The Life of Judas
A translation and introduction

by Brandon W. Hawk and Mari Mamyan

The medieval Life of Judas (Life Jud.) presents a biography of the notorious disciple before he meets and becomes a follower of Jesus. Dealing with his birth and life up to adulthood, the story is comprised of legendary elements that embellish biblical knowledge about Judas and give him a more nuanced background. This is a curious feature of the narrative, given negative attitudes toward and representations of Judas throughout Christian history, but it also speaks to medieval interest in his character as not only the scapegoat of the Gospels but also a sympathetic figure trapped in his own tragedy.

Contents
The plot of Life Jud., in its Latin form, falls generally into four acts. Act one tells about Judas's parents and his unfortunate birth. Before Judas is born, his father has a vision that his son will kill him (2:1); so after his birth, Judas's legs are wounded and he is abandoned outside of Jerusalem (2:2). Some shepherds find the baby and he is raised by a woman in a town called Scariot (2:3). In act two, Judas is a grown man who has entered the service of King Herod (3:1). Herod desires fresh fruit for one of his feasts, so Judas steals some from a local orchard (3:2). When caught, Judas kills the farmer, not knowing the man is his own father (3:3). The townspeople threaten to kill Judas, but he finds protection from Herod, who marries him to the murdered farmer's wife (Judas's mother, though unknown) to make peace (3:4–6). Act three consists of the revelation of Judas's identity, when his mother sees him naked and recognizes the scars on his legs (4:1). His mother then asks Judas a series of questions about his origins (4:2). Judas relates what little he knows, and both realize their folly: he has killed his father and married his mother (4:3–5). In act four, after he has fled from his mother, Judas seeks atonement and meets Jesus, who receives him as a disciple (5:1–2). Jesus' ministry is briefly mentioned, as well as Judas's treachery and suicide (5:3–4). The text offers moralizing aphorisms at both the beginning and the end, framing the story as a negative example for the audience.

The Armenian version of Life Jud., translated here for the first time, contains a number of distinct features. The father's vision is expanded, becoming a visit to some wise men or astrologers who predict everything that transpires in Judas's future (1:1–2). His father sets him adrift in the river but does not give him the identifying wound on his legs (1:4). The shepherd finds him, but instead of handing him over to a "certain woman in Scariot," he and his wife raise him (1:7–8). After they die, Judas moves to the village of his biological parents (2:2) and is hired by his father to tend his garden (2:3). No mention is made of Herod. While working the garden, Judas mistakes his father...
for a thief and slays him (2:7–8). The people of the village see his industriousness and his contrition and marry him to his mother (2:12). Judas's identity is revealed when he tells his new wife about being found by the shepherd in the river (3:2). The villagers urge Judas to join Jesus because "no one," they say, "can absolve your sins, but Master Jesus" (4:1). Little is said about Judas's time among the apostles except for his betrayal of Jesus for the silver coins (4:3).

Manuscripts and Versions

_Life Jud._ is extant in Latin, Greek, Armenian, and a host of European vernacular languages. Its form varies depending on the language and even the manuscript. The earliest surviving version of the Latin text is found in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 14489, fols. 109v–110r (ca. 1160–ca. 1170), first published by Edward Kennard Rand and later by Paul Franklin Baum.1 Despite the Paris manuscript's early date, comparisons with near-contemporary and later versions seem to indicate that the legend was adaptable from an early stage of its transmission. It is more prudent, then, to consider the text in Paris lat. 14489 not as an original version, but as the oldest surviving form within a fluid tradition. For this reason, it is also pertinent to situate this version of _Life Jud._ in the context of other text types that circulated during the medieval period and the relationships between them.

