Type: Newsletter

Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant

Editor(s): John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid
Published: Provo, UT; Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2005

Abstract: This third volume in the series Studies in the Book of Abraham includes nine papers from a FARMS-sponsored conference on the Book of Abraham, one of the canonized works of scripture of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Three papers on related subjects are also included. An assumption underlying the papers in this volume is that the Book of Abraham is both an authentic and ancient text.

In seeking to illuminate the background of the Book of Abraham from historical, geographical, cultural, scientific, and doctrinal perspectives, these studies deal with three broad themes: astronomy in the Book of Abraham, the Joseph Smith Papyri, and the nature of the Abrahamic covenant. As a whole, the research highlighted in this volume affirms that the Book of Abraham is what it claims to be—an ancient text. This becomes clear, for example, when certain nonbiblical themes reflected in the text are found to abound in extrabiblical traditions from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

NUMBER 3

JOHN GEE AND BRIAN M. HAUGLID, SERIES EDITORS

Previously Published Volumes

Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham

The Hor Book of Breathings: A Translation and Commentary

Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant

compiled and edited by
John Gee • Brian M. Hauglid

Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies
Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah

Cover design by Bjorn Pendleton

On the cover: Dendera Zodiac. Courtesy Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY.

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University Station
Provo, Utah 84602

Printed in the United States of America
13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Astronomy, papyrus, and covenant / compiled and edited by John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid
p. cm.—(Studies in the book of Abraham ; no. 3)
Includes index.
ISBN 0-934893-76-4 (alk. paper)
1. Book of Abraham—Congresses. 2. Abraham (Biblical patriarch)—
Congresses. I. Gee, John Laurence. II. Hauglid, Brian M., 1954– III. Series.
BX8629.B563A88 2005
289.3′2—dc22
2004004285

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Preface

Following the approach it takes in studying the Book of Mormon, Brigham Young University's Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) decided in 1998 to also focus on the Book of Abraham. At that time, FARMS formed the Book of Abraham research project, headed by John Gee, William (Bill) Gay Associate Research Professor of Egyptology at the Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts at Brigham Young University (the Institute), and Brian M. Hauglid, associate professor of ancient scripture at BYU. As part of this effort, FARMS initiated the series Studies in the Book of Abraham. The series includes scholarly work dealing with the Book of Abraham and, by extension, the Joseph Smith Papyri, Abraham, and related subjects. To date, two titles have been published in the series: *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham,* 2001, edited by John A. Tvedtnes, senior resident scholar with the Institute, Hauglid, and Gee; and *The Hor Book of Breathings: A Translation and Commentary,* 2002, based on the Joseph Smith Papyri, by Michael D. Rhodes, associate research professor of ancient scripture at BYU.

The present volume, *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, is the third title in the series. It deals with three broad themes: astronomy in the Book of Abraham, the background of the Joseph Smith Papyri, and the nature of the Abrahamic covenant. All but three of the articles in this collection were initially presented as papers at a conference held on the BYU campus. The three additional articles are "The Creation of Humankind, an Allegory?" by Richard D. Draper, associate dean of religious education at BYU; "The Book of Abraham in the Muslim Tradition," by Hauglid; and "The Facsimiles and Semitic Adaptations of Existing Sources," by Kevin L. Barney, an attorney in private practice in Chicago. We hoped to be able to include an article by David Elliot, a graduate student in Egyptology at the University of Pennsylvania, but unfortunately he passed away before he was able to complete it. This book is dedicated to his memory.

One of the major features of the Book of Abraham is its treatment of ancient astronomy, an aspect of Abraham's teachings not recounted in the biblical narrative but one that does appear in noncanonical traditions about the Patriarch. William J. Hamblin, associate professor of history, and Daniel C. Peterson, professor of Islamic studies and Arabic, both at BYU, along with Gee, situate the astronomical accounts in the Book of Abraham among ancient geocentric astronomies, while Rhodes and J. Ward Moody, professor of physics and astronomy at BYU, use conceptions from contemporary physics to elucidate the same subject. E. Douglas

Clark, an attorney and the international policy director of United Families International, examines the metaphor of stars and cedars in various ancient accounts about Abraham. Jared W. Ludlow, associate professor of history and religion at BYU–Hawaii, discusses Abraham's reputation as an astronomer as found in a variety of ancient sources. Finally, Draper analyzes the role of the Book of Abraham in Latter-day Saint discussions about whether various scriptural creation accounts are allegorical.

The nature of the connection between the Joseph Smith Papyri and the Book of Abraham continues to be a matter of interest and discussion. Several articles in the volume address various issues associated with the papyri and their background. Since these ancient documents are currently dated to the Ptolemaic period (332–30 B.C.), Peter C. Nadig, lecturer in ancient history at the University of Düsseldorf, deals with various aspects of the Jewish experience in Ptolemaic Egypt. Gee shows why a common "Egyptological" misinterpretation of Facsimile 3 in the Book of Abraham should be rejected precisely on Egyptological grounds. On the other hand, Barney discusses ancient Semitic interpretations of Egyptian iconography and raises the issue of whether an Egyptological interpretation of the facsimiles from the Book of Abraham is relevant. Finally, Hauglid examines medieval Muslim viewpoints on Abraham and shows how many nonbiblical narratives about Abraham, as recounted in the Book of Abraham, circulated in Muslim sources.

One of the most important themes dealt with in the Book of Abraham, especially for Latter-day Saints, is the Abrahamic covenant. Researcher and librarian Janet Hovorka analyzes the role of women in the Abrahamic covenant. Jennifer Lane, assistant professor of religious education at BYU–Hawaii, discusses Abraham's redemption in light of the covenant. Finally, Andrew H. Hedges, associate professor of church history and doctrine at BYU, looks at accounts of Abraham in nineteenth-century America and reflects on how often Abraham was dealt with in Joseph Smith's day.

The articles in this volume all share an assumption that the Book of Abraham is both authentic and ancient. Beyond that, a number of other assumptions and preconceptions ground the work of the various authors, as they do the work of all authors. The editors have made no attempt to harmonize the various viewpoints and interpretations expressed in these articles. On the contrary, in some instances scholars deal with a common subject using assumptions that are mutually incompatible. Their juxtaposition in this volume is intentional since it well illustrates the variety of interpretations of scripture that can come from a common background of faith. Readers will have to judge for themselves which positions best reflect what the scripture means.

Finally, the editors would like to acknowledge the help of M. Gerald Bradford, Alison Coutts, William J. Hamblin, Larry E. Morris, Katherine Newbold, Jacob Rawlins, Paula W. Hicken, Julie Dozier, Ellen Henneman, Renee Wald, Linda Sheffield, Marshelle Papa, Emily Ellsworth, Amanda Smith, and Brian L. Smith in preparing this volume for publication.

John Gee
Brian M. Hauglid

List of Abbreviations

BEIE	*The Book of Enoch or I Enoch: A New English Edition (Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha, No. 7),* ed. M. Black and James C. Vanderkam, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997.
BGU	*Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen (*later *Staatlichen) Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden*, Berlin, 1895—.
CdE	*Chronique d'Égypte, Bulletin périodique de la Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth,* published by the Foundation, Brussels, 1925—.
CPJ	*Corpus papyrorum judicaorum,* ed. V. A. Tcherikover et al., Cambridge, Mass., 1957—.
EEF	Egyptian Exploration Fund.
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature.*
LÄ	*Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, ed. E. Helck and E. Otto, Wiesbaden, 1975—.
PCZ	*Zenon Papyri, Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*, Cairo, 1925—.
P. Enteux.	ΕΝΤΕΨΧΕΙΣ: *Requêtes et plaintes adressées au Roi d'Égypte au IIIe siècle avant J.-C.,* ed. O. Guéraud, Cairo, 1931.
PG	*Patrologia Graecae.*

P. Hib.	*The Hibeh Papyri I*, ed. B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt (Egypt Exploration Society, Graeco-Roman Memoirs 7), London, 1906.
P. Magd.	*Papyrus de Magdôla*, ed. J. Lesquier, Lille, 1912 (also known as P. Lille II).
P. Paris	*Notices et textes des papyrus du Musée du Louvre et de la Bibliothèque Impériale*, ed. J. A. Letronne, W. Brunet de Presle, and E. Egger, Paris, 1865.
P. Petr.	*The Flinders Petrie Papyri III*, ed. J. P. Mahaffy and J. G. Smyly, Dublin, 1905.
P. Tebt.	*The Tebtunis Papyri*, ed. B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt et al., London, 1902—.
Rev.d'Eg.	*Revue d'Égyptologie,* published by La Société Française de l'Égypte, 1933—.
TAD	*Textbook of Aramaic Documents*, ed. B. Porten and A. Yadeni, Winona Lake, Ind., 1986.
UPZ	*Urkunden der Ptolemäerzeit (ältere Funde) I*, ed. U. Wilcken, *Papyri aus Unterägypten*, Berlin—Leipzig, 1927.

Chapter 1

"And I Saw the Stars"

The Book of Abraham and Ancient Geocentric Astronomy

John Gee, William J. Hamblin, and Daniel C. Peterson

"The stars are described in a passage which will fatigue most modern readers, though it might fatigue us less if our education had not left us so ignorant of astronomy."

—C. S. Lewis[1]

Traditionally there have been three major interpretations of the astronomical material found in the Book of Abraham.[2] First, many Latter-day Saints believe that the Book of Abraham contains an accurate portrayal of the universe that can be reconciled with modern relativistic astrophysics and astronomy. In other words, the Book of Abraham describes Einsteinian, or perhaps even post-Einsteinian, astronomy, where no particular object is seen as the center of the universe but any particular object can be viewed as the center for local reference purposes.[3] Second, most non-Mormons who have concerned themselves with the question, viewing the Book of Abraham as purely a nineteenth-century document, have attempted to associate the astronomy of the Book of Abraham with early nineteenth-century astronomical speculations. The Book of Abraham would thus represent Copernican and Newtonian astronomy, which was heliocentric, or centered on the

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), 91–92.
2. All unattributed parenthetical references are to the Book of Abraham. If no chapter reference is given, the verses refer to chapter three. We would like to thank Janet Carpenter for her research assistance. Helpful comments on an earlier draft were made by F. Kent Nielsen and Stephen D. Ricks.
3. R. Grant Athay, "Worlds without Number: The Astronomy of Enoch, Abraham, and Moses," *Brigham Young University Studies* 8/3 (1968): 255–69; R. Grant Athay, "Astrophysics and Mormonism" (Provo, Utah: *BYU* 1972), 14–19, lecture given September 1972; H. Kimball Hansen, "Astronomy and the Scriptures," in Wilford M. Hess and Raymond T. Matheny, eds., *Science and Religion: Toward a More Useful Dialogue* (Geneva, Ill.: Paladin House Publishers, 1979), 1:181–96; Michael D. Rhodes and J. Ward Moody, "Astronomy and the Creation in the Book of Abraham," in this volume.

sun.[4] Finally, it is possible to view Abrahamic astronomy as reflecting a geocentric conception of the universe—that is, one centered on the earth. This is the position we will defend in this paper.

We wish to advance two propositions about the text: (1) The text of Abraham 3:1–11 can best be understood as a discussion of the visible heavens rather than as a grand supernatural vision of the entire universe. (2) The text of these same verses makes most sense when read as referring to ancient geocentric astronomy. (Please see Appendix A for a discussion of our methodological considerations.)

Abraham and Ancient Egyptian Astronomy

However one wants to interpret the question of the origin of the text—whether Joseph Smith invented the document, translated an ancient text, or received a revelation independent of any ancient text—Joseph Smith's opinion of the astronomy of the Book of Abraham is worth noting. According to the *History of the Church,* Joseph stated that the Abraham papyri included a discussion of "the principles of astronomy *as understood by Father Abraham and the ancients.*"[5] Joseph here is not represented as saying that the Book of Abraham contains an accurate explanation of the principles of astronomy but rather of those principles "as understood by the ancients." In other words, according to a nineteenth-century view attributed by those who knew him and his thinking, to Joseph Smith, the Book of Abraham presents ancient cosmology, not modern or nineteenth-century astronomy. Thus, efforts by LDS astronomers to reconcile Abrahamic astronomy with modern astronomy are largely irrelevant—as is their inability to do so.[6]

Abraham's traditional reputation as an ancient astronomer has been previously analyzed.[7] One of the most interesting texts in this regard is by Pseudo-Eupolemus, as quoted by Eusebius in the fourth century A.D., which states that "While living with the Egyptian priests in Heliopolis, Abraham taught them many things, including astronomy, and other related things. . . . Abraham, having been trained in the science of astronomy, first went to Phoenicia, to teach the Phoenicians astronomy, then went into Egypt."[8] Later Islamic traditions about Abraham continue his identification as an astronomer. The brilliant tenth-century Arab historian al-Ṭabarī passes on reports that

4. For the most recent attempt, see Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, "Joseph Smith's Scriptural Cosmology," in *The Word of God,* ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 187–219.
5. *History of the Church,* 2:286, emphasis added. In *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith,* ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 60 (1 Oct. 1835) (cf. Dean C. Jessee, ed. *The Papers of Joseph Smith*. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989], 1:102) the phrase "as understood by Father Abraham and the ancients" does not occur. However, its inclusion in the later formal edition would seem to indicate what Joseph's final understanding of the texts was.
6. Vogel and Metcalf use the "Mormon astronomers' inability to harmonize Abrahamic cosmology with modern understanding" ("Joseph Smith's Scriptural Cosmology," 218 n. 78) as an indication that the book should be seen as a product of the nineteenth century. In fact, as we hope to show, it is equally difficult to "harmonize Abrahamic cosmology with [nineteenth-century] understanding."
7. Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 106–15, discusses much of the material.
8. Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica,* 9.17.3–18.2 (PG 21:708–9). See also John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), 8, hereafter referred to as *Traditions*. See also Jared W. Ludlow, "Abraham's Visions of the Heavens," in this volume.

Abraham was given a vision of the creation, in which, among other things, "the seven heavens were opened to Abraham up to and including the throne [*al-ʿarsh*] [of God]."[9]

For our paper it is important to note that the purpose of God's revelation of astronomy to Abraham was to provide him with an introduction to the court of Pharaoh. "I [God] show these things unto thee [Abraham] before ye go into Egypt, that ye may declare all these words" (Abraham 3:15).[10] Thus, the purpose of the revelation of astronomical ideas is not necessarily to give Abraham an accurate view of the universe but to provide him a mechanism to attract the attention of Pharaoh. In such circumstances it would make sense for Abraham to be given a geocentric astronomy that would have been intelligible to people of his day.

One other point needs to be made here. Some will wonder why the Lord, instead of revealing to Abraham the "true" nature of the cosmos, would teach him the "false" system of geocentric astronomy found in the Book of Abraham. Two principles may help to explain this. First, the Lord tends to speak to humans within the limits of their understanding. "These commandments are of me," he says in Doctrine and Covenants 1:24, "and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding." Secondly, the geocentric view of the cosmos is not, strictly speaking, false. If modern relativistic physics has taught us anything, it is that there is no absolute space, and thus no privileged point for observation of the cosmos except as has been established by convention. The geocentric system was abandoned, in the last analysis, not because it was incorrect but because, as it had developed with its cycles and epicycles, it was too complex and cumbersome. And even then, scientists were able to abandon it only because a new and less cumbersome and more accurate alternative—essentially the Keplerian and Copernican theory—was available to replace it. But it would still be possible today, in light of modern relativistic physics—and if we were willing to subject ourselves to the difficulty of doing so—to construct a description of the universe that assumes the earth to be at the center. Indeed astronomical observations are of necessity made from a geocentric point of view and converted into a nongeocentric point of view.

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9. Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār Maʿrifa li al-Ṭibāʿa wa al-Nashr, 1978), 7:160. Later Muslim mystics also saw the Throne of God as being associated with the furthermost heaven. See James Winston Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 61–62, who speaks of "the two intimately connected meanings that the original Arabic expression *(al-ʿarsh)* conveyed to Sadra's readers. The 'Throne' was at once the empyrean, the incorporeal dimension of reality lying 'beyond' (that is, in no place) and encompassing the material cosmos, and at the same time the noetic 'heart' *(qalb)* or innermost reality of man. In the language of the philosophers, both meanings referred to aspects of the divine Intelligence or Nous *(ʿaql).*" At ibid., 61 n. 67, Morris refers to "famous Prophetic sayings to the effect that God's Throne or 'House' was 'the heart of the man of true faith' *(qalb al-muʾmin).*" *Throne* in Sadra is both *qalb* and empyrean, enclosing the "Pedestal"—or "Footstool"—which is the sphere of the fixed stars; ibid., 224 nn. 259, 262.

10. Cf. Facsimile 3, which shows, "Abraham . . . reasoning upon the principles of Astronomy, in the king's court." That astronomy was a "royal art" that particularly concerned kings is explained by A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 224–25. On the spread of "royal astronomy" through the ancient world, see Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia,* 73, 206–7.

Visible Cosmos or Cosmic Vision?

Let us turn first to proposition 1, that *the text of Abraham 3:1–11 can best be understood as a discussion of the visible heavens rather than as a grand supernatural vision of the universe.* A careful reading of these verses reveals numerous phrases that support the assumption that Abraham is describing the heavens as visible from the earth.

First and most important is the fact that nowhere in verses 1 through 11 is there any mention of a supernatural vision. On the other hand, there are many statements that imply an ordinary view of the sky from earth. Although Abraham used a Urim and Thummim, it is not described as a visionary instrument but rather as an instrument by which God *talked* to Abraham ("the Lord said unto me, by the Urim and Thummim" [Abraham 3:4]). No *vision* through the Urim and Thummim is mentioned. Likewise, in verses 3, 5, and 6 the Lord is talking to Abraham. Again, no supernatural vision is implied. Verse 11 confirms this interpretation, where Abraham summarizes his experience up to that point, "Thus I, Abraham, talked with the Lord, face to face, as one man talketh with another; and he *told* me of [his] works" (emphasis added).

Numerous references are also made to the fact that Abraham is *standing* on the earth (Abraham 3:3, 4, 6, 7, 9), and that God and Abraham are discussing things that Abraham can see with his own eyes ("behold thine eyes see it" [Abraham 3:6] and "I saw the stars" [Abraham 3:2, cf. v. 16]). Furthermore, Abraham is talking with the Lord at night, when the stars would be visible: "And it was in the night time when the Lord spake these words unto me" (Abraham 3:14).

In his discussion of the heavens, Abraham also consistently describes the function of the sun, moon, and stars as ruling and giving light to the earth ("the greater light which is set to rule the day, and the . . . lesser light which is set to rule the night" [Abraham 3:6] and "all the stars that are set to give light" [Abraham 3:10; cf. v. 5]). Abraham's discussion of these heavenly bodies is thus again from the perspective of someone viewing the visible night sky from the earth.

The assumption that verses 1 through 11 refer to the visible heavens as seen from the earth is all the more striking when compared to the supernatural vision described as beginning in verse 12. "And he [the Lord] said unto me: My son, my son (and his hand was stretched out), behold I will show you all these. And he put his hand upon mine eyes, and I saw those things which his hands had made, which were many; and they [the astronomical bodies] multiplied before mine eyes, and I could not see the end thereof" (Abraham 3:12). Our understanding of this passage is that only at this point does a supernatural vision of the universe begin. At first Abraham "saw those things which his [the Lord's] hands had made, which were many," which we interpret as referring to the visible heavens described in verses 1–11. Then, "they [the things the Lord had made, i.e., stars] multiplied before mine eyes." Here Abraham sees the stars visible from the earth increase in number, until he "could not see the end thereof." The implication from this final phrase is that up to this point Abraham could indeed "see the end thereof," which again implies an examination of the visible heavens from the earth.

In summary, the language of verses 1 through 11 consistently implies that what Abraham is seeing is the heavens visible from the earth at night. No supernatural vision is implied until the Lord touches the eyes of Abraham in verse 12. Given the lack of explicit reference to a supernatural vision up to verse 12, the burden of proof would seem to rest largely on those who maintain

that verses 1 through 11 are a supernatural vision. The further implication of this is that Kolob, mentioned in verses 3, 4, and 9, is a star visible from the earth.

The Geocentric Worldview

"Had I been present at the Creation, I would have given some useful hints for the better ordering of the universe."
—Alfonso the Wise, King of Castile, A.D. 1221–84, after studying Ptolemaic astronomy

Our second proposition is that *the text of verses 1–11 can best be understood as referring to geocentric astronomy.*

Before we examine the passages from the Book of Abraham on this topic, it is important to present a brief discussion of the nature of archaic views of the geocentric cosmos. In antiquity there were four versions of the geocentric worldview. The first was the view that the earth was the center of the universe and that celestial phenomena—sun, moon, stars, planets, etc.—surrounded and encompassed the earth in a single undifferentiated heaven.[11] The second variation included a celestial hierarchy where there was a single expanse of heaven, but within that expanse there was an ordering of celestial phenomena, one planet or star above the other. Thus, the sun was thought to be higher above the earth than the moon, many planets were above the moon, and the stars were usually seen as the highest of all. Nonetheless, in this system all cosmic bodies were thought to have been contained in a single, undifferentiated heaven. The third version of geocentric cosmology was the transfer of this celestial hierarchy to a series of multiple differentiated heavens. The mention of multiple heavens in the Old and New Testaments is a good indication that those peoples conceived of such a universe.[12] In the final version, these multiple heavens were structured into a series of concentric spheres, varying in number depending on the specific version of astronomy.

Throughout this paper, when we refer to ancient geocentric cosmology or astronomy, we will be referring to the broad geocentric idea. Since our purpose in this paper is only to show that the Book of Abraham describes a geocentric universe, it is not necessary at this point to make technical distinctions between the four versions. However, we feel the Book of Abraham presents a clear indication of a geocentric cosmology with a celestial hierarchy, and probably differentiated heavens, but has no clear discussion of the later formalization of this cosmology into a system of celestial spheres and thus probably best matches the third geocentric system. Further study should

11. See, for example, the view of the heavens from the tomb of Seti I reconstructed in James P. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts* (New Haven: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 1988), 1–7. Similar views can be seen in Pyramid Text 215 §149, in Kurt Sethe, *Die altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908), 1:85.

12. There are numerous examples, including Deuteronomy 10:14; 1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 11:4; Isaiah 14:13–14; 2 Corinthians 12:2, to name only a few. Unfortunately, the singular/plural distinction for the words for heaven is often ignored in English translations of the Bible. It is also worth noting that the Septuagint, New Testament, and Christian authors were unique in classical Greek in their use of the plural *ouranoi* "heavens"; Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick McKenzie, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* 9th ed (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 1273; Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 593–95.

help determine exactly which form of geocentrism best matches the Book of Abraham. Although there were many variations in detail, all ancient geocentric cosmologies conceived of the earth as the center of the universe. (That is, after all, what the term *geocentric* means.)

Variations on this worldview were held by all civilizations of the medieval Mediterranean basin. The most brilliant description of the geocentric universe is found in Dante,[13] although similar views were held by the Byzantines.[14] Medieval Muslim astronomy was also geocentric, as evidenced by both scientific treatises,[15] and accounts of the famous *miʿrāj,* Muḥammad's ascent into Heaven,[16] in which some scholars find antecedents to Dante's more famous heavenly ascent.[17] Early Christian gnostics held similar views of the nature of the universe,[18] as did the Jews.[19]

All of these medieval versions of the geocentric universe ultimately derive from the classical Greek model of Ptolemy (second century A.D.). Although this final version of the geocentric view of the universe is frequently therefore called Ptolemaic, it in turn derived from various forms of geocentrism described by pre-Ptolemaic writers. Among the Greeks a full description is found in Aristotle, with earlier fragmentary discussions in the writings of Plato, Pythagoras, Leucippus, Democritus, and nearly all the other pre-Socratic philosophers.[20]

Although there is no explicit evidence to indicate that the Egyptians conceived of a universe of concentric spheres as did Ptolemy, they nonetheless clearly held one of the other geocentric views of the universe.[21] And while no ancient Egyptian text provides a complete discussion of

13. See Dante's *Paradiso;* for an English translation of Dante with an excellent commentary, see Dorothy L. Sayers and Barbara Reynolds, trans. and ed., *The Divine Comedy 3: Paradise* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962). For Dante's geocentric astronomy, see M. A. Orr, *Dante and the Early Astronomers,* 2nd ed. (London: Allan Wingate, 1956).
14. For a brief discussion of Byzantine astronomers' dependence on Ptolemy, see Olaf Pedersen, "Astronomy," in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages,* ed. Joseph R. Strayer (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1982), 1:613, and references discussed therein.
15. The third epistle of the tenth-century Brethren of Purity gives a fine summary of geocentric astronomy as understood among the Arabs. *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ* (Dār Ṣāwir and Dār Bayrūt: li-Ṭibāʿa wa-al-Nashr, 1957) 114–57. Muslim philosophical texts also presuppose it: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's tenth-century treatise *Mabādiʾ Arāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila,* now conveniently available in a dual language edition as *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State,* ed. and trans. Richard Walzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). In the eleventh century, the philosophical system of al-Kirmānī presupposes a geocentric cosmos—see Ḥamīd al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd-Allāh al-Kirmānī, *Rāḥat al-ʿaql,* ed. Maḥmūd Kamāl Ḥusayn and Maḥmūd Muṣṭafā Ḥīlamī (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1953).
16. For an interesting introduction to the *miʿrāj* literature, see Marie-Rose Séguy, *The Miraculous Journey of Mahomet: Miʿraj nameh,* trans. Richard Pevear (New York: G. Braziller, 1977).
17. Miguel Asin Palacios, *Islam and the Divine Comedy,* trans. and abrid. Harold Sunderland (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1926).
18. See, for example, *1–2 Jeu*; *The Apocalypse of Paul,* in Douglas M. Parrott, ed. and trans., *Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2–5 and VI* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979); Irenaeus, *Contra Haereses,* 1.30 (PG 694–704).
19. Philo, *De Opificio Mundi,* 14.45; 17.54, in F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, trans., *Philo* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), 1:32–33, 40–43.
20. For an excellent introduction to Greek astronomy, see D. R. Dicks, *Early Greek Astronomy to Aristotle* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970). On Aristotle's astronomy, see ibid., 190–219; on Plato, see his *Republic* (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1982), 501–3, 10:16–17ff. ; and Dicks, *Early Greek Astronomy to Aristotle,* 92–150; on the Pythagoreans, see ibid., 62–91; on the pre-Socratics, see ibid., 39–61. For drawings of the models of Leucippus and Democritus, see Orr, *Dante and the Early Astronomers,* 53–65.
21. For the general view of the universe of Egyptians, see James P. Allen, "The Cosmology of the Pyramid Texts," in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt* (New Haven: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 1989), 1–28; Allen, *Genesis in Egypt,* 1–7.

their views of the cosmos,[22] numerous references make it clear that their worldview was fundamentally geocentric.[23] For example, Queen Hatshepsut says that the god Amun "has given to her [Hatshepsut] what the Sun-disk encircles *(šnn.wt itn),* that which Geb and Nut enclose."[24] The phrase "what the Sun-disk encircles" strongly implies that the earth was seen as the center of the universe. This idea goes back at least as far as the Middle Kingdom (and thus to the approximate time of Abraham), when a similar idea is manifest by Sinuhe, who says of the Pharaoh, "Fear of you resounds in the lowlands and the highlands, since you have seized that which the Sun-disk encircles *(šnn.t itn)*."[25]

Variations on this geocentric worldview were nearly universally held until the revolution of Kepler and Copernicus in the sixteenth century, which replaced geocentricity with heliocentricity.[26] "Having removed the earth from the center of the universe, Copernicus placed it among the planets in a position where it was now difficult to regard it as the obvious recipient of influences from other celestial bodies. . . . One century later, when Newton succeeded in giving an account of the mutual interactions of all celestial bodies in terms of light and gravitation, [geocentric] astrology as a serious subject was bound to disappear."[27] Thus, by the nineteenth century, all western astronomy was Copernican and Newtonian. Even the nineteenth-century occultists and astrologers, who maintained more elements of the archaic worldviews than any other segments of nineteenth-century society, accepted heliocentricity and modified their practices and theories accordingly. Thus, Joseph Smith lived in a world universally dominated by heliocentric, Copernican, and Newtonian cosmology. If Joseph is to be considered the author of the Book of Abraham under the influences of the astronomical speculations of his day, we would expect to see a heliocentric worldview espoused in the text.

The Book of Abraham as Geocentric Astronomy

A careful reading of the Book of Abraham, however, shows that the text is describing a geocentric system. The clearest indication of this geocentricity is found in the frequent references to a hierarchy of celestial bodies, each one higher than the preceding and all above the earth. The most explicit statement of this comes from Abraham 3:17: "Now, if there be two things, one above the other, and the moon be above the earth, then it may be that a planet or a star may exist above it." Likewise, the moon is elsewhere stated to be above the earth: "[The moon] is above or greater than that [the earth] upon which thou standest" (Abraham 3:5). Furthermore, we find that "one planet [is] above another" (Abraham 3:9). The text does not describe any object as being below

22. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt,* 1.
23. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt,* 3–7. Hugh Nibley, "The Hierocentric State," in *The Ancient State,* ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 105, briefly discusses this topic.
24. Deir al-Bahri in Adriaan de Buck, *Egyptian Readingbook* (hereafter *Readingbook*) (Leiden: Netherlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1963), 48.15; cf. Gebel Barkal Stela in *Readingbook,* 59.3, cf. *Readingbook,* 54.10, 112.6; Kurt Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie Urkunden des Aegyptischen Altertums 4* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1906–14), 4:82.13; 102:11.
25. Sinuhe, B 212–13.
26. Copernicus published a preliminary outline of his heliocentric theory in the 1530 *Commentariolus.* The complete system was laid out in 1543, in *De revolutionibus orbium caelestium.*
27. Olaf Pedersen, "Astrology," in *The Dictionary of the Middle Ages,* 1:609a.

"the earth upon which thou standest" (Abraham 3:5, 7). To us it seems very difficult to interpret this language as anything other than geocentric, and this alone should suffice to prove the geocentric perspective of the text. However, there is a great deal of additional evidence pointing to the geocentric perspective.

The higher position of the various planets or stars correlates to a longer time span. Thus, we find that "the set time of the lesser light [the moon] is a longer time as to its reckoning than the reckoning of the time of the earth upon which thou standest" (Abraham 3:7). The higher the planet or star, the greater the length of its reckoning. Thus, "there shall be another planet whose reckoning of time shall be longer still; And thus there shall be the reckoning of the time of one planet above another, until thou come nigh unto Kolob" (Abraham 3:8–9). The basis of the reckoning of time is given with the example of Kolob "according to its times and seasons in the revolutions thereof" (Abraham 3:4). Thus, the length of the reckoning of a planet is based on its revolution (and not rotation). Those planets or stars that are higher have a greater "point of reckoning, for it moveth in order more slow" (Abraham 3:5). It therefore moves in revolution above the earth. This is a geocentric description.

God is consistently said to "go down" to the earth or is described as being "above" the earth (Abraham 2:7; 3:21). "I [God] now, therefore, have come down unto thee [Abraham]" (Abraham 3:21). God likewise descends to create the earth and mankind (see Abraham 3:24; 4:26–27; 5:4); "The Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down . . . and organized and formed the heavens and the earth" (Abraham 4:1; see 5:4). God's revelations likewise must descend through the various heavens: the explanation for figure 7 of Facsimile 2 has "God sitting upon his throne, revealing through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood." (Facsimile 2, explanation to fig. 7, cf. 3:21).[28] From the perspective of ancient geocentric cosmology, all of this was conceived literally; God is indeed above the earth in or above the highest heaven and needs to physically descend, or send messages, down through the heavens to arrive at the earth.

Stars Nearest God

The Book of Abraham describes the stars in general, and Kolob in particular, as being near the throne of God. Note that Kolob is not itself the throne of God nor the planet or star where God lives. That the stars in general are near to the throne of God is implied in Abraham 3:2, which states, "one of them [i.e., one of the stars, referring to Kolob] was nearest unto the throne of God," and verse 16, "Kolob is the greatest of all the Kokaubeam [stars] that thou hast seen, because it is nearest unto me." The most simple and intelligible reading of these verses is that the stars in general were near the throne of God but that Kolob in particular was the nearest to the throne of God of all the stars. Be this as it may, the text explicitly states that at least the star Kolob was near

28. The figure is also said to represent the otherwise unknown "sign of the Holy Ghost unto Abraham, in the form of a dove" (Facsimile 2). This is certainly linked with the descent of the dove at the baptism of Christ (Matthew 3:16–17; Mark 1:10–11; Luke 3:21–22; John 1:32), in which there is a literal coming-down from the heavens, which have been parted to allow passage and to allow God to speak from his throne above. It is worth noting the omnipresence of the verb *anzala/yunzilu/inzāl* ("to send down") in the Qur'an as a description of the revelations of God.

the throne of God. "Kolob is set nigh unto the throne of God" (Abraham 3:9); "Kolob is . . . nearest unto me [God]" (Abraham 3:16); "Kolob, [is] . . . nearest to the celestial, or the residence of God" (Facsimile 2, fig. 1).

As noted previously, Ptolemaic geocentric astronomers generally viewed the stars as the outermost celestial sphere, furthest from the earth and nearest to God. It is interesting to note here that the Book of Abraham shows greater parallels to the more archaic fifth century B.C. cosmological models of Leucippus and Democritus than it does to the second century A.D. model of Ptolemy. According to both, the universe above the earth is divided into four zones, in ascending order: moon, planets, sun, and stars according to Leucippus; moon, sun, planets, and stars according to Democritus.[29]

Dante's description of his journey through Paradiso, a classic example of celestial hierarchy in Ptolemaic astronomy, nicely matches Abraham's astronomy in broad terms. Dante passes through the seven heavens or celestial spheres—I. Moon (Paradiso ii–v), II. Mercury (v–vii), III. Venus (viii–ix), IV. Sun (x–xiv), V. Mars (xiv–xviii), VI. Jupiter (xviii–xx), and VII. Saturn (xxi–xxii), finally arriving at the eighth heaven, that of the fixed stars (xxii–xxvii). The ninth heaven is the Crystalline Heaven *("Primum Mobile, mobile primo"),* where the angels abide (xxvii–xxix), and the tenth heaven (the Empyrean) is the celestial residence of God (xxx–xxxiii).[30] The important thing to notice here is that the eighth celestial sphere is that of the fixed stars. In other words, the stars are the closest of all the visible heavenly bodies to God.

More to the point, for our purpose here, is the celestial hierarchy described in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, which, as Nibley has shown, bears remarkable resemblance to parts of the Book of Abraham.[31] In the nineteenth chapter of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, God and his throne reside in the eighth firmament (19.6).[32] Abraham is standing on the seventh firmament of heaven, which in this version is the abode of the angels. Abraham looks down through the crystalline firmament and sees in "the fifth (firmament), [the] hosts of stars."[33] Here again we see the same pattern: the earth at the center of the universe, with a series of concentric spheres culminating in the sphere of the stars, which is the closest to the residence of God, exactly as described in the Book of Abraham.

To summarize this point, many ancient systems of astronomy—including that of the Book of Abraham—despite whatever differences in particulars, agree that the celestial zone of the stars is the highest of all celestial bodies and therefore is nearest to God.

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29. See Dicks, *Early Greek Astronomy to Aristotle,* index, for references to these two astronomers; Orr, *Dante and the Early Astronomers,* 55–56 for diagrams.
30. Sayers and Reynolds have a foldout chart of the heavens at the end of their translation of *The Divine Comedy.* An adequate discussion of the fascinating relationships between Dante's cosmos and the Book of Abraham would require a lengthy separate paper.
31. Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt,* 8–40.
32. R. Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:698–99.
33. Ibid., 1:699; *Apocalypse of Abraham,* 19:9. See also *Traditions,* 57.