After the medieval period, up until the twentieth century, the legend of Judas was primarily known through the version included in Jacob of Voragine's _The Golden Legend_ 45 (ca. 1260). In this collection of saints' lives, the story of Judas is an expanded, adapted version of the earlier _Life Jud._, forming part of the account of the apostle Matthias (who was elected to replace Judas in Acts 1).2 In 1913, Edward Kennard Rand published a textual antecedent to Jacob's version of the story from Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Palat. lat. 619 (12th/13th cent.), as well as several other earlier texts relating the legend.3 In 1916, Paul Franklin Baum published a more complete study of the various accounts of the legend—in Latin and vernacular languages—with a wide-ranging list of manuscripts and versions.4 Expanding on the earlier studies by Rand and Baum, in 1929 Paul Lehmann clarified some of the details about later developments, with a focus especially on poetic adaptations.5 All of these studies re-

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1. The text was added by a twelfth-century scribe on two pages originally left blank. Printed in Rand, _Mediaeval Lives_, 313–14; and Baum, "Mediaeval Legend," 490–91. For descriptions of this manuscript, including its date, see Nikolaus Häring, _Commentaries on Boethius by Thierry of Chartres and His School_ (Studies and Texts 20; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1971), 27–28; and Michael M. Gorman, "Jacobus Pamellius (1536–1587) and a St Victor Manuscript Used for the 1563 Edition of Bede: Paris lat. 14489," _Scriptorium_ 52 (1998): 321–30. Although some scholars have mistakenly indicated Saint-Victor as the manuscript's origin, Häring notes that the manuscript was not composed there, but purchased for the monastery in the fifteenth century and later transferred to the Bibliothèque nationale (Commentaries, 27).


3. Rand, _Mediaeval Lives_.

4. Baum, "Mediaeval Legend."

5. Lehmann, "Judas Ischarioth."
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main valuable for their text-critical work as well as for accessible editions of the most important texts.

Baum (following Rand) demonstrated that by the end of the twelfth century at least three distinct Latin versions of Life Jud. circulated.6

Type A, represented only by Paris lat. 14489;
Type H, the longest, most elaborate version, represented by three manuscripts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries;
Type R, a developed adaptation, represented by eleven manuscripts from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.

Baum published texts of all three versions based on his collations of the various manuscripts.7 In addition to these three early versions, Baum also categorized three other text types, developed during the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries:

Type L, the version included in the Golden Legend, independently represented by twenty-one manuscripts (as in Vatican, Pal. lat. 619, the earliest of these)
Type P, comprised of two later Latin poetic adaptations (in two manuscripts each)
Type M (miscellaneous), represented by two unclassifiable fifteenth-century versions

While Rand's, Baum's, and Lehmann's efforts to sort out general relationships between the many Latin versions of the legend are valuable, further work is needed to elucidate the various and complex texts, as well as the interrelationships of the vernacular versions.8 Baum suggests that Paris lat. 14489, the earliest and simplest form of the legend, is close to the original text.9 His review of the evidence also establishes that both types H and R were likely composed before the turn of the thirteenth century: while Type H relies on Type A but expands it with many details and elaborations, Type R developed from the original version, parallel to (not reliant on) Type A. It is also possible that Type H took some of its material from Type R.

From the thirteenth century onward, later versions of the legend derive from the early developments of Types A, H, and R. There is no solid evidence to determine the exact relationship of Type L to earlier texts, but Baum proposes that it relies on Type R (the two are obviously related) and was composed sometime in the thirteenth century before Jacob of Voragine included it in his collection. Based on verbal parallels, it is clear that one of the poetic versions (Type P) from the thirteenth century relies on a text like Type R, and possibly also on Type H; the other poetic version from the fifteenth century is based directly on Type L, as included in the Golden Legend. One of the miscellaneous, unclassifiable versions (Type M) is similar to Types R and L, but diverges in a number of ways and also adds an amalgamation of material about Judas from the canonical Gospels at the end of the narrative. Baum was aware of the other

7. Baum, "Mediaeval Legend," 490–91 (Type A); 501–8 (Type H); 493–94 (Type R).
8. The following relies on Baum, "Mediaeval Legend," 485–521; see also Lehmann, "Judas Ischariot"; and the summary of Baum's conclusions in Ohly, Damned and the Elect, 163 n. 73.
Type M manuscript only secondhand, so was unable to classify it; he says little about it except that it "doubtless follows the usual tradition."  

Vasili Istrin published two Greek versions of the text in 1898. The earlier of the two (Greek A) survives in Mount Athos, Monē Dionusiou, 132 (17th cent.), where it is titled Peri tou paranomou louda ("Concerning the traitor Judas"). Istrin's other text (Greek B) was taken from a pamphlet published by a monk of Mount Athos at Athens in 1889. Baum also notes versions of Life Jud. surviving in two other manuscripts on Mount Athos: Monē Dionusiou 260 (17th cent.) and Monē Ibëron 496 (16th/17th cent.). G. A. Megas discusses the Greek tradition and includes a collation of Monē Dionusiou 260 with another text of the same version from Archbishopric of Cyprus.

In his comparison of the Greek and Latin traditions, Baum argues that Greek A and B, at least, must derive from much older Greek texts contemporary with the medieval Latin texts. The Greek texts represent something like intermediate versions between the Latin Type A and later adaptations like Types R and L, since the Greek stories diverge in a number of ways from the accounts as they became popular in the West. Baum concludes that the evidence "seem[s] to indicate that the Greek versions are in some way or other redactions of a Western original," copied before the emergence of the popular Type L and taking a different trajectory in the details.

Transmission Stemma

Adaptations of Life Jud. proliferated in many European vernacular languages from the end of the thirteenth century onward. For example, we find a host of accounts in both poetry and prose in Middle English, Welsh, Irish, Swedish, Old

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13. Megas, "O Íōðás eis tās paraðóseis tou laou." We have been unable to obtain this article, but gleaned information from a translation of the text by Margaret M. Thorne included in Edmunds, Oedipus, 65–67; see other modern Greek folkloric versions (printed by Megas) translated ibid., 89–93.
16. For overviews, see Baum, "Mediaeval Legend," 526–64; Ohly, Damned and the Elect; as well as many other studies of specific languages and texts, some noted in the following.

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Norse,\(^{17}\) German,\(^{18}\) Dutch, French, Provençal, Catalan, Spanish,\(^{19}\) Bohemian, Russian, and Bulgarian. Baum points out that the earliest of these (though extant in late manuscripts) are thirteenth-century versions in Welsh, Catalan, and Bohemian; he also suggests that the Catalan contains some details so strikingly different from surviving Latin texts that it might reflect the text of the earliest Life Jud., possibly even predating the A-text.

The Armenian version of Life Jud. is not mentioned in Baum’s study and has not yet been published in a critical edition. The translation here is based on eleven manuscripts from the Matenadaran in Yerevan.

A: M6616, fols. 23r–23v (15th cent.)
E: M515, fols. 8r–9r (17th cent.)
F: M665, fols. 306v–307v (1710)
G: M706, fols. 209r–210r (17th cent.)
H: M1771, fols. 241v–242v (1651)
I: M2196, fols. 377r–377v (1683)
J: M2242, fols. 387r–387v (17th cent.)
P: M1127, fols. 47v–49v (17th cent.)
Q: M3366, fols. 7r–8v (1698)
S: M3522, fols. 118v–120r (1634)
T: M5882, fols. 112r–113v (15th cent.)

Without further evidence, the precise relationships between the Latin, Greek, Armenian, and European vernacular versions remain elusive.