Governing Stars

The Book of Abraham also describes stars as "governing" the heavenly bodies below them. According to Abraham 3:3, in general, the stars "are the governing ones," while, in particular, God "set this one [the star Kolob] to govern all those [celestial bodies] which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest [the earth]" (Abraham 3:3). Verse 9 agrees that "Kolob is set . . . to govern all those planets which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest."[34] Furthermore, the sun is said to be "one of the governing planets" (Facsimile 2, fig. 5).[35] Throughout the ancient world the governing role of celestial bodies was conceived in similar terms. God sits on his throne in the highest heaven giving commands, which are passed down by angels through the various regions of heaven, with each region governing or commanding the regions beneath it. Thus, from a geocentric perspective, it makes perfect sense for the star Kolob, being the nearest celestial body to God, to govern the celestial bodies beneath it, and ultimately, to govern the earth at the center of the entire system.

This is made explicit in numerous ancient texts.[36] *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, which dates to roughly the same period as the Joseph Smith Papyri, tells us that "the host [of divine beings] I [Abraham] saw on the seventh firmament commanded the sixth firmament and it removed itself. I saw there, on the fifth (firmament), hosts of stars, and the orders they were commanded to carry out [by the beings on the sixth and seventh firmaments], and the elements of the earth [below them] obeying them" (19:8–9).[37] Unfortunately, so little has survived of Israelite astronomy that it is impossible to determine their views of the celestial realms. By at least the Christian period, however, Judeo-Christian astronomers had similar views.[38] In the astronomy of the gnostic *Apocalypse of Paul* we find Paul in the sixth heaven being told to "Look and see the rulers [*eniarchē*] and powers [*niexousia*]. . . . Give him the sign [*symion*] that you have, and he will open [the gate to the seventh heaven] for you."[39]

Likewise, the medieval Jewish Kabbalists (in thirteenth- to fourteenth-century Spain), interpreting the biblical tradition, reflect precisely the same concept. "The stars below [God] exist because of the influence that spreads out from the supernal mystery [God], for all is in the image of the upper world . . . Therefore, all the stars and planets in the height of the firmament are there to direct the world that is below it, and thence the levels spread out so that they are ready to guide the stars below [God], for none of them exists under its own authority . . . they all exist under authority from above."[40] As a general rule, the divination techniques of astrology, found widely throughout the ancient world, were based on the fundamental assumption that the stars and the planets, being

34. Cf. Facsimile 2, fig. 1, where "[Kolob is] first in government, the last pertaining to the measurement of time."
35. A further discussion of the governing role of celestial bodies is found in the explanation of Fac. 2, fig. 5.
36. Plato, in his *Republic,* describes a vaguely similar system, 10:616ff. Irenaeus, *Contra Haereses,* I.5, I.30 (PG 7:491–504, 694–704). A. J. Welburn, "Reconstructing the Ophite Diagram," *Novum Testamentum* 23/3 (1981): 261–87.
37. Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 1:699. On the original date of the text, see p. 683. See also *Traditions,* 57.
38. For a Jewish version of these ideas, see Philo, *De Abrahamo* 15.69, in Colson and Whitaker, trans., *Philo,* 6:38–39. See also *Traditions,* 39.
39. *Apocalypse of Paul,* 23:20–24, in Parrott, ed. and trans., *Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2–5 and VI,* 60.
40. Zohar II, 232a, in Isaiah Tishby and Fischel Lachower, *The Wisdom of the Zohar,* trans. David Goldstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 2:662. See also *Traditions,* 154–63.

gods themselves—or, from a monotheistic perspective, being higher than the earth and nearer to God—acted as transmitters of the will of God to the earth. Thus, from a wide variety of ancient perspectives, celestial bodies were seen as governing the earth.

Planets as Stars

In the Book of Abraham, there is a seeming confusion between the uses of the terms *stars* and *planets.*[41] The key phrase in this regard is Abraham 3:13, which discusses the "stars, or all the great lights, which were in the firmament of heaven." This verse is essentially a catalog of celestial bodies: "And he [the Lord] said unto me [Abraham]: This is Shinehah, which is the sun. And he said unto me: Kokob, which is star. And he said unto me: Olea, which is the moon. And he said unto me: Kokaubeam, which signifies stars, or all the great lights, which were in the firmament of heaven." What is conspicuously absent from this catalog are the planets. However, as we interpret it, the phrase "all the great lights . . . of heaven," should be understood to include both the stars and the planets. This is consistent with most ancient systems of astronomy, where the planets were seen as *planetes asteres* or "wandering stars."[42] According to Dicks, in Greek "*astron* is a general word (as indeed is *aster*) which can be applied indifferently to the fixed stars, the planets, the sun, and the moon."[43] Likewise, in ancient Egyptian astronomy, the planets are consistently viewed as special types of stars but stars nonetheless. For example, Venus was called *sbȝ ḏȝ,* the "crossing star"; Jupiter was the *sbȝ rsy (n) pt,* "southern star (of) the sky"; and Saturn was called *sbȝ iȝbty ḏȝ pt,* "the eastern star which crosses the sky."[44] The Babylonians also refer to planets as a special category of star.[45] In general, the planets are called the gods which "keep changing their positions."[46] For example, Saturn is called MUL ^{d}UTU = *kakkab šamaš:* the "Star of the sun."[47] Likewise, Mercury and Mars are called stars.[48]

Thus, the Book of Abraham's seeming "confusion" of planets and stars is in fact perfectly acceptable when viewed from an ancient perspective.

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41. Other examples of the imprecise use of astronomical terminology include reference to the "planet which is the lesser light" (Abraham 3:5), obviously referring to the moon. Joseph Smith's explanations for Facsimile 2 likewise state that "this is one of the governing planets . . . and is said by the Egyptians to be the Sun . . . which governs fifteen other fixed planets or stars" (Facsimile 2, fig. 5). This latter phrase is somewhat problematic from the view of ancient and modern astronomy. What exactly is a "fixed planet"? However, this seeming problem derives from Joseph Smith's modern interpretations, not from the ancient text of the Book of Abraham.
42. Liddell, Scott, Jones, and McKenzie, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* 1411; Jude 1:13 makes reference to those who fall away from the Church as "wandering stars," *asteres planetai.* Philo, *De Opificio Mundi* 17.54, contrasts the *aplanon* with the *planeton asteron,* in Colson and Whitaker, trans., *Philo,* 1:40–43.
43. Dicks, *Early Greek Astronomy to Aristotle,* 65. Vogel and Metcalfe (217 n. 64, 218 n. 75) are disturbed by the fact that the Sun is called a "moving planet," which of course does not fit with nineteenth-century ideas but which perfectly matches geocentric thought.
44. Otto Neugebauer and Richard A. Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts* (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1962–69), 3:175, 177, 178.
45. In general, all the planet names include the ideogram MUL, meaning *star,* in Hermann Hunger and David Pingree, *MUL.APIN: An Astronomical Compendium in Cuneiform* (Horn, Austria: Verlag F. Berger and Söhne, 1989), 80, MUL.APIN 2.1.38.
46. Ibid., 80, MUL.APIN 2.1.40.
47. Ibid., 80, MUL.APIN 2.1.39; cf. ibid., 86, MUL.APIN 2.1.64–65.
48. Ibid., 83–84, Mercury, MUL.APIN 2.1.54–59; Ibid., 85–86, Mars, MUL.APIN 2.162–63.

Higher and Slower

The Book of Abraham not only describes the universe as a series of revolving astronomical bodies in ascending order above the earth but also tells us that the further from the earth a given celestial body is, the slower will be its speed of revolution around the earth. The text of Abraham 3:7–9 is quite clear on this point: "Now the set time of the lesser light [the moon] is a longer time as to its reckoning than the reckoning of the time of the earth upon which thou standest. And where these two facts exist, there shall be another fact above them, that is, there shall be another planet whose reckoning of time shall be longer still; And thus there shall be the reckoning of the time of one planet above another, until thou come nigh unto Kolob, which Kolob is after the reckoning of the Lord's time."[49] Here we have, quite clearly described, a hierarchy of celestial bodies, one above another, with the higher celestial bodies moving more slowly than the lower. This is, of course, precisely how many ancient geocentric models described the movement of the heavens. In the Ptolemaic version of the universe, the ordering of the celestial bodies in their concentric spheres was based on their speeds. Thus, although the exact periods may differ slightly according to different astronomers, we find that Saturn has the longest period (about 29 and a half years), Jupiter the next (11 years, 315 days), Mars almost two years, the sun, Venus, and Mercury each about a year, and the moon the shortest period, the lunar month.[50] Thus, the closer to the earth, the faster the cycle; the further from the earth, the slower the cycle. This is precisely what is described in the Book of Abraham's "there shall be another planet whose reckoning of time shall be longer still; And thus there shall be the reckoning of the time of one planet above another, until thou come nigh unto Kolob" (Abraham 3:8–9).

Dante, in his medieval rendition of the geocentric system, tells us explicitly that "Likewise the eight and nine [spheres of the Celestial Rose revolved], each [sphere] moving more slowly according to its distance from the central point."[51]

Thus, the cosmology of the Book of Abraham once again matches perfectly with archaic views of the universe.

The Sun, Moon, and Stars Created for the Benefit of the Earth

The Book of Abraham mentions three purposes for the creation of the sun, moon, planets, and stars:

(1) To give light to the earth: "The stars that are set to give light" (Abraham 3:10; cf. 3:13); "And the Gods organized the lights in the expanse of the heaven . . . to give light upon the earth" (Abraham 4:14–15; cf. 3:17).

(2) To rule over periods of time: God established the "set time of the greater light which is set to rule the day, and the set time of the lesser light which is set to rule the night"

49. Cf. Abraham 3:5, "for it [the moon] moveth in order more slow [than the earth]; this is in order because it standeth above the earth upon which thou standest." According to our interpretation, the phrase "[Kolob is] first in government, the last pertaining to the measurement of time" (Facsimile 2, fig. 1) means that Kolob is the highest celestial body (furthest from the earth and closest to God) and therefore has the slowest period of revolution around the earth.

50. For specific figures and references see Orr, *Dante and the Early Astronomers,* 294.

51. Dante, *Paradiso* xxviii 34–36.

(Abraham 3:6); "And the Gods organized the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night" (4:16).

(3) To provide "signs" for the earth: "And the Gods organized the lights in the expanse of the heaven . . . to be for signs" (Abraham 4:14).[52]

Thus, we see that the Abraham cosmology is not only literally, physically geocentric, but it is earth centered in the sense that all the heavenly bodies are viewed in terms of their utility for the earth and those who dwell upon it. In a sense, even though Abraham is being given something of a course in astronomy, he is receiving it from a very limited perspective. As the Lord said to Moses, "Only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you" (Moses 1:35).

In summary, we find six basic characteristics of the universe as described in the Book of Abraham. The Abrahamic universe is explicitly geocentric; the stars are seen as furthest from the earth and nearest to God; the stars and other celestial bodies govern the earth; planets are a type of star; the higher celestial bodies in the hierarchy move more slowly than the lower; and all celestial bodies are conceived as having been created for the benefit of the earth and mankind. All of these ideas make perfect sense only from an ancient geocentric perspective. They are fundamentally incomprehensible from the Copernican and Newtonian heliocentric perspective of the nineteenth century and the relativistic Einsteinian perspectives of the twenty-first century.

52. The parallels to Genesis 1:14–18 should be noted. In the Babylonian tradition, all of the Enuma Anu Enlil writings center on how to interpret the signs of the heavens. For the entire text in cuneiform and transliteration, see Charles Virolleaud, *L'Astrologie Chaldéenne* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1908–12). For a recent discussion and current bibliography, see Francesca Rochberg-Halton, *Aspects of Babylonian Celestial Divination: The Lunar Eclipse Tablets of Enuma Anu Enlil,* Archiv fur Orientforschung 22 (Horn: Verlag F. Berger, 1988). In the New Testament, the coming of the Magi to the newborn Christ is initiated by astronomical signs (see Matthew 2:1–12.)

Appendix A: Methodological Considerations

It is important to consider some methodological issues surrounding the study of the astronomy in the Book of Abraham. A number of methodological caveats should be made:

(1) If our goal is to attempt to determine the best possible setting for Abrahamic astronomy, all three possible sets of parallels must be considered. It is insufficient to examine only possible parallels to twentieth-century, nineteenth-century, or ancient cosmologies. Indeed, if someone studies only nineteenth-century documents, he will, remarkably enough, only discover parallels to nineteenth-century documents. Parallels and differences from each of the possible settings of the Book of Abraham must be examined and cataloged, and then each set of parallels and differences should be compared. Only then can we begin to form some conclusion as to which setting best accounts for each group of possible parallels and differences. Thus, we must not only demonstrate that a single parallel exists but show that one particular set of parallels is more significant and coherent than another set of parallels.

(2) The astronomy of the Book of Abraham must first be examined as a single, unique system of thought. We must ask, "What is the nature of the cosmology described in the text of the Book of Abraham itself?" If such a unique and consistent cosmology cannot be found in the text, this fact should be noted. Only after we have attempted to understand Abrahamic astronomy as an independent system—or shown that no such system exists—should we begin to examine possible parallels to other astronomical systems of thought. Only then is it possible to examine parallels to other Latter-day Saint cosmologies (the Book of Mormon, Book of Moses, or Doctrine and Covenants), nineteenth- and twentieth-century astronomies, or ancient cosmologies.

    One of the great weaknesses of Dan Vogel and Brent Metcalfe's approach to the issue is that they fundamentally beg the question of origins by assuming that all of Joseph Smith's writings—be they scriptural or nonscriptural, purportedly ancient or clearly nineteenth-century, allegedly revealed or clearly his personal opinion—come from the same source: Joseph Smith's imagination. Given this assumption, they conclude that all of these ideas should somehow form an interrelated whole. But this, in fact, is one of the disputed issues. We believe that a careful examination of early cosmologies from LDS scriptures revealed within a few years of each other shows a wide range of conflicting astronomical ideas.

(3) A clear distinction must be drawn between parallels and causality. The existence of a parallel alone is fundamentally irrelevant. Parallels do not prove causes; rather, they indicate that there is possible reason for searching for causality. A causal and temporal connection between the time and place of the creation of the Book of Abraham and any proposed nineteenth-century parallel must be established for such a parallel to be seen as significant. For example, claiming that the ideas in the Book of Abraham derived from private unpublished journals or astronomical texts in foreign languages is highly implausible. However, the discovery of parallels to ancient materials to which Joseph Smith could not have had access, is extremely relevant. The very existence of

such an ancient parallel, even if the specific temporal and geographical causal link is unclear, is fundamental to our case since our goal at this point is only to show that the Book of Abraham derived from an ancient setting otherwise unspecified rather than to attempt to specify the exact time and place of its origin and transmission.

Thus, we believe that those who argue for a nineteenth-century origin for the text have a greater burden of proof in terms of demonstrating temporal and geographical causality for possible parallels than those arguing for an ancient origin of the text. The goal of the nineteenth-century advocate is not to explain that the Book of Abraham originated at an unspecified time and place in the nineteenth century, but that Joseph Smith, at a specific time and place, was decisively influenced by a well-defined set of nineteenth-century ideas. The advocate of antiquity, on the other hand, need only show that the Book of Abraham exhibits unique parallels to widely or universally held ancient astronomical ideas, which were not accepted or known in the nineteenth century.

(4) Differences between systems of astronomy are as significant as, if not more significant than, possible parallels. Thus, we find there are six characteristics of Abrahamic astronomy given in the Book of Abraham. It may be possible to show that two or three of these are parallel to nineteenth-century astronomical ideas. But the fact, as we hope to show, that Abrahamic cosmology is geocentric, while no nineteenth-century cosmology was geocentric, is far more significant than any possible parallels with the nineteenth century.

(5) It is inadequate to show that a single isolated element of Abrahamic astronomy has possible parallels to ancient, nineteenth-, or twentieth-century astronomical thought. Rather, it must be shown that the Abrahamic system of astronomy *as a whole* parallels or does not parallel geocentric, nineteenth-, or twentieth-century astronomy. Thus, the discovery of one or several parallels between Abrahamic and nineteenth-century astronomy is fundamentally irrelevant unless one can show that Abrahamic astronomy, *as a whole,* matches some single system of nineteenth- or twentieth-century astronomy, rather than evoking mild parallels with bits and pieces of several incompatible nineteenth-century astronomical speculations. The Book of Abraham is most likely to be related to that system of astronomy that shows the greatest number of parallels to the Abrahamic system as a whole.

(6) Parallels between nineteenth-century or ancient astronomy and Abrahamic astronomy should be unique. Thus, the fact that planets are said to move in Abrahamic astronomy and that nineteenth-century astronomers also believed that planets moved is irrelevant, since ancient astronomers held exactly the same belief. The truly significant parallels are those unique either to the nineteenth century or to antiquity and also found in the Book of Abraham. Thus, the geocentricity of the Book of Abraham, which was unique to antiquity, is a striking and important parallel.

(7) Parallels should preferably be established between the most widely accepted astronomical thought of the nineteenth century or antiquity rather than with obscure or unique ideas. Many ideas in the Book of Abraham may in fact be unique. However, for the purposes of trying to establish a general historical context, we should attempt to show

that the fundamental astronomical ideas of the Book of Abraham, however unique in their actual manifestations, fit the general intellectual milieu under consideration. Thus, the fact that a single obscure and unique text from the nineteenth century or antiquity—which contradicts widespread commonly held astronomical ideas of those respective times—parallels a passage in the Book of Abraham should not be given decisive weight in the debate unless we have powerful and specific reasons for linking that text directly to the Book of Abraham. Furthermore, such parallels should not be isolated but should form part of a larger whole. Thus, showing that three ideas in the Book of Abraham have parallels with ideas from three separate and obscure nineteenth-century astronomical speculations is largely irrelevant.

(8) This leads us to the important distinction between establishing parallels with universally held ideas of a given time and parallels with specific unique ideas. In our paper we adduce both types of parallels: universal and specific. Both are relevant to the study of the Book of Abraham as a possible ancient document. For some of the points we make below, such as geocentricity, we attempt to establish that the ideas found in the Book of Abraham were extremely widespread, if not universal, in antiquity. In these cases, it is methodologically sound to examine a wide range of texts covering a broad spectrum of cultures and times. If an idea such as geocentricity is found in texts ranging from 2000 B.C. to A.D. 1500, and in every culture in antiquity, it is quite clearly a universal ancient idea, and the fact that the Book of Abraham parallels this idea while differing with nineteenth-century heliocentricity is extremely significant. For other issues, we will examine largely specific and unique parallels to Jewish and Egyptian astronomy. A final point in this regard is that the paucity of ancient astronomical texts and references often forces us to also extend our search for parallels through space and time.

(9) Finally, we should be aware that any document can be misconstrued by reading it out of its proper chronological and cultural context. Assumptions and theories can indeed control the evidence. Vogel and Metcalfe make this point quite nicely when they state, "We sometimes read certain passages from the scriptures unaware that we are coloring them with our modern views. As a result, much of the original historical context is obscured. When we read the scriptures, we need to keep in mind that they have come to us from a different time and cultural setting."[53] Although they are using this phrase to justify the examination of possible nineteenth-century parallels, this dialectical sword cuts equally both ways. If the "original historical context" of the Book of Abraham is indeed to be found in antiquity, looking only for nineteenth- or twentieth-century parallels obscures the real meaning of the text.

53. Vogel and Metcalfe, "Joseph Smith's Scriptural Cosmology," 211.

Chapter 2

Astronomy and the Creation in the Book of Abraham

Michael D. Rhodes and J. Ward Moody

The Book of Abraham is unique among the books of scripture now in our possession in that it contains a description not only of this earth but also of some of the other planets and stellar systems of our Father in Heaven's creations. It is, in a limited sense at least, a divine textbook of astronomy. Also, the account of the creation in the Book of Abraham contains many unique and important insights into the creation process, which supplement the other scriptural accounts we have. As we try to understand what the Book of Abraham tells us about astronomy and the creation, we will also refer to other relevant scriptural accounts of visions of God's creations given to prophets such as Enoch, Moses, and Joseph Smith, since most often the best explanation of a given scriptural passage comes from another passage of scripture. Our purpose is to try to understand the eternal truths about astronomy and the creation that God revealed to Abraham and these other prophets. We then want to compare the information thus obtained with the findings of modern science. This attempt is made with the explicit faith that the truths of revealed religion will agree with the truths of science. As Brigham Young said, "The idea that the religion of Christ is one thing, and science is another, is a mistaken idea, for there is no true religion without true science, and consequently there is no true science without true religion."[1]

The emphasis, of course, must be on *true* science and *true* religion. When there seems to be a conflict between the two, obviously the revealed word of God must take precedence. As President Harold B. Lee said, "In all your learning, measure it and test it by the white light of truth revealed

1. *Journal of Discourses,* 17:53. The authors would like to especially thank Professor Scott Woodward of the Department of Microbiology at Brigham Young University, Professor Larry Dahl of the Department of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University, and Professor John Gee of the Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts for their critical reading of early drafts of this paper and their many helpful suggestions.

to the prophets of God and you will never be lead astray."[2] We must, however, also be careful in our interpretation of revealed truth. We must not wrest the scriptures, as Peter warns (2 Peter 3:16), and try to draw conclusions from them that are not warranted. We need a humble recognition of the limitations of our interpretive ability of both scripture and science. Dogmatism, pride, and prejudice can all get in the way. Above all, without the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Ghost, we can never come to an understanding of truth.[3] As Moroni said, by the power of the Holy Ghost we can know the truth of all things (Moroni 10:5).

Thus, the basic principles governing this study are the following:

- The truths of revealed religion will agree with the truths of science.
- Emphasis must be on *true* religion and *true* science.
- The revealed word of God takes precedence.
- A humble recognition of our interpretive ability in both science and religion is required.
- We must rely on the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

With these principles in mind then, let us look first at Abrahamic astronomy and then the creation.

Astronomy 101 at the University of Kolob (Abraham 3:1–17)

Abraham said that his knowledge of astronomy came from three different sources: first, from the records of the fathers (Abraham 1:31); second, through the Urim and Thummim (Abraham 3:4); and third, by direct revelation, face to face with the Lord (Abraham 3:12). This astronomical knowledge included the following concepts:

- There are many stars and planets—so many that Abraham could not see an end to them all (Abraham 3:9, 12).[4]
- Stars are not just points of light, but are in fact revolving bodies that vary in greatness (Abraham 3:3–4, 10, 16).
- There are also other planets like the earth, which are "governed" by these stars (Abraham 3:8–9).
- All these planets and stars are organized into groups, with a star that "governs" them (Abraham 3:3, 8–9; explanation of figure 5 of Facsimile 2).
- The governing star for those planets that are of the "same order" as the earth is Kolob, so named because it is nearest the throne of God (Abraham 3:2–3, 9).
- Time—years, seasons, months, and days—for each of these stars or planets is different and is reckoned according to that body's revolutions (Abraham 3:4–5, 9).

Let us now look in more detail at the Book of Abraham's teachings on astronomy in the light of present-day astronomical knowledge.

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2. Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 341.
3. Perhaps the best definition of truth is found in D&C 93:24, "And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come."
4. It seems that Abraham is making the same distinction between a star and a planet as we now do. A star is a large gaseous body consisting mostly of hydrogen, which shines by means of the nuclear fusion of hydrogen into helium. A planet is a smaller body that does not produce its own light but is visible due to the reflected light of a star.

Innumerable Stars and Stellar Systems

Abraham said, "I saw those things which his hands had made, which were many; and they multiplied before mine eyes, and I could not see the end thereof" (Abraham 3:12). This is more than just looking up into the night sky. The word *multiplied* implies that more and more stars are constantly coming into Abraham's view as the vastness of God's creations is unfolded to his view. On a clear night, far from city lights, around three thousand to five thousand stars are visible. The ancients were aware of this. For example, one Egyptian designation for the starry night sky was *ḫ3-b3=s,* literally, "a thousand are her souls" referring to the number of visible stars.[5] And while several thousand stars are a lot, "the end thereof" can be seen. God refers to the immensity of his creations when he says to Moses, "worlds without number have I created" (Moses 1:33). The ancient prophet Enoch also said, "Were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations" (Moses 7:30).

It is only within the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that science has obtained observational evidence of the vastness of the universe in which we live. Our own galaxy, the Milky Way, consists of about 100 billion stars, and it is itself part of a group of some twenty galaxies called the Local Group.[6] This Local Group is in turn part of a supercluster of galaxies. Finally, the observable universe itself is made up of large numbers of superclusters separated by voids in which there are few galaxies.[7] This structure of superclusters and voids extends out to the limit of visibility of our present telescopes—some 15 billion light years,[8] and there are at least 100 billion galaxies in the visible universe.[9] This is a vastness that is difficult to even begin to comprehend. But even with this innumerable host of stars and worlds, God assures us that although they are innumerable to man, they all "are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them" (Moses 1:35). And the most miraculous part of all is that this incredibly vast panorama of worlds, stars, and galaxies exists for the express purpose of bringing about "the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

Additional insight into stars and planets is revealed in the Book of Moses. The Lord told Moses that many worlds had already passed away (Moses 1:35)—presumably this means passed through their mortal stage of existence and moved on to immortal worlds, as will happen with our own earth (D&C 130:9). Modern astronomers have come to realize that stars and planets do pass away, evidence of which is all around us. We see the birth of stars in dense stellar nebulae as well as the spectacular and violent deaths of stars in supernovae, where a single star gives off as much light as an entire galaxy.

Modern astronomy has opened up to our view in ways not formerly possible the incredible vastness and variety of God's creations. Abraham saw ordered groupings of stars and planets,

5. Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1962), 184.
6. Michael Zeilik, Stephen A. Gregory, and Elske v. P. Smith, *Introductory Astronomy and Astrophysics*. 3rd ed. (New York: Saunders College Publishing, 1992), 439–40.
7. Ibid., 446–47.
8. A light year is the distance that light travels in one year at a velocity of 300,000 kilometers per second, about 9,460,000,000,000 kilometers. The nearest star, Proxima Centauri, is 4.36 light years away.
9. Cesare Emiliani, *The Scientific Companion* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1988), 6.

and today we recognize that stars and planets are indeed grouped together in stellar systems, galaxies, clusters, superclusters, etc. As for extrasolar planets, it is only in the last few years that astronomers have obtained direct evidence for planets around some of the closest stars. There are now eighty-seven confirmed extrasolar planets around main sequence stars, with new ones being found frequently. Thus we have modern scientific confirmation of the orderly groupings of stars and planets, and the existence of extrasolar planets—things that were revealed to Abraham some three millennia ago.

Will the Real Kolob Please Stand Up!

What about Kolob? What is it? Where is it located? First let us look at exactly what the Book of Abraham tells us about Kolob:

1. Kolob is a star (Abraham 3:2, 16).
2. It appears to be part of the first stellar system created by God (explanation of figure 1 of Facsimile 2).
3. It is called Kolob because it is nearest the throne of God (Abraham 3:3, 9, 16; explanation of figure 1 of Facsimile 2).
4. It is the greatest of the stars Abraham saw (Abraham 3:16).
5. The Lord reckons his time by Kolob, one day being one thousand of our years (Abraham 3:4, 9; explanation of figure 1 of Facsimile 2).
6. Kolob "governs" all those planets that belong to "the same order" as the earth (Abraham 3:3, 9; explanation of figure 5 of Facsimile 2).
7. Kolob gives "light" to the earth, the sun, the moon, and fifteen other "fixed planets or stars" (explanation of figure 5 of Facsimile 2).

Some have assumed that "governing" means gravitational attraction, but this brings with it a problem, because more massive stars have a stronger gravitational attraction but also a shorter lifetime. Our sun, for example, is an average star with an approximate lifetime of ten billion years (about five billion of which have already passed). The smallest stars have a mass of about 1/10th that of the sun with lifetimes of trillions of years, while the largest are more than 100 times its mass, with lifetimes of only a few million years. Based on the assumption that "governing" means gravitational attraction, there have been various guesses as to the location of Kolob. These have ranged from the star Alcyone in the Pleiades[10] to the center of our own galaxy.[11] However, recent observations have shown that rather than a star, there is a supermassive black hole at the center of our galaxy. Moving further out, one could suggest the "Great Attractor" of some 5×10^{16} solar masses, the gravitational center of the supercluster to which our galaxy belongs.[12] Unfortunately, the direction in which it lies is in the plane of our galaxy, and the intervening dust makes it impossible to see, so we do not know exactly what is located there, although observations in the infrared indicate a cluster of galaxies is there.

10. George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1965), 267.
11. J. Reuben Clark Jr., "Kolob—The Governor," (unpublished manuscript, 1958).
12. Zeilik et al., *Introductory Astronomy*, 451.

Of course *govern* does not have to refer to gravitational attraction. It could be taken in a more abstract sense—Kolob is the center of priesthood authority over worlds like ours. If that is the case, another possibility could be that God does not dwell in this universe at all. All around us we see evidence of the second law of thermodynamics in action.[13] Stars burn up their fuel and either slowly cool or explode as supernovas, depending on their initial mass. In other words, we see a mortal, fallen universe where everything is moving from a more ordered to a less ordered state. The state into which all living things and the earth itself eventually will enter is immortal and eternal (D&C 76:62; 77:1; 130:9). God and all immortal, resurrected beings may dwell in a separate universe where decay and corruption do not exist. The bottom line is that we simply do not have enough information to be able to say with any confidence where Kolob is or what its characteristics are.

Reckoning of Time

But whatever and wherever Kolob might be, God calls it a star (Abraham 3:16), the one "nearest unto the throne of God" (Abraham 3:2). God tells Abraham that the Lord's time can be reckoned according to the reckoning of Kolob, and that "one revolution [of Kolob] was a day unto the Lord, after his manner of reckoning" (Abraham 3:4), it being equal to one thousand of our years. Although the term *day* can refer to an indeterminate amount of time (e.g., "in my father's day, things were different"), it most commonly means the time for the sun to traverse or "revolve" once around in the sky, and this seems to be how the Lord is using it in this passage. He is telling Abraham that Kolob also traverses the sky from the Lord's point of view, taking one thousand years to complete this revolution. We can conclude then that God dwells on a celestialized world (cf. D&C 130:4–8) that is orbiting near the star Kolob. The "revolution" thus described would be the rotation of that world about its axis, which has a period of one thousand earth years. Consequently, from the surface of that world, the star Kolob would be seen to rise and set once every one thousand of our years.

Next, God explained to Abraham how the reckoning of time of a given planet is dependent upon the motions of that planet (Abraham 3:5–9). A day for someone dwelling on the earth is determined by the rising and setting of the sun, a month by one complete phase of the moon, and a year by the return of the sun to its starting point on the ecliptic (the apparent yearly path of the sun with respect to the stars). These are all the result of the combination of the rotation of the earth about its axis, the moon's orbit about the earth, and the earth's orbit about the sun—"revolutions" as Abraham calls them. So the "set time" of the moon is "longer" than the reckoning of time for the earth (Abraham 3:7). The moon moves "in order more slow . . . therefore the reckoning of its time is not so many as to its number of days, and of months, and of years" (Abraham 3:5). Since the moon rotates more slowly on its axis, its time reckoning is longer than that of the earth. The Lord went on to explain that just as the reckoning of time for the moon is longer than that of the earth, so there are other planets with even longer time reckonings, and this continues until you come to the Kolob star system where God dwells (Abraham 3:8–9). All the statements about time in Abraham 3 can be understood in a self-consistent fashion if they are taken to refer to the rotational and orbital motions of the planets. However, we must interpret them in the general sense

13. The second law of thermodynamics states that in any closed system, entropy (disorder) is always increasing.

of perhaps teaching Abraham basic facts of the movement of the earth and planets, and that each one possesses a unique manner of motion, instead of establishing a specific cosmology that links our solar system to Kolob. No one of Abraham's day would have known these things, and the Lord revealed them to Abraham so he could better understand God's creations.

Systems of Astronomy

One question that has arisen in studies of the astronomy of the Book of Abraham concerns the assumed point of view. Heliocentric (or sun centered),[14] geocentric (or earth centered),[15] and even Pythagorean[16] have been suggested. The prevailing view of astronomy at the time of Abraham was geocentric, and at least some of what is described in Abraham chapter 3 can be viewed from a geocentric position. Understanding a geocentric perspective would have helped Abraham in presenting these things to the Egyptians (see Abraham 3:15 and the explanation to Facsimile 3). But there are also elements of the description the Lord gives to Abraham that argue against a geocentric system. For example, Kolob is said to "govern all those which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest" (Abraham 3:3). In other words, Kolob governs many planets like the earth. The concept of a number of planets of "the same order" as the earth is incompatible with a geocentric point of view. If anything, it would be a Kolob-centric system. Moreover, the Lord showed Abraham the "things which his hands had made," stars and planets, which "multiplied" before his eyes until he could not see an end to them (Abraham 3:12). The Lord makes it clear to Abraham that the earth is anything but the center of the universe. The Lord certainly could and in fact did reveal to at least one other ancient prophet a more accurate perspective. In the Book of Mormon we read, "Surely it is the earth that moveth and not the sun" (Helaman 12:15).

It is especially important to recognize that Abraham's purpose in recording this astronomical knowledge was "for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me" (Abraham 1:31)—it was not written for the Egyptians, but for us. What we then want to do, as Nephi said, is to "liken all scriptures unto" ourselves "for our profit and learning" (1 Nephi 19:23). In other words, we want to try to understand what Abraham is telling us on the basis of our own experience and knowledge. In describing these various stars and planets, the Lord kept stressing to Abraham that time—days, months, and years—is reckoned according to the rotational and orbital motions of the planet on which one resides. In terms of cosmological systems, this is neither a heliocentric nor a geocentric one. There is, in fact, no absolute reference frame for reckoning time—it depends on one's location.

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14. R. Grant Athay, "Worlds Without Number: The Astronomy of Enoch, Abraham, and Moses," *BYU Studies* 8/3 (1968): 255–69. R. Grant Athay, "Astrophysics and the Gospel," *New Era,* September 1972, 14–19. H. Kimball Hansen, "Astronomy and the Scriptures," *Science and Religion: Toward a More Useful Dialogue, Volume II—Background for Man: Preparation of the Earth,* ed. Wilford M. Hess and Raymond T. Matheny (Geneva, Il.: Paladin House Publishers, 1979), 181–96. Fred Holmstrom, "Astronomy and the Book of Abraham," in *Sydney B. Sperry Symposium, The Pearl of Great Price,* 30 January 1982 (Provo, Utah: BYU, CES, 1982), 105-16.
15. See John Gee, William J. Hamblin, and Daniel C. Peterson, "And I Saw the Stars: The Book of Abraham and Ancient Geocentric Astronomy," in this volume.
16. William E. Dibble, "The Book of Abraham and Pythagorean Astronomy," *Dialogue* 8/34 (1973), 135–37. In the Pythagorean system, the earth was thought to orbit not about the sun, but about a central fire. The sun, the moon, and the other five planets were also thought to orbit about this central fire.

Borrowed Light

One puzzling thing mentioned in the explanations to Facsimile 2 is that the sun borrows "its light from Kolob through the medium of Kae-e-vanrash, which is the grand Key, or, in other words, the governing power, which governs fifteen other fixed planets or stars, as also Floeese or the Moon, the Earth and the Sun in their annual revolutions" (explanation to figure 5 of Facsimile 2). What it means to "borrow light" is not clear. The light of the sun is produced by the fusion of hydrogen atoms into helium in its core. Does this mean that the fusion reactions in the Sun are in some way controlled from Kolob? This passage seems to be a description of the Light of Christ which "proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space" (D&C 88:12) and "is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made" (D&C 88:7) as well as the light and power of the earth, the moon, and the stars (D&C 88:8–10). This light is also said to be "the law by which all things are governed" (D&C 88:13).

In summary, as we have looked at the descriptions in the Book of Abraham concerning the creations of God—stars, planets, and the relationships between them—we have found that they appear to be consistent with modern scientific understanding of physics and astronomy. Moreover, they match modern concepts better than those of either the nineteenth century or ancient times.