Genre, Structure, and Prosody

Generically, the Latin Life Jud. is structured much like an exemplum for preaching: the earliest versions are short prose narratives with moralizing introductions and conclusions. In the medieval period, it was common for biblical and apocryphal characters to be used in these types of moral narratives for preaching. This is the case with the Latin text translated here, which is bookended by two proverbial statements—the first from Matt 10:26 and the second an appeal for God’s mercy and another proverbial admonition from Matt 10:22. It is possible that the first Gospel quotation is meant to be read as a type of pericope, linking Life Jud. to the larger subject of Matt 10, in which Jesus sends his disciples into the world. Indeed, specifically mentioned among Jesus’ followers in verse 4, Judas is the disciple “who also betrayed him” (in the Vulgate: “qui et tradidit eum”). The subject, this link to the biblical narrative, and the moralizing framing devices all make Life Jud. appear as an appropriate text for preaching.\(^{20}\)

From another generic perspective, Life Jud. also comes close to the classical conception of tragedy, especially because of its affinities with the Oedipus legend. Like the tragic hero most well known from Sophocles’ plays, Judas is fated from his birth to kill his father and marry his mother, portended in Life Jud. by his father’s dream as an omen. Also like the Greek tragedy, there is an aspect of fate in this plot, although it is not explicitly addressed or made a vital part of the narrative. Instead, within the story, Judas’s destiny relates more to his total depravity than to a tragic flaw; rather than hubris, Judas suffers from being inherently, inevitably, “evil in birth, worse in life, and... worst in death,” as stated at the outset. Yet, as other commentators have pointed out,

\(^{17}\) See Wolf, “Judas Legend in Scandinavia.”
\(^{18}\) See Ohly, Damned and the Elect, esp. the text printed and translated on pp. 143–49.
\(^{19}\) See Fouilhé-Delbosc, La légende de Judas Iscariote.
\(^{20}\) See Hawk, “Literary Contexts.”

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the character of Judas is not presented here as totally evil, since the sense of his tragic destiny lends some nuance to his story. As Rand points out, there is "a pathos direct and touching, not far removed from tragedy... [T]he Judas in this story awakens our compassion and the recognition of our common human frailty." 21

Life Jud. in the earliest version is fairly simple in both structure and style. Like many exempla used for preaching, the story relates the major plot points with few details and little spoken dialogue, giving it a folkloric quality that many commentators have mentioned. The plot moves along in broad strokes, punctuated by key scenes like Judas's murder of his father and the revelation of his identity. This latter scene, in fact, contains the only instance of direct speech in the lament of Judas's mother. Her speech serves to emphasize the sparseness of dialogue and paucity of details, momentarily disrupting the general pace of the narrative to introduce a moment of pathos, fatalism, and psychology. Just as this moment propels Judas out of his mother's presence, it also seems to propel the rest of the story forward: the protagonist's downward slide into his ultimate betrayal of Jesus and the moral lesson applied at the end.

Date and Provenance

As previously indicated, the most solid date and provenance for the earliest Latin Life Jud. translated here (Type A) rests on the version's sole surviving manuscript, from the twelfth century. Any earlier date without new evidence is merely a matter of conjecture. It is plausible that an antecedent version circulated as early as the late eleventh century, although this is only speculation proposed by previous work on the Judas tradition. Similarly, there is little evidence to situate the text's original provenance. The Latin is not especially localizable, and the earliest vernacular versions appear at the end of the thirteenth century en masse. The oldest manuscripts (including Paris lat. 14489) are of French origin. The safest assumption, therefore, is that the earliest surviving Latin Life Jud. was composed in France by the middle or second half of the twelfth century.

Circumstantial evidence for a date earlier than the twelfth century is unsubstantiated and dubious. Baum suggests an earlier possible date by proposing that a certain interest in incest (legal and heresiological) in the eleventh century might have been the impetus and original purpose for Life Jud., although this does not rest on altogether solid ground. With this suggestion in mind, Baum links Life Jud. with a fabulous legend about Pope Gregory, which has a similar Oedipal plot. 22 Yet, while the narrative of Life Jud. displays affinities with the Oedipus legend, it does not draw special attention to the issue of incest; instead, it focuses more on the overall arc of Judas's depravity in life leading up to his role as traitor in the Gospels. Without more solid grounds for placing Life Jud. in the eleventh century, Baum's suggestions must be considered speculative.

A more plausible background for the original purpose of Life Jud., as already indicated, is in the rise of the exemplum as a popular genre in the central Middle Ages. This explanation accounts for the desire to expand Judas's biography before his appearance in the Gospels, the origin of the earliest Latin version, the story's rapid rise

22. Baum, "Medieval Legend," 520 and inter alia. Ohly, Damned and the Elect, also links these legends, although he is more circumspect about dates, focusing instead on the twelfth century onward.
to fame in a variety of versions, and its enduring popularity in a variety of languages and story collections.

**Literary Context**

Much of the literary context for the *Life Jud.* in Latin (presumably the language of composition) is to be found in the types of legends that circulated in oral and written forms throughout the medieval period. Notably, the only identifiable direct source used in the text is the first sentence, from Matt 10:26, although the verse is slightly different from the standard reading in the Latin Vulgate. Despite the paucity of distinct, identifiable sources, the author does weave a number of biblical allusions into the final portion of the narrative, which generally parallels the Gospels.23 In a brief description of Jesus' ministry, the imagery of a shepherd saving a sheep from the mouth of a wolf is reminiscent of Amos 3:12, although there the animal is a lion. The author mentions that Judas kept the purse as in John 12:6 and 13:29, implying how his inward deception was not seen by others, who only saw his outward actions. As in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 14:10–11, 43–45 par.), Judas betrays Jesus for money—again, as with his holding of the purse, emphasizing his greed—although, curiously, the thirty pieces of silver are not mentioned. As in Matt 27:3–10, Judas commits suicide by hanging himself. The penultimate sentence evoking God’s mercy echoes Ps 123:3, Isa 33:2, and Matt 20:30–31, although it is impossible to know which is the direct source, or if the author recalled the phrase from memory; significantly, this phrase also evokes the popular penitential Ps 51 (*miserere mei*). The final sentence is a close parallel to Matt 10:22, adding only one extra phrase about a person's life needing to be good.

Other direct sources and immediate literary contexts remain relatively ambiguous, although a number of general associations are remarkable. Regarding the canonical status of the story, Jacob of Voragine warns readers in his *Golden Legend*, "What is read so far is from the aforesaid apocryphal history, and whether it should be retold should be left to the judgment of the reader, although it is probably better left aside than repeated."24 As modern readers, with the hindsight of comparative literary history, we are able to recognize both apocryphal aspects of the story as well as other general influences from biblical and legendary traditions. In the detail of his aban-
donment and orphaned upbringing (in some versions, he is set adrift in a basket) he is like Moses, although in his later life he clearly diverges as an antitype. The Oedipus legend provides a more obvious analogue for the overall plot, as most commentators have remarked. Yet there are no clear paths to follow in tracing the Oedipus myth into Western medieval culture. During the Middle Ages, the story of Oedipus circulated in various forms,25 but we cannot be sure how specific medieval readers in the Latin West might have encountered the narrative, nor why the author of *Life Jud.* adopted it.

Britt Mize has surveyed the general European Judas tradition leading up to the thirteenth century, as well as the contexts in which the legend began to flourish, particularly in English vernacular literature.26 In a similar, though more focused, manner,

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23. In contrast to the Latin, the Armenian version has far fewer scriptural allusions.
25. See Edmunds, "Oedipus"; idem, *Oedipus*; and Hahn, "Medieval Oedipus."
26. Mize, "Working with the Enemy."
Friedrich Ohly has examined *Life Jud.* and its many outgrowths in relation to the theme of guilt in Western literature from the twelfth century onward—especially in contrast to the analogous legend about Pope Gregory. Both of these studies situate the Latin *Life Jud.* within evolving late medieval literary contexts, including the emergence of (for Ohly) secular poetry and (for Mize) lay confession and devotional piety. Within these contexts, the story of Judas was meant to spark introspection, in the form of reflection on the audience's own destiny, choices, and salvation in view of the negative example presented in this narrative.