The Creation

Let's turn now to the creation account in Abraham. The Book of Abraham (and the other scriptures as well) makes clear that the creation was not simply a mechanistic unfolding of events driven by "natural law." Rather, God played an intimate, integral, and continuous part in the creation—he didn't just "wind the clock" at the beginning and stand back and let things develop on their own. There are numerous examples from the scriptures that describe God's personal involvement in the creation. For example, when the Lord tells Moses of the vastness of his creations, he says, "innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them" (Moses 1:35). Christ taught of God's individual concern, not only for his children, but even for animals: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:6–7). God's omnipotence and omniscience does not prevent him from having a personal and detailed interest and involvement in all his creations.[17]

God makes it clear to Abraham that the earth and its solar system are not created out of nothing, but out of existing matter: "We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell" (Abraham 3:24). The Lord explicitly told Joseph Smith that "the elements are eternal" (D&C 93:33). Moreover, "there is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure" (D&C 131:7). Thus the elements, the building blocks of the creation, have always existed. There is no such thing as creation out of nothing. Intelligences are also eternal and uncreated; they "have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are gnolaum, or eternal" (Abraham 3:18). Spirit matter is also eternal and self-existent (D&C 131:7). Thus God's creative work involves

17. Elder Neal A. Maxwell discusses this at length in "Our Creator's Cosmos," *The Religious Educator,* 3/2 (2002).

organizing three eternally existing constituents: physical matter (D&C 93:33), spirit matter (D&C 131:7), and intelligences (D&C 93:29, Abraham 3:18). To these could be added energy, but that is simply another form of matter, as Einstein's well-known equation $E = mc^2$ makes clear. God organizes spirit matter into spirit bodies for intelligences (true for human beings as well as all living things); he organizes chaotic physical matter and energy to provide planets, stars, and physical bodies for all living things. At the beginning the Lord said, "We will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell" (Abraham 3:24). The gods "prepared" the earth and the waters to bring forth life (Abraham 4:11, 20, 24), and they "watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed" (Abraham 4:18). We get a picture of God carefully watching over all that is happening, fine-tuning and making adjustments as needed to ensure that all unfolds in accordance with his perfect design. A governing principle in all his work is agency—"All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence" (D&C 93:30). The creation account in Abraham makes it clear that this principle of agency applies not only to mankind but to plants (Abraham 4:12), animals (Abraham 4:24–25), and even to what we would call inanimate matter, since "the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed" (Abraham 4:18; see also Abraham 4:10). God thus organizes and arranges all things so as to fulfill his eternal purposes while still respecting the agency of all things.

In dealing with the creation, especially looking at it from a scientific standpoint, numerous questions arise. How long was each of the creative periods? What is the actual age of the earth? Was there death among plant and animal life before the fall of Adam? What are all these fossils of strange plants and animals that are no longer found on the earth? What about these manlike creatures that lived on the earth thousands or even millions of years ago? What about evolution? Before we address these issues, it is important to note what Elder Bruce R. McConkie said some years ago:

> Our knowledge about the Creation is limited. We do not know the how and why and when of all things. Our finite limitations are such that we could not comprehend them if they were revealed to us in all their glory, fulness, and perfection. What has been revealed is that portion of the Lord's eternal word which we must believe and understand if we are to envision the truth about the Fall and the Atonement and thus become heirs of salvation. This is all we are obligated to know in our day.[18]

The words of Elder James E. Talmage are also applicable here:

> Discrepancies that trouble us now will diminish as our knowledge of pertinent facts is extended. The Creator has made record in the rocks for man to decipher; but He has also spoken directly regarding the main stages of progress by which the earth has been brought to be what it is. The accounts cannot be fundamentally opposed; one cannot contradict the other; though man's interpretation of either may be at fault. . . . Let us not try to wrest the scriptures in an attempt to explain away what we cannot explain. The opening chapters of *Genesis,* and scriptures related thereto, were never intended as a textbook of geology, archeology, earth-science or man-science. Holy Scripture will endure, while the conceptions of men change with new discoveries. We do not show reverence for the scriptures when we misapply them through faulty interpretation.[19]

18. Bruce R. McConkie, "Christ and the Creation," *Ensign,* June 1982, 10.
19. James E. Talmage, "The Earth and Man," *The Instructor,* December 1965, 475.

In looking at the creation then, we must be humbly aware of our very limited knowledge. We must also recognize that the accounts of the creation we do have in the scriptures are in no way meant to be a scientific treatise on the subject; hence, we must be very careful in trying to apply modern scientific knowledge to the accounts. Also, we must not "wrest" the scriptures—twist meaning from them which is not really there. With these warnings in mind, let us first look at these questions about the creation. Then we will look at the actual creation account in detail.

How Long Were Each of the Creative Periods?

As Elder Widtsoe once pointed out, within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints there are at least three prevailing positions on the age of the earth: (1) each day of the creation was 24 hours, (2) each day of the creation was actually one thousand years, and (3) the creation of the earth extended over very long periods, the duration of which we do not yet accurately know.[20] Of the three, we adopt the last here—the creative periods were of very long duration, since this seems to best fit the present scientific evidence. The Abrahamic account of the creation also replaces the word *day* with *time* (Abraham 4:8, 13, 19, 23, 31). In fact, even in the Genesis account, the Hebrew word translated as "day" (יוֹם) can also mean "time" in a general sense.[21] It also is important to note that the creative periods were not all necessarily of the same duration. As Elder McConkie observed, "Each day [of the creation] . . . has the duration needed for its purposes. . . . There is no revealed recitation specifying that each of the 'six days' involved in the Creation was of the same duration."[22] We thus assume that the creative periods described in the Abrahamic creation account are of very long periods of varying length.

What Is the Actual Age of the Earth?

The answer to this question is clearly related to how long the creative periods were. An added problem is the question of when the fall actually occurred, and whether there was death among plant and animal life before the fall. The traditional chronology of the Irish Anglican Archbishop James Ussher (b. 1581, d. 1656), places the fall at 4004 B.C. To arrive at this number, Ussher worked back from known dates using the data for births and deaths given for the various patriarchs in the text of the book of Genesis. Unfortunately these numbers are not consistent in the various manuscripts and versions of the Bible, and we have no way of knowing which, if any, of those that have come down to us are accurate. One interesting statement by the prophet Nephi, son of Helaman, in the Book of Mormon, seems to indicate that the fall may have occurred considerably earlier than 4000 B.C. Speaking around 20 B.C., he states, "there were many before the days of Abraham who were called by the order of God; yea, even after the order of his Son; and this that it should be shown unto the people, *a great many thousand years before his coming,* that even redemption should come unto them" (Helaman 8:18; emphasis added). Only 4,000 years before the coming of Christ does not seem to qualify as "a great many thousand years."

20. John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), 146.
21. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907), 399.
22. McConkie, "Christ and the Creation," 11.

William W. Phelps, who worked as a scribe for Joseph Smith in his translation of the Book of Abraham, made this interesting statement in a letter to William Smith, the Prophet's brother (which was later published in the *Times and Seasons*): "Eternity, agreeably to the records found in the catacombs of Egypt, has been going on in this system, (not this world) almost *two thousand five hundred and fifty five millions of years.*"[23] An age of 2,555,000,000 years is within an order of magnitude of present scientific estimates of the age of the solar system (around 4.6 billion years).

Scientists date the earth and the solar system using a variety of radiometric dating techniques. Radioactive isotopes of elements such as uranium, thorium, potassium, and carbon are unstable. Their radioactivity is the result of their nuclei giving off subatomic particles. As a given nucleus emits a particle, it decays, or changes into another element or isotope. Ultimately the nucleus reaches a point where it is stable and decays no longer. Uranium, for example, ultimately becomes lead. This radioactive decay occurs at a very predictable rate. The term *half-life* is used to describe this rate. It is the amount of time it takes half of all the atoms of a radioactive substance to decay. This varies considerably from element to element. For uranium 238 the half-life is 4.5 billion years, whereas carbon 14 has a half-life of only 5,730 years. Taking a sample of rock, a scientist can compare the ratio of the radioactive element to its nonradioactive end product in that rock and then calculate its age. The process is, of course, more complex than this, but that is the basic idea. Using such techniques, the oldest terrestrial rocks are estimated to be about 3.8 billion years old.[24] Since the earth is very active geologically and is subject to weathering, rocks from its earliest period will not have survived. On the moon, which is not geologically active and which has no weathering, the oldest rocks found there by the Apollo astronauts are around 4.2 billion years old. Radioactive dating of meteorites gives ages of 4.5 to 4.7 billion years.[25] All of this evidence taken together seems to point to the formation of the solar system and this earth around 4.6 billion years ago.

Was There Death among Plants and Animals before the Fall?

This is a question that has generated much discussion within the Church, with strong opinions held on both sides. In the late 1920s and early 1930s Elder B. H. Roberts, senior president of the First Council of Seventy, wrote and spoke extensively of his beliefs concerning pre-Adamites and death among plant and animal life before the fall. His views were strongly opposed by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith of the Quorum of the Twelve. Elder Smith's arguments centered on the passage from 2 Nephi 2:22 that if Adam had not fallen, "all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end." Each attempted to have his views confirmed by the church. Both Elder Roberts and Elder Smith formally presented their views to the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. After careful consideration, the First Presidency issued a report. Dated 5 April 1931 and addressed to the Council of the Twelve, the First Council of the Seventy, and the Presiding

23. *Times and Seasons* 5/24 (January 1844), 758. This number may have been arrived at as follows: 7,000 years of the Lord's time of 1,000 years per day (i.e., 2,555,000,000 = 1,000 x 365 x 7,000).
24. Emiliani, *Scientific Companion,* 197.
25. Frank H. Shu, *The Physical Universe: An Introduction to Astronomy* (Mill Valley, Calif.: University Science Books, 1982), 462.

Bishopric, the report stated: "Neither side of the controversy has been accepted as doctrine at all."[26] Thus, the First Presidency made it clear that the Church has no official stand concerning the existence of pre-Adamites and death among plants and animals before the fall.

Soon after this the First Presidency invited Elder James E. Talmage (who was a geologist by profession) to give a talk on the issue. He gave this talk, entitled "The Earth and Man," in the Tabernacle on 9 August 1931 and stated that the earth was extremely ancient. He also confirmed that life and death occurred on the earth long before the coming of man:

> But this we know, for both revealed and discovered truth, that is to say, both scripture and science, so affirm—that plant life antedated animal existence, and that animals preceded man on earth. . . . These [plants and animals] lived and died, age after age, while the earth was yet unfit for human habitation.[27]

In November of that same year, 1931, the First Presidency approved the publication of this speech with slight changes, and it appeared in the church section of the *Deseret News* on 17 November.[28]It was subsequently made available as a church pamphlet and was republished in *The Instructor.*[29] While this does not constitute official church approval, it does show that there was no disapproval.

It is important here to stress that although there may have been death among plants and animals before the fall, this does not apply to Adam and Eve. The scriptures and the teaching of the Brethren make it absolutely clear that before the fall Adam and Eve were not yet subject to death, and it was only by partaking of the forbidden fruit that they became mortal.

Elder Talmage certainly supported the view that among plants and animals there was death before the fall. If there were no death before the fall, it would be very difficult to account for all the fossilized remains of now extinct flora and fauna located in geologic strata all over the earth. In addition, ancient fossil bones show signs of tumors, rheumatic disorders, arthritis, abscesses, and breakage; and fossil plants show spot fungi, burls, and insect galls.[30] All these seem to indicate that death and disease were part of living things millions of years ago.

Some have tried to account for these fossilized remains by maintaining that the earth was formed from parts of other earths. For support, they refer to a quotation from Joseph Smith that "this earth was organized or formed out of other planets which were broken up and remodeled and made into the one on which we live."[31] This is not, however, a direct quote from Joseph Smith, but it comes from an entry in William Clayton's journal.[32] William McIntire was at the same sermon and

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26. James B. Allen, "The Story of The Truth, The Way, The Life," in B. H. Roberts, *The Truth, The Way, The Life, An Elementary Treatise on Theology,* 2nd ed., ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1996), 709. This article has an extensive description of this controversy between Elders Roberts and Smith as well as supporting documentation.
27. Talmage, "The Earth and Man," 474–75.
28. Allen, "The Story of The Truth, The Way, The Life," 711.
29. James E. Talmage, "The Earth and Man," 474–77; January 1966, 9–11, 15.
30. Patricia Rich et al., *The Fossil Book: A Record of Prehistoric Life,* 2nd revised ed. (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1996), 15.
31. Franklin D. Richards and James A. Little, *A Compendium of the Doctrines of the Gospel* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1882), 287.
32. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, comps. and eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Dscourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991), 60.

recorded what Joseph said somewhat differently: "~~this~~ Earth has been organized out of portions of other Globes that has ben Disorganized."[33] Here McIntire uses "globes" rather than "planets," which could refer to any celestial body: planet, comet, asteroid, or star. All the elements out of which this earth is formed (with the exception of hydrogen and some helium) were formed inside stars. The elements up to iron are formed in the various stages of fusion a star goes through during its lifetime. Elements heavier than iron are formed primarily in supernova explosions and are then dispersed throughout the galaxy by that same explosion. Thus the elements of this earth did indeed come from other "globes" that were disorganized—a supernova is a fairly substantial disorganization.

Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that our own earth is typical of what God does in preparing worlds for his children. That being so, then after an inhabited world has passed through its mortal state, it is not disorganized and thrown into a pile for use in forming other worlds but rather is resurrected and celestialized.

Another telling argument against fossils being the remains of plants and animals from fragments of other worlds is the sequential way in which they are preserved—in layers, or strata. Fossilized plants and animals found at great distances from each other all over the earth are found in equivalent strata and in the same order within these strata. Were this earth formed from bits and pieces of other planets that would likely not be the case.

What about the Fossil Remains of Manlike Creatures?

What about these manlike creatures that lived on the earth thousands or even millions of years ago? The scriptures do not mention them. What are they? What is our relationship to them? They are certainly creations of our Father in Heaven, but what their purpose is in his plans he has not revealed to us. In any event, whatever they are, they are not our ancestors, as the First Presidency statement on the origin of man makes clear:

> It is held by some that Adam was not the first man upon the earth, and that the original human being was a development from lower orders of the animal creation. These, however, are the theories of men. The word of the Lord declares that Adam was "the first man of all men" (Moses 1:34), and we are therefore duty bound to regard him as the primal parent of our race. It was shown to the brother of Jared that all men were created in the *beginning* after the image of God; and whether we take this to mean the spirit or the body, or both, it commits us to the same conclusion: Man began life as a human being, in the likeness of our heavenly Father.[34]

Evolution

Since the authors of this paper have received their advanced degrees in physics and astronomy, with no formal training in biology, we will take the prudent course and let those who are more knowledgeable on the subject deal with evolution. For us the critically important point is that God is the source and author of all life and was intimately and continuously involved in bringing it

33. Ibid. 61; original spelling, punctuation, grammar, and crossed out words are retained.
34. Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, Anthon H. Lund, "The Origin of Man," in James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 4:205.

forth on this earth—it was not and indeed cannot have been, as some scientists maintain, the result of "nothing but a set of individually mindless steps succeeding each other without the help of any intelligent supervision."[35] The details of how God accomplished the placing of life on this earth are not explicitly stated in the scriptures, but his intimate involvement is made absolutely clear.

The Sequence of Events during the Creation

Those familiar with the temple account of the creation will recognize that there are some differences both in sequence of events as well as what is done on a given "day." As Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated, "The temple account [of the creation], for reasons that are apparent to those familiar with its teachings, has a different division of events. It seems clear that the 'six days' are one continuing period and that there is no one place where the dividing lines between the successive events must of necessity be placed."[36] The divisions into days or periods may, in a sense, be artificial, since, as Elder McConkie points out, the creation is really one continuous event.

Spiritual versus Physical Creation

Some have suggested that the account of the creation in Abraham is about the spiritual rather than the physical creation. Elder McConkie suggests otherwise:

> The Mosaic and the temple accounts set forth the temporal or physical creation, the actual organization of element or matter into tangible form. They are not accounts of the spirit creation. Abraham gives a blueprint as it were of the Creation. He tells the plans of the holy beings who wrought the creative work. . . . Then he says they performed as they had planned, which means we can, by merely changing the verb tenses and without doing violence to the sense and meaning, also consider the Abrahamic account as one of the actual creation.[37]

This seems reasonable, and on this basis, we will treat the creation account in Abraham as dealing with the physical and not the spiritual creation.

The Seven Creative Periods

In looking at the creation account in Abraham, we will also refer to the accounts in Genesis and Moses when added information is found in them. The three scriptural accounts all agree that "in the beginning" God (or the gods) created the heavens and the earth. But is this the beginning of the entire universe? The account in Moses makes it clear that it is not: "Behold, I reveal unto you concerning *this* heaven, and *this* earth (Moses 1:35; 2:1; emphasis added). As already noted above, God made it clear to both Abraham and Moses that his creations were innumerable to man and that this earth is not the first of his creations. Thus, the scriptural creation accounts do not describe the creation of the universe but only of *this* earth and *this* heaven, a description that seems

35. Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 59.
36. McConkie, "Christ and the Creation," 11.
37. Ibid.

to include what we now designate as our solar system, and perhaps other local stellar systems that collapsed out of the same cloud as our solar system.

The following paragraphs are our attempt to correlate the events of the creation described in scripture with the latest scientific evidence and theories of the formation of the earth and our solar system. The dates we give are those derived from radiometric dating and are not to be considered absolute but rather the best present estimates based on a variety of scientific measurement techniques. At the end of the paper is a chart showing the six creative periods, the events occurring in each, and the approximate dates.

First Period—Formation of the Solar System (Abraham 4:1–5)

Several things occur during this first period: the organization and formation of the solar system—the sun and its associated planets, asteroids, comets, meteorites, and sundry dust and gas. In this primeval state, darkness "reigned upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of the gods was brooding upon the face of the waters" (Abraham 4:2). What is happening here? Abraham is describing what he sees in his vision using a vocabulary that lacks the specialized scientific words we now use. According to the present theory of the formation of our solar system, some 4.7 billion years ago there was a large cloud of gas and dust, which, perhaps initiated by the shock wave of a nearby supernova, began to rotate and collapse upon itself due to the mutual gravitational attraction of the constituent gas molecules and dust particles. Since approximately 75 percent of all the matter in the universe is hydrogen, this was a major component of the cloud. Abraham perhaps used the term "waters" to describe this cloud consisting predominantly of hydrogen (the word hydrogen means "water source" in Greek). As the cloud of gas and dust began to collapse, it became denser and began to block out light; hence the darkness. There are regions in our galaxy where we see these dark clouds (the Horsehead Nebula in Orion is perhaps the most well known), in which infrared observations show new stars forming.[38]

As this cloud continued to collapse, regions of higher density formed within it. At the center, in particular, the density became particularly high, and as the gravitational potential energy was converted to heat, the center got progressively hotter until the density and temperature were high enough for nuclear fusion of hydrogen into helium. The smaller regions of higher density further from the center of the cloud eventually formed the nine planets, the asteroids, and the comets of our solar system. Close to the sun the temperature was higher, which only allowed the formation of small, rocky planets like the earth. Further out, the lower temperatures allowed the formation of the larger, gaseous planets like Jupiter.[39]

Once fusion started in the core of the proto-sun, the light pressure began to blow off the remaining dust and gas. Stars in this stage of development, i.e., pre-main sequence, stars surrounded by dark clouds of gas and dust, have been observed and are called T-Tauri stars.[40] Naked T-Tauri stars are the next stage in which the cloud has mostly been dispersed.[41] Thus, the creation of light during the first

38. Zeilik et al., *Introductory Astronomy,* 387–90.
39. Ibid., 141–45.
40. Ibid., 341.
41. Ibid., 391.

period seems to refer to the ignition of nuclear fusion in the core of the sun. It is not, however, until the fourth period that the various "lights" in the heavens become visible, because it takes some time for the light pressure of the sun to disperse the dark cloud in which the solar system was formed.

Let's turn now to the continuing formation of the earth. Abraham 4:2 says "the earth, after it was formed, was empty and desolate." The earth began to be formed by the accretion of rocky bodies formed within the cloud. This accretion as well as the decay of radioactive elements produced a rapid internal heating, which drove off the initial atmosphere of hydrogen and inert gases and melted the planet. Lighter materials rose to the surface to ultimately form the crust of the earth, and the denser material sank to form the molten nickel-iron core. The earth began to cool, and by "about 3.7 billion years ago, the first continents appeared and plate tectonics began."[42]

The events of the first period took place roughly between 4.6 and 3.6 billion years ago, according to the most recent scientific dating techniques.

Second Period—Formation of the Atmosphere (Abraham 4:6–8)

In the second creative period, the gods form an "expanse" in the midst of the "waters" to divide the waters above from the waters below (Abraham 4:6). This seems to be describing the formation of the earth's atmosphere. About four billion years ago, "volcanic activity caused by interior heating created the second atmosphere, containing outgassed water, methane, ammonia, sulfur dioxide, and carbon dioxide. An infall of large objects continued, fracturing the [earth's] crust.[43] The scars of this bombardment have been weathered away on the earth but are still clearly visible on the moon. Ocean basins were formed by this bombardment, and "the Earth's surface cooled enough for rain to fall and begin filling the basins."[44]

Beginning about 3.5 billion years ago, photosynthesis by blue-green algae (primitive one-celled organisms without a distinct nucleus) began to release oxygen into the atmosphere.[45] However, prior to two billion years ago, there was very little free oxygen in the atmosphere. It was a reducing atmosphere (one without any free oxygen). Large deposits of reduced minerals such as banded iron chert, detrital pyrite, and uranite could not have formed if even 0.1 percent of the atmosphere had been oxygen. Sometime between 2.0 and 1.5 billion years ago, levels of oxygen increased, due to the biologic activity of the blue-green algae. From this time on, no more reduced minerals are laid down, and now oxidized minerals are found.[46] About 1.5 billion years ago, green algae, the first eukaryotes (organisms with nuclei in their cells) began to appear. "Green algae are efficient photosynthesizers. They added more oxygen to the atmosphere until, about 800 million years ago, the oxygen level reached 5 percent of the present value."[47]

Another important element of the atmosphere also formed during this period—the ozone layer. Energetic ultraviolet photons began to dissociate water molecules in the atmosphere. The hydrogen escaped into space and the oxygen atom was left behind. The oxygen in turn combined

42. Ibid., 76.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Shu, *Physical Universe,* 494.
46. Rich et al., *Fossil Book,* 79.
47. Emiliani, *Scientific Companion,* 156.

to form molecular oxygen (O_2) and other molecules. As O_2 accumulated in the upper atmosphere, it was again dissociated into free oxygen atoms, which in turn combined with other O_2 molecules to form ozone. The dissociation-association process eventually stabilized, forming the ozone layer. This filtered out the harmful ultraviolet light, which not only prevented any further dissociation of water, but also allowed life to flourish.[48] Ultraviolet light is lethal to most living organisms.

The proper mixture of gases in the atmosphere is critically important for sustaining life on the earth. For example, although carbon dioxide and water vapor make up only a very small part of the atmosphere, without them "the average temperature of the earth would be -40° C."[49] It seems clear that God at various stages of the creative process arranged for modifications in the earth's atmosphere to ultimately provide one suited to the animal and plant life now found here.

The earth's magnetic field, produced by its rotating liquid nickel-iron core, also helps protect life upon the earth's surface. This field deflects the potentially harmful stream of charged particles coming from the sun, called the solar wind, and forms the well-known Van Allen radiation belts.[50]

The events of the second period, in which the present atmosphere of the earth was formed, seem to have occurred from around 4.0 billion to 600 million years ago, thus overlapping with both the first and third periods.

Third Period—Formation of Oceans and Continents, Plant Life (Abraham 4:9–13)

During this creative period the seas were formed and dry land appeared. As indicated above, the water that forms the seas and other bodies of water on the earth came from the volcanic outgassing of water vapor, which condensed as rain and began to fill the low-lying areas. Also, with the cooling of the crust of the earth around 3.7 billion years ago, the major continental plates formed and the process known as plate tectonics began.[51] As the various continental plates collided with each other, mountain ranges began to form, a process that continues up to the present time. The weathering of the earth by rain and wind also caused major changes over time.

Next the gods prepared the earth for plant life. When the earth was first formed, it was far from being a favorable environment for life. It had an atmosphere of carbon dioxide, hydrogen, sulfur, methane, etc., but lacked any free oxygen. Plants would be the obvious thing to first place on the earth. Their ability to convert carbon dioxide into oxygen would in turn prepare the earth for animal life. The oldest fossils are those of blue-green algae (sometimes called cyanobacteria) dating back some 3.5 billion years, and they remained the dominant form of life until about 1.5 billion years ago,[52] although in Precambrian rocks found in South Africa there are also fossil remains of tiny rod-shaped forms resembling living bacteria in their cell-wall structure.[53] This means that life appeared on the earth very soon after the crust solidified. There is some genetic evidence that perhaps archaebacteria preceded the blue-green algae, but there is no fossil evidence to support this.[54]

48. Shu, *Physical Universe,* 492.
49. Emiliani, *The Scientific Companion,* 157.
50. Zeilik et al., *Introductory Astronomy,* 72–74.
51. Ibid., 76.
52. Emiliani, *Scientific Companion,* 151.
53. Rich et al., *The Fossil Book,* 91.
54. Emiliani, *Scientific Companion,* 150.

It is interesting that scientists have proposed terraforming the planet Venus (converting it to an earthlike environment) by seeding its clouds with blue-green algae, which would convert the predominantly carbon dioxide atmosphere to oxygen. The reduction of carbon dioxide would in turn reduce the greenhouse effect, and the temperature would drop. Eventually, water vapor in the atmosphere (which contains enough water to cover the entire surface of Venus with 100 inches of water) would condense and fall as rain. Over time the surface temperature of Venus would drop to 70 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit, with oceans forming in the depressions.[55] This is, in essence, the process God seems to have used in preparing our earth for more advanced life forms.

Land plants appeared much later during the Middle Silurian period, some 420 million years ago, and did not become common until near the end of the Devonian, about 360 million years ago.[56] The first appearance of flowering plants (angiosperms) was not until about 120 million years ago.[57] Grasses are not found until around 57 million years ago.[58]

The progressive appearance of plant life[59] on the earth thus stretched over an enormous period of time—from about 3.5 billion years to 57 million years ago, when the variety of plant life was much like what we now have on the earth.

Fourth Period—Appearance of Sun, Moon, and Stars (Abraham 4:14–19)

During this phase of the creation, the gods organized the various "lights" in the heavens—the sun, moon, and stars. As stated in the section in the first period, once hydrogen fusion had started in the sun, light pressure would have progressively blown out the remaining gas and dust of the original cloud out of which the solar system formed, thus progressively making these various heavenly bodies visible. Organizing the lights for seasons, days, and years can also have reference to the setting of the orbital and rotational periods of the earth and moon, a year being the time it takes the earth to orbit once around the sun. A month originally was the time period from one new moon to another, which is based upon the orbital period of the moon about the earth. A day is the time it takes the earth to rotate once upon its axis. The seasons too can be determined by which constellations are visible at a given period during the year. Moreover, the various seasons—winter, summer, spring, and fall—are a consequence of the tilt of the earth's axis with respect to its orbital plane, as well as the eccentricity of its orbit about the sun. All these various aspects of the motion of the earth and moon had to be fine-tuned to produce the times and seasons we now have.

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55. Adrian Berry, *The Next Ten Thousand Years: A Vision of Man's Future in the Universe* (New York: The New American Library, 1974), 90–93. Carl Sagan first suggested the idea in "The Planet Venus," *Science* 133 (24 March 1961), 849–58.
56. Rich et al., *Fossil Book,* 67.
57. Ibid., 33–35.
58. Ibid.
59. In classifying blue-green and green algae as plants, we recognize that this is not in accordance with modern biological classification schemes, which now recognize five kingdoms. But as was stated above, the scriptures are not meant as textbooks of geology, biology, etc. The algae perform the same function as more complex plant life in that they convert carbon dioxide to free oxygen.

Fifth Period—Sea Animals and Birds (Abraham 4:20–23)

In agreement with the scriptural accounts of creation, both plant and animal life first appeared in the ocean. Only in rocks less than 1.5 billion years old are microfossils of eukaryotic cellular organisms much more complicated than the prokaryotic blue-green algae.[60] It was only when oxygen levels reached about 5 percent of the present value, some 800 million years ago, that more complex multicellar life (metazoa) began to appear.[61]

About 600 million years ago, at the beginning of the Cambrian period, there was a rapid increase in the variety of higher life forms.[62] Around 590 million years ago, exoskeletal animals such as trilobites, brachiopods, and shelled mollusks appeared. By 550 million years ago, the first vertebrates, such as jawless fish and graptolites, appeared.[63]

It was not until 145 million years ago that birds first appeared. Why birds are included with sea animals rather than land animals is not clear, but as we stated before, the separation into periods is in a sense artificial, since the creative process was a continuous one.

Sixth Period—Land Animals and Man (Abraham 4:24–31)

The sixth and final period of creation includes the placing of land animals and man upon the earth. About 370 million years ago, amphibians first appeared in the fossil record. By 340 million years ago the earliest reptiles (cotylosaurs) were present, and by 320 million years ago mammal-like reptiles (pelycosaurs) were found. Winged insects appeared around 310 million years ago, and dinosaurs came on the scene about 240 million years ago. By 220 million years ago, there were a large variety of mammal-like reptiles, but it was not until about 90 million years ago that marsupials and placentals appeared.[64]

Around 65 million years ago, at the end of the Cretaceous period, there was a period of mass extinction, in which dinosaurs and many other kinds of life disappeared. This may have been caused by a giant asteroidal impact. The fossil record also shows other major extinction events, such as the Permian, around 250 million years ago.[65]

The first primates appeared 62 million years ago, and by 60 million years ago there was a great diversity of mammal types. Rodents first arrived on the scene about 45 million years ago, and hominids (manlike creatures) about 19 million years ago.[66]

The first appearance of fossils of *Homo sapiens sapiens* and *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* seems to have been about 125,000 years ago, when fossils of both are found, at about the temperature maximum of the last interglacial period. By 18,000 years ago, the last ice age reached its maximum with glaciers covering large areas of northern Europe and North America.[67] About 11,600 years ago, there

60. Shu, *Physical Universe,* 495.
61. Emiliani, *Scientific Companion,* 159.
62. Shu, *Physical Universe,* 497.
63. Rich et al., *Fossil Book,* 33–35.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., 247, 483.
66. Ibid., 33–35.
67. Emiliani, *Scientific Companion,* 195.

was a rapid warming, and the ice sheets melted, producing catastrophic floods down the Mississippi valley and other places.[68] Could this have been the cause of the biblical flood?

This final phase of the creation thus seems to have covered a period from about 370 million years ago to the point when Adam was first placed on the earth.

Seventh Period

The seventh period is actually not part of the creation but is the rest period after the work was done. We have no information as to how long it lasted.

Summary

As we have examined the astronomy and creation accounts of the Book of Abraham, we have found a remarkable agreement with modern scientific understanding. This is especially notable since most of our present scientific knowledge has been discovered during this century and indeed during the latter part of this century—a century and a half after it was revealed through Joseph Smith. The Book of Abraham stands as a proof of Joseph's prophetic calling for the entire world to see. It is also a confirmation that true science and true religion will be in harmony with each other.

Note that the dates here are those derived using various radiometric dating techniques. They are not meant to be the final word but are science's best estimate at this time.

68. Ibid., Rich et al., *Fossil Book,* 617.

Tentative Chronology of the Events of Creation

Period	Activity	Details	Years before present
First	Formation of solar system	Earliest meteorites formed Solar system formed Oldest lunar rocks Oldest terrestrial rocks	4.7 billion 4.6 billion 4.2 billion 3.8 billion
Second	Formation of atmosphere	First (original) atmosphere Volcanic activity formed 2nd atmosphere Blue-green algae begin to produce O_2 in atmosphere Oxygen level reaches 5% of present value	4.0 billion 4.0 billion 3.5 billion 800 million
Third	Formation of continents and ocean, plant life	Plate tectonics begins Blue-green algae Green algae Land plants Flowering plants Grasses	3.7 billion 3.5 billion 1.5 billion 420 million 120 million 57 million
Fourth	Appearance of sun, moon, and stars	Light pressure from the sun clears out residual gas and dust	4.5 to 4.4 billion
Fifth	Appearance of sea animals and birds	Cambrian explosion of complex life forms Exoskeletal animals Vertebrates Birds	600 million 590 million 550 million 150 million
Sixth	Appearance of land animals	Amphibians Reptiles Mammal-like reptiles Marsupials and placentals Primates Rodents Hominids	370 million 340 million 320 million 90 million 62 million 45 million 19 million

Chapter 3

Cedars and Stars

Enduring Symbols of Cosmic Kingship in Abraham's Encounter with Pharaoh[1]

E. Douglas Clark

The Cosmic Abraham Meets Pharaoh

Just over three and a half millennia ago, on the upper border of Egypt, a group of travelers arrived from the north and made camp for the evening. We don't know how large the party was, but it could easily have been the size of one of our Latter-day Saint wards or even stakes. The arrival of yet another caravan on this highly trafficked border was hardly unusual, but from that time hence God's people have looked back with great interest on the remarkable events of that night. For the leader of that party was none other than Abraham, father of the faithful, in whose steps the saints are ever commanded to walk.

1. Abraham's encounter with Pharaoh, including the theme of competing claims of kingship, has been treated by Hugh Nibley in *Abraham in Egypt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2000), 219–318, 382–465; and in "A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price," a series of articles in the *Improvement Era* beginning in January 1968; see especially "Facsimile No. 1: A Unique Document," *Improvement Era*, December 1968, 28–33; "The Unknown Abraham," *Improvement Era*, April 1969, 66–72; "The Unknown Abraham," *Improvement Era*, May 1969, 87–91; "Facsimile No. 1, by the Figures," *Improvement Era*, August 1969, 75–87; "Setting the Stage—The World of Abraham," *Improvement Era*, October 1969, 89–95; and "The Sacrifice of Sarah," *Improvement Era*, April 1970, 79–95. ("Setting the Stage" and "The Sacrifice of Sarah" are both reprinted in *Abraham in Egypt*.) For extrabiblical accounts that support the Book of Abraham, including Abraham's encounter with Pharaoh, see John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, comps. and eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), hereafter referred to as *Traditions*.

   This paper builds on Nibley's work by examining Abraham's momentous encounter with Pharaoh from a different approach: first through recognizing Abraham as a cosmic figure as portrayed in Genesis and rabbinic literature, and then by focusing on the interplay of our two oldest nonbiblical sources—the Book of Abraham and the *Genesis Apocryphon*— and their use of the symbols of cedars and stars. These symbols turn out to have not only remarkable implications about cosmic kingship but also enduring relevance for Abraham's righteous posterity.

Ironically, Abraham's steps were now leading him away from the land that God had promised. What a trial of faith it must have been to finally arrive at the land of promise only to find a grievous famine. Had it been only Abraham, it is easy to imagine him staying put and toughing it out there in the promised land, for one of the constants of his exemplary life was obedience at all costs. But he also had to consider the welfare of his wife and the saints whom he led. And so, he says in his autobiography in the Book of Abraham, "I . . . concluded to go down into Egypt" (Abraham 2:21). "Concluded," he says, implying that this was a deliberate decision he alone had arrived at, and probably not without some difficulty. For despite the many prior revelations he had received, no divine direction was now forthcoming. Abraham seemed forced to take matters into his own hand and head for Egypt, where crops depended not on rainfall but on the annual flooding of the Nile. Only when Abraham arrived at the border of Egypt did the Lord finally speak.