Later versions demonstrate how Judas's story was further adapted with details drawn from other biblical and legendary conventions. Some of the more substantial changes made by later redactors include:

- Judas's father and mother are given the names Reuben and Cyborea, solidifying associations with biblical Judaism.
- Judas is raised by a queen who had no children before adopting him, as presumptive heir to the kingdom, extending the parallels with Moses' upbringing among royalty.
- The queen has a younger son with the king; and, when Judas learns of his true parentage, he becomes jealous and eventually kills his half-brother.
- Judas joins the service of Pilate, not Herod, linking him more closely to the Gospels and other apocrypha.

All of these changes and expansions appear in Jacob's *Golden Legend*, the most widespread and popular version of the Judas legend. In one later version in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Lat. 12262 (Baum's Mw text), *Life Jud.* precedes a series of biblical passages about Judas compiled for a longer synoptic narrative fusing the canonical and apocryphal sources more fully. We have also already mentioned divergences between the Latin and Armenian versions, which add to the complexity of adaptations across languages and cultures.

Emphasizing links to other apocrypha, versions of *Life Jud.* (Latin and vernacular) are often found paired with accounts of Pilate's life and other texts concerning figures like Vespasian and Veronica, Nero, and the Holy Cross. Considering *Life Jud.* among exempla also helps to situate its afterlife as a popular story that found its way into many languages and other types of collections. Perhaps the most famous medieval collection of exempla was Jacques de Vitry's, although many others circulated in the late Middle Ages. These were, moreover, the types of collections that later compilers drew on when assembling their own story collections—figures such as Jacob for his *Golden Legend*, Giovanni Boccaccio for his *Decameron*, Geoffrey Chaucer for his *Canterbury Tales*, and Christine de Pizan for her *Book of the City of Ladies*. As an entertaining story that also gestures toward a moral lesson, later versions of *Life Jud.* in Latin and vernacular languages appealed to clerics and laity alike, encompassing an array of diverse audiences.

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27. Ohly, *Damned and the Elect.*
28. See lists of manuscripts in Baum's "Mediaeval Legend," 485–89; and Hawk, "Literary Contexts," with extended descriptions of manuscript contents and discussion about these apocrypha.
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Translation
The translation of the Latin text by Brandon W. Hawk is based on Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 14489. The Armenian translation by Mari Mamyan is based on Yerevan, Matenadaran, 6616 (15th cent.), the earliest of the known witnesses. Chapter and verse divisions for both texts have been introduced by the translators.

Bibliography

EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

STUDIES
The Life of Judasa
(Latin Version)

Introduction
1 *Nothing is hidden that shall not be revealed, nor covered that shall not be known.* Whoever goes forth in evil and perseveres in evil is given not a crown but the penalty of merit. 2 *Woven for us is a life of Judas the traitor, who was evil in birth, worse in life, and remained worst in death.*

The birth of Judas
2 3Now, as was said among men, his father was reputed by all his neighbors to be abounding in riches and honor. One night he saw a vision of having a son who intended to kill him; for soon his wife was pregnant. That was a portent about the future. 2At the baby's birth, the father remembered and feared this omen, pierced his legs, and placed him in the bushes a long way from the city of Jerusalem. 3Hearing his crying and wailing, some shepherds took him from the place and brought him to a certain woman in Scariotb to raise him.

Judas in Herod's court
3 1When he had been raised and had grown into a strong man, he joined King Herod and served among the other servants and soldiers of the king in all excellence. However, according to the custom of servants, he lavishly distributed what he had and claimed as much as he could take for himself. 2And it happened once that Herod held a festive banquet with the nobles in Jerusalem, and the king wanted fruit among the many types of dishes. Judas hastened to fulfill his desire and went down to his father's orchard—although he did not know that it was his father—and by force plucked and stripped the fruit from the trees. 3The man to whom they actually belonged, shaken in spirit and filled with bitterness, went to confront the hostile man; but Judas, the stronger, struck and killed him.

4The whole city was stirred up against him and rising up at him, they prepared to put him to death. But Judas fled to Herod's protection and escaped the threat of death. 3Herod, himself also disturbed, acted so that he might

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a. Paris lat. 1448g gives the title as "Concerning Judas the Traitor" ("De Juda proditore").
b. In the New Testament Gospels, Judas is given the epithet "Iscariot," although the meaning is unknown. Here, the author apparently follows the popular late antique and medieval etymology for Judas's name, that it means "from the town of Scariot" (found, for example, in Isidore of Seville's *Etyrn. 6.9.20* and Jacob of Voragine's *Golden Legend*).
obtain peace from the friends of the murdered man, lest a single evil thing might turn into some greater threat. "Then, taking counsel, Herod married Judas to the wife of the murdered man, himself and everyone ignorant that she was his mother.

**Judas's identity revealed**

4 One day it happened that Judas openly appeared naked to his mother and wife. She saw the marks of the wounds on his legs and suspected him to be her son, whom she once had abandoned, casting him into the bushes. 2 Then she asked him who his father had been, or who his mother was, who his parents were, and from which province he had come or by whom he had been raised. 3 He admitted that he did not know, but that he had heard from his nurse that he had been cast into the bushes in that place, and found by shepherds, taken to Scariot, and had been raised in that place; and when he had grown into a strong man, he joined the servants of Herod and pleased many with his service. 4 When she heard this, she fell down and cried out that she was wretched saying, "Unfortunate vision of my marriage, which is fulfilled by my son, and the madness of malice and sin overflow around me. May the day of my birth perish and may the fog of darkness embrace him." 5 But Judas, perceiving that he had committed such wickedness, lamented and, penitent for such a crime, left his mother.

**Judas among the disciples**

5 1 At that time, in those places lived Jesus, who by preaching and healing, redeemed many bodies and minds from various sins; he received to himself those who came burdened by sins and drew them away from assault as a shepherd seizes sheep from the mouth of a wolf. 2 Judas recognized the virtue and piety that Jesus had collected in himself and asked him to have mercy on him. Jesus perceived his desire, allowing him to remain with him and also to be among his disciples. 3 He even gave what he had to Judas, so that he would provide the necessities to himself and to others. In truth, he kept the purse and stole what he was able. 4 And what the intentions of Judas himself were, they became apparent in the end, because he sold the master for a price and delivered him to the Jews. In the end, he hanged himself and ended a wretched life in death. 5 But you, Lord, have mercy on us. Whoever perseveres in goodness until the end shall be saved.
Judas’s birth and adoption

1 And so, we heard and learned from the spiritual teachers that when Judas was born, his father went to some wise and insightful men and asked, “Who is my child destined to become?”

2 They examined and observed and said to him, “This child of yours will be an evil person and a villain, for he will murder his father and will marry his mother, and he will betray to death the God of the heavens and of the earth, and he himself will die a terrible death.”

3 As his father heard this, he thought in his heart to get rid of him, but he could not kill him with his own hands. Then he made a chest and he put him inside and set him adrift on the river to die. Having set off down the river, he began to cry. And it happened that there was a certain shepherd pasturing his herd on the river bank, and when he heard the sound of his crying, he went down and took him out and brought him to his house. His wife took him and fostered him joyfully, as they did not have a child.

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a. Titles vary in the manuscripts, though most have some variation of “The history and/or life of Judas” or simply “Concerning Judas.” Others have “Concerning Judas, on how he was called a betrayer of Christ in the womb” (A), “Concerning the Birth of Judas, who betrayed the Lord” (F), and “History concerning the birth of wicked Judas” (Q).

b. ST have “Judas Iscariot.”

c. PQ add “astrologers.”

d. H has “as he smelled awful and disgusting.” H repeats this description in 3:5 (see p. 221 n. h).

e. Q has “a murderer.”

f. QST add “and the Creator of all.”