To appreciate what happened, though, we must go back to Abraham's earlier appearance in the pages of Genesis where, as scholars point out, his pivotal role in God's plan for the human race is already perceptible at the very point of the patriarch's entrance onto the stage of history. The previous eleven Genesis chapters, often referred to as "primeval history," had spoken broadly "of the world and of humanity"[2] in a "universal setting" with "the whole world as its stage."[3] But the unfolding drama had been an increasingly tragic one in which "an avalanche of sin . . . gradually engulfs mankind"[4] to create a "continually widening chasm between man and God."[5] Even so, each new punishment meted out upon the errant human race had been followed by a divine manifestation of mercy—until the Tower of Babel.[6] Again there is divine judgment as God scatters mankind abroad, but this time there is no word of divine mercy. In the words of Gerhard von Rad:

> The whole primeval history, therefore, seems to break off in shrill dissonance, and the question . . . arises . . . urgently: Is God's relationship to the nations now finally broken; is God's gracious forbearance now exhausted; has God rejected the nations in wrath forever?[7]

The answer is found in "the strangely new thing"[8] that occurs "without any prior warning"[9] as the narrative shifts abruptly from the universal to the particular, from primeval history to patriarchal history, from mankind in general to one man in particular. As von Rad explains:

> All at once and precipitously the universal field of vision narrows; world and humanity . . . are submerged, and all interest is concentrated upon a single man. . . .
>
> From the multitude of nations God chooses a man, looses him from tribal ties, and makes him the beginner of a new nation and the recipient of great promises of salvation. What is promised to Abraham . . . has universal meaning for all generations on earth.[10]

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2. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 23.
3. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (1964; reprint, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1980), 1:liii.
4. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), 1:li.
5. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary,* rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 152.
6. Ibid., 153.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis,* 1:liii.
10. Von Rad, *Genesis,* 154.

Having thus zoomed in from worldwide history to the personal story of this one man, the lens of the biblical camera will from that point on remain focused exclusively on him and his chosen line, for the story of God's blessing the world has become the story of Abraham, whom one scholar has called "the most pivotal and strategic man in the course of world history."[11] Indeed, all nations are to be blessed through him and his posterity, who are promised to be not only as the sands of the seashore but as the very stars of heaven. In short, Abraham is divinely invested with nothing less than cosmic significance for the future of the human race—a point likewise expressed in rabbinic tradition recognizing Abraham as "a cosmic type because of his linking 'earth' up to 'heaven' through the making of proselytes"[12] and insisting that through the Abrahamic covenant "the order of the world was established."[13]

It is hardly surprising, therefore, to find Abraham soon crossing paths with the most powerful monarch of his time and place, Pharaoh. What has surprised and even perplexed many a modern reader is the apparent pettiness of the episode as recounted in the traditional Genesis account.

> And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels. And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.[14]

The episode stands out as "a mélange of the credible and the unexplained"[15] with "some extraordinary gaps which have not been covered over."[16] It is further puzzling not only for its bizarre incongruity with the widespread ancient tradition attesting to Abraham's exemplary righteousness,[17] but also for its utter failure to reveal why the ancients considered Abraham's encounter

11. J. McKee Adams, *Ancient Records and the Bible: A Survey of Archaeological Evidences in Their Bearing on the Integrity of the Historical Narratives of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1946), 187.
12. C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 38 n. 1, commenting on *Rabbah Genesis* XII.9.
13. Ibid., 245, quoting the introduction to *Rabbah Lamentations.*
14. Genesis 12:10–20.
15. Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), 182.
16. Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 129.
17. See, for example, Isaiah 41:8; 51:1–2 (=2 Nephi 8:1–2); 1 Nephi 15:18–19; 17:35–40; 2 Nephi 29:14; Jacob 4:5; Alma 5:24; 7:25; 13:15; Helaman 3:30; 8:16–17; 3 Nephi 20:25–27; Mormon 5:20; Ecclesiasticus [Sirach] 44:19–20; Luke 16:19–31; John 8:39; *TB Nedarim* (Bablyonian Talmud) 32a; *Zohar Genesis* 76b, in

with Pharaoh to be "a crucial event in the history of mankind."[18] No wonder some scholars surmise that the original story in Genesis contained additional information that has long since dropped out of the text.[19]

Two Towering Cedars

One ancient source purporting to tell more of the original story is now known as the *Genesis Apocryphon* but perhaps more aptly named, as one translator chose to call it, *Memoirs of the Patriarchs*.[20] Long lost to the world until its 1947 discovery in a cave near the Dead Sea, the *Genesis Apocryphon* claims to contain autobiographical accounts by the ancient patriarchs Lamech, his son Noah, and in turn his descendant Abraham (Abram), whose account is by far the largest in the scroll. Unfortunately, the column that apparently formed the initial portion of the Abrahamic account was part of the deteriorated portion of the scroll (it had apparently been lying on the floor of the cave) and may well have recounted Abraham's early life in Ur and Haran.[21] The narrative picks up with Abraham traveling south through the promised land and settling for a time in Hebron until a famine strikes. Hearing that there was grain in Egypt, Abraham undertakes to travel there. But on the night of his entry into Egypt, he has a troubling dream.

> And I, Abram, had a dream in the night of my entering into the land of Egypt and I saw in my dream [that there wa]s a cedar, and a date-palm (which was) [very beautif]ul; and some men came intending to cut down and uproot the cedar, but leave the date-palm by itself. Now the date-palm remonstrated and said, "Do not cut down the cedar, for we are both from one family" [*another translation: "for the two of us grow fr[om] but a [sin]gle root"*[22]]. So the cedar was spared with the help of the date-palm, and [it was] not [cut down]. (That) night I awoke from my sleep and said to Sarai my wife, "I have had a dream, [and I] am frightened by this dream." She said to me, "Tell me your dream that I may know (it too)." So I began to tell her this dream; [and I made known] to [her the meaning of this] dream, [and] s[aid], "[ ] who will seek to *kill me and to spare you.* [N]ow this is all the favor [that you must do for me]; whe[rev]er [we shall be, *say*] about me, 'He is my brother.' Then I shall live with your help *and my life will be saved because of you.* [ ] they will seek to [ta]ke you away from me and

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Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon, trans., *The Zohar,* 2nd ed. (London: Soncino, 1984), 1:260; *Damascus Document* III, 4, in Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 129; Philo, *On Abraham* XLVI, in Philo VI (1935; reprint, London: William Heinemann, 1966), 135; Qur'an 4:125; 16:120; and see my treatment of these sources in the foreword to Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt.*

18. Ben Zion Wacholder, "How Long Did Abraham Stay in Egypt?" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 35 (1964): 43.
19. John J. Scullion, *Genesis: A Commentary for Students, Teachers, and Preachers* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992), 6:112–13, citing H. Gunkel and K. Koch.
20. Theodor H. Gaster, trans., *The Dead Sea Scriptures,* 3rd ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1976), 350–72.
21. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The "Genesis Apocryphon" of Qumran Cave I: A Commentary,* 2nd rev. ed. (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1971), 105, noting that Avigad and Yadin thought that the lost portion must have dealt with Abraham's experience in Ur and Haran.
22. Michael Wise, Martin Abegg Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 79.

> to kill me." And Sarai wept at my words that night. [ ]. and Pharaoh Zo[an . . . so that] Sarai [no longer wished] to go toward Zoan [with me, for she feared very m]uch within her, lest any[one] should see her [ ].[23]

The most striking difference between this account and the Genesis story concerns the origin of the idea that Sarah hold herself out as Abraham's sister, for although the dream is never expressly said to come from God, yet "this is certainly the implication."[24] But the imagery of the dream also suggests something important about Abraham, who is not the first in the *Genesis Apocryphon* to be compared to a cedar. In a previous column that only recently has become available, Noah hears God interpret a dream that Noah has just had: "You are the great cedar," God explains, from which eventually "will spring a righteous plant" that "will stand for ever."[25] On the principle that plants produce their own kind, Noah's comparison to a cedar that will produce a "plant of righteousness" seems to imply that Noah himself was righteous—a fact emphasized not only in the Old Testament, which calls him "righteous" and "blameless,"[26] but also in numerous other ancient texts characterizing him as "the exemplary righteous man" imbued with "special holiness."[27]

For the *Genesis Apocryphon* later to relate another divinely given dream, this time to Abraham, comparing him to the same kind of tree to which Noah was divinely compared, points to Abraham as the plant of righteousness foretold in Noah's dream. Similarly, in another ancient patriarchal text from the Dead Sea Scrolls, *1 Enoch,* the patriarch Enoch foretells—in a passage whose context unquestionably refers to Abraham[28]—that one of his descendants "shall be chosen as a plant of righteous judgement; and his posterity shall come forth as a plant of eternal righteousness."[29]

Abraham's righteousness is in fact widely attested in numerous ancient sources,[30] while one of the Psalms declares that "the righteous flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in

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23. 1QapGen XIX, 14–23, in Fitzmyer, *The "Genesis Apocryphon" of Qumran Cave I,* 60–61; see also *Traditions,* 26–27.
24. Fitzmyer, *The "Genesis Apocryphon" of Qumran Cave I,* 110; see Michael A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community* (1987; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 2:190.
25. 1QapGen XIV, 9, 14, in Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English,* 452.
26. Genesis 6:9 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) (and so also most modern translations), translating the Hebrew words *zadik* and *tammim,* rendered here in the King James as "just" and "perfect."
27. Jack P. Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 21 and 46, and see 22, 101–2, and 159, citing numerous pseudepigraphical and early Jewish and Christian sources. See also Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968), 5:178–79; and Menahem M. Kasher, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation: A Millennial Anthology* (New York: American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, 1955), 2:1–6.
28. As the scholars state: "Abraham and his seed are to be chosen as the race through which God would bring 'truth and righteousness' into the world." BEIE 290, translation on 86. "The sentence . . . describes the election of Abra(ha)m, the ancestor of the chosen people." James C. VanderKam, *Enoch: A Man for All Generations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 68. "Abraham and his seed chosen as the race in and through which God would reveal His righteous judgments—'the plant of righteous judgment.'" R. H. Charles, ed., *The Book of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1893), 272 n. 5. See also James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 1:74 n. 93j (noting that Ethiopian commentators also insisted that it referred to Abraham).
29. *1 Enoch* 93:5, in BEIE 86.
30. See note 17 above.

Lebanon."[31] Rabbinic sources commenting on the biblical narrative of Abraham in Egypt contain statements strikingly reminiscent of Abraham's dream and explain how the righteous are like cedar trees and palm trees: even as there is no crookedness in the growth of these trees, so the righteous have no crookedness of character; even as the shadow of these tall trees is cast afar, so the reward of the righteous seems far away; and even as the very core of these magnificent trees points upward, so are the hearts of righteous pointed upward to the Holy One.[32] (One of the rabbinic commentaries on the biblical narrative of Abraham in Egypt even mentions dreams that God gives to the righteous: "Happy are the righteous to whom God reveals His secrets in dreams, so that they may be on their guard against sin."[33])

And who are those righteous who are like the great cedars? An ancient teaching found in various sources insists that the righteous are the true seed of Abraham;[34] hence, according to Jewish tradition, the cedar is symbolic of Israel.[35]

But what do we make of the fact that the cedar of Abraham's dream was in danger of being cut down? Could the image of Abraham as a cedar imply something even more than his exemplary righteousness? The cedar of Lebanon *(Cedrus libani)* was highly prized in the ancient Near East. Adorned with bluish-green needles and upright oval-shaped cones, the branches grow straight out as the tree develops into its distinctive and majestic pyramidal shape.[36] Attaining dazzling heights upwards of a hundred feet, the tree is extremely long-lived, up to three thousand years. The fragrant, reddish-colored wood is, among other things, an excellent fuel, burning virtually without smoke and leaving few ashes. Its resin and oil were used as perfume, as an embalming agent, and as a preservative for cloth and parchment. The finely grained wood is also strong, straight, extremely durable, resistant to rot and insects, and takes a fine finish, making it anciently the coveted wood of choice for such diverse items as musical instruments, chests, coffins, household furnishings, and tombs, and on a larger scale for ship timbers and masts, as well as for the structural parts and even decorative paneling of large and important buildings. With good reason does the modern flag of Lebanon bear the image of its famous tree, which from earliest times constituted an important trade item and figured prominently in the rise of the Middle East. The original great cedar forests

31. Psalm 92:12 NRSV.
32. See, e.g., *Rabbah Genesis* 41:1, in H. Freedman, ed., *Midrash Rabbah* (London: Soncino, 1983), 1:332–33; *Zohar Genesis* 82*a*, in Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar,* 1:273–74. See also the (more recent) translation of this passage in Jacob Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis: A New American Translation* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), 2:87. See also *Traditions*, 95.
33. *Zohar Genesis* 83*a*, in Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar,* 1:277. See also *Traditions*, 159. Commentators on the *Genesis Apocryphon* routinely assert that the account of Abraham's dream appears to have "drawn from" the Psalms passage (see, e.g., Fitzmyer, *The "Genesis Apocryphon" of Qumran Cave I,* 111; and Knibb, *The Qumran Community,* 2:190). Might it not, however, have been the other way around?
34. See, e.g., Abraham 2:10; and Beẓah 32b: "He who has no pity upon his fellow-creatures is assuredly not of the seed of Abraham our father." Montefiore and Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology,* 421. See also Joseph Smith, in Joseph Fielding Smith and Richard C. Galbraith, eds., *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 171: "The effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham."
35. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews,* 4:444.
36. Older trees gradually lose their pyramidal shape as the branches become widespread.

covering mountainous Lebanon and surrounding regions were extensively exploited by the successive dominant powers to float their imperial navies and erect their great edifices, everything from Solomon's temple to Pharaoh's palace.[37]

To get that choice wood to Pharaoh's palace necessarily required that the cedar be imported, for while "Egypt was almost completely self-sufficient in natural resources," "timber from Lebanon and Syria was the major exception."[38] One of the earliest Egyptian annals reports that in the reign of the Pharaoh Snefru of the Fourth Dynasty (in the third millennium B.C.), an expedition of forty ships sailed to Phoenicia and returned "filled (with) cedar logs" which were used for, among other things, the doors of the royal palace.[39] In Abraham's dream, then, the attempt by Egyptians to cut down the great cedar reflects Egypt's high demand for the precious wood.

But the symbolism goes further, for these are not just any Egyptians who come to cut down the tree but are apparently sent by Pharaoh, who himself would be later compared by the Lord (speaking through Ezekiel) to "a cedar of Lebanon . . . of great height" and "beautiful in its greatness."[40] Commenting on the Ezekiel passage, one scholar contends that "the imagery [of Pharaoh as a cedar] seems strangely incongruous [since] nothing could be less suggestive of Egypt than the trees and scenery of Lebanon."[41] On the other hand, one need only catch a glimpse of the cedar's pyramidal shape[42] to recognize its unique aptness as a symbol for Egypt and its most famous monuments. Even so, the cedar described by Ezekiel is a most unusual tree, whose roots penetrated down to the "abundant water" of "the deep"[43] and whose top "towered high above all the trees of the field"[44] and ascended even "among the clouds,"[45] and "in [whose] shade all great nations lived."[46] According to one scholar, "while at first it seems to be a tree from Lebanon that is being depicted, the description soon broadens out beyond earthly proportions and sketches the picture of the great world tree," that mythological cosmic tree offering shelter and protection for all life on earth.[47]

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37. See generally Irene Jacob and Walter Jacob, "Cedar of Lebanon," in David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:805; J. C. Trevor, "Cedar," in George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (1962; reprint, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 1:545–46; *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* vol. 5, rev. ed. (Jerusalem: Keter, n.d.), col. 268; "Cedar," in Paul J. Achtemeier, ed., *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 159; "Cedar," in Allen C. Myers, ed., *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 197; *Encyclopædica Britannica,* 15th ed., 3:5, 20:453, 28:904, 907; Jaromír Málek, *In the Shadow of the Pyramids: Egypt during the Old Kingdom* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 37; Evan Eisenberg, *The Ecology of Eden* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 116.
38. Málek, *In the Shadow of the Pyramids,* 84.
39. James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament,* (1955; reprint, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), 227.
40. Ezekiel 31:3, 7 NRSV.
41. G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1985), 339.
42. As noted in Jacob and Jacob, "Cedar of Lebanon," 2:805; Achtemeier, "Cedar," 159.
43. Ezekiel 31:4–5, 7 NRSV.
44. Ezekiel 31:5 NRSV.
45. Ezekiel 31:3, 10 NRSV.
46. Ezekiel 31:6 NRSV.
47. Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48,* trans. James D. Martin (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 147.

It was apparently that very grandioseness, or Pharaoh's aspiration thereto, that had angered the Lord. "Therefore thus says the LORD GOD," continues the Ezekiel passage, "Because it towered high and set its top among the clouds, and its heart was proud of its height, I gave it into the hand of the prince of the nations; he has dealt with it as its wickedness deserves. I have cast it out. Foreigners from the most terrible of the nations have cut it down and left it."[48] Accordingly, even as Pharaoh, as a great cosmic cedar, had aspired to ascend into the very clouds, so he "went down to Sheol," being "brought down . . . to the world below."[49] In short, the Ezekiel passage is directed to "the proud self-exaltation of the mighty one who does not accept that his rise comes from the hand of one mightier still,"[50] making "the entire chapter [of Ezekiel 31] a biting satire on the divine claims of the pharaoh."[51]

The association of the cedar tree with kingship recurred throughout the ancient Near East. Because of the quality of its wood, the cedar anciently symbolized strength and stamina; because of its size, it symbolized also the lofty and the sublime.[52] Assyrian kings often compared their rule to the qualities of a cedar, expressing the hope that their reign would be as tolerant as the majestic tree.[53] Such royal symbolism was rooted in early tradition, as for example in Mesopotamian lore that places the garden of the gods at Dilmun, or land of sacred cedars "guarded like the tree of life in Eden." It was to Dilmun's cedar mountain, "the mountain of life," that Gilgamesh journeyed in order to obtain immortality.[54] The cedar tree was the very symbol of the Mesopotamian deity Tammuz,[55] who was revered at both Babylon and Assyria and who is thought to be the same deity appearing under different names elsewhere, most notably Adonis in Greece and Osiris in Egypt.[56] Similarly, the oldest Egyptian emblem of Osiris[57] (and earlier of the creator god Ptah, himself designated as the "Noble *Djed*")[58] was the *djed* column, which had the appearance of a conifer with its branches lopped off[59] and was apparently originally a cedar. As "one of the most frequently used hieroglyphic signs," the *djed* "had particular associations with Egyptian concepts of royalty"[60] and "was comparable to the Tree of Life."[61] In Syria the cedar was also the "most venerated and venerable sacred tree."[62] There, as

48. Ezekiel 31:10–12 NRSV.
49. Ezekiel 31:15, 18 NRSV. See also Isaiah 14:12–15.
50. Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 426.
51. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990), 323.
52. "Cedar Tree," in Udo Becker, *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Symbols* (New York: Continuum, 1992), 55.
53. Maurice H. Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism* (New York: Ktav, 1970), 33.
54. E. O. James, *The Tree of Life: An Archaeological Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 11:71.
55. Ibid., 166.
56. Lowell K. Handy, "Tammuz," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary,* 6:318.
57. James, *Tree of Life,* 38, 40.
58. Richard H. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Egyptian Painting and Sculpture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 165.
59. James, *Tree of Life,* 38.
60. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art,* 165.
61. James, *Tree of Life,* 40.
62. Ibid., 38.

in ancient Palestine, when the reigning deity sat enthroned in his temple to preside over gods and men, he was said to be holding a scepter of cedar, "a derivative of the Tree of Life [and] indicative of his royal status in heaven and on earth."[63]

Similarly, Jewish tradition remembers that when the usurper Nimrod built a throne for himself "in imitation of the seat of God," it was of cedar wood,[64] even as later when Nimrod, after his unsuccessful attempt to sacrifice Abraham, had a cedar throne made for him.[65] Likewise years later, according to tradition, when Abraham was honored for his remarkable victory over the allied eastern kings, the multitudes who wished him to be their king "felled cedars" to erect a large royal dais for him.[66]

But it is Abraham as a cedar that carries not only royal but also cosmic significance, like the great world tree that the proud Pharaoh aspired to be. Commenting on Abraham's experience in Egypt, the *Zohar* expressly compares Abraham to a cedar that "is pre-eminent and all sit under him. The world is supported upon one righteous one, as it is written, 'the righteous is the foundation of the world' (Prov. X, 25)."[67] Such a view of Abraham would correspond with his divinely ordained cosmic role as the conduit through whom all nations would be blessed.

Accordingly, what Abraham's dream appears to portend is nothing less than a confrontation between two competing claimants to cosmic kingship.

Competing Claimants to Cosmic Kingship

More than a century before the discovery of the *Genesis Apocryphon,* the Prophet Joseph Smith published what he stated was an authentic autobiography of Abraham. Called the Book of Abraham, it has remarkable parallels with the Abrahamic account in the *Genesis Apocryphon,* beginning with God's instructions to Abraham as he was about to enter Egypt:

> And it came to pass when I was come near to enter into Egypt, the Lord said unto me: Behold, Sarai, thy wife, is a very fair woman to look upon; Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see her, they will say—She is his wife; and they will kill you, but they will save her alive; therefore see that ye do on this wise; Let her say unto the Egyptians, she is thy sister, and thy soul shall live. And it came to pass that I, Abraham, told Sarai, my wife, all that the Lord had said unto me—Therefore say unto them, I pray thee, thou art my sister, that it may be well with me for thy sake, and my soul shall live because of thee.[68]

Unlike the *Genesis Apocryphon,* however, the Book of Abraham contains intact the account of young Abraham in Ur, where he had ardently sought the patriarchal priesthood of his ancient forefathers.[69] What made the search difficult was that his immediate forefathers had "turned from their

63. Ibid., 101.
64. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews,* 1:178, citing *Midrash ha Gadol.*
65. Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt,* 312, citing Adolph Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrasch* (1967). See *Traditions*, 179.
66. *Rabbah Genesis* 42:5 in Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah,* 1:347. See *Traditions*, 97.
67. *Zohar Genesis* 82a, in Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar,* 1:274. See *Traditions*, 159.
68. Abraham 2:22–25.
69. Abraham 1:1–4.

righteousness, and from the holy commandments which the Lord their God had given unto them, unto the worshiping of the gods of the heathen," and had set "their hearts . . . to do evil."[70] Facing a corrupt and murderous society, young Abraham courageously spoke out for truth, creating such a stir that those in power determined to do away with him by making him a victim in the kind of human sacrifice against that which he was preaching. Strapped upon the altar as the intended offering in an important religious ritual involving both local and Egyptian pagan gods, Abraham saw Pharaoh's priest raise the knife. Abraham raised his voice in prayer and was dramatically delivered and promised divine protection and blessing.[71]

It is only then in the narrative that we begin to discover the larger significance of the confrontation that has just passed: Pharaoh falsely claimed the exclusive patriarchal priesthood authority to which Abraham was the legitimate heir![72] At issue was nothing less than the right of Adam's priesthood rulership over all of his posterity, the entire human race. Abraham refers to it as "the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam,"[73] or as "that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah."[74] The same unique priesthood order, as described in a latter-day revelation, "was confirmed to be handed down from father to son,"[75] meaning apparently the firstborn son, who when he became the senior patriarch would exercise his right to "rule," or righteously preside over all of Adam's righteous posterity.[76] Josephus likewise speaks of the "rulership" and "reins of power" that were handed down through the line of the antediluvian patriarchs,[77] while an early Ethiopic text provides detailed descriptions of how each of those patriarchs in turn presided over and taught all of the righteous.[78] Hence Jewish tradition remembered that God granted to Abraham "to rule as king over the whole world."[79]

Although the first Pharaoh did not possess that unique patriarchal authority, he was a righteous man who governed "wisely and justly" after the pattern of the true patriarchal order. By Abraham's day, however, the Pharaohs were falsely claiming the authority of patriarchal priesthood rule over all mankind. According to R. T. Rundle Clark in his celebrated study of ancient Egyptian symbolism, "It is basic for all [Egyptian] royal symbols of antiquity that kingship is universal; it means rule over the whole earth and all that is beneath the vault of the sky."[80]

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70. Abraham 1:5–6.
71. Abraham 1:5–20.
72. Abraham 1:21–27.
73. Abraham 1:3.
74. Abraham 1:26.
75. D&C 107:40.
76. D&C 107:40–57.
77. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1.3.3-4, in *Josephus IV* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 37–41.
78. "Combat of Adam and Eve with Satan," bk. II chap. VIII–bk. III chap. VI, in S. C. Malan, ed., *The Book of Adam and Eve, Also Called the Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1882), 114–50.
79. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews,* 1:178.
80. R. T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (1959; reprint, New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 237.

As the Book of Abraham account continues, Abraham finally receives the priesthood that he sought, along with pivotal promises containing more than disclosed in Genesis: all nations and families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham as his posterity would carry the gospel to all the world, and those accepting would actually be accounted his seed and would rise up and bless him as their father.[81]

This, then, is the remarkable man who finds it necessary to travel to Egypt, ostensibly forced there by famine but actually led by the hand of the Lord; according to the Zohar, "If Abram had not gone down into Egypt and been tested there, his portion would not have been in the Lord."[82] What was the test? Was it not to obey the Lord's instruction regarding Sarah? After all, Abraham proved repeatedly throughout his life that he would gladly risk that life in the cause of truth and to protect his fellow beings, for whom he bore such love that he was remembered in Jewish tradition as the very personification of compassion and loving-kindness.[83] Now, however, to obey God, Abraham was forced to stand by silently and without protest as Egyptian emissaries took his beloved wife to Pharaoh's harem. The *Genesis Apocryphon* describes what ensued when Pharaoh had Sarah brought to the palace.

> I wept bitterly—I, Abram, and Lot, my nephew, with me—on the night when Sarai was taken away from me by force. That night I prayed, I entreated, and I asked for mercy; in (my) sorrow I said, as my tears ran down (my cheeks), "Blessed (are) you, O God Most High, my Lord, for all ages! For you are Lord and Master over all, and have power to mete out justice to all the kings of the earth. Now I lodge my complaint with you, my Lord, against the Pharaoh Zoan, the king of Egypt, because my wife has been taken away from me by force. Mete out justice to him for me and show forth your great hand against him and against all his house. May he not be able to defile my wife tonight—that it may be known about you, my Lord, that you are the Lord of all the kings of the earth." And I wept and talked to no one. (But) that night God Most High sent him a pestilential spirit *to afflict him* and all the men of *his household,* an evil spirit, that kept afflicting him and all the men of his household. He was not able to approach her, nor did he have intercourse with her, though he was with her (?) for two years.[84]

The power of this moving petition lies not only in its depth of emotion and supplication, but also, of course, in the identity of the petitioner: this is not just any injured party praying for justice, but Abraham, true heir to the royal patriarchal priesthood of God, praying to that same God to mete out justice to a pretender to that authority. The confrontation may be less ostentatious than that between Elijah and the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel,[85] but the point is the same: Will the true and living God now show forth his power so that, in Abraham's words, "it may be known about you, my Lord, that you are the Lord of all the kings of the earth"? And for God to do so would also necessarily reveal the true identity of the parties. Indeed, Abraham's prayer directly challenges

81. Abraham 2:9–12.

82. *Zohar Genesis* 83*a*, in Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar,* 1:276.

83. See, e.g., Charles B. Chavel, *Encyclopedia of Torah Thoughts* (New York: Shilo, 1980), 42–46; Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr, eds., *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought: Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements, and Beliefs* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987), 299–302.

84. 1QapGen XX, 10–16, in Fitzmyer, *The "Genesis Apocryphon" of Qumran Cave I,* 63, 65. See also *Traditions*, 28.

85. 1 Kings 18.

royal Egyptian ideology in which the divine Pharaoh himself "constituted a final court of appeal."[86] And in that same ideology "justice was defined as 'what Pharaoh loves,' [and] wrongdoing as 'what Pharaoh hates.'"[87] Abraham's plea that God "mete out justice" upon Pharaoh is surely the ultimate affront to Pharaoh's usurped authority.

Meanwhile, all that Pharaoh knew was that he was suddenly and sorely afflicted to such an astonishing degree that he could not even approach this dazzling foreign beauty he had, according to the *Genesis Apocryphon,* just officially taken as wife. Nor did the plagues pass. For two long years was Pharaoh, and with him all his household, afflicted, nor was there any abating, nor could the magicians or physicians, so famed for their curative powers, heal the ailing king, for when they tried, they themselves became afflicted. The situation was bizarre and baffling, for normally "an Egyptian who fell ill could always rely on some cure being available, whatever the problem."[88] But on the need for this particular cure rested the welfare of the entire realm, for Egyptians deemed their king "a divine presence on whom the life of the nation depended."[89] By means of royal ritual "the kingship was clearly very closely connected with agriculture and fertility, and the safety and health of the king entailed the safety of Egypt and the health and well-being of its inhabitants,"[90] so that "the destiny of the Egyptian people was linked to that of their Pharaoh and his welfare was also theirs."[91] Indeed, "the state was unthinkable without kingship," which "as the central institution of Egyptian society . . . form[ed] the point of connection among human society, the gods, and the wider cosmos."[92] Hence Egyptian kingship was perceived as "not merely part, but the kernel of the static order of the world,"[93] and even beyond:

> Around this sacred monarchy and its priesthood a theocratic government [had] developed in which every aspect of life was a function of the State centred in the divine throne as the pivot of society in a permanent changeless cosmic order of elemental vastness whose powers were unlimited.[94]

There was an important corollary to this cosmic power:

> It was the duty of the king as the son of Re, who had put order *(maat)* in the place of chaos when he called all things into being, to maintain "justice" *(maat)* in relation to the needs of the nation, ruling it with "truth."[95]

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86. J. E. Manchip White, *Ancient Egypt: Its Culture and History* (New York: Dover, 1970), 17.
87. Ibid., 16.
88. Eugen Strouhal, *Life of the Ancient Egyptians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 251.
89. H. A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement: An Essay on Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East* (1972; reprint, New York: Hacker Art Books, 1978), 44.
90. H. W. Fairman, "The Kingship Rituals of Egypt," in S. H. Hooke, ed., *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958), 85.
91. James Putnam, *Egyptology: An Introduction to the History, Art and Culture of Ancient Egypt* (1990; reprint, London: Grange Books, 1998), 44.
92. John Baines, "Origins of Egyptian Kingship," in David O'Connor and David P. Silverman, eds., *Ancient Egyptian Kingship* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 95.
93. Ibid.
94. E. O. James, "The Sacred Kingship and the Priesthood," in *The Sacral Kingship: Contributions to the Central Theme of the VIIIth International Congress for the History of Religions (Rome, April 1955)* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 65.
95. E. O. James, *The Nature and Function of Priesthood: A Comparative and Anthropological Study* (1955; reprint, London: Thames and Hudson, 1961), 116.

That Pharaoh would now find himself in such a precarious plight implies that he has breached his duty to rule with *maat,* vividly calling to mind the Book of Abraham's description of the Pharaohs of his day as having departed from the righteous ways of the first Pharaoh.[96] The violation of *maat* by the Pharaoh who had taken Sarah and been willing to kill Abraham threatened not only Pharaoh personally but also his royal realm and beyond; the crisis was, in a word, cosmic.

What next befalls Pharaoh in the *Genesis Apocryphon* is noteworthy in light of the fact that Egyptians suffering from illness sometimes turned to the gods for help. Some magical cures apparently took place in temples, where the afflicted would pray, meditate, and rest, while truths would be revealed to them in dreams.[97] According to the *Genesis Apocryphon,* Pharaoh had a dream in which he saw Abraham laying his hand on Pharaoh's head and healing him.[98] Egypt's finest physicians and wizards had utterly failed to cure the languishing king, upon whose health and well-being theoretically rested the welfare of the entire realm and continuation of the cosmic order. All was imperiled, and, according to Pharaoh's dream, everything now depended on the power of one man, this foreigner Abraham. In one of the great turnabouts and ironies of history, the life of Pharaoh and all that theoretically depended on him were literally in Abraham's hands. No wonder the ancients understood this incident to be a "crucial event in the history of mankind."[99]

The *Genesis Apocryphon* proceeds to tell that when Pharaoh's messenger implored Abraham to come heal the king, Lot divulged that Sarah was really Abraham's wife and would have to be restored to him before he could heal Pharaoh. With this startling news, the irony of the situation may well have become apparent. Numerous statues of the ancient Pharaohs depict the king's head sheltered under the outstretched wings of a falcon, symbolizing the perpetual protection of Pharaoh by the great god Horus.[100] "The central tenet binding together ancient Egyptian civilisation [was] the notion that the king fulfils a role on earth under the protective wings of the celestial falcon in heaven."[101] Now, however, it was Abraham who seemed to enjoy divine protection, even at Pharaoh's expense.

Summoning Abraham to his side, the ailing monarch first chided and then implored: "*What have you done to me . . . ? . . . Here is your wife;* take her away; *go,* depart from all the provinces of Egypt. But now pray for me and for my household that this evil spirit may be commanded (to depart) from us."[102] Pharaoh's complaint, followed immediately by his plea to the patriarch for help, demonstrates that not only has the Lord stretched out his mighty hand to answer Abraham's prayer, but that the Lord's hand was in the whole event in the first place, for as Hugh Nibley has observed, "If Abraham was rudely thrust aside by his royal [rival] . . . in Egypt . . . , it was only to show who the real king was—[Pharaoh], as it turned out, [was] for all [his] pride and power the [pretender]," which "in the end, is made perfectly clear in the almost comical [complaint] of [Pharaoh that he], who had contemptuously thrust the helpless

96. Abraham 1:26.
97. Strouhal, *Life of the Ancient Egyptians,* 251.
98. 1QapGen XX.22, in Fitzmyer, *The "Genesis Apocryphon" of Qumran Cave I,* 57. See also *Traditions*, 28.
99. Wacholder, "How Long Did Abraham Stay in Egypt?" 43.
100. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art,* 82–83.
101. Stephen Quirke, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (London: British Museum, 1992), 21–22.
102. 1QapGen XX.26–28, in Fitzmyer, *The "Genesis Apocryphon" of Qumran Cave I,* 65, 67. See also *Traditions*, 29.

Abraham aside, [was] actually the [victim] of his power. . . . The roles of victim and victor are almost ludicrously reversed."[103]

Even so, it was not in Abraham's nature to take pleasure at the pain of another, even an enemy; and, as the *Genesis Apocryphon* recounts, he promptly complied with the request of the hapless king: "So I prayed for that [ ] . . . and I laid my hands upon his [he]ad. The plague was removed from him and the evil [spirit] was commanded (to depart) [from him], and he was cured. And the king rose."[104]

This remarkable account, unknown to the modern world in Joseph Smith's day, constitutes the missing piece of the puzzle that makes sense of the scene depicted in the Book of Abraham's Facsimile 3 showing Abraham sitting on Pharaoh's throne "by the politeness of the king" and wearing a crown "representing the priesthood." Abraham's remarkable rise from the Egyptian altar of death in Ur to Pharaoh's very throne in Egypt reflects, says Hugh Nibley, the broad outlines of the royal ritual enacted throughout the ancient Near East at the New Year's drama, an "indispensable element" of which was "the temporary humiliation of the true king while a rival and substitute displaces him on the throne."[105] And as in the New Year's drama where "the true king is always vindicated in the end," so it is with Abraham when Pharaoh "acknowledg[es] th[e] superior power and priesthood of his rival"[106] by "the bestowal of royal honors."[107] Here again the image of the cedar becomes visible, for despite Pharaoh's pretensions to be the cedar world-tree, it took Abraham to restore health and life to the ailing Pharaoh, reminiscent of the fact that in the ancient Near East the cedar was "employed in magic rites and incantations . . . for the purpose of restoring life and health."[108] And with a twist of irony, it is finally only by Abraham's word that Pharaoh himself is not felled, while Abraham towers tall and strong as the true cosmic royal cedar.

As the Stars of Heaven

The Book of Abraham facsimile depicting Abraham on the Egyptian throne explains that he is "reasoning upon the principles of astronomy, in the king's court." And as this unique opportunity had arisen directly from God's unusual command to Abraham as he was about to enter Egypt, so God had also prepared Abraham—apparently on the very night he received that command—with the knowledge necessary to enlighten the Egyptians on the subject for which they were already so famed. According to the Book of Abraham, it was immediately after Abraham received the strange command regarding Sarah that he gazed into the Urim and Thummim, which served that night as a kind of supertelescope through which the patriarch peered at the stars—only to then find himself face to face with their Creator, who personally conducted the astronomy lesson.

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103. Nibley, "The Sacrifice of Sarah," 84; see also *Abraham in Egypt,* 359–60.

104. 1QapGen XX.28–29, in Fitzmyer, *The "Genesis Apocryphon" of Qumran Cave I,* 67. See also *Traditions*, 29.

105. Nibley, "The Sacrifice of Sarah," 84; see also *Abraham in Egypt,* 359–60.

106. Ibid.

107. Ibid., 82. Bestowed, notes Nibley, on both Abraham and Sarah; he is ushered onto the royal throne while she is presented with silver and gold and garments of the finest linen and purple. Ibid., 87.

108. Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism,* 33.

> Thus I, Abraham, talked with the Lord, face to face, as one man talketh with another; and he told me of the works which his hands had made; And he said unto me: My son, my son (and his hand was stretched out), behold I show you all these. And he put his hand upon mine eyes, and I saw those things which his hands had made, which were many; and they multiplied before mine eyes, and I could not see the end thereof. . . . And it was in the night time when the Lord spake these words unto me: I will multiply thee, and thy seed after thee, like unto these; and if thou canst count the number of sands, so shall be the number of thy seeds.[109]

Furthermore, explained the Lord, the stars in their varying degrees of glory were like God's spirit children in their differing degrees of intelligence.[110] Abraham was being shown these things before going into Egypt, he was told, "that ye may declare all these words."[111]

What the Lord apparently did not tell Abraham was the remarkable circumstance in which he would be declaring these things—seated on the very throne of Pharaoh and surrounded by the greatest astronomers of the realm. Abraham "taught them much," says Eupolemus, and "explained astrology and the other sciences to them."[112] According to Josephus, Abraham conversed "with the most learned of the Egyptians, whence his virtue and reputation became still more conspicuous." And "gaining their admiration at these meetings as a man of extreme sagacity, gifted not only with high intelligence but with power to convince his hearers on any subject which he undertook to teach, he introduced them to arithmetic and transmitted to them the laws of astronomy."[113]

That Abraham would be deemed qualified to enlighten the royal Egyptian court on astronomy is perhaps as much a miracle as was his healing of Pharaoh. From the earliest times, explained Diodorus of Sicily in the first century B.C., "the positions and arrangements of the stars, as well as their motion, have always been the subject of careful observation among the Egyptians, if anywhere in the world . . . they have observed with utmost keenness the motions, orbits and stoppings of each planet."[114] Nor was this intense interest in the skies merely a disinterested search for knowledge,[115] but was part and parcel of the royal ideology and cult with its "need to establish the exact periods of time deemed indispensable for the performance of certain rites."[116] Thus, "remarkable progress was made in astronomy by observation of the sky" in order "to meet the practical requirements of telling the time for temple services to begin, matching the public calendar with celestial time and correctly orienting sacred buildings such as temples and pyramids."[117] It comes as no surprise, then, to learn that "the continuous [astronomical] observations necessitated to fulfil the requirements of the cult" were made by members of

109. Abraham 3:11–14.
110. Abraham 3:16–19.
111. Abraham 3:15.
112. Eupolemus, quoted by Eusebius in *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.17.8, in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* 2:881. See also *Traditions*, 8.
113. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1.8.2, in *Josephus IV,* 83. See also *Traditions*, 49.
114. Tamsyn Barton, *Ancient Astrology* (London: Routledge, 1994), 24, quoting Diodorus, *World History* 1.81.
115. See James Henry Breasted, *A History of Egypt: From the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), 100: "It never occurred to the Egyptian to enter upon the search for truth for its own sake. . . . They had much practical acquaintance with astronomy."
116. Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1973), 8.
117. Strouhal, *Life of the Ancient Egyptians,* 239–40.

the priesthood[118]—a fact adding further significance to the detail included in Book of Abraham Facsimile 3 showing that as Abraham sat on the Egyptian throne he was wearing "a crown upon his head, representing the Priesthood." If the Egyptians expected miraculous healing to come only by means of a priest, they similarly expected astronomical instruction to come the same way. And so it did as they were taught by the great Abraham seated upon the royal throne.

And here the imagery of the cedar converges with that of the stars, for even as Abraham, symbolized by the great cedar, teaches of the sky, early Egyptian texts describe the sky itself as "a huge tree overshadowing the earth, the stars being the fruits or leaves which hang from its branches. When 'the gods perch on its boughs,' they are evidently identified with the stars."[119] One might also say that Abraham's vastly superior knowledge of the stars demonstrates that he is the true cedar, towering high above Pharaoh and enjoying a much higher vantage point from which to see and understand the cosmos.

Ironically, the center of the cosmos in Egyptian belief was represented by Pharaoh's throne, which was deemed "the divine throne as the pivot of society in a permanent changeless cosmic order of elemental vastness,"[120] in which "everything, past and future," was thought to be "written in the stars,"[121] so that Pharaoh's proximity and pivotal relationship to the starry heavens was indeed central. If Pharaoh was the earthly embodiment of the gods,[122] the High God Ptah—the "ancient one" who was associated with a cedar by virtue of being the Noble *Djed*[123]—was depicted as "the regulator of the circuit of the heavenly bodies" and is described in a Pyramid Text as "the greatest of those who are in the northern sky,"[124] meaning the greatest star around whom all the other stars rotate. Likewise the god Osiris, whose soul was at one point transformed into a star,[125] appears in Pyramid Texts "seated on his throne . . . while the stars clustered about, as celestial spirits."[126] Similarly, Pharaoh's reign is infused with cosmic significance as he is frequently depicted with upraised arms supporting the star-studded heavens.[127] The concept is reminiscent of the cosmic throne room of other ancient eastern monarchs whose thrones were each situated in a domed and sometimes even revolving room decorated with depictions of the stars and other heavenly bodies. In this auspicious setting the king reigned "as though enthroned in Heaven" while the stars, planets, and moon "revolve[d] like jewels about the throne."[128]

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118. Morenz, *Egyptian Religion,* 8.
119. W. Max Müller, *Egyptian Mythology* (London: George G. Harrap, n.d.), 35.
120. James, "The Sacred Kingship and the Priesthood," in *The Sacral Kingship,* 65.
121. Müller, *Egyptian Mythology,* 53.
122. Erik Hornung, *The Valley of the Kings: Horizon of Eternity* (New York: Timken, 1990), 56.
123. See above notes 55 and 56 and accompanying text.
124. Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt,* 59.
125. Ibid., 131.
126. Beatrice L. Goff, *Symbols of Ancient Egypt in the Late Period: The Twenty-first Dynasty* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 20.
127. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art,* 127.
128. H. P. L'Orange, "Expressions of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World," in *The Sacral Kingship,* 484.

In relation to Pharaoh's throne, those stars were considered to be the prior Egyptian kings, who, "in dying, left the sad and restricting conditions of earthly life for a carefree existence among the stars"[129] to be transformed into "the imperishable stars, that is, . . . the circumpolar stars that never set in the northern sky."[130] To join those glorious beings was the highest aspiration of the living Pharaoh, who saw "in the splendor of the nightly heavens the host of those who had preceded him" as "they now swept across the sky as eternal stars."[131] Many royal tombs, including the pyramidal burial chambers at the end of the Old Kingdom, have star-covered ceilings. The motif continued even into the New Kingdom, as seen, for example, in the astronomical ceiling in the tomb of Seti I, where "the imperishable circumpolar stars of the northern sky" appear.[132] Commemorating Pharaoh's destiny among those imperishable stars were the seemingly imperishable pyramids of the Old Kingdom, constructed with a northerly orientation for the entrance corridor, which "ascends at an angle of 26 to 27 degrees and creates a direct line from the circumpolar stars to the burial chamber. The pharaoh could thus climb to the 'indestructible' stars of the northern sky who accepted him in their number and prevented him from sinking into the depths of the Netherworld."[133] Once again there is a convergence of the imagery of cedars and stars, for as the Pyramid Texts prescribe, the deceased king—whose body had been embalmed with cedar oil and laid in a cedar tomb—was to "ferry over to Re, to the horizon . . . to his station on the east side of the sky, in its northern region among the Imperishable (Stars)."[134] His barque would, of course, necessarily be made of cedar,[135] even as was the funerary barque of Khufu, builder of the Great Pyramid.[136]

Pharaoh's highest eternal aspirations were thus inextricably linked with the stars, but it was now obvious that it was none other than Abraham who held the key to understanding those stars; only he could point the way to eternal life and kingship. What remains to be explained, however, is why the Egyptian ideology of the stars—an ideology already ancient in Abraham's day—bears such resemblance to the Abrahamic ideology as seen in the Joseph Smith sources. For example, even as the Egyptian creator god Ptah was identified with the sun or the polar star, so the God who has through Joseph Smith declared himself still to be the God of Abraham[137] has emphasized his divine connection with the cosmos he has created: "He is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. . . . As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made."[138] Even as Ptah was the greatest star and the axis around which the other stars rotated, so Abraham tells (in the Book of Abraham) that the star nearest to God's throne is the greatest

129. Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt,* 181.
130. Goff, *Symbols of Ancient Egypt,* 20.
131. James Henry Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 101.
132. Hornung, *The Valley of the Kings,* 78.
133. Ibid., 24; and see p. 87.
134. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt,* 102, quoting Pyramid Text § 1000.
135. Málek, *In the Shadow of the Pyramids,* 37, 58.
136. John Baines and Jaromír Málek, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Facts on File, 1984), 20.
137. 2 Nephi 29:14; D&C 132:29–51.
138. D&C 88:7–9.

of all the stars seen by Abraham, and governs the other heavenly bodies,[139] in likeness of the one greatest premortal spirit who "was like unto God," even the "Son of Man."[140] Even as Pharaoh's throne, as the divine throne, was set in the midst of the starry orbiting heavens, so God tells Enoch (in the Book of Moses) that "I can stretch forth mine hands and hold all the creations which I have made."[141] Even as Osiris is seen surrounded by stars as celestial spirits, so Abraham saw the host of premortal spirits surrounding the glorious one who "was like unto God,"[142] and so Joseph Smith described righteous spirits as so glorious in appearance as to resemble "flaming fire."[143] Even as the living Pharaoh identified his royal predecessors with great stars, so Abraham disclosed that his patriarchal predecessors were kings with a keen interest in and knowledge of the stars,[144] and had figured among the "many . . . noble and great ones" chosen by God to be "rulers,"[145] similar to the stars among which there were "many great ones" God had set as "the governing ones."[146] And even as Pharaoh's ultimate and highest aim was to join his ancestors among the great stars, so Abraham was promised that his seed would be multiplied as the "stars, or all the great lights . . . in the firmament of heaven,"[147] meaning that they who obeyed the gospel[148] would in eternity "have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever."[149]

What such striking resemblances seem to suggest is that the Abrahamic ideology of the stars was nothing new with him but had been well known among his patriarchal predecessors and was in turn preserved to a remarkable (and clearly recognizable degree) by the Pharaohs "seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah."[150] Indeed, when the Book of Abraham tells of the "records of the fathers" in Abraham's possession, Abraham indicates that they contained "a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers."[151] According to *Jubilees*, among those patriarchal records in Abraham's possession were the writings of Enoch,[152] calling to mind the astronomical sections of the extant work called *1 Enoch*.[153] And Eupolemus recounts that when Abraham taught the Egyptians astronomy, he attributed the discovery of these things to Enoch.[154]

139. Abraham 3:2–3, 9, 16.
140. Abraham 3:24, 27.
141. Moses 7:36.
142. Abraham 3:24.
143. Smith and Galbraith, *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith,* 365–66.
144. Abraham 1:26, 31.
145. Abraham 3:22–23.
146. Abraham 3:2–3.
147. Abraham 3:13.
148. Abraham 2:10.
149. Abraham 3:26.
150. Abraham 1:26.
151. Abraham 1:31.
152. *Jubilees* 21:10. See also *Traditions*, 19.
153. *1 Enoch* 72–82, in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* 1:50–61.
154. Eupolemus, quoted by Eusebius in *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.17.8, in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* 2:881. See also *Traditions*, 9.

But that unforgettable scene of cosmic kingship with Abraham seated on Pharaoh's throne and discoursing on the stars looked not only backward in time but also forward; in Nibley's words, Abraham "is one of those key figures in whom all the events of the past are brought into focus as by a burning-glass, and whose actions are in turn projected into the future as an ever-expanding image."[155] As the posterity of Abraham, Latter-day Saints strive to "do the works of Abraham"[156] in order to "keep their second estate" and "have glory added upon their heads forever and ever"[157]—so they can join their illustrious ancestor Abraham, who already has entered into his exaltation and sits upon his throne not as an angel but as a god.[158] Then will they, in accordance with the ancient rabbinical teaching about future Israel, truly "shine like the stars"[159] as they sit gloriously enthroned among the stars, enjoying that eternal life and kingship so aptly symbolized by the towering and majestic evergreen cedars of Lebanon.

Such was the significance of the cedar and the stars seen by Father Abraham on that momentous night long ago at the border of Egypt.

155. Nibley, "Facsimile No. 1, by the Figures," 88.
156. D&C 132:32.
157. Abraham 3:26.
158. D&C 132:37.
159. Kasher, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation,* 3:161, citing *Sifre D'barim* 206 and other midrashim, and citing Daniel 12:3 that the "wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament . . . as the stars for ever and ever."

Chapter 4

Abraham's Visions of the Heavens

Jared W. Ludlow

"If you could hie to Kolob in the twinkling of an eye," begins a familiar LDS hymn partially based on the revelation Abraham received of the vastness and eternal nature of God's creations in the heavens above.[1] If one turns to the book of Genesis, however, no such record of Abraham's vision is found, an interesting omission considering all the contact between Abraham and God in the Genesis account.[2] Yet significant heavenly visions of Abraham are preserved in the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price and in several Jewish, Christian, and "pagan" texts of the first centuries B.C. and A.D.

The question is, then, when texts contain stories about Abraham not found in Genesis, how credible are these stories? Where do these traditions come from? Are they simply creations by later authors, or is it possible that they transmit Abrahamic traditions that did not make the canonical Bible? Are we to ignore and disregard these traditions as false, as mere fabrications by later authors? Or can we, in the spirit of what Joseph Smith urged when talking about the Apocrypha (see Doctrine and Covenants 91:1–6), find gems of truth within the texts that can be beneficial?

In order to discuss possible relationships among texts describing Abraham's visions of the heavens, this paper will compare the descriptions of Abraham's visions in the Book of Abraham with these ancient texts according to the criteria listed below. This examination will help show the strong possibility that there was a common tradition about Abraham's knowledge of the heavens—not presently found in the Bible—upon which the ancient texts and the Book of Abraham drew.

1. "If You Could Hie to Kolob," *Hymns,* no. 284.
2. The closest reference to Abraham seeing the heavens is in Genesis 15:5, when God asks Abraham to count the stars in the heaven above; and so numberless also shall be his posterity. "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be."

Thus, it may be possible to determine that these preserved traditions are authentic accounts of Abraham passed down through the generations and not solely creative additions by later writers.

Criteria

Although tracing the threads of a tradition is a difficult endeavor, there may be some criteria to help establish the authenticity of ancient traditions found in later texts. First, to try to avoid proof-texting[3] and falling victim to "parallelomania,"[4] these traditions should be found in *similar contexts* and a *specific time period* (this study will look at Jewish and Christian texts from ca. 200 B.C. to A.D. 200). The more details of a tradition that are shared, the more likely they stem from the same core tradition. It is one thing to say that an ancient prophet had a heavenly vision—numerous examples of prophets could be given—but it is quite another thing to see various texts talking about a specific prophet, Abraham, having a vision of the heavens, learning the governing principles of the stars, and even passing on this knowledge to the Egyptians.[5] "Detailed study is the criterion, and the detailed study ought to respect the context and not be limited to juxtaposing mere excerpts."[6]

Second, the texts need to be examined to determine if they are *dependent* on each other. If they are dependent, these texts can be further explored to see differences and modifications of the tradition from one period to the next. However, multiple attestations of a tradition in various independent texts raise the strong possibility of an earlier unknown source of the tradition upon which these later texts drew independently.

A third criterion is the *purpose* for which the later authors used this tradition. If all the authors used it to prove the same point, there is a greater likelihood for dependence among texts. If, however, various authors use this tradition for different means, then it seems more likely that they drew upon a common source of the tradition but used it for their own purposes (unless they were in polemics against another text's use of the tradition).

Thus, the three criteria we will be using in this paper when looking at traditions about Abraham are the following:

- Whether the traditions are found in similar contexts and time period
- Whether the texts are dependent upon each other
- The purpose for the author's use of the tradition

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3. This term means using a portion of a text out of context to prove a particular point, usually distorting the original meaning of the text.
4. This term was coined to discourage the common practice of citing parallels between texts without any determination of how the parallel texts may have actually been related historically. There needs to be consideration of genre, historical milieu, or other factors to show some type of relationship. See the cautions of Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 (1962): 1–3, 6–7; and Stephen E. Robinson, "Lying for God: The Uses of Apocrypha," in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints,* ed. C. Wilfred Griggs (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1986), 133–54.
5. A helpful collection of Abrahamic texts can be found in John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, comps. and eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), hereafter referred to as *Traditions.*
6. Sandmel, "Parallelomania," 2. An excellent example of the importance of this criterion in our study is found in the *Book of Jasher* 15:22: "And the king [Pharaoh] ordered Abram to be brought, and he sat in the court of the

Tradition History and Criticism

The critical study of traditions has been common among biblical scholars.[7] Primarily this methodology looks at the adaptation of earlier traditions and stories, either oral or written, by later writers. One of its goals is to determine whether new meanings were applied to older traditions, thereby changing the status of the tradition. Or, asked another way, do later texts preserve kernels of earlier oral or written traditions even if they have been modified creatively by later writers? Douglas Knight stated, "while materials were at points transmitted from one generation to another in a manner that would minimize changes in the *traditum,* in many other instances the tradition was 'existentially' applied to the new historical situation, resulting in novel layers of meaning which were incorporated quite naturally into the growing text."[8] Another scholar has explained the process this way: "Folk traditions do not become completely extinct, but with the change of circumstances they tend to change their form, sloughing one aspect and assuming another, and despite this, or just because of this, they safeguard an important part of their content."[9]

An example of this type of work is Shalom Spiegel's work on the Akedah (Abraham's binding of Isaac). He closely examined the later Jewish legends and lore surrounding this biblical event, primarily in the rabbinical Midrash, and attempted to determine which parts of the Midrash were based on earlier traditions that had been passed down through the centuries. The translator's introduction to this work explains what might have happened:

> As we observe how each age treats the biblical story, we come to appreciate still another possibility: that the biblical account itself may be but the selected, the adopted version of a much more ancient narrative which once upon a time circulated orally and which possibly included elements now no longer in the written record. Can we be sure that such elements have been completely forgotten? Perhaps the biblical author chose to write down not everything he knew but only what seemed fitting to him to record in his time; and what he would not put down in writing, word of mouth and memory might well preserve.[10]

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king's house, and the king greatly exalted Abram on that night." Here Abram is being exalted by the Egyptians, which sounds very similar to the depiction in Facsimile 3 of the Book of Abraham; however, the context in the *Book of Jasher* is not Abraham's teaching astronomy to the Egyptians but his being exalted because the Pharaoh was taken with Sarah's beauty. The possibility of a connection between these two parallels, therefore, is much weaker than in the other cases mentioned below.

7. For some introductions and overviews to tradition-historical theory, see Douglas A. Knight, *Rediscovering the Traditions of Israel* (Missoula, Mont.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), 1–32; Knud Jeppesen and Benedikt Otzen, eds., *The Productions of Time: Tradition History in Old Testament Scholarship,* trans. Frederick H. Cryer (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1984), 127–33; Walter E. Rast, *Tradition History and the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 1–32, 72–77.
8. Douglas A. Knight, "Tradition History," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary,* ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:638.
9. Umberto Cassuto, *Biblical and Ancient Oriental Texts,* vol. 2 of Biblical and Oriental Studies, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1975), 2:81.
10. Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial. On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice: The Akedah,* trans. Judah Goldin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), xvii.

By examining later traditions, one can find "faint echoes" or an "archaic cliché" of earlier versions of the story.[11] Spiegel explained how there might be several attempts at recording a tradition: "Either [there are] variant readings due to errors in the course of transcription and oral transmission; or different versions of a tradition; or additions or expansions by different homilists as they attempt to harmonize and unite kindred themes."[12] Spiegel felt that many times the impetus for revised traditions was contact with foreign influences: "And it also happens that in time, owing to forgetfulness, traditions get lost, and the loss is recovered through contact with an alien culture."[13] Perhaps by examining the traditions related to Abraham's visions of the heavens, we can get a sense of the earlier sources of this tradition, either oral or written, that these texts might have been drawing on and the possible impetus for their later appearance.

Book of Abraham Account

The Book of Abraham begins with a description of Abraham's early years in Chaldea within an idolatrous family and his subsequent journeys to Haran and finally Canaan. When the famine worsened in the land of Canaan, Abraham was told by the Lord to go down into Egypt. As Abraham journeyed south towards Egypt to escape the famine, the Lord granted him a tremendous heavenly vision of all the works and creations of His hands (see Abraham 3:11–12). The Lord specifically stated that he was showing these things to Abraham before he went into Egypt so "that ye may declare all these words" (3:15).

Abraham's vision of these creations seems to have occurred in two stages. First, the text states that Abraham had the Urim and Thummim and saw the stars and specifically Kolob (see 3:2–3). The Lord also communicated with Abraham "by the Urim and Thummim" as He shared with him the reckoning of the Lord's time (3:4). The second stage of Abraham's vision seems to begin in 3:11, when Abraham "talked with the Lord, face to face, as one man talketh with another; and he told me of the works which his hands had made." The Lord stretched out his hand and "put his hand upon mine [Abraham's] eyes, and I saw those things which his hands had made, which were many; and they multiplied before mine eyes, and I could not see the end thereof" (3:12). (In both stages of the vision, Abraham's body remained on the earth since throughout the vision the Lord referred to the earth upon which Abraham *stood* [see 3:5, 6, 7; see also 3:3, 9].)

From this vision, Abraham learned many significant things about God's creations and the laws that keep these celestial bodies in their proper sphere and order. He learned that there are governing planets that control all the other planets in their revolutions, and that nearest to the throne of

11. Ibid., 57–58.

12. Ibid., 89.

13. Ibid., 118. For this phenomenon, Spiegel used the example of small, short-lived plants planted around the time of the New Year, which were used for asking for blessings. This practice seems to have been a pagan rite that Jews adopted; then Jews in the Diaspora reinstituted the custom under influence from Christians. This phenomenon also explains the reappearance and revival of haggadot "which, to be sure, in almost all details can be explained by ancient midrashic sources, but which in the course of time either disappeared or were put out of sight, and the very recollection of them was lost, and in the Christian environment of the Middle Ages rose again to the surface and in full light" (Spiegel, *The Last Trial,* 120 n. 153).

God was the great one, Kolob, "which is the grand center which governs all the suns and systems of suns 'which belong to the same order' as our earth and those that move with it."[14] Abraham was told that "Kolob was after the manner of the Lord, according to its times and seasons in the revolutions thereof; that one revolution was a day unto the Lord, after his manner of reckoning, it being one thousand years according to the time appointed unto that whereon thou standest" (Abraham 3:4). God continued his discourse by discussing celestial bodies closer to Abraham's location and understanding: the rotations of the moon and earth. The moon rotates slower on its axis than the earth and therefore has a longer reckoning of time than the earth (see 3:5, 7).

Despite all the astronomical knowledge given to Abraham through this vision,[15] the vision and explanation of these celestial bodies seem to have been primarily a background for the more important principles God wanted to teach Abraham: that there will always be a higher level in the order of things until one reaches God. In other words, just as the planets are governed in a certain order, so too are the intelligences. There are various levels of intelligences, some intelligences governing others, until one comes to the Lord God, who is "more intelligent than they all" (3:19).

As the Lord continued to teach Abraham, he revealed some significant details of the premortal existence. Many "noble and great ones" were foreordained to be rulers because the Lord "saw that they were good" (3:23). Abraham was shown a glimpse of the beginning of this earth's creation when one who was like unto God told the others who were with him, "We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell" (3:24). The purpose for this earth's existence was then given: "And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (3:25). A brief glimpse of future judgment was also related: those who keep their first estate shall be added upon, "and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever" (3:26). Finally, Abraham gave a brief synopsis of the presentation of God's plan in a council in heaven, Jesus' meek acceptance of his mission as the Savior, and the subsequent rebellion of Satan and those who refused the plan (3:27–28). A more detailed description of the creation of the earth closes out the Book of Abraham (see chapters 4–5).

There are a few other parts of the Book of Abraham that can help us understand more about Abraham's knowledge of the heavens. In addition to the revelations and visions given Abraham in chapter 3, part of Abraham's astral knowledge apparently came from a record of the fathers he was preserving: "But the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands; therefore a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers, have I kept unto this day" (1:31).[16] Facsimile 3 is very

14. George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 265.

15. Perhaps Abraham had a personal interest or background in astronomy; thus the Lord worked through his interests to teach him other principles.

16. The book of *Jubilees* mentions that Abraham copied and studied the Hebrew books of his father (12:27; see *Traditions,* 18). "Several centuries later, in the brief introduction to the compilation *Sefer Ha-Razim* (late third to early fourth century A.D.), it is said that the 'books of the mysteries' were given to Noah by the angel Raziel and passed on to Abraham, Isaac, and eventually Solomon." James E. Bowley, "The Compositions of Abraham," in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha,* ed. John C. Reeves (Atlanta: Scholars

significant for understanding Abraham's connection with the Egyptians and astronomy. According to the explanation given for this facsimile, Abraham is sitting upon the Pharaoh's throne and "is reasoning upon the principles of Astronomy, in the king's court." The teaching of Abraham's knowledge of the heavens to the Egyptians is prevalent in several Jewish texts but completely absent from Genesis. Facsimile 2 portrays many of the items that Abraham learned from his vision of the heavens in Abraham 3.

Extracanonical Accounts

Some of the most significant facets of Abraham's vision in the Book of Abraham can also be found in ancient Jewish texts.[17] These texts, like the Book of Abraham, relate accounts of Abraham's seeing the heavens and God's creations; having a great knowledge of the stars and passing that knowledge on to the Egyptians; learning about future judgment; and glimpsing the premortal existence. Turning now to some extracanonical traditions about Abraham, we are able to see the similarities in various accounts of Abraham's visions of the heavens.

The *Apocalypse of Abraham*

The *Apocalypse of Abraham,* a first or second century A.D. Jewish text, is remarkably similar to the Book of Abraham in its bipartite structure. The first part discloses Abraham's father's idolatry and Abraham's refusal to follow, and the second part details the visions Abraham was given of the heavens and events related to God's plan.

The *Apocalypse of Abraham* begins with a discussion of Abraham's being raised in an idolatrous household and struggling to come to know the true God. In the midst of his struggles (portrayed somewhat comically as Abraham used some of his father's gods to destroy the other gods and then when his father confronted him about the destruction, Abraham blamed it on the surviving gods), God revealed himself to Abraham and told him to "Go out from Terah, your father, and go out of the house, that you too may not be slain in the sins of your father's house" (8:4).[18] (Immediately after Abraham went out of the house, "the sound of a great thunder came and burned him [Terah] and his house and everything in his house, down to the ground" [8:6].)

The second part of the *Apocalypse* relates the visions Abraham had of the heavens. The Lord told Abraham he would show him "the things which were made by the ages and by my word, and affirmed, created, and renewed.[19] And I will announce to you in them what will come upon those who have done evil and just things in the race of man" (9:9–10). An angel arrived to escort

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Press, 1994), 215; see also *Traditions,* 85. The Qur'an also refers to writings of Abraham (sura 53:36–37; 87:18–19); see *Traditions,* 291–97.

17. Some parallels between these texts, particularly the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and the *Testament of Abraham* and the Book of Abraham have been mentioned in earlier LDS works, most notably Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 10–35. See also Michael D. Rhodes, "The Book of Abraham: Divinely Inspired Scripture," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): 120–26, and *Traditions.*

18. Translations of the text are from Ryszard Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:681–705. Pertinent parts of this translation can also be found in *Traditions,* 52–66.

19. Could this be referring to stages of God's creative processes? Affirmed—spiritual creation, created—physical creation, renewed—restoration to pre-fall conditions?

Abraham on his visionary journey and made an interesting statement regarding predestination (or foreordination).[20] "Behold, I am assigned (to be) with you and with the generation which is predestined (to be born) from you" (10:16–17). In other words, there was a foreordination of those who would be born of Abraham's lineage. The angel then stated that they would ascend "to show you (what) is in the heavens, on the earth and in the sea, in the abyss, and in the lower depths, in the garden of Eden and in its rivers, in the fullness of the universe. And you will see its circles[21] in all" (12:10). Michael Rhodes has pointed out that the first part of this phrase ("what is in the heavens, on the earth and in the sea, in the abyss")

> is almost an exact translation of the Egyptian words in the left middle portion of Facsimile Number 2 of the book of Abraham (figures 9 and 10). He is shown "the fullness of the whole world and its circle," in a picture with two sides. This is a good description of the object depicted in Facsimile Number 2 (called a hypocephalus by Egyptologists). This document even describes the four animal-headed figures labeled number 6 in Facsimile Number 2 [*Apocalypse of Abraham* 18].[22]

As they were preparing to ascend from the earth, a figure named Azazel,[23] chief of the fallen angels, confronted Abraham. Then the angel accompanying Abraham seemed to make an allusion to Satan's rebellion in the pre-earthly council when he said to Azazel, "For Abraham's portion is in heaven, and yours is on earth, for you have selected here, (and) become enamored of the dwelling place of your blemish. Therefore the Eternal Ruler, the Mighty One, has given you a dwelling on earth. Through you the all-evil spirit (is) a liar, and through you (are) wrath and trials on the generations of men who live impiously. . . . You cannot deceive him [Abraham], because he is the enemy of you and of those who follow you and who love what you wish" (13:8–10, 13–14).

Later in the vision we find another discussion of Azazel when Abraham saw the Garden of Eden and Azazel (Satan) tempting Adam and Eve. Abraham asked why God allowed Azazel such dominion when his works could ruin humankind on earth (see 23:12). God responded, "Those who desire evil, . . . over them did I give him dominion, and he was to be beloved of them" (23:13–14). This is very similar to the description of Satan's rebellion in Abraham 3:28, "and the second [Satan] was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him."

After the confrontation with Azazel, Abraham ascended to the heavens into a glorious light, and various aspects of God's creations were shown to him. "I [Abraham] saw there, on the fifth (firmament), hosts of stars, and the orders they were commanded to carry out, and the elements of earth obeying them" (19:9). God asked Abraham to count the stars, which Abraham declined to do

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20. Although there is a distinction between "predestination" and "foreordination" in LDS theology today, it is not always clear from the translations (most done by translators who have no notion of "foreordination"), or even from the primary sources, which meaning is most correct.
21. According to the translator's footnote, this last phrase is "obscure, perhaps corrupt. Possibly 'in the fullness of the universe and its circles, and you will see . . . in all.'" Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 695 n. 12c. The reference to "circles" may be an allusion to the revolutions and rotations of celestial stars, similar to what Abraham saw in the Book of Abraham.
22. Rhodes, "The Book of Abraham: Divinely Inspired Scripture," 123.
23. For a brief discussion on the identification of Azazel as a demon figure see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 3:1020–21.

because as a mortal he could not. Then God gave Abraham the promise of numberless posterity, which we know as part of the Abrahamic covenant: "As the number of the stars and their power so shall I place for your seed the nations and men" (20:5; cf. Genesis 18:18). The addition of "and their [the stars'] power" to the normal phrasing of God's promise of numberless posterity to Abraham is noteworthy.[24] This phrase and *Apocalypse of Abraham* 19:9, "and [Abraham saw] the orders they [the hosts of stars] were commanded to carry out, and the elements of earth obeying them," echo the idea found in the Book of Abraham that greater stars had power or governed over lesser stars (see Abraham 3:2–6; 4:14–17).

The next portion of the vision consisted of seeing the inhabitants of the world. As Abraham looked upon the inhabitants he saw half of them on one side and half on the other. He asked God about this phenomenon and God responded, "This is my will with regard to what is in the light[25] and it was good before my face. And then, afterward, I gave them a command by my word and they came into existence. Whatever I had decreed was to exist had already been outlined in this and all the previously created (things) you have seen stood before me" (*Apocalypse of Abraham* 22:1–3). Although these sentences may be corrupted in the present text and it is difficult to establish with certainty the referents for some of the pronouns, it does seem likely that this passage is talking about a premortal existence or at least a preliminary spiritual creation for God's works. God then went on to explain that there were different groups of people because some had been "set apart" and "prepared" to be born of Abraham and to be called "my people" (22:5), hearkening back again to the notion of foreordination found in the Book of Abraham.[26]

The final stage of the vision dealt with the last days when evil upon the earth would be punished.[27] Regarding the wicked, God told Abraham, "My judgment will come upon the heathen who have acted wickedly through the people of your seed who have been set apart for me" (29:14–15). After the wicked are destroyed, only the righteous will remain. "And then from your seed will be left the righteous men in their number, protected by me, who strive in the glory of my name toward the place [the temple] prepared beforehand for them, which you saw deserted in the picture. . . . And they will rejoice forever in me" (29:17–19). This future promise to the righteous sounds

24. This term could also be translated as "host." See Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 699 n. 20c. Either definition seems to fit with the claim that follows above.

25. According to Rubinkiewicz, this word might be missing a letter, in which case it would mean "council, counsel" ("Apocalypse of Abraham," 700 n. 22b). This then might hearken back to the council in heaven. Another interesting speculation is that it could refer to the intelligence with (or around) which God created the spirit bodies, since, according to Doctrine and Covenants 93:29, intelligence is the *light* of truth (emphasis added).

26. This verse is the only one mentioned here that may be a later interpolation (by the Bogomils? See Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 684). However, the interpolation seems to fit more possibly with the first part, linking God with Azazel, and not with this second part, which is found in similar form earlier in the text (see 10:17).

27. There is also some discussion about the temple and its destruction at the hands of the heathen (undoubtedly alluding to the Roman destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70). One interesting part of the discussion for LDS readers is the relationship between the temple and priesthood. "This temple which you have seen, the altar and the works of art, this is my idea of the priesthood of the name of my glory, where every petition of man will enter and dwell" (25:4). "The priesthood of the name of my glory" perhaps alludes to the original name of the Melchizedek priesthood, "the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God" (D&C 107:3).

similar to the one given in the Book of Abraham for those who keep their first and second estates: "[They] shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever" (Abraham 3:26).

Other Extracanonical Accounts

There are many sources that definitively point to Abraham's having a superior knowledge of the stars, although the details of how he gained this knowledge are not as clearly given as in the Book of Abraham. The book of *Jubilees*, a second or first century B.C. Jewish text, states that

> in the sixth week, in its fifth year, Abram sat up during the night on the first of the seventh month, so that he might observe the stars from evening until daybreak so that he might see what the nature of the year would be with respect to rain. And he was sitting alone and making observations; and a word came into his heart, saying, "All of the signs of the stars and the signs of the sun and the moon are all in the hand of the Lord." . . . And he prayed on that night, saying: "My God, the Most High God, you alone are God to me. And you created everything, and everything which is was the work of your hands." (*Jubilees* 12:16–17, 19)[28]

As Abraham came to know the true God, he learned that the stars, sun, and moon were in the hands of the Lord. He also saw that everything was the work of God's hands. These ideas, and even their unfolding to Abraham during the nighttime,[29] find close correlation to the account in the Book of Abraham where Abraham came to know the works of God's hands and learned that everything was ultimately governed by the Lord (see Abraham 3:11–12, 14, 16, 18).

Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century A.D., gave an account of Abraham from the sources and information he had. "Berossus mentions our father Abram without naming him, when he says thus: 'In the tenth generation after the flood, there was among the Chaldeans a man, righteous and great, and skilful in the celestial science'" (*Jewish Antiquities* 1.7.2). Josephus also included a description of how Abraham came to know that the stars did not govern themselves, because of their irregular phenomena, but were governed by God: "If [said he (Abraham)] these bodies had power of their own, they would certainly take care of their own regular motions; but since they do not preserve such regularity, they make it plain that so far as they co-operate to our advantage, they do it not of their own abilities, but as they are subservient to him that commands them, to whom alone we ought justly to offer our honour and thanksgiving" (1.7.1). Josephus also related that Abraham conferred with the Egyptians and "delivered to them the science of astronomy" (1.8.2) and "he was admired by them, in those conferences, as a very wise man" (1.8.2).[30] Again there are some interesting parallels with the Book of Abraham: Abraham became learned in

28. Translation from Orval S. Wintermute, "Jubilees," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* 2:35–142; see *Traditions,* 17.

29. Another pseudepigraphic text, *4 Ezra*, contains a brief allusion to Abraham's having learned the extent of God's plan during the night. "And when they were committing iniquity before you, you chose for yourself one of them, whose name was Abraham; and you loved him and to him only you revealed the end of times, secretly by night" (3:13–15). Translation from Bruce M. Metzger, "The Fourth Book of Ezra," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* 1:517–59. See *Traditions,* 61.

30. Translation from William Whiston, *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (Baltimore: Armstrong and Plaskitt, 1830), 1.7.2. (Although this may not be the most up-to-date version of Josephus, it is interesting for its date. If Joseph Smith had read Josephus, it would have been from a work similar to this one.) See *Traditions,* 47–49.

the workings of the stars in heaven and passed this knowledge on to the Egyptians, thereby gaining great respect (cf. Abraham Facsimile 3).

The connection between astronomy, Abraham, and the Egyptians is also found in a few Hellenistic Jewish fragments which have been preserved in the writings of Eusebius.[31] Artapanus, who lived before 100 B.C., said that Abraham "came to Egypt with all his household to the Egyptian king Pharethothes, and taught him astrology."[32] An unidentified writer, termed Pseudo-Eupolemus, recorded that "Abraham excelled all in nobility and wisdom; he sought and obtained the knowledge of astrology and the Chaldean craft, and pleased God because he eagerly sought to be reverent. . . . When famine came on the land, Abraham moved to Egypt with his whole household and dwelt there. . . . Abraham lived in Heliopolis with the Egyptian priests and taught them much: He explained astrology and the other sciences to them, saying that the Babylonians and he himself had obtained this knowledge. However, he attributed the discovery of them to Enoch."[33]

Another writer, Vettius Valens, may also preserve an early source for the connection of Abraham to astronomy. "Vettius Valens claims to recount part of Abraham's composition in his own massive astrological compendium entitled *Anthologiae,* for which he culled material from many ancient sources."[34] One of these sources, Hermippus of Smyrna (third-century B.C. Peripatetic and Alexandrian student of Callimachus),[35] talks about Abraham in a discussion on the ninth locus, one of the loci that were part of an alternative horoscopic system. The ninth locus deals with matters concerning religion and travel, of which Vettius Valens cites Abraham as an expert:

On traveling from the works of Hermippus:

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31. Another possible source of Abraham and astronomy is Pseudo-Orpheus (Recension B) cited in Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 124:

    [Orpheus tells Musaeus about God, that no one can]
    see Him; for around [Him] a cloud has been fixed . . .
    Except a certain unique man, by descent an offshoot
    of the Chaldeans. For he was knowledgeable about the path of the Star,
    and the movements of the spheres around the earth,
    in a circle regularly, but each on its own axis.
    [This Chaldean, Abraham, understood]
    how He guides the winds [that is, spirits, subsidiary forces] around both air and water. (21, 27–31)

    Cited in James L. Kugel, *The Bible As It Was* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), 139. See also *Traditions,* 12.

32. Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.18.1; translation from John J. Collins, "Artapanus," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* 2:889–903. See also *Traditions,* 7.

33. Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.17.3–4, 6, 8; translation from Robert Doran, "Pseudo-Eupolemus," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* 2:873–82. See also *Traditions,* 8–9.

    The *Genesis Apocryphon* also mentions Abraham teaching something about Enoch to the Egyptians: "Goodness, wisdom and truth and I [Abram] read to them [Egyptian officials] the book of the writings of Enoch." (XIX, 25, as deciphered by Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, "Some Observations on the *Genesis Apocryphon,*" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 22 [1960]: 288.) See also the discussion in Ben Zion Wacholder, "How Long Did Abram Stay in Egypt?" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 35 (1964): 54.

34. Bowley, "The Compositions of Abraham," 229. See also *Traditions,* 476–77.

35. Rudolf Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 150–51.

> (1) Neither Petosiris nor the well-known king in their treatises explain the locus concerning traveling which is difficult to comprehend, except having spoken only this in regard to this *locus:* 'In regard to the time-degrees, they said that if anyone is of the maleficent (planets) he will make his geniture in travels and annoyances.' (2) Which is true, but beyond these they have nothing else in relation to the *locus* concerning travel. (3) But the most wonderful Abramos in his books about this *locus* has shown us both the explanations of others and ideas of his own, both originating other things and testing them, especially in matters of genitures prone to travelling, which have the following theories regarding these things.[36]

In talking about the importance of this work, Bowley has shown how this might be one of the earliest references to Abraham and astronomy (except for perhaps Berossus cited by Josephus mentioned above). Bowley also related how this tradition had a long life:

> The entire text of Vettius Valens *Anthologiae* 2.28–29 raises many fascinating questions regarding the astrological traditions associated with Abraham and their extensiveness and availability. . . . this important text of Vettius Valens, and the supporting testimony from Firmicus Maternus, clearly show that the portrait of Abraham depicting him as an eminent astrologer was long-lived (Hermippus to Firmicus) and widely disseminated. Like the more traditional and pious portrait of Abraham, this astrological Greek portrait was supported by pseudepigraphic writings. In fact, with Hermippus of Smyrna as the first witness, it would appear that the penning of Abraham's astrological treatise preceded the composition of any other "Abrahamic" work.
>
> We have then, in the motley collection of texts and testimonies consisting of the *Apocalypse of Abraham,* the *Testament of Abraham,* the Sethian work mentioned by Epiphanius, and the statements of Vettius Valens and Firmicus Maternus, evidence for the diverse threads of Abraham's compositions which weave their way through Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious traditions and through the records of pagan historiography and astrology.[37]

Philo, the Jewish philosopher of the first century A.D., related stories of Abraham's knowledge of the stars in his various treatises. In *De Cherubim,* he said that Abram "delighted in the lofty philosophy which investigates the events which take place in the air, and the sublime nature of the beings which exist in heaven" (1.2.4).[38] In other treatises, when discussing Abraham's name change, Philo tried to show the difference between a mere "astronomer" and one who is a wise man through the learning he has gained from the heavens.[39]

> The addition of the letter A, by one single element, changed and reformed the whole character of the mind, causing it, instead of the sublime knowledge and learning of sublime things, that is to say, instead of astronomy, to acquire a comprehension of wisdom, since it is by the knowledge of things above that the faculty is acquired of mounting up to one portion of the world, that is to say, to heaven, and to the periodical revolutions and motions of the stars; but wisdom has reference to

36. Translation from Bowley, "The Compositions of Abraham," 231–32.

37. Bowley, "The Compositions of Abraham," 232–33. For Vettius Valens, see *Traditions,* 476–77; for Firmicus Maternus, see 478–84; for Epiphanius, see 197–98.

38. Translations for Philo taken from Charles D. Yonge, *The Works of Philo* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 80. See also *Traditions*, 35.

39. Philo seems to be making the same point in another treatise when he says the Chaldeans are great astronomers but questions their motivation for studying the stars when they aren't yet able to comprehend everything around them here on the earth (*De Somniis,* 1.10.53–54, 57; Yonge, *Works of Philo,* 369). See *Traditions,* 35–43.

> the nature of all things, both such as are visible to the outward senses, and such as are appreciable only by the intellect, for the intellect is the wisdom which gives a knowledge of divine and human things and of their principles.[40]

This point is similar to the teaching that was given to Abraham in the Book of Abraham: he was shown the stars and all their revolutions but then learned the governing principles behind them that have greater significance for the progress of man.

Philo seems to make an allusion to Abraham's vision of the heavens in his most extensive work dealing with Abraham, *De Abrahamo.* Philo talked about the Chaldeans' addiction to the study of astronomy and their mistaken idea that the world itself was the god, "their impious philosophy comparing the creature to the Creator" (15.69).[41] Then, alluding to Abraham's deliverance from this false doctrine, Philo said:

> The man [Abraham] who had been bred up in this doctrine, and who for a long time had studied the philosophy of the Chaldaeans, as if suddenly awakening from a deep slumber and opening the eye of the soul, and beginning to perceive a pure ray of light instead of profound darkness, followed the light, and saw what he had never seen before, a certain governor and director of the world standing above it, and guiding his own work in a salutary manner, and exerting his care and power in behalf of all those parts of it which are worthy of divine superintendence. (15.70)[42]

This appears to be another example of Abraham learning that governing principles exist in the heavens above and that some planets and individuals have influence and power over others (see Abraham 3:3, 19).

The *Testament of Abraham,* another first-century Jewish text, contains a lengthy description of a heavenly ascent vision that Abraham was given just before his death.[43] This vision actually came as a result of Abraham's attempts to delay his death by requesting to see and learn more about God's creations. Abraham requested that Michael, the archangel sent to escort Abraham's soul to the heavens following his impending death, send a communication to God to allow him, while still in his body, to see "all the inhabited world and all the created things which you established, master, through one word" (9:6).[44] Chapter 10 then details Abraham's ascension over the earth and his vision of all the inhabited world and all its sins. Because Abraham began to destroy all the wicked sinners he beheld, the Lord told Michael to escort Abraham to the first gate of heaven to see the judgments and recompenses so that he could "repent over the souls of the sinners which he destroyed" (10:15). The rest of the heavenly vision focuses on the judgment of souls, the divi-

40. *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin, III,* 43, Yonge, *Works of Philo,* 855–56. See *Traditions,* 43.
41. Yonge, *Works of Philo*, 417. See *Traditions,* 39.
42. Yonge, *Works of Philo*, 417. See *Traditions,* 39.
43. Similar to the Book of Abraham and the *Apocalypse of Abraham,* the *Testament of Abraham* has a bipartite structure, with first a lengthy narrative section of Abraham's personal life and then a description of Abraham's visions. (The presence of the preliminary narrative section has always puzzled scholars because it seems somewhat unnecessary for understanding the succeeding visions.) The *Testament of Abraham,* however, does not talk about Abraham's childhood or youth, nor his idolatrous family.
44. Translations taken from E. P. Sanders, "Testament of Abraham," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* 1:871–902 (Recension A).

sion between the righteous and wicked, and descriptions of those who have charge of the future judgments (Adam, Abel, the Twelve Tribes, and Enoch, in chapters 11–14).

The *Testament of Abraham,* therefore, is primarily concerned with the future judgment of the soul and thus does not have many overt parallels with the Book of Abraham. The principle of judgment is touched upon only lightly in the Book of Abraham, when God reveals to Abraham that those who keep their first and second estates will be added upon. However, the *Testament of Abraham* does preserve an account of Abraham's seeing all the inhabited world and all created things, just as the Book of Abraham and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* relate.

Turning to some rabbinical discussions on Abraham,[45] *Midrash Rabbah Genesis* interprets Genesis 15:5 where God had Abraham look at the stars to see if he could number them.

> And He brought him forth without—ha-huzah (xv, 5). R. Joshua said in R. Levi's name: Did He then lead him forth without the world, that it says, And He brought him forth without? It means, however, that He showed him the streets of heaven, as you read, *While as yet He had not made the earth, nor the outer spaces*—ḥuẓot (Prov. viii, 26). R. Judah b. R. Simon said in R. Joḥanan's name: He lifted him up above the vault of heaven; hence He says to him, Look (habbet) now toward heaven, habbet signifying to look down from above. The Rabbis said: [God said to him]: 'Thou art a prophet, not an astrologer,' as it says, *Now therefore restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet* (Gen. xx, 7).
>
> In the days of Jeremiah the Israelites wished to entertain this belief [in astrology], but the Holy One, blessed be He, would not permit them. Thus it is written, *Thus saith the Lord: Learn not the way of the nations, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven,* etc. (Jer. x, 2): your ancestor Abraham wished to entertain this belief long ago, but I would not permit him. (*Midrash Rabbah Genesis* 44:12)[46]

From this brief excursus on Genesis 15:5, the only possible biblical allusion to Abraham having a vision of the heavens in Genesis, we see a further tradition that Abraham saw heavenly things before they were even created. There is also a distinction drawn between being an astrologer and a prophet; Abraham was not an astrologer but had been taught from above while looking "down" on the works of God's hands (*Midrash Rabbah Genesis* 38.6).[47]

Implications and Conclusions

Traditions about Abraham abound in Jewish, pagan, Christian, and Muslim texts.[48] Many of these traditions stem from and elaborate on experiences found in the Genesis account of Abraham. Some traditions, however, are not based on what we have in the present text of Genesis. Are these traditions simply later creations by later authors, or is it possible that they transmit Abraham

45. The dating of Midrash is always difficult because although the texts may have been written down later, most scholars believe they preserve accounts from earlier periods.

46. Translation from Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon, *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis 1* (1939; reprint, London: Soncino Press, 1961), 1:367–68. See *Traditions,* 99.

47. The notion that Abraham was raised above the vault of the heavens is also found in Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus,* 3:454. See also *Traditions,* 104.

48. Because of space, a much higher possibility of dependence on earlier texts, and later dates, most of the Christian and Muslim texts were not dealt with here. A good sampling of these traditions can be found in *Traditions.*

traditions that did not make the canonical Bible cut (or were purposely removed—that is plain and precious truths?) yet were passed down through the generations reappearing in these later texts?

An examination of the texts containing accounts of Abraham's having a heavenly vision and passing astronomical knowledge on to the Egyptians indicates a possible earlier tradition. Two major facets of this tradition are (1) Abraham came to know God through the stars and learned that the stars were governed by God or higher powers;[49] and (2) Abraham taught astrology to the Egyptians. The first facet is found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham, Jubilees,* Philo, and Josephus. The second facet is found in Artapanus, Pseudo-Eupolemus, Josephus, and Vettius Valens. Other possible facets of this tradition include Abraham's having a heavenly vision of God's creations (found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham, Testament of Abraham,* and *Midrash Rabbah Genesis*) and a notion of future judgment (found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *Testament of Abraham*). The *Apocalypse of Abraham* is the only Jewish text to discuss foreordination, Satan's rebellion, and premortal existence in the context of Abraham's heavenly vision.

Returning to the criteria mentioned at the beginning, what is the possibility of there actually having been an earlier source for these traditions? The first criterion was that the parallels from the texts had to be found in similar contexts. This discussion has not focused on random excerpts talking about prophets learning about the stars or on Hebrew prophets teaching the Egyptians but has focused specifically on Abraham and his heavenly visions during his wanderings from Chaldea to Egypt. This study has also tried to stay within a specific historical period (ca. 200 B.C.–A.D. 200). All these texts connect Abraham with knowledge of the stars (heavens). Some texts, but not all, connect this knowledge with teaching the Egyptians. Thus, it opens the possibility that there were two streams of the tradition that connected Abraham with astronomy (facets 1 and 2 mentioned above).

The second criterion was the question of dependence between the various texts, particularly ones carrying similar facets of the tradition.[50] The first facet is found in a variety of texts that have little connection in provenance, genre, and language with each other; thus, the likelihood of dependence is slight. The dependence of texts containing the second facet is harder to determine because many of the texts come from similar genres, perhaps similar provenances (Palestine), and were all written in Greek. Because of these difficulties, the question of dependence between these texts has been debated by scholars. Since Josephus is held to be the latest of these works, if there is dependence, it would be manifested in his works. Ben Zion Wacholder, however, felt that "as there is no reason to believe that either Artapanus or Josephus was dependent on Pseudo-Eupolemus,

49. Louis Ginzberg specifically mentioned the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (chap. 7), (see *Traditions*, 56) *Jubilees* (12:17) (see *Traditions*, 17), and the rabbinic sources (*Midrash Rabbah Genesis* 39) as stressing the fact that Abraham arrived at the notion of monotheism through reasoning about the heavenly bodies and their creator who directed them. See *The Legends of the Jews,* trans. Henrietta Szold (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1937), 5.210 n. 16; and 217–18 n. 49.

50. There is a paradox in the question of dependence when looking at the development of a tradition. On the one hand, if all later texts are dependent on an earlier text, then it is possible that the author of the earliest text creatively introduced a motif that was picked up by later writers. On the other hand, there will often be signs of dependence of a later text on an earlier one, and this provides data to see how traditions are adapted for different audiences. If, however, it can be shown that two texts share the same notion of a tradition independently of each other, then it is possible to hypothesize about an Urtext from which these facets were drawn.

it must be assumed that the belief concerning Abraham's mastery of the Chaldaean science was a major motif of Jewish folklore."[51] In other words, there was a common notion among ancient Jewish texts that Abraham had a great knowledge of astronomy; and some texts even describe, most likely independently of each other, Abraham's passing that knowledge on to the Egyptians.

The third criterion was the purpose for which the authors used this tradition. If they all used it to prove the same point, then there is greater likelihood of dependence on each other. It is interesting to see the difference in views of these writers with regards to Abraham and astronomy. Some, such as Philo, the author of *Jubilees,* and the rabbis, mention Abraham's knowledge of astronomy as a negative characteristic. Abraham was much more than an astronomer, and whatever learning he achieved through astronomy was of a lesser value than the spiritual knowledge he gained from God. These writers' efforts to distance Abraham from mere astronomy seem to demonstrate that there was an existing, vibrant tradition of Abraham's knowledge of the heavens that they were clarifying or reacting against. Artapanus, Pseudo-Eupolemus, and Josephus elevate Abraham's knowledge of astronomy to one of the greatest gifts Abraham passed on to the Egyptians.[52] The other texts merely seem to relate accounts of how Abraham gained great knowledge of the heavens, without rendering any judgment. Thus, there was a variety of purposes for using this Abrahamic tradition. Therefore, it is less likely they were dependent on each other.

As has been shown above from a great variety of texts (historical, philosophical, religious, Jewish, Christian, and pagan) found in many different locations, there are many documents that relate that Abraham had an extraordinary knowledge of the heavens that came to him primarily from heavenly visions. He had a notion of the governance of the stars and their revolutions and understood that this governing principle applied as well to God and spirits. He had visions of God's creations, both physical and prephysical (spiritual). He knew of foreordination and that Satan had rebelled in a pre-earth council. He gained knowledge of future judgment. He passed on his astronomical knowledge to the Egyptians and was honored by them. All these aspects of Abraham's knowledge found in ancient texts but lacking in the book of Genesis have strong parallels in the Book of Abraham. (Perhaps special note should be made of the many parallels between the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and the Book of Abraham.) As Hugh Nibley has stated, "After viewing many texts from many times and places all telling the same story, one emerges with the conviction that there was indeed one Abraham story."[53]

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51. Ben Zion Wacholder, "Pseudo-Eupolemus' Two Greek Fragments on the Life of Abraham," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 34 (1963): 103. The question of "motif" should also be addressed. Tradition history criticism draws a distinction between traditions and motifs. If a simple idea is found in various texts, then it is likely a motif. If, however, a set of ideas are found together in various texts, then one can talk of a tradition. The aspects of Abraham's heavenly vision seem to fall into the tradition category, rather than motif, because they contain more than Abraham's merely being an astronomer: he comes to know God, learns governing principles, etc.
52. However, it should be noted there are significant differences between these three texts. Josephus mentions Abraham's teaching the Egyptians; Pseudo-Eupolemus says he taught the Egyptian priests; and Artapanus says he taught the Pharaoh. Thus, the different audiences may show different purposes for each of the authors. See Louis H. Feldman, "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 99 (1968): 154; Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors. Vol. 1: Historians* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 180–81 n. 12.
53. Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt,* 23.

So, what might be the relationship between these texts and the Book of Abraham? Because the texts seem to draw upon sources of earlier traditions about Abraham, is it possible that the Book of Abraham did likewise, especially since the papyrus fragments are dated to the same period as many of these texts?[54] Some critics of the Book of Abraham claim Joseph Smith simply "made up" these stories[55] or used existing apocryphal accounts to form the Book of Abraham.[56] Yet only a few of the texts with only part of the tradition mentioned above had been discovered and published by the time of Joseph Smith,[57] and even these probably would not have been accessible to him either because of distance (they were in Europe) or published language, and they contain only a few points of the tradition analyzed above.[58] The similarities in traditions of all these ancient texts—most of which were not even discovered or published in the early 1800s—with the Book of Abraham provides support for the authenticity of the accounts and visions in the Book of Abraham, thereby disputing the notion of its being a nineteenth-century creation by Joseph Smith. In other words, some of the accounts and visions these texts record about Abraham were passed down through the generations and ap-

54. See Kevin Barney, "The Facsimiles and Semitic Adaptation of Existing Sources," in this volume, for a discussion of the dating of the Joseph Smith Papyri.

55. An example of a scholar's basing the Book of Abraham on Joseph's imagination: "It [the Book of Abraham] reflects in a large measure some of the strange religious and philosophical concepts of the early nineteenth century; and more than any other of his works, it reflects the inner workings of Joseph Smith's mystical mind at its best. The Book of Abraham, then, is not a product of the ancient Middle East as the title implies—and the Saints insist." Wesley M. Jones, *The Book of Abraham—A Product of the Nineteenth Century* (Oakland, Calif.: n.p., 1966), 1.

56. Hugh Nibley has written: "[E. A. W. Budge stated that] 'the letter press [of the Book of Abraham] is as idiotic as the pictures, and is clearly based on the Bible, and some of the Old Testament apocryphal histories.' . . . As to those apocryphal sources, why have all his other critics overlooked them, insisting that the whole thing is 'a pure fabrication,' 'simply the product of Joseph Smith's imagination'? As we wrote some ten years ago, 'What could Joseph Smith have known about Old Testament apocryphal histories? Budge was possibly the greatest authority on apocrypha of his day, but that was because he spent his days in the British Museum among original manuscripts to which no one else had access. There were indeed a number of important apocrypha published in Budge's day—but in the 1830s? Who has access to the apocryphal Abraham materials even today?' . . . Now if Budge insists that the Abraham story in the Pearl of Great Price is *clearly based* on Old Testament apocryphal histories, it deserves to be treated with some attention. What, the relatively uneducated Joseph Smith using sources of which none of the experts save only Budge, the most learned and productive Orientalist of his time, was aware? What a flattering accusation!" (*Abraham in Egypt,* 2).

57. For the pre– and post–Joseph Smith publication dates of works containing Abraham traditions, see Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt,* 47–48. Of the sources discussed above, publications of Josephus, Philo, Eusebius, and *Midrash Rabbah Genesis* may predate Joseph's Smith work on the Book of Abraham, whereas the *Apocalypse of Abraham, Jubilees,* Vettius Valens, and the *Testament of Abraham*—as well as English versions of Philo and *Midrash Rabbah Genesis*—appeared after Joseph Smith. See also *Traditions*; the introductions to each section offer relevant information.

58. Another thought by Nibley: "Absurd as it seems to labor a point as obvious as Joseph Smith's ignorance of a literature that has always been recondite and is still largely unknown even to experts on Abraham, it has been nonetheless necessary because of the growing practice of assuming offhand that Joseph must after all have had access to this and that apocryphal source whenever such a source strongly confirms some statement of his—a phenomenon that occurs with disturbing frequency" (*Abraham in Egypt,* 48).

peared in these later texts among other material creatively put together by later authors for a specific purpose (many in reaction to or interplay with Hellenism).[59]

But even if these traditions are of ancient origin, does that automatically make the Book of Abraham true? Even as archaeologists uncover evidence proving places and figures in the accounts of the Bible, this does not automatically mean the Bible is the word of God revealed through prophets. For this assurance of scriptures, a further criterion is needed, a testimony through the Spirit.[60] Yet even though a testimony of the Book of Abraham should come through the Spirit so that it may be properly internalized and confirmed, a study of ancient parallels can be a nudging confirmation as we walk down the path of faith.

It appears, therefore, that these texts may be preserving traditions that were passed down about Abraham, especially since similar materials are found in a variety of texts whose dependence on one another, or on a contemporary common source, seems unlikely. Although we do not know completely why these accounts were not preserved in the Bible, it seems certain that they were preserved in other fashions and revealed in their purest form in the Book of Abraham through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

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59. What are some possible models for the existence of "portions" of light amongst "main courses" of darkness? (1) Recollections passed down (my grandfather said his grandfather said) and thereby changed. (2) Inspiration of certain principles to later writers (but what of the other parts of their writings?). (3) People/groups going off without complete gospel or authority (cf. Mulekites and Lamanites in the Book of Mormon). (4) Cutting and pasting by later writers using these traditions for their own agendas, therefore found amongst divergent beliefs (cf. What Gnostics did to early Christian writings). Elder Neal A. Maxwell has stated: "One must recognize doctrinal debris for what it is—remnants of revealed religion, pieces of powerful principles that are as traceable as pieces of ancient pottery." *Deposition of a Disciple* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 78.

60. Perhaps related to this criteria is what Edward J. Brandt stated: "[Determining ancient traditions] requires a measuring rod or standard, as it were. For the Latter-day Saints the primary standard consists of the standard works of scripture—the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. The theological perspective and the historical-scriptural view are dependent on these standard works, most of which came as a result of the revelatory experiences and labors of the Prophet Joseph Smith" ("The Book of Jasher and the Latter-day Saints," in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints,* 308). Therefore, for LDS scholars, the first criterion should be measuring these traditions against the standard works. This comparison may appear to be a circular argument, attempting to "prove" the Book of Abraham stories by analyzing Abraham traditions against them, but the truthfulness of the Book of Abraham will certainly not be proved by this paper, nor through any other intellectual endeavor. These traditions will not prove the Book of Abraham, but they may help eliminate some possible explanations (like Joseph Smith's having made up these stories *ex nihilo*). If one has a testimony of the Book of Abraham, however, one can then use the Book of Abraham and other scriptures as standards against which other traditions can be measured. Otherwise, we would have to accept all the divergent beliefs that are found in context with the Abraham traditions examined above. If the Book of Abraham says that Abraham had a vision of the heavens and passed on his knowledge to the Egyptians, and we believe this record to be from an ancient source, then we have another text to compare with the others in examining the existence of this tradition in antiquity.

Chapter 5

The Creation of Humankind, an Allegory?

A Note on Abraham 5:7, 14–16

Richard D. Draper

Many people are curious about beginnings, especially the beginnings of humankind. Conservative Jews and Christians look to the book of Genesis for information. Latter-day Saints do the same thing, but many with trepidation. They believe there are some things in the account that are not to be taken literally. Joseph Fielding Smith expressed his reservations by saying that "the Lord has not seen fit to tell us definitely just how Adam came for we are not ready to receive that truth."[1] He promised that the "time will come when we shall be informed all about Adam and the manner of creation." Most do agree that the account as told in our modern-day Genesis is close to Moses' original but also believe that the creation narrative includes a mixture of reality and metaphor. Therefore, they give Moses credit for creating both the historical and allegorical portions of the narrative. This paper looks at the contribution the Book of Abraham makes to this idea.

The book of Genesis has no problem telling its reader precisely how Adam came to be. It recounts how God said to another, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion. . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them" (Genesis 1:26–28). The record is also clear as to the method. Concerning Adam, it states, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). The method of Eve's creation is equally explicit: "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman" (Genesis 2:21–22). A literal reading of the text insists that God molded Adam as a brick before enlivening him and then transformed one of Adam's ribs into a woman.

1. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 1:110.

Through Joseph Smith, Latter-day Saints have additional scriptures that deal with the advent of humankind on the planet. A revelation the Prophet received between June and October 1830 restored material that originally belonged to Genesis but had become lost.[2] The question is, does this new material change the Genesis account of humankind's creation in any essential way? The answer is no. From it, we learn that God "said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and it was so. . . . And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them" (Moses 2:26–27). Except for learning that Jehovah was the unnamed person whom God addressed in Genesis, the scripture adds nothing new to this portion of the creation account. The same is true when the text describes the actual advent of Adam. It says matter of factly that "I, the Lord God, formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul, the first flesh upon the earth, the first man also" (Moses 3:7). The change from Adam being made "of the dust of the earth" to "from the dust of the earth" seems insignificant. The basic outline of the narrative remains the same. This is also true of the creation of Eve. According to the restored material, God said that "the rib which I, the Lord God, had taken from man, made I a woman" (Moses 3:22). The only difference between the two accounts is a voice shift from third to first person. In both, God makes Adam's rib into a woman.

The agreement between the two accounts has not persuaded all Latter-day Saints to take them literally. One of the earliest to take exception was Parley P. Pratt. In his work *Key to the Science of Theology*, Pratt wrote that due to apostasy:

> Man was no longer counted worthy to retain the knowledge of his heavenly origin. . . . At length a Moses came, who knew his God, and would fain have led mankind to know Him too, and see Him face to face. But they could not receive His heavenly laws or bide His presence.
>
> Thus the holy man was forced again to veil the past in mystery, and in the beginning of his history assign to man an earthly origin.
>
> Man, moulded from the earth, as a brick.
>
> Woman, manufactured from a rib.
>
> Thus, parents still would fain conceal from budding manhood the mysteries of procreation, or the sources of life's ever-flowing river, by relating some childish tale of new-born life.[3]

With these words, Elder Pratt rejected the literal reading of the Genesis and Moses texts and suggested a new understanding. At the same time, he explained why Moses chose to hide the real story behind symbols: Israel was too spiritually immature to handle the truth. To protect them, Moses veiled the secrets of creation.

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2. See Moses 1:41. Joseph Smith received a revelation in June 1830 that he called the "visions of Moses," comprising chapter one of the Book of Moses in the current Pearl of Great Price. The information contained therein has no biblical counterpart, but it does give the setting through which Moses gained an understanding of the creation story. Joseph Smith's understanding came as part of the Prophet's work on his "plainer translation" of the Bible. We do not know the date when he finished his work on Genesis 2, but it is likely it was well before September 1830, when the Prophet went to Fayette, New York, for conference. See Robert J. Matthews, *"A Plainer Translation": Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1985).
3. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology,* 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1893), 55–56.

Brigham Young also rejected the biblical account. He told the Saints, "When you tell me that Father Adam was made as we make adobes from the earth, you tell me what I deem an idle tale." He went on to explain that "Mankind are here because they are the offspring of parents who were first brought here from another planet, and power was given them to propagate their species."[4]

Latter-day Saints are not the only ones who insist on viewing portions of the Bible in a less-than-literal way. Men and women have been doing this kind of thing with sacred texts at least from the first millennium B.C. The ancient Greek noun for proclaiming an idea with a meaning other than the one readily apparent was ἀλληγορία. The verb describing this action was ἀλληγορέω and product of the action was ἀλληγούμενα. From the noun ἀλληγορία comes the English word *allegory.* All these words denote speaking or writing in such a way the hearers or readers should not take literally.[5]

The Greeks recognized two types of allegory: one the conscious creation of the author and the other something superimposed by the critical reader. Today, we refer to the former as "allegoric" and the latter as "allegoristic."[6]

Elder Pratt argues that the account of humankind's creation was allegoric: Moses deliberately created the symbolism to veil reality. Though Brigham Young does not say anything about Moses per se, he does view the Genesis account as highly symbolic. Why did these two men believe this? Their idea does not seem to have come from Joseph Smith. Nothing in the Prophet's public teachings suggests that he took the Bible account any way but literally. During midsummer of 1830, he received the creation material found in Moses chapters three and four, which follows the Genesis account of humankind's creation closely and, thereby, reinforces the accuracy of the Bible. In 1831 he corrected the Savior's genealogy as given in Luke 3:38 from reading "Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God" to "Seth, which was the son of Adam, who was formed of God, and the first man upon the earth" (JST Luke 3:45). The Prophet's change suggests he felt Luke would be more accurate if it conformed to Genesis.

In 1835 the Prophet received the Egyptian papyri from which he translated the Abrahamic materials found in the Pearl of Great Price. As will be discussed below, they too followed Genesis and reinforced its accuracy. The Prophet's translation was published in 1842. From 1831 to 1842, he said nothing about the creation of Adam. Then in the 1 April edition of the *Times and Seasons*, he declared, "When God breathed into man's nostrils he became a living soul, before that he did not live, and when that was taken away his body died."[7] In a discourse given on 9 July, the Prophet again broached the subject, asking in whose image Adam and Eve were created. He answered, "In the image of Gods created they them, male and female: innocent, harmless, and spotless, bearing the same character and the same image as the Gods."[8] Joseph Smith's language in both of these statements echoes that of Genesis and suggests that he held to the creation account.

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4. Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young,* ed. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 104–5.
5. See Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (1964; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 1:260–63 and J. Gwyn Griffiths, "Allegory in Greece and Egypt," *JEA* 53: 89, 99.
6. See Griffiths, "Allegory," 89.
7. *Times and Seasons,* 1 April 1842, 746.
8. The discourse was recorded by James Burgess and is here quoted from Kent P. Jackson, ed., *Joseph Smith's Commentary on the Bible* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 7.

Later statements show that he continued to hold this view. In August of 1842 he asked, "What was the design of the Almighty in making man? It was to exalt him to be as God."[9] His language suggests he viewed Adam as made, not conceived and born. In May 1843 he noted that "the 7th verse of C[hapter] 2 of Genesis ought to read God breathed into Adam his spirit or breath of life, but when the word 'ruach' [rûaḥ] applies to Eve it should be translated lives."[10] Though he explains how to understand *ruach* (rûaḥ), Joseph Smith did not argue against any of the essentials in the account. Both statements show he continued to support a literal interpretation of Genesis, Moses, and Abraham.

Joseph Smith's last-known public comment on Adam's creation took place on 7 April 1844, in what has become known as the King Follet Discourse. The Prophet noted that "Adam was created in the very fashion [that is, image] of God."[11] He further stated that "God made man out of the earth and put into him his spirit, and then it became a living body,"[12] or, as another source recorded it, "God made a tabernacle and put a spirit into it, and it became a living soul. (Refers to the old Bible.) How does it read in the Hebrew? It does not say in the Hebrew that God created the spirit of man. It says 'God made man out of the earth and put into him Adam's spirit, and so became a living body.'"[13] All the above suggests that Joseph never moved from a literal interpretation of Genesis.

Some have argued that Joseph Smith hinted at another understanding of the text in his 16 June 1844 talk when he asked, "Where was there ever a son without a father? And where was there ever a father without first being a son? Whenever did a tree or anything spring into existence without a progenitor? And everything comes in this way."[14] However, Joseph Smith was not looking at Adam's creation; he was teaching about the plurality of the Gods. Though one could argue that Joseph's thought would include Adam, it does not prove the point.[15]

Admittedly, during the last year of his life, the Prophet was expanding LDS theology in a dramatic manner, and he may have taught some things off the record. It is of note, however, that only one contemporary of the Prophet, Benjamin F. Johnson, mentioned hearing him actually teach "that *God was the great head of human procreation*—[that He] was really and truly the Father of

9. Ibid. This statement was made in a discourse delivered on 27 August 1843 and recorded by James Burgess.

10. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, comps. and eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 203.

11. Jackson, *Commentary,* 8.

12. Ibid., 10. This is how William Clayton recorded the words. Wilford Woodruff recorded them as, "God made a tabernacle and put a spirit in it, and it became a human soul" (ibid., 11). Though the wording is somewhat different, both accounts agree that Joseph Smith held to the creation account in Genesis. For a comparison of the various accounts of the King Follett sermon, see Ehat, *Words,* 340–62, and Donald Q. Cannon and Larry E. Dahl, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's King Follett Discourse: A Six Column Comparison of Original Notes and Amalgamations* (Provo, Utah: BYU Printing Service, 1983).

13. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith,* ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 352–53.

14. Smith, *Teachings,* 373.

15. An account made by Josiah Quincy in the spring of 1844 gives some supporting evidence that Joseph Smith understood the Garden of Eden story in a literal sense. According to Mr. Quincy, the Prophet showed him some of the papyrus material. Quincy reported that, "Some parchments inscribed with hieroglyphics were then offered us [by Joseph Smith]. They were preserved under glass and handled with great respect. . . . 'Here

both our Spirits and our Bodies."[16] Johnson supplies no information on when, where, or with whom he heard this idea. Therefore, it is impossible to verify his statement. If Joseph Smith were teaching the idea, one would expect others to have noted it.[17] In light of the documentary record, it may be that Johnson's memory slipped, especially since his statement came more than sixty years after the Prophet's death. During those intervening years a good deal of interesting and even startling things had been taught about Adam, God, and their involvement in the creation of humankind. Since his is the only preserved account, one must question how accurately he remembered.

As noted, Brigham Young was another contemporary of Joseph Smith who insisted that the creation accounts of humankind should not be taken as they read. Only nine years after the Prophet's death, he said, "suppose Adam was made and fashioned the same as we make adobies; if he had never drunk of the bitter cup, the Lord might have talked to him to this day, and he would have continued as he was to all eternity, never advancing one particle in the school of intelligence." Going on, he questioned, "Supposing that Adam was formed actually out of clay, out of the same kind of material from which bricks are formed; that with this matter God made the pattern of a man, and breathed into it the breath of life, and left it there, in that state of supposed perfection, he would have been an adobie to this day. He would not have known anything."[18] Thus did Brigham Young deny that God created Adam like a brick. Six years later, as noted above, he stated his belief that Adam and Eve were transplanted to the earth from another planet "to propagate their species." [19]

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we have the earliest account of the Creation, from which Moses composed the First Book of Genesis.' The parchment last referred to showed a rude drawing of a man and woman, and a serpent walking upon a pair of legs. I ventured to doubt the propriety of providing the reptile in question with this unusual means of locomotion. 'Why, that's as plain as a pikestaff,' was the rejoinder. 'Before the Fall snakes always went about on legs, just like chickens. They were deprived of them, in punishment for their agency in the ruin of man'" (Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past from the Leaves of Old Journals* [Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883], 386–87, as quoted in *The Pearl of Great Price, Studies in Scripture,* vol. 2, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson [Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1985], 92).

16. Fred C. Collier, ed., *Patriarch Benjamin F. Johnson's Letter to Elder George F. Gibbs,* Doctrines of the Priesthood, vol. 7, no. 5 (Salt Lake City: Collier's, 1990), 25.

17. The only clue to the setting Johnson gives is that the Prophet was stressing the need for love and unity. According to Johnson, it was in this context that Joseph Smith presented the idea that God was the father of all both spiritually and physically. Therefore, all are brothers and sisters, the Prophet concluded, and the Saints ought to practice love and unity. Among the recorded sermons of the Prophet, none are devoted either fully or in part to this topic, though he does briefly mention it on at least one occasion. That being the case, there is no way of checking up on Johnson. The lack of such a sermon casts doubt on Johnson's memory. The problem with this conclusion is, of course, that it is an argument from silence, but it is, taking a look at the many who recorded Joseph's words, a very loud silence. It is true that Joseph Smith may have taught the idea to a closed group. Johnson claimed that he was privy to esoteric information the Prophet shared with few others. That only makes it all the more difficult to check up on Johnson. The public record, however, is clear, and in it, Joseph Smith stayed true to the Genesis account.

18. *Journal of Discourses,* 2:6.

19. *Journal of Discourses,* 7:285. Brigham Young's views about Adam have become known as "The Adam-God Theory." It lays well outside the scope of this paper to address the Adam-God issue. Others have discussed it in detail. See for example, Rodney Turner, "The Position of Adam in Latter-day Saint Scripture and Theology" (Provo, Utah: master's thesis, BYU, 1953) and David John Buerger, "The Adam-God Doctrine," *Dialogue* 15/1 (1982):14-58. For the

Clearly, Brigham Young, like Parley P. Pratt, took Moses' account in an allegorical vein, insisting that "God has made His children like Himself to stand erect, and has endowed them with intelligence and power and dominion over all His works, and given them the same attributes which He Himself possesses. He created man, as we create our children; for there is no other process of creation in heaven, on the earth, in the earth, or under the earth, or in all the eternities, that is, that were, or that ever will be. . . . There exist fixed laws and regulations by which the elements are fashioned . . . and this process of creation is from everlasting to everlasting."[20]

Elder Pratt's and President Young's views square with one another. But the apostle adds a dimension we do not get from the president: that it was Moses who created the allegoric account. On this point, Elder Pratt seems to stand alone. There is a logical appeal to his thinking. However, the question naturally arises, why use allegory to tell the creation story? It seems logical, given the conditions under which Moses labored, that he would veil the truth from an Israel that was only a breath away from idolatry and its attendant immorality. To suggest that God created humankind through the act of procreation may have allowed some to see truth in the fertility religions in the area. Moses wanted his people as far from idolatry as possible and went to lengths to assure it. Clearly his declaration that "the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God" (Deuteronomy 4:24) shows him operating in this way. How could Israel make a graven image of glory?

Yet as appealing as Pratt's theory is, it does not work. Latter-day Saints possess an additional account of the creation that antedates that of Moses by a half millennium or more, and that record is yet based on an even older account. The record is that of Abraham.[21] He tells us that he wrote "for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me" (Abraham 1:31). He states that his sources were "the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs" who wrote "concerning the right of Priesthood" and who

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purposes of this paper, it should be noted that Brigham Young never claimed that he received the material either by revelation or from Joseph Smith. In fact, he neither fully explained his ideas nor attempted to reconcile them to the scriptures. As was his custom, he simply declared his views and left it to others to accept or reject them. As Hugh Nibley wrote: "He sometimes made statements that surprised or even offended those who tended to accept his every utterance as doctrine, but with a New Englander's passion for teaching and learning, he plunged ahead" (Hugh Nibley, "Teachings of Brigham Young," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4:1609).

Even today, some may be concerned about a prophet expressing his own ideas. The Brethren of the nineteenth century, differing from those of the twentieth, felt much more free in expressing their personal views publically and in a forceful manner. As Rodney Turner has written in addressing the Adam-God problem, "When speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, a prophet's word is as the word of the Lord himself. . . . But a prophet is not a pope." He goes on to say that what a prophet says is "not an *ex cathedra* pronouncement that is infallible" when the Holy Ghost is not acting. "When the prophet speaks without inspiration, his word may or may not prove correct." For a more full discussion on this see Turner's work, "Adam-God Controversy" (unpublished statement prepared by BYU, April 1983), copy in possession of the author. See also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), 3:203.

20. *Journal of Discourse,* 11:122.

21. As with the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith never explained how he translated the Book of Abraham. Some have suggested that when he came to the creation material he was influenced by the accounts with which he was already familiar, and that as a result, he did not make a literal translation but rather a paraphrase of already existing material. However, the fact that Joseph did not lift the story whole cloth from the Old Testament but preserved various distinctive features throughout his translation of Abraham suggests that he was dealing with parallel but unique material and not simply copying what already existed.

gave "a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto [them]" (Abraham 1:31). Therefore, Abraham says that he would "delineate the chronology running back from myself to the beginning of the creation, for the records have come into my hands, which I hold unto this present time" (Abraham 1:28).

Abraham's account, then, conveys the creation story as the fathers handed it down. It could conceivably run all the way back to Adam, since Abraham states the record contained his own priesthood line, which also "came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me" (Abraham 1:3).

Concerning the creation of humankind, this very ancient record reveals that "the Gods took counsel among themselves and said: Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness; and we will give them dominion. . . . So the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them" (Abraham 4:26–27). Speaking specifically of Adam, Abraham records, "the Gods formed man from the dust of the ground, and took his spirit (that is, the man's spirit), and put it into him; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Abraham 5:7).

Abraham's account differs from those based on Moses' writings in three distinct ways: (1) it shows that others beside God and Christ were involved in the creation process;[22] (2) it clarifies that God put Adam's spirit into Adam's body; and (3) it explains that God breathed into Adam's nostrils after putting man's spirit into Adam.

Note that these details do not change the method of Adam's creation. Abraham's record follows that of Moses in insisting that Adam was made from the dust of the ground. The account of Eve's creation also duplicates that in Moses: "And the Gods caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; and he slept, and they took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in the stead thereof; And of the rib which the Gods had taken from man, formed they a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Abraham 5:15–16). The only change in this account is that the Gods were involved in her creation. The way the story is told, there is every suggestion that Abraham wanted it taken literally. In other words, Abraham, like Genesis and Moses, leaves no room for allegory.

The Book of Abraham forces us to conclude that Moses did not create an allegoric tale due to the weakness of a faithless Israel. Nor was Abraham its creator. Why would he want to veil the truth from his posterity? If the records of the fathers reached all the way back to Adam, then the story preserved by Abraham and Moses was the "official" account from the beginning. If there were any additional materials or alternative views, they have not survived to discount the original account.

The first-person account revealed to Joseph Smith and preserved in the Book of Moses, along with the ancient account preserved in the Book of Abraham, suggests that God determined how the prophets told the story. The books of Moses and of Abraham act as witnesses that the account as it stands in Genesis is the word of God. Therefore, even though the Book of Abraham ends abruptly with Adam naming the animals, the parallel between Moses and Abraham is so close that we can, with confidence, recreate the rest of Abraham's narrative. Very likely the Gods would

22. Elohim may not have been directly involved at all. According to Abraham 3:24, the Savior said "unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there."

continue to operate, telling Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the serpent would tempt them, and Eve would succumb and coax Adam to partake of the fruit. The Gods would then assign cherubim with the flaming sword to guard the tree of life and cast the man and his wife from the garden.

The point is that Abraham's record parallels that of Moses, and even if more had been published in the *Times and Seasons*, it would have brought little new to the account of the creation and the fall. What we have in Moses, then, is the story as it has been handed down from the beginning.

Allow me to repeat a point for emphasis. Genesis, Moses, and Abraham preserve the "official" account of humankind's entrance into the world as revealed by God. He has not seen fit to reveal more. No official statement of the First Presidency or public revelation by church leaders annuls the story as told in the scriptures. Does that force us to accept the account as historically accurate, or is there some room that God himself has given us an allegoric account? He has promised us that "in that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things—Things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof" (D&C 101:32–33). Given that, it seems that until he comes, the Lord will give us no more than what we have, and that what we have is sufficient for his purposes. In conclusion, Abraham's record shows us that Moses did not create the tale but gave it to us as God gave it to him.

Chapter 6

"We Beg You, Our King!"[1]

Some Reflections on the Jews in Persian and Ptolemaic Egypt

Peter C. Nadig

Due to its proximity to Canaan, the fertile Nile delta had always been a breadbasket for the house of Israel. Even the biblical patriarchs went there in time of need. Later tradition merged the long sojourn of the children of Israel into a captivity of over four hundred years that finally resulted in the exodus. Later, the law given on Mount Sinai expressed the ideal of separating the covenant people from Egypt and its culture and even prohibited emigration from Canaan to Egypt. Notwithstanding this restriction[2] and also a warning of the prophet Jeremiah,[3] Egypt maintained a remarkable attraction for the people who lived in the area settled by the tribe of Judah. They mostly came as mercenaries or military settlers in order to serve the current ruler of the land—be he Pharaoh, Persian Great King, or Ptolemaic *basileus.* One of the earliest references to such activities can be dated back to the seventh or early sixth century, according to the *Letter of Aristeas.*[4] Immigration was intensified after the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem (597 B.C.), when many Jewish military leaders went to Egypt with a large retinue, as can be gleaned from a statement of Jeremiah.[5]

1. CPJ I 37 (= P. Magd. 3; P. Enteux. 59) ll. 29–31.
2. Deuteronomy 17:16: "But he [the king] shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the Lord has said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way." Cf. Exodus 13:17; Jeremiah 42:19.
3. Jeremiah 42:14–22, 43:2.
4. Letter of Aristeas 13: "And even before this time large numbers of Jews had come into Egypt with the Persian, and in an earlier period still others had been sent to Egypt to help Psammetichus in his campaign against the kings of the Ethiopians." Cf. Joseph M. Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian,* trans. Robert Cornman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995), 21–26; originally published as *Les Juifs d'Egypte, de Ramsès à Hadrien* (Paris: Editions Armand Colin, 1992).
5. Jeremiah 43:4–7.

The present paper shall examine the relationship between the Jews and the rulers of Egypt from the sixth to the first century B.C.—namely the Persians and the Ptolemies. Here some examples will be singled out to examine the question of how the Jews dealt with royal authority and to what measure they could exercise their religion.

After the conquest by the Persian Great King Cambyses in 525 B.C., Egypt became a satrapy of the Persian Empire. Unlike the earlier rulers of Egypt, the Great King did not reside in the country but left a satrap to administer it. Despite their absence, the Persian kings subsequently tried to implement themselves as Pharaohs, as can be seen in their Egyptian royal titles and the building programs they promoted. To a large extent the conquerors even adopted the Egyptian civil administration. In this context it is noteworthy that the Persian administrative language, Aramaic, was also the everyday language of the Jews. However, this language never succeeded in establishing itself as a lingua franca in Egypt—as was the case with Greek at the time of the Ptolemies. Despite the concessions made by the Persians, they were distrusted by the Egyptians, who couldn't imagine Persian kings in the traditional ritual role of the Pharaoh.[6]

However, contrary to the native Egyptian population, the Jews welcomed the Great King and openly acknowledged his rule. Their positive attitude towards the Persian administration and the king can be easily understood in light of the conquest of Babylon of 539 B.C., which ended Jewish exile. The special tolerance that the Persians in return extended to the Jews can be demonstrated by the existence of a Jewish temple dedicated to YHW (Yaho) on Elephantine Island at the southern Egyptian border.[7] We know about it through some papyri from the late fifth century B.C.; however, no physical remains of the building are extant. Moreover, some of these Aramaic papyri are named and dated after the years of King Darius II (424–404 B.C.).[8] Two of these, the extant draft preserved in two versions of a letter to Bagavahya, the governor of Judah in 407 B.C., hint at the age of this shrine: "Our ancestors built that temple in Fort Elephantine back during the time of the kings of Egypt, and when Cambyses came into Egypt, he found it already built. They pulled down the temples of the Egyptian gods, but no one damaged anything in that temple."[9]

6. Cf. G. Hölbl, "Zur Legitimation der Ptolemäer als Pharaonen," in *Selbstverständnis und Realität: Akten des Symposiums zur Ägyptischen Königsideologie in Mainz,* 15–17 June 1995, Ägypten und Altes Testament (ÄAT) 36,1, ed. R. Gundlach and C. Raedler (Mainz: Wiesbaden, 1995), 21–22.

7. The temple may have had a certain protection through the Great King and some toleration by the priestly authorities in Jerusalem. The precise reasons for the construction of this temple, which seems to have been built as early as the seventh century B.C. by military colonists, can only be partially determined and depend on the possible time of its construction. The reforms of King Josiah of Judah had fixed the unity of worship in 622 B.C. With that, only one temple could be the right one—the one in Jerusalem. It remains a fact, however, that the shrine in Elephantine temporarily replaced the one in Jerusalem during the Babylonian exile until the Second Temple took up its service in 515 B.C. Yet the cult of Elephantine continued. Deviations to the official cult seem to be evident in the so-called Passover Papyrus. Cf. Modrzejewski, *Jews of Egypt,* 141–153.

8. "Darius the King," cf. Bezalel Porten and Ada Yadeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt I, Letters* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986) (= TAD), A4.1 (B13) l. 2; A4.5 (B17) l. 2; A4.7 (B19) ll. 3–419, 21, 30; A4.8 (B20) ll. 2–4,19,29; 4.9 (B21) l. 7.

9. James M. Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters,* in Kent H. Richards, ed., *Writings from the Ancient World,* vol. 4 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), No. 34, 67. Cf. TAD, A4.7 (B19) ll. 13–14; A4.8 ll. 12–13.

It becomes very clear through this passage that the temple was there under the Pharaohs—that is, before the Persian conquest. The statement about the destruction of the Egyptian temples by the Persians may be exaggerated, but the leniency towards the Jewish sanctuary on the island is an indication of how the Jews approached the Persian king and proves at the same time that the Persians respected a place of worship built under their predecessors.

Adjacent to the Jewish temple at Elephantine was the Egyptian temple of Khnum, the ram-headed god of the Nile flood, a fact which would eventually prove disastrous for the Jews.[10] This can be explained by the Jews' sacrifice of rams and sheep. The ram was sacred to Khnum and its use as a sacrificial animal was not only out of the question, but the Jewish proceedings must have been perceived as a massive affront to the religious sensibilities of the Egyptians. Confrontation was inevitable.[11]

In the year 410 B.C. the priests of Khnum used the absence of the satrap from Egypt to pillage and destroy the Jewish temple. In order to do this they had obviously bribed the local Persian military commander into collusion. The above-mentioned letter to the satrap of Judah, dating from three years after this, narrates not only the course of events but also contains a petition for the rebuilding of the sanctuary. At the same time it becomes clear that the destruction was an isolated incident and not a reflection of a wider anti-Jewish sentiment. Subsequently, a remarkable compromise was reached, with reconstruction linked to the condition that only meal offerings and incense could be offered up. The conciliatory intentions of Persian politics become obvious here—Jews and Egyptians were equally considered.[12] Soon after the destruction of their temple, the Jews of Elephantine had written to the high priest Yehohanan in Jerusalem and also to other Jewish nobles—most likely to get some support for a rebuilding. But no answer came.[13] This indicates that the religious authorities in the Jewish homeland wished to enforce the demand for a central place of worship as laid out in the Pentateuch and thus had little interest in a temple in the diaspora. For this reason the Jews of Elephantine had addressed their petition to the Persian governor of Judah and also to the sons of the satrap of Samaria. They again expressed their loyalty to the Persian administration and stated their lack of understanding as to why a sanctuary built

10. For the building cf. Walter Niederberger, Elephantine XX. *Der Chnumtempel Nektanebos II: Architektur und baugeschichtliche Einordnung* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1999). How far any tensions between Egyptians and Jews on Elephantine reached back in the long run is not documented. The first signs stem from the time prior to the destruction of the temple.

11. Egyptians were normally permitted to eat the meat of sheep, drink their milk, and use their skins, but to priests this was forbidden, and it was also taboo to bring wool into a temple. This may perhaps explain the aloof attitude of the Egyptians regarding sheep-breeding. Cf. L. Störk, Schaf, LÄ 5:522–24 P. Behrends, Widder, LÄ 6:1243–45; C. Straußß-Seeber, Wolle, LÄ 6:1285–86.

12. Lindenberger (cf. note 9), *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters,* No. 35, 68; Cf. TAD (see note 8) A4.7 (B19) ll. 13–14; A4.8 (B20) ll. 12–13. This is confirmed in another petition by the Jews that explicitly states that "no sheep, ox or goat is to be offered as a burnt offering, but only incense and meal offering" when the temple should be rebuilt. Cf. Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters,* No. 36, 69; Cf. TAD A4.7 (B22) ll. 10–11.

13. Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters,* No. 34, 67: "Some time ago, when this evil was done to us, we sent letters to our lord, to Yehohanan the high priest and his colleagues the priests in Jerusalem . . . and to the Judean nobles. None of them ever replied to us." Cf. TAD A4.7 (B19) ll. 18–19; A4.8 (B20) ll. 16–18.

under the last native kings of Egypt, who had tolerated their religion, was destroyed. Whether the temple was ever rebuilt is not known.

When Alexander the Great liberated Egypt from the Persians in 332 B.C. and was crowned as Pharaoh in Memphis—after his visit to the Oracle of Siwa[14]—he was accepted by the Egyptian population. With him the country came under Greek-Macedonian administration and was from then on basically administrated in two languages: Greek for the Greek-speaking foreigners and Egyptian for the native Egyptian majority. The Egyptians, partially conditioned by the Persian precedent, tolerated the absence of the king.[15] Following his death in 323 B.C., Alexander's general Ptolemy became satrap of Egypt. When he became king two decades later, Egypt once again had a resident monarch. Since Ptolemy, who as Ptolemy I Soter (306/4–283/2 B.C.) founded the dynasty of the Ptolemies, saw himself in the immediate succession of Alexander, whose body he had interred in Egypt, he emulated Alexander's example by his own coronation in Memphis. As the land was governed by two languages, so was the king's ideology expressed twofold. The Macedonians and Greeks as well as the other foreign nationals saw the Ptolemaic king as a Hellenistic *basileus.* But for the Egyptians, who were attached to their traditions, he was the Pharaoh.[16] At his side was his queen, who in official documents of this time is referred to as Pharaohness (pr-ˁ3.t). The latter, however, constitutes a novelty, which can be explained by the fact that the royal couple was always listed jointly in the royal Ptolemaic titulature.[17]

Since the Ptolemies favored immigration and settlement of Jews on a greater scale than their predecessors, the Jewish population in Egypt experienced a steady increase.[18] Significantly,

14. K. P. Kuhlmann, *Das Ammoneion: Archäologie, Geschichte und Kultpraxis des Orakels von Siwa* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1988), 144, 154.

15. This applies to Alexander's immediate successors, Philipp III Arrhidaios (323–317) and Alexander IV (317–310/9). For Alexander as Pharaoh see also Hölbl, "Pharaonen," 22–25.

16. It is important to note that he did not usually appear as a Pharaoh. He may at best have worn pharaonic garb when he was crowned in Memphis or visited Egyptian temples in order to attend religious festivals or functions. He may have even just worn a type of Greek dress blended with pharaonic insignia like a double-crown, which was adorned with the Hellenistic diadem. For some examples of such a depiction in the temple of Edfu cf. É. Chassinat, *Le Temple d'Edfou*, IX, Cairo plate XXXVIII 1929, and X,1, Cairo plate XCIII 1928. Cf. P. Munro, *Die spätägyptischen Totenstelen* (Glückstadt: Verlag J.J. Augustin, 1973), 63. Compare Bernard V. Bothmer, *Egyptian Sculpture of the Late Period: 700 B.C. to A.D. 100,* ed. Elizabeth Riefstahl (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Museum 1960), No. 138, 178–179. On Ptolemy I Soter see also G. Hölbl, *Geschichte des Ptolemäerreiches: Politik, Ideologie und religiöse Kultur von Alexander dem Großen bis zur römischen Eroberung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994), 69–91, 105–107; 111–112; Hölbl, "Pharaonen," 25–27; Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire* (London: Routledge, 2001), 77–98.

17. Cf. Hölbl, "Pharaonen," 31–33.

18. The start was made by Ptolemy I. According to tradition he deported one hundred thousand Jewish prisoners of war after his conquest of Jerusalem, of which he took aside thirty thousand men to serve in the rural garrisons, while enslaving all the others. Ptolemy II Philadelphus later released the slaves. Independent of this singular enforced measure, voluntary immigration to Egypt continued. Cf. Bezalel Bar-Kochva, *Pseudo-Hecateus On the Jews: Legitimizing the Jewish Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 71–91. J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan* (323 B.C.E.–117 C.E.) (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 20–22.

the territory of Judah belonged to the Ptolemaic kingdom from 301 to 200 B.C. and was thus directly linked to the Egyptian Diaspora. Since the Ptolemies desired to fill the most important posts in their civil and military administration with Greek-speaking foreigners, the Jews quickly adapted themselves to the use of the Greek language, which helped them raise their status accordingly. This process was strengthened by the translation of the Torah (i.e., Pentateuch)[19] into Greek, as well as the use of this language for prayer and worship. Under the Ptolemies, Jews were counted among the *Hellenes,* the foreigners of Greek tongue. Especially in the countryside they were employed to a greater extent as civil administrators and mercenaries and even served in police functions. The latter certainly was not very conducive to a good relationship between Jews and Egyptians.

Regarding religious worship under the Ptolemaic kings, the following can be noted: the Jews surely must have had some knowledge of the religious traditions of their Egyptian neighbors, but there is no evidence of how they viewed the pharaonic aspect of their Hellenistic king. They can hardly have seen him in line with the Pharaoh of the bondage.[20] His function as the head of the Egyptian religion may, therefore, have been of little interest to them because they were not compelled to violate their religion.[21]

A limited insight is given in the documents that can be linked to Jews and that have references to royal titles and administration. They refer as usual to the king and queen as the *basileus* and *basilissa.* Like all other Greek documents they use the same formalities and do not shun common referral to the official cults of deceased and deified rulers.[22] Other writings contain petitions *(enteuxeis)* addressed to the king with the plea to receive justice. Those cases were normally dealt with by subofficials but sometimes found their way to the ruler.[23] Some writings express the petitioner's hope that "the king may read it"[24] or that he will receive justice through the king's judgment.[25]

19. Cf. H. J. Cadbury and M. D. Goodman, "Septuagint," *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (1996), 1391–92, Modrzejewski, *Jews of Egypt,* 99–104.
20. The question is, How could they? Pharaoh is one of the most popular anachronisms. The very dating of the Exodus cannot be exactly determined. But it can be said for certain that whenever it took place, the actual word *Pharaoh* had not become the title for the king as it was at the time our version of Exodus came on record (after 1000 B.C.). As early as the Eighteenth dynasty the word pr-ᶜ3 referred to the king's palace and thus synonymously to the king himself. As a title it came into use by Sheshonq I in the twenty-second dynasty (946/45–925, after Jürgen von Beckerath, *Chronologie des pharaonischen Ägypten: Münchener Ägyptologische Studien* Bd. 46 [Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1997], 191). Cf. Jürgen Osing, "Pharao," LÄ 4:1021.
21. This also applies to the pharaonic aspect as exercised by the Persian Great King.
22. The following Ptolemaic papyri have dating formula which include the names of the reigning couples as well as their deified parents and eponymous priests: CPJ I 1 (= PCZ 59003); CPJ I 18 (= P. Hib. 96); CPJ I 19 (= P. Petr. 3, 21 (g)); CPJ I 22 (= P. Tebt. III 820); CPJ I 23 (= P. Tebt. III 817); CPJ I 24 (= P. Tebt. III 818); CPJ I 25 (= BGU 1272); CPJ I 127d (= P. Tebt. III 815 col. II recto ll. 1–3); CPJ I 127e (= P. Hib. 90 ll. 1–4).
23. CPJ I 16 (= PCZ 59618); CPJ I 19 (= P. Petr. 3, 21 [g]); CPJ I 37 (= P. Magd. 3; P. Enteux. 59); CPJ I 38 (= P. Magd. N.S. 18; P. Enteux. 2); CPJ I 127b (= P. Enteux. 29); CPJ I 128 (P. Enteux. 23); CPJ I 129 (= P. Magd. 35).
24. CPJ I 38 (11. 11–12); (= P. Madg. N.S. 18; P. Enteux. 2).
25. CPJ I 129 (= P. Magd. 35): "I shall have received justice through you, my king." Nearly the same formula is in CPJ I 38 (= P. Madg. N.S. 18; P. Enteux. 2); cf. note 1.

The king is also adressed as "impartial saviour of all [men]."[26] Other papyri slightly touch on the king's or queen's affairs.[27]

An extraordinary example of the religious tolerance of the Ptolemies towards the Jews can be seen in the activities of Onias, most likely a former high priest from Jerusalem, of whom Flavius Josephus, a Jewish writer of the first century A.D., reports. The erection of another Jewish sanctuary in Egypt in the middle of the second century B.C., under Ptolemy VI, has been attributed to Onias. Parts of its archaeological remains seem to have long been identified in the modern Tell-el-Yahudieh, the ancient Leontopolis, about forty miles north of Cairo.[28] Further sources of information[29] include some scant references in the rabbinical,[30] Jewish-Hellenistic,[31] and early Christian literature.[32] Without going into the exact ramifications, a historical arrangement shall be attempted here. The real identity of Onias does not emerge clearly, since Josephus presents conflicting accounts and seems to confuse father and son.[33]

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26. CPJ I 38 (11. 11–12); (= P. Madg. N.S. 18; P. Enteux. 2).
27. CPJ I 130 (= P. Tebt. III 793 col. II [Fr. I., recto II] l. 29–31 [about some produce being withheld]): "that the king shall not suffer any loss." CPJ I 132 (= P. Paris 63; UPZ I 110), see above; CPJ I 134 (= P. Tebt. I 86 ll. 14–31) refers to one Sarapion who holds one aroura of sacred land belonging to the queen (Cleopatra II or III?).
28. Cf. Edouard Naville, *Mound of the Jew and the City of Onias, Bilbeis, Samarod, Abusir, Turkh El Karmus*, EEF 7 (London, 1890), 17–21; W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Hyksos and Israelite Cities* (London 1906), 3, 19–27. For a summary of the earliest relevant studies on the Temple of Leontopolis, cf. L.H. Feldmann, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship (1937–1980)* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), 459–463. See also A. P. Zivie, Tell el-Jahudija LÄ 6:321–35; E. S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 240–245. For a study on rival Jewish temples, see J. Frey, "Temple and rival Temple—The Cases of Elephantine, Mt. Gerizim, and Leontopolis," in Beate Ego, Armin Lange, and Peter Pilhofer, eds., *Gemeinde ohne Tempel (Community without Temple): Zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum,* Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 118 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 171–203.
29. It is interesting to note that Philo of Alexandria does not mention the temple in his numerous works.
30. M Menahot 13:10 (for the text see note 48); cf. also M Menahot 109b; Jerusalem Talmud, *Yoma* VI, 3.
31. Sibylline Oracles 5.492–511.
32. Eusebius, *Chronicle (Hieronymi Chronicon and versio Armenia),* mentions it, though he is basically following Josephus, *Antiquitates judaicae*, in seeing Onias IV as the builder of the temple. Cf. Eusebius, *Hieronymi Chronicon,* ed. R. Helm (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1956), 223F: "Ob quod Onias, filius pontificis Oniae, Aegyptum transmigrans in Heliopolitano pago civitatem nominis sui condit templo ad similitudinem templi patrii constructo (in *versio Armenia:* '. . . in qua templum similitudinem Hierosolymitani aedificabat')." There is one papyrus from a later time that can be linked to it: CPJ III 520. For a new reading, cf. G. Bohak, "CPJ III, 520: The Egyptian Reaction to Onias' Temple," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 26 (1995): 32–41, who sees some native response to the presence of the Leontopolis temple.
33. For recent studies on the background, see F. Parente, "Onias III's Death and the Founding of the Temple of Leontopolis," in *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period: Essays in Memory of Morton Smith,* ed. F. Parente and J. Sievers (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 69–98; G. Bohak, *Joseph and Asenath and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996); E. S Gruen, "The Origins and Objectives of Onias' Temple," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 16 (1997): 47–70; J. E. Taylor, "A Second Temple in Egypt: The Evidence for the Zadokite Temple of Onias," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 29 (1998): 297–321.

In *A History of the Jewish Wars,* the high priest Onias III flees to Egypt and builds this temple, whereas in *Antiquities of the Jews,* Josephus attributes this deed to his son, Onias IV.[34]

Fausto Parente has recently offered a convincing analysis of the sources and clarified some of those contradictions. It now appears likely that it was the third Onias who fled to the Nile and constructed the sanctuary.[35] The reason for his exile was his deposition as high priest by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.) in favor of his brother Jason, who received the office through bribery.[36] The desecration of the temple in Jerusalem through the machinations of the Seleucid king falls in that period.

Josephus reports that Onias was living in Alexandria for a while before he asked King Ptolemy VI Philometor by letter, and, it is important to note, Queen Cleopatra II as well,[37] for permission to build a Jewish temple.[38] According to the text, he felt prompted to fulfill the prophecy[39] by the prophet Isaiah that states: "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of

34. In Josephus's report in *Antiquities of the Jews,* the father of Onias IV died a natural death when Onias IV was still a child and thus too young to succeed his father in the priesthood (12.237). But once he had come of age it was another man, Alcimus, who was invested as high priest in his place for his murdered and unbeloved uncle Menelaus (12.283–88). This prompted the younger Onias to flee to Egypt with an unknown number of followers. Whether this Onias really is the mercenary leader of 145 B.C. is far from certain. Cf. Gruen, "Origins and Objectives," 59. According to Josephus (*Contra Apionem* 2.52–55) this Onias took up arms and came to the aid of the Queen Cleopatra II against her brother Ptolemy VIII "Physcon." Ptolemy, however, didn't dare face the army of Onias but instead forced all the Jews of Alexandria to be assembled at a certain place and ordered them to be trampled to death by his war elephants. But the animals, despite being made drunk for the event, turned against the king's friends and killed quite a few of them. Due to the intercession of one of his concubines, Ptolemy repented of his plans. It is difficult to assess what really happened. There is proof of an annual festival celebrated by the Alexandrian Jews which commemorated relief from a great danger (Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.56). As for the elephant episode, there is a similar story in 3 Maccabees from the time of Ptolemy IV Philopator (222/21–204 B.C.). Here the king had intended the same fate for the Alexandrian Jews. The victims were already driven into the hippodrome, but the elephants miraculously refused to kill them and turned against the royal troops instead. This event also affected the king's change of heart (*3 Maccabees* 6:21–22). There has been some discussion as to which of the two accounts is historical or if both events occurred independently from each other. It remains difficult, if not impossible, to narrow both narratives down to the historical truth. For a discussion on both accounts, cf. Modrzejewski, *Jews of Egypt,* 141–53. See also Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 37–39 n. 18 and Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes towards the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 218 n. 43. Nothing is known about the fate of Onias after the events of 145 B.C. His interference surely created a precedent. Josephus, who refers to a lost passage by the geographer Strabo, writes that his sons Khelkias and Ananias commanded the troops of Cleopatra III when she went to war against her son Ptolemy IX Soter II from 107 to 102 B.C. She was the daughter of the second Cleopatra. Josephus, however, refers to both generals as sons of the Onias who built the temple. Gruen, "Origins and Objectives," 59n61, rejects that and rather sees the two generals as sons of the Onias who helped in 145 B.C. Cf. Parente, "Onias III's Death," 95, for a summary of the various Josephus accounts.

35. Cf. Parente, "Onias III's Death," passim.

36. According to *2 Maccabees* 4:31–35, which is in fact the only source for this, he was later murdered on behest of Menelaus, who had supplanted Jason. Parente, "Onias III's Death," doubts this passage. Contra Gruen, "Origins and Objectives," 48–51, who believes Onias III was murdered.

37. The letter, which the author quotes, is obviously a fiction, but may reflect the way Onias might have proceeded.

38. Likewise he asked for the authority to install Levites and priests as well; cf. Josephus, *Antiquitates judaicae* 13.63, 13.73. Gruen, "Origins and Objectives," 69 and n. 105 questions his installment as high priest.

39. Josephus, *Antiquitates judaicae* 13.64.

Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts; one shall be called city of [the sun]. In that day there shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord."[40] A further motivation can be seen in the report of Onias. In the course of his flight from Judea he had visited many Jewish settlements in Egypt. He stated that "most of them have temples, contrary to what is proper, and for this reason they are ill-disposed toward one another, as is also the case with the Egyptians and the multitude of their temples (*hiera*) and their varying opinions about the forms of worship."[41] So it seems that other Jewish communities in Egypt had built sanctuaries of their own that did not meet Onias's approval.[42] He therefore offers himself as the right man for the construction of a Jewish temple, since he had already found an ideal site in a ruined temple of the cat-headed goddess Bastet in the city of Leontopolis in the nome of Heliopolis, not far from the city which gave it its name, the Egyptian center of the sun god Ra, *Iwnw*. Here Onias was able to use the analogy to the city of the sun in the passage from Isaiah mentioned above.[43] According to his plan, the Jews of Egypt should gather at this temple in mutual harmony, serving the interests of the king and the queen at the same time. This became apparent when the deposed high priest—in contrast with the Jews in his (now Selucid-controlled) homeland—submitted himself in religious affairs to the Ptolemaic rulers. The royal answer, likewise in written form, was consequently in the affirmative.[44] The king allotted Onias "extended territories" to assure revenues for the temple and provisions for the priests.[45] As a result, the Jewish population around Leontopolis boomed, and the area was known as "the Land of Onias" from then until Roman times.

A further motive for the erection of an alternate sanctuary in Leontopolis seems to lie in the character of the high priest. Josephus writes that Onias had seen the desecrations in Jerusalem but was also prompted by the desire "to acquire for himself eternal fame and glory."[46] In *A History of the Jewish Wars,* this impression becomes clearer: "In all this Onias was not actuated by honest motives; his aim was rather to rival the Jews at Jerusalem, against whom he harboured resentment for his exile, and he hoped by erecting this temple to attract the multitude away from them to it."[47] This negative commentary becomes understandable if one considers that Josephus was a determined adherent of the Jerusalem temple who deeply deplored its destruction by the later emperor Titus in A.D. 70—the blame for which he attributed to the various Jewish partisan

40. Isaiah 19:18–19. See also Gruen, "Origins and Objectives," 67–69.
41. Josephus, *Antiquitates judaicae* 13.66.
42. The exact nature of these sanctuaries is not clear. Cf. Gruen, "Origins and Objectives," 60.
43. The interesting clue lies in the phrase "city of the sun." This reading is preserved in the oldest known copy of Isaiah—in the Qumran scroll (1QIsa[a]). All later versions have "city of destruction," which is a slightly different spelling in Hebrew.
44. Josephus, *Antiquitates judaicae* 13.70–71. In their reply the royal couple questioned if Onias's choice of the site would please God, since it was wild and full of sacred animals. For the alleged piety of the king, cf. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora,* 36 n. 52. See also Gruen, "Origins and Objectives," 51–52.
45. Josephus, *Bellum judaicum* 7.430.
46. Josephus, *Antiquitates judaicae* 13.63.
47. Josephus, *Bellum judaicum* 7.431–432; cf. 7.425.

groups. For this reason he may have held very little sympathy for what seemed to him a schismatic shrine in the Diaspora.[48]

There is no proof that the Jewish temple in Leontopolis had more than regional or local importance. While it was tolerated as a shrine of minor significance, its offerings and vows were regarded as inferior at best to those in Jerusalem.[49] It is also noteworthy that the temple in Jerusalem had been rededicated in 164 B.C.—by the time the temple in Egypt was under construction or barely built.

Not only is the foundation of a temple by Onias of interest, but his likely career permits several interesting conclusions on how Jews could rise to the court. Onias writes to the royal couple: "Many and great are the services which I have rendered you in the course of the war, with the help of God, when I was in Coele-Syria and Phoenicia."[50] This statement is substantiated by a line in *Contra Apionem,* where Josephus states that Ptolemy and Cleopatra "entrusted the whole of their realm to Jews and placed their entire army under command of Jews, Onias and Dositheos."[51] Both passages prove a military leader by the name of Onias in the service of the Ptolemaic king.[52] How far one can take the word of Josephus, who in his own time hoped for an influential position at the Roman imperial court, remains undecided. Perhaps a papyrus apparently addressed to an Onias, dated to 21 September 164 B.C., may elucidate the context: the familiar tone by which the royal family is being referred to constitutes an interesting aspect: "King Ptolemy is well and King Ptolemy his brother and queen Cleopatra his sister and their children, and their affairs also are as usual."[53] It is important to note that such an intimate reference to the king's family is unique among all Ptolemaic documents and signifies that the writer as well as the recipient were high state officials who were well acquainted with the court.

48. Gruen, "Origins and Objectives," 69, sees the temple of Leontopolis not as schismatic. It rather served "as a beacon announcing that the faith remained alive and strong," especially in a time when the high priesthood in Jerusalem stood vacant. This may therefore serve as an indicator for the date of its construction.

49. M Menahot 13:10: "[If he said,] 'I pledge myself to offer a Whole-offering,' he must offer it in the Temple. And if he offered it in the House of Onias he has not fulfilled his obligation. [If he said,] 'I will offer it in the House of Onias', he should offer it in the Temple, but if he offered it in the House of Onias he has fulfilled his obligation. R. Simeon says: Such is not accounted a Whole-offering. [If a man said,] 'I will be a Nazarite,' he must offer the Hair-offering in the Temple; and if he offered it in the House of Onias he has not fulfilled his obligation. [If he said,] 'I will offer the Hair-offering in the House of Onias', he should offer it in the Temple; but if he offered it in the House of Onias he has fulfilled his obligation. R. Simeon says: Such a one is not accounted a Nazirite. If priests have ministered in the House of Onias they may not minister in the Temple in Jerusalem; still more does this apply to [priests who have ministered in] that other matter; for it is written, 'Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they did eat unleavened bread among their brethren (2 Kings 23:9); thus they were like them that have a blemish: they may share and they may eat [of the Holy Things] but they may not offer sacrifice.'" The Mishnah, trans. Herbert Danby (Oxford University Press, 1933), 512–13.

50. Josephus, *Antiquitates judaicae* 13.65. The context of this passage is attributed to Onias IV. As stated above (see note 34) it remains doubtful, however, whether the mercenary leader named Onias can be identified with the religious leader. Cf. Gruen, "Origins and Objectives," 52–54.

51. Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.49. Cf. Hölbl, *Geschichte des Ptolemäerreiches,* 167–68; Hölbl, *Ptolemaic Empire, 190–91.*

52. Perhaps Onias had been promoted to the *strategos* of the Heliopolite nome.

53. P. Paris 63, I–VII = UPZ I 110 ll. 1–19 = CPJ I 132. The name of the recipient has been amended to Onias by Ulrich Wilcken. His conjecture has found wide acceptance but is still far from certain. Cf. also Aryeh Kasher,

Those three sources document that the sixth Ptolemy was well disposed toward the Jews. This must be seen against its historical background. The kings of Egypt stood in obvious antagonism against the Seleucid king Antiochus IV from the year 170 B.C. This was the more remarkable since the latter was the uncle of the royal couple and of their brother, Ptolemy VIII. During the sixth Syrian War, from 170 to 168 B.C., Antiochus assumed the guardianship for his nephew, occupied parts of Egypt, and had himself crowned as king of Egypt. Only the intervention of the aspiring power of Rome through a delegation of Popillius Laenas in 168 B.C. brought his activities there to a halt.[54] Additionally, ever since the Ptolemies lost Coele-Syria in 200 B.C., they had an interest in the reconquest of those territories. The chances of that then looked very bad, however. So it must have suited the royal couple that the oppressions of the Seleucid king and his interference concerning the appointment of the high priest in Judea resulted in the revolt of the Maccabees in 166 B.C. Considering the strained relations between Antiochus and the Ptolemies, Onias must therefore have been a very welcome guest in Egypt, and his favorable reception must logically be seen in this context. The more Antiochus hassled the Jews with his politics of Hellenization and other measures, the more his Ptolemaic enemies were willing not only to grant asylum to the presumably anti-Seleucid Jews but also to permit some of their most able men into the higher echelons of power. Josephus mentions that Onias in return used this political situation, promising the Ptolemies that the Jews would be his allies—provided the king approved the building of a Jewish temple in Egypt. Thus, after Antiochus's defilement of the temple in Jerusalem, Ptolemy had the chance to pull many Jews to his side with this building permit.[55] But these hopes were not fulfilled. Antiochus IV died in 164 B.C. and his successor, Antiochus V Eupator (164 to 162 B.C.), supported the resumption of the temple worship as pursued by the Maccabees.

Summary

This contribution endeavors to chart how the position of the Jews in Egypt and their relationship to royal authority changed from late pharaonic times to the Ptolemaic period. The main turning point can be fixed after the year 200 B.C., when Coele-Syria, including Judea, was lost to the Seleucids. The resulting conflict enabled the Jews to achieve greater social status within the Ptolemaic realm, a status that at times surpassed even that of the native population. This was an obvious contrast to the epoch of the last Pharaohs, when the Jews had a rather subordinate standing. Already under the Persian rule, they were made nearly equal with the native Egyptians, but their toleration depended on a foreign power that was rejected by the Egyptians. Later, in Ptolemaic times, an escalating conflict concerning the homeland of the Jews meant that the Ptolemies could see a benefit in favoring the Jews within their borders, thereby reserving the option of enlisting

The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: The Struggle for Equal Rights (Tübingen: Mohr, 1985), 60–61, 135, who doubts that the Onias of the Papyrus is the builder of the temple (in this case Onias IV); Modrzejewski, *Jews of Egypt,* 124, accepts Wilcken's conjecture; Parente, "Onias III's Death," 84, 96, is equally positive about it and sees Onias III as the recipient of the letter.

54. For more details cf. Hölbl, *Geschichte des Ptolemäerreiches,* 128–40, 157–69; Hölbl, *Ptolemaic Empire,* 143–48, 181–92.

55. Josephus, *Bellum judaicum* 7.422–425.

Jewish aid in any future attempts to recapture their lost territories or in defending their own borders from the Seleucids. Only within this context can the concessions to Onias, the exiled high priest, be understood. The Jewish priest may have found it hard to exercise subservience toward the royal couple, but he nevertheless had the unique opportunity to gain concessions for his followers. At the same time, he used the Ptolemies to gratify his own ambitions, for he desired a position he esteemed equal to that of the high priest in Jerusalem. That neither the wishes of the royal couple nor Onias were fulfilled in the long run was regrettable for both sides but inevitable in the face of a momentary stalemate between the successor of Antiochus IV and the rulers in Alexandria.

For the Jews, Egypt must have been a place of many opportunities. Their Pharaoh "who remembered not Joseph"[56] was himself but a distant memory and no longer equated with the nominal Pharaohs of the later centuries. Additionally, the prohibitions against (re)emigration in the Law and the Prophets were no longer seen as relevant or binding. The handling of Jewish religion by the Egyptian rulers was an additional factor. The level of tolerance was remarkable. The last native kings permitted the Jews to build their temple on Elephantine. The Persians largely continued this toleration, and under the Ptolemaic kings, the Jews extended their religious freedoms, and the building of a Jewish sanctuary at Leontopolis was even sponsored by royal grants.

In general, however, we should note that our sources present us with a very one-sided and distorted, sometimes even glorifying, picture so that we remain incapable of gaining a complete and rounded picture of Egyptian Jewry in these centuries.

56. Exodus 1:8.

Chapter 7

Facsimile 3 and Book of the Dead 125

John Gee

Facsimile 3 has always been the most neglected of the three facsimiles in the Book of Abraham. Unfortunately, most of what has been said about this facsimile is seriously wanting at best and highly erroneous at worst.[1] This lamentable state of affairs exists because the basic Egyptological work on Facsimile 3 has not been done, and much of the evidence lies neglected and unpublished in museums.[2] Furthermore, what an ancient Egyptian understood by a vignette and what a modern Egyptologist understands by the same vignette are by no means the same thing.[3] Until we

1. E.g., Allen J. Fletcher, "Another Look at the Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham" (n.p.: self published, n.d.), 6–8; James R. Harris, *The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham: A Study of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri* (Payson, Utah: James R. Harris, 1990), 42–49; James R. Harris, "The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham," in H. Donl Peterson, *The Pearl of Great Price: A History and Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 49–51; James R. Harris, "The Book of Abraham Facsimiles," in *Studies in Scripture: Volume Two: The Pearl of Great Price,* Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson, eds. (Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1985), 260–62; Samuel A. B. Mercer, "Joseph Smith as an Interpreter and Translator of Egyptian," *Utah Survey* 1/1 (September 1913): 25–29; Charles M. Larson, *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Institute for Religious Research, 1992), 108–11; Dee Jay Nelson, *A Translation & Study of Facsimile No. 3 in the Book of Abraham* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, 1969).
2. "Owing to the limited number of Demotic specialists, large corpora of Demotic sources remain unpublished and uncatalogued in museum collections." Robert K. Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire: The Demotic Spells and their Religious Context," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt,* Teil II, Band 18, Teilband 5 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 3334; cf. Jan Mertens, "Bibliography and Description of Demotic Literary Texts: A Progress Report," in *Life in a Multi-Cultural Society: Egypt from Cambyses to Constantine and Beyond,* ed. Janet H. Johnson, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 51 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1992), 233: "Many Demotic literary texts remain undiscovered in papyrus collections all over the world." The relevance of Demotic will become painfully obvious in the course of this essay.
3. For the method and examples, see John Gee, "Towards an Interpretation of Hypocephali," in *"Le lotus qui sort de terre": Mélanges offerts à Edith Varga,* ed. Hedvig Győry (Budapest: Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts, 2001), 330–34.

understand what the Egyptians understood by this scene, we have no hope of telling whether what Joseph Smith said about them matches what the Egyptians thought about them. I have no intention of explaining Facsimile 3 or providing the real parallels at this time. I rather desire to debunk a few persistent myths circulating about Facsimile 3.

Dating Facsimile 3

Facsimile 3 came from the middle of a long roll belonging to a man by the name of Hor, who was the son of Osoroeris and Chibois.[4] The first part of the roll contained the man's name and titles, followed by Facsimile 1, followed by the so-called First Book of Breathings, four of the six columns of which have been preserved. Facsimile 3 came next, followed by another text, the only portions of which have been preserved are the maddeningly elliptical opening words: "Beginning of the Book of . . . ."[5] Although this papyrus has been assumed to date to the end of the first century A.D.,[6] the reasoning behind such dating has been convincingly challenged,[7] and it has now been dated, on the basis of the names and titles of the owner, to the first half of the second century B.C.[8]

Some have assumed that the facsimiles of the Book of Abraham were drawn by Abraham himself.[9] This assumption is too simplistic for what we know of the traditions of manuscript

4. For the name and genealogy, see Joseph Smith Papyrus (JSP) I. The name also appears in the lower register of Facsimile 3. See Marc Cohen, "The Dating of the Papyri Joseph Smith I, X, and XI and Min who Massacres His Enemies," in *Egyptian Religion: The Last Thousand Years,* ed. Willy Claryesse, Antoon Schoors, and Harco Willems (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 2:1104; John Gee, *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 10–11, 54–55; Michael D. Rhodes, *The Hor Book of Breathings: A Translation and Commentary* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), 3, 21–25, 33, 43.
5. For the reconstruction of the papyrus, see John Gee, "Eyewitness, Hearsay, and Physical Evidence of the Joseph Smith Papyri," in *The Disciple as Witness: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson,* ed. Andrew Hedges, Donald W. Parry, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 175–217; Gee, *Guide,* 10–13.
6. For the standard dating, see Hugh Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 4–6.
7. Jan Quaegebaer, "Demotic Inscriptions on Wood from the Tomb of ʿAnch-Hor," in Manfred Bietak and Elfriede Reiser-Haslauer, *Das Grab des ʿAnch-Hor, Obermeister der Gottesgemählin Nitokris* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1982), 2:264; John Gee, "Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7/1 (1995): 71 n. 272; Coenen, "Dating of the Papyri Joseph Smith I, X, and XI and Min who Massacres His Enemies," 1103–15; John Gee, "The Original Owners of the Joseph Smith Papyri," (FARMS Paper GEE-99a) 1–5.
8. Jan Quaegebeur, "Books of Thoth Belonging to Owners of Portraits? On Dating Late Hieratic Funerary Papyri," in *Portraits and Masks: Burial Customs in Roman Egypt,* ed. M. L. Bierbrier (London: British Museum, 1997), 74, for full argument see 72–77; cf. Jan Quaegebeur, "Le papyrus Denon à La Haye et une famille de prophètes de Min-Amon," in *Aspekte spätägyptischer Kultur,* Aegyptiaca Treverensia 7 (Mainz: von Zabern, 1994), 213–25. (I have corrected Quaegebeur's identification of the papyri slightly.) Marc Coenen, "Horos, Prophet of Min Who Massacres His Enemies," *CdE* 74/148 (1999): 257–60; Marc Coenen, "On the Demise of the *Book of the Dead* in Ptolemaic Thebes," *RdE* 52 (2001): 69–84; Coenen, "Dating of the Papyri Joseph Smith I, X, and XI and Min who Massacres His Enemies," 1103–15; Gee, "The Original Owners of the Joseph Smith Papyri," 1–5.
9. For alternate views, see Gee, "Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob," 72–74; H. Donl Peterson, *The Story of the Book of Abraham: Mummies, Manuscripts, and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 34–35; John Gee,

illustrations.[10] In Egypt, iconographic traditions—such as the canon of proportions[11]—are modified from time to time, the same tradition even varying in artistic media from time to time.[12] The Egyptians even change the text associated with vignettes, which I will demonstrate later. So while the text of the Book of Abraham comes from Abraham's day, the style of the facsimiles of the Book of Abraham reflects the date of the manuscript rather than the date of the text.

Egypt of the Greco-Roman period (332 B.C.–A.D. 642) is in some ways substantially different from the earlier periods of the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms that most Egyptologists specialize in. For one thing, the language in use in the Greco-Roman period is Demotic, a very different language from the classical Egyptian that most Egyptologists know. Furthermore, most of the Egyptologists who have commented on the Joseph Smith Papyri have not had training in the Greco-Roman period to which the manuscripts date.[13] In fact, one Demotic scholar bids us, "Note how few Demoticists there are in [the] world, how few contemporary Egyptologists extend their interests past Tutankhamen and the New Kingdom 'flowering.' In the past, Demoticists have been considered almost 'suspect' to 'mainstream' Egyptologists."[14] If most Egyptologists think that those who study material from this time period are suspect, they obviously think even less of the material under study. Since everyone insists that the facsimiles come from the Greco-Roman period, the principal evidence to explain the facsimiles should also come from the Greco-Roman period, even if most Egyptologists lack the necessary training in that time period. Since Egyptology comprises four thousand years of history of all facets of a complex civilization, no Egyptologist can be a specialist in all facets of this civilization. The opinion of an Egyptologist who has no interest or ability in the time period of the Joseph Smith Papyri is therefore unlikely to be informed.

The Vignette from Book of the Dead 125

A general assumption, both inside and outside the church, is that "Facsimile 3 presents a constantly recurring scene in Egyptian literature, best known from the 125th chapter of the *Book of the Dead.* It

"Telling the Story of the Joseph Smith Papyri," *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 58; Gee, *Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri,* 25–27.

10. See, for example, Thomas W. Mackay, "Early Christian Millenarianist Interpretation of the Two Witnesses in John's Apocalypse 11:3–13," in *By Study and Also By Faith,* ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 1:308–9.
11. Gay Robins, *Proportion and Style in Ancient Egyptian Art* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).
12. See for example Černý's tracing of the motif from Old Kingdom tomb paintings to Middle Kingdom wooden models to shawabtis; Jaroslav Černý, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1952), 92–94. The missing step in the progression outlined by Černý are four wooden statues from the Middle Kingdom, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA 10.176.57–60), inscribed with Coffin Texts; see William C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt: A Background for the Study of the Egyptian Antiquities in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1953), 1:211 and 1:212, figure 129.
13. This includes James Henry Breasted, Arthur C. Mace, Samuel A. B. Mercer, John A. Wilson, Klaus Baer, Stephen E. Thompson, and Edward H. Ashment. The exceptions are W. M. Flinders Petrie, Richard A. Parker, Jan Quaegebeur, Michael Rhodes, Marc Coenen, and the present author.
14. Robert K. Ritner, "Implicit Models of Cross-Cultural Interaction: A Question of Noses, Soap, and Prejudice," in *Life in a Multi-Cultural Society,* 285.

represents the judgment of the dead before the throne of Osiris."[15] This notion, so far as I have been able to trace it, was originally suggested both by W. M. Flinders Petrie[16] and James H. Breasted;[17] the fullest attempt to demonstrate this was promulgated by Jerald and Sandra Tanner based on comparisons made by Grant Heward with two judgment scenes in P. BM 3135 and P. BM 3154.[18]

The numbering of the vignettes and chapters of the Book of the Dead comes from a papyrus published in 1842 by Richard Leipsius. This papyrus, then and now in Turin, dates to the Ptolemaic period (332–52 B.C.). The earliest copies of the Book of the Dead date from the Eighteenth Dynasty, about 1,300 years earlier, and are much different, although the same numbering system is still used.

Though Book of the Dead 125 first appeared early in the reign of the Eighteenth Dynasty pharaoh, Thutmosis III (1479–1425 B.C.),[19] it had no vignette, or picture, accompanying it. The earliest papyrus copies of the Book of the Dead had no vignettes of any sort. Vignettes on Book of the Dead papyri did not appear until after the reign of Thutmosis III, following an iconographic movement that took place during his reign, when many cultic scenes (such as the depiction of the divine royal birth, tree goddesses and their cult, the Opet festival, the canonical lists of the nine bows, and the presentation of Maat) first appear in the iconography.[20] The judgment scene does occur in the Eighteenth Dynasty (1552–1401 B.C.), but when it originally appeared it was associated with Book of the Dead 30B, not Book of the Dead 125.[21] The connection of Book of the Dead 125 with the judgment of the dead appears first in manuscripts that have been dated, though not securely, to the reign of Amenhotep II (1425–1401 B.C.),[22] but there is no *consistent* association of the vignette depicting the judgement of the dead with Book of the Dead 125 until after the

15. Michael D. Rhodes, "Book of Abraham: Facsimiles from the Book of Abraham," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:136.
16. W. M. Flinders Petrie to Franklin S. Spalding, in F. S. Spalding, *Joseph Smith, Jr., As a Translator* (Salt Lake City: Arrow, 1912), 24; cf. Mercer, "Joseph Smith as an Interpreter and Translator of Egyptian," 25.
17. James H. Breasted to Franklin S. Spalding, in Spalding, *Joseph Smith, Jr., As a Translator,* 26.
18. Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Case Against Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1968–71), 3:51–52; Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987), 352–53. The earliest mention seems to be Nelson, *Translation & Study of Facsimile No. 3,* 3, but the demonstration is that of Heward. Derivative accounts can be found in Larson, *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus,* 108.
19. The earliest example is the tomb of Senenmut, which is securely dated; Peter F. Dorman, *The Tombs of Senenmut: The Architecture and Decoration of Tombs 71 and 353* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition, 1991), pls. 30–34.
20. See Emily Teeter, *The Presentation of Maat: Ritual and Legitimacy in Ancient Egypt* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1997), 81.
21. Reinhard Grieshammer, "Zum 'Sitz im Leben' des Negativen Sündenbekenntnisses," *XVIII. Deutscher Orientalistentag,* ed. Wolfgang Voigt, Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft Supplement 2 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1974), 25; cf. Geo Nagel, *Un papyrus funéraire de la fin du nouvel empire [Louvre, 3292 (inv.)]* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1929), 35.
22. The earliest examples are Amenhotep Cc and P. Cairo 2512, both dated to the reign of Amenhotep II on stylistic grounds; Irmtraut Munro, *Totenbuch-Handschriften der 18. Dynastie im ägyptischen Museum Cairo,* 2 vols., ÄgAb 54 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowtiz, 1994), 1:Photo-Taf. 27, 79; Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1988), 17–18, 133, 275–76, 287. Unfortunately, there are very few securely dated Eighteenth Dynasty Books of the Dead and not enough to establish the securely dated sequence that Munro attempts. These datings must remain tentative.

Nineteenth Dynasty (1295–1188 B.C.). Taken as a whole, only a minority of Eighteenth Dynasty vignettes associate the judgment scene with Book of the Dead 125, and almost as many associate the judgment scene with Book of the Dead 30B.[23] The switch in vignettes has caused many Egyptologists to identify examples of Book of the Dead 30B incorrectly as Book of the Dead 125 because they apparently looked only at the vignette and did not read the text.[24]

Book of the Dead 30B is a famous text, which reads as follows: "O my heart of my mother, O my heart of my mother, O my heart of my forms, do not stand up as a witness against me! Do not oppose me in the council. Do not go against me in the presence of the keeper of the balance."[25] In later times, the vignette associated with Book of the Dead 30B was a picture of a heart scarab, but the heart scarab occurs in the Eighteenth Dynasty only rarely.[26] The association of the judgment of the dead with 30B makes sense because Book of the Dead 30B mentions the judgment and the weighing of the heart, whereas Book of the Dead 125 does not. After the 26th Dynasty, the judgment of the dead vignette is consistently attached to Book of the Dead 125 in copies of the Book of the Dead. From this, we can conclude that vignettes can be used for texts other than those with which they were originally associated. Thus, the argument usually advanced by critics of the Book of Abraham, that because a vignette from a text is similar to a vignette from a funerary text it must therefore retain its full funerary meaning, is an invalid argument.

This is quite telling, as both Facsimile 1 and Facsimile 3 are assumed to belong to the Book of Breathings Made by Isis because they accompanied the text in the Joseph Smith Papyri. Yet the contemporary parallel texts of the Book of Breathings Made by Isis belonging to members of the same family have different vignettes associated with them. Instead of a scene like Facsimile 3, most Books of Breathings Made by Isis show a man with his hands raised in adoration to a cow. This indicates that the facsimiles of the Book of Abraham do not belong to the Book of Breathings.

What Facsimile 3 Is Not

The problems with the theory that Facsimile 3 is the vignette from Book of the Dead 125 can be most readily shown by a single quotation from the latest known copy of the Book of the Dead,

23. Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri,* 108–10: "Das TG [Totengericht] ist bei den frühen wie auch den in die Zeit TIV zu datierenden Tb gleichermaßen sowohl mit Tb 30B als auch mit Tb 125 verbunden, und auch in der 19. Dyn. bleiben beide Sprüche weiterhin gleichwertig für eine Verbindung mit dem TG in Gebrauch."

24. Robert K. Ritner, "The Cult of the Dead," in *Ancient Egypt,* ed. David P. Silverman (London: Duncan Baird, 1997), 137; Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (London: British Museum, 1985), 34–35; Ian Shaw and Paul Nicholson, *The Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum, 1995), 30; Hartwig Altenmüller, "Zu den Jenseitsvorstellungen des Alten Ägypten," in *Suche nach Unsterblichkeit: Totenkult und Jenseitsglaube im Alten Ägypten* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1990), 14, 12–13, Abb. 5.

25. BD 30B, from *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Book of Going Forth by Day,* ed. Eva von Dassow (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1994), plate 3.

26. Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri,* 72, lists only four examples, the earliest dating to the reign of Amenhotep II, where the heart scarab is the vignette for BD 30B; ibid.; in Eighteenth Dynasty manuscripts of the Book of the Dead, the weighing of the heart is attested from the time of Hatshepsut to Thutmosis IV while the heart scarab is attested from the reign of Amenhotep II to Amenhotep III.

written in Demotic in A.D. 63. This Book of the Dead has no vignettes; instead it has a written description of the vignettes demonstrating clearly what elements the Egyptians thought were essential in the judgment scene:

> The forty-two gods [in front of] the deceased above the hall of the truths;[27] a figure of Hathor, [lady] of the underworld carrying a *was*-scepter,[28] protecting the man, while the two arms of the scale are straight and Thoth is on its left, to the right of its [...] while Horus speaks,[29] and Anubis grasps it on the side on which are the two truths (Maats) while he is opposite on the other side of the scale. Thoth reads the writings since a scroll is in his hand [...Ammut] in whose hand is a knife and before whom are a sword and a scepter,[30] Anubis holding his hand. A lotus with two supports on which are the four sons of Horus. A chapel[31] in which Osiris sits on his throne there being an offering table with a lotus before him. Isis is behind him praising, and Nephthys is behind him praising.[32]

A careful comparison of this description with actual vignettes of Book of the Dead 125 shows that the major elements are all in this picture: Here are the forty-two gods. Here is the hall of the truths. This is the figure of the goddess holding a *was*-scepter. Here is the man. The two arms of the scale are straight. Thoth is on the left of the scale. Horus has his hand raised in a gesture of speaking. Anubis is grasping the side of the scale in which the figure representing truth is seated. The man is shown placing his heart upon the scale. Thoth is shown reading or writing something. Ammut is clearly present, and although this particular illustration omits the knife in his hand, it is shown on other copies of the same scene. The scepter is nearby. Here is the lotus with the four sons of Horus atop it. This is the chapel in which sits Osiris, with the offering table and lotus in front of him. In this particular scene, Isis and Nephthys are not standing behind him, but they are found on other scenes.

If we compare this description with Facsimile 3, we find that the description does not match at all: Facsimile 3 lacks the forty-two gods. It is missing Hathor holding the *was*-scepter. There is no

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27.  Read: *ḥsy ḥr ḏ3ḏ3 t3 wsḫ3.t m3ʿṯ.w*. Only partially read by Lexa.
28.  Read *wst*; spelled differently than Wolja Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar* (Kopenhagen: Munksgaard, 1954), 77, 99; compare the vignette in Richard Lepsius, *Das Todtenbuch der Ägypter nach dem hieroglyphischen Papyrus in Turin* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1842), plate L.
29. Read: *iw Ḥr tm*, and see Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar,* 632.
30.  *ḥq3*, "scepter." The word was unread by Lexa in his commentary (Franz Lexa, *Das demotische Totenbuch der Pariser Nationalbibliothek [Papyrus des Pamonthes],* Demotische Studien 4 [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1910], 7), though it was listed in his glossary, ibid., 48 #193 translated as "eine Waffe(?)"; the reading was taken over with some doubts in Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar,* 33. The word is the Demotic descendent of the earlier hieroglyphic *ḥq3.t* "scepter"; see Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar,* 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 508 (Signlist S 38); Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1981), 178. An examination of vignettes from Greco-Roman period vignettes shows that it is common for Ammut to carry both knife and scepter; see Bengt Julius Peterson, "Der Totenfresser in den Darstellungen der Psychostasie des altägyptischen Totenbuches," *Orientalia Suecana* 10 (1961): 31–40.
31. The term *gw3.t*, which Lexa read with some hesitation (*Demotische Totenbuch,* 7–8, 52), derives from the earlier term *g3ỉ.t;* see Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar,* 570.
32. P. Bibliothèque Nationale E 140 1/16–24, Franz Lexa, *Das demotische Totenbuch der Pariser Nationalbibliothek (Papyrus des Pamonthes)* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1910), ix, 6–8, plate I.

balance-scale. Thoth is missing from the left side of the nonexistent scale. Horus is missing. The figure generally identified with Anubis is not grasping the side of the scale, but the waist of the man. Since Thoth is not depicted, he cannot be shown reading anything. Ammut is absent, along with the knife, sword, and scepter. The lotus is missing the four sons of Horus atop it. Though Osiris is shown sitting, he is not depicted seated within any chapel. Almost all of the elements which the Egyptians thought were important for the scene are conspicuous by their absence from Facsimile 3. Significantly, these elements are present in a vignette accompanying Book of the Dead, chapter 125, found among the Joseph Smith Papyri, as well as other copies of vignettes of Book of the Dead, chapter 125. These elements are present in all the judgment scenes that the critics would compare with the Facsimile 3. The elements of the judgment scene as listed in the Demotic Book of the Dead are consistent with those of earlier judgment scenes.[33] Their absence from Facsimile 3 indicates that Facsimile 3 is not a judgment scene and is not directly associated with Book of the Dead 125.[34]

Far from being, as one critic claimed, "the single most common form of Egyptian funerary scene known"[35] (which is not true even of Book of the Dead 125), the real parallels to Facsimile 3 have not yet been publicly identified. Having established what Facsimile 3 is not, however, we are free to look for those real parallels to Facsimile 3.

33. See also Jeanne C. Guillevic and Pierre Ramond, *Le Papyrus Varille: un livre des morts d'époque ptolémaique (305–30 av. J.-C.)* (Toulouse: Musée Georges Labit, 1975), 26–27; Jacques J. Clère, *Le Papyrus de Nesmin: un livre des morts hiéroglyphique de l'époque ptolémaïque* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1987), frontispiece, and plates X–XI; Lepsius, *Das Todtenbuch der Ägypter nach dem hieroglyphischen Papyrus in Turin,* plate L.

34. Klaus Parlasca, however, disagrees, saying the following about the scenes: "Inhaltlich handelt es sich in der Regel um das Geleit des Verstorbenen (oder mehrerer Toter) vor Osiris, also der Grundgedanke des Totengerichts." Klaus Parlasca, review of Abdalla, in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 82 (1996): 240.

35. Larson, *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus,* 108.

Figure 1. Vignette 2 of the Denon Papyrus. Courtesy Den Haag, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, Inv. 42 (Papyrus Denon).

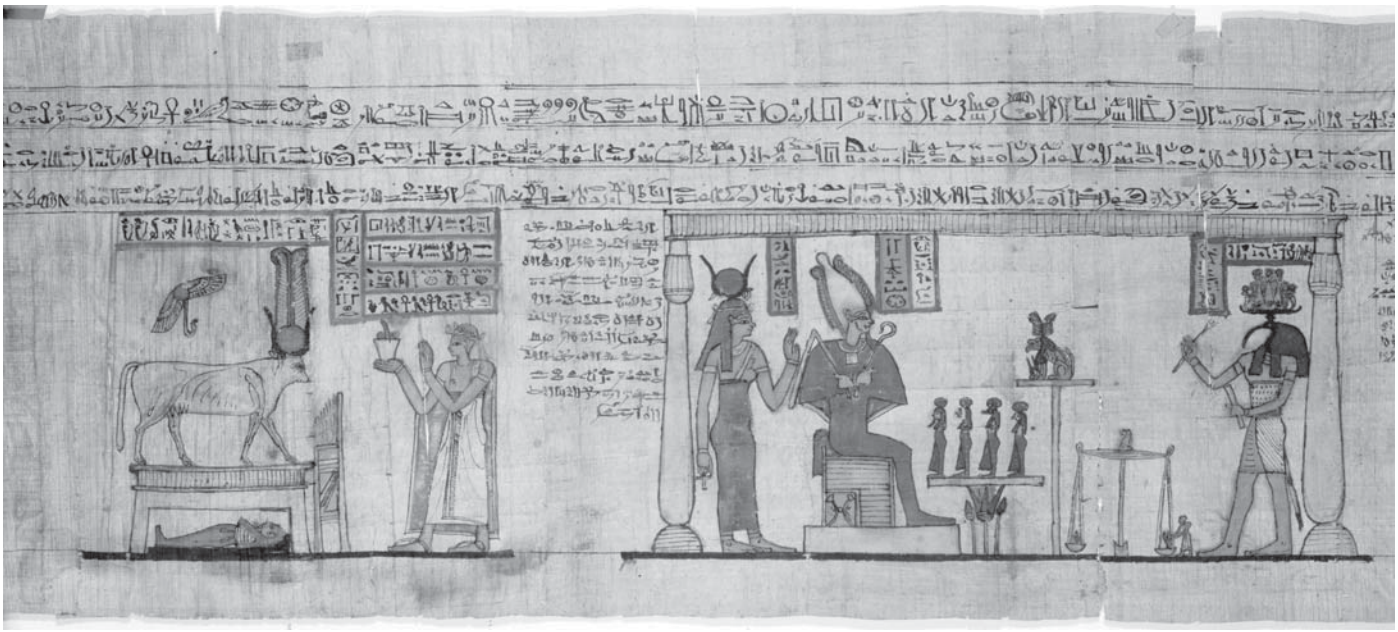

Figure 2. Vignette 3 of Louvre 3284. Courtesy Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY.

Figure 3. Facsimile 3 of the Book of Abraham from an 1842 edition of *Times and Seasons.*

Table 1

T = Thutmosis A = Amenhotep TT = Theban Tomb
(Securely dated documents are listed in boldface type)

Manuscript	Date	Shrine	Judgment	Heart Scarab	Fire Lake	Sequence
Senenmut[36]	***T III***	*no vignettes*				*isolated*[37]
TT 82[38]	***T III***	*no vignettes*				*125-17*
Thutmosis III[39]	***T III-A II***	*no vignettes*				*90-125A-83 ... 24-125B-D*
Nu[40]	*T III-A II*	*125*			*126*	*176-125A-D-126*
Nebseni[41]	*T III-A II*	*different vignettes