g. For “of the heavens and of the earth,” J has “and he will do many bad things on the earth.”

h. J lacks “and he himself will die a terrible death.” Q adds “he will hang himself with his own hands”; ST have “he will commit suicide” (T adds “strangling”).

i. Q adds “and he was in great sorrow.”

j. ST have “to get rid of the wicked child by starvation.”

k. J has “the father and mother.”

l. Q adds “to the seaside.”

m. Q has “the evil and illegitimate child”; ST “the wicked child.”

n. J has “a fisherman.”

o. ST add “and swimming, he entered the water.”

p. Q adds “from the sea.”

q. J adds “as he saw that he was cheerful and extremely beautiful.”

r. J lacks “his wife”; Q adds “and seeing him, his wife rejoiced much.”

s. P lacks “took him.”
Judas kills his father

2 1When he grew up and became a man, a the shepherd and his wife died, b and he c was left an orphan. d 2Then he went out and walked about the country, and he came and settled in a village e where his father and mother were living, but they did not recognize him or each other. f And it came to pass one day that his father went out and g saw him sitting idly and he said to him, “Why are you idle? Come, h work for me, and I will pay i your wages.” j 4And he got up and went with him, and one evening he sent him to guard his vineyard. When he went there and kept watch, k after a little while his father got up and went to the vineyard to test him to see if he was awake. l 6Hearing him coming, (Judas) thrice called out to him, “Who are you?” m but he did not give an answer. n Quickly, he took an arrow and put it in the bow and, thinking him to be a thief, he struck him o and immediately killed him.

And he went, and as he saw and recognized him, p crying out, he wept and screamed, “I killed my lord q in ignorance.” r All men and women s and his mother gathered around him. t When they found out the reason, they did not judge him, u for he was not guilty, and they buried him. v

Seeing that he was quick to do the work of his house and that he was sincere, because of his success they deliberated w and married him off to his mother. x

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a. ST have “perfect man.”
b. In J, before dying, the fisherman and his wife confessed to Judas that he was found and adopted by them.
c. Q has “the boy.”
d. I has “the shepherd died and his wife was left a widow.”
e. J has “an alien world.”
f. P lacks “went out.”
g. Q adds “if you want.”
h. Q adds “every day.”
i. In J Judas himself offers his services, reading “Judas says to his father, ‘I want to cultivate the land.’”
j. Q adds “or carelessly asleep.”
k. Q adds “heavily.”
l. JQ add “that he was his lord.”
m. Q adds “and my benefactor.”
n. J lacks “I killed my lord in ignorance.”
o. Q adds “and his relatives.”
p. QST add “as a murderer.”
q. J has “the members of his family mourned and buried him.”
r. ST have “because of his success, the woman liked him, and they decided.”
s. The entire verse in Q is “His wife saw that he was quick and sincere to do the work of the house, and they loved and were pleasd with each other, and he (Judas) deliberated and married his mother.”
Judas’s identity revealed

3 And it came to pass one day, as they were sitting together in the house, his wife asked him and said, “What country or what province do you come from? And do you have any relatives or family?”

2 He said, “I do not know who my father and mother are, but a shepherd and his wife raised me and they told me, “We found you in a chest that was coming down the river.”

3 As his mother heard that, she cried out and screamed. Hearing her voice, they all gathered together and found out the reason why: it was her son who was thrown into the river according to the words of the wise men.

5 As Judas heard that, he began to cry and hit his head and said, “Woe is me, who will heal me from this great pain and from this bitter sin?”

Judas among the disciples

4 At that time the fame of Jesus’ miracles was widespread everywhere, and thinking in their minds, they said to him, “No one can absolve your sins, but Master Jesus.” And he got up and came to Jesus, and since that day he became his disciple with the other disciples. Then he betrayed the Lord for thirty silver coins. For this reason he was called a betrayer.

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Mark 14:20-31, 43-45

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"O Judas, a partner and contributor of the slanderer, who easily sold God, the Creator of everything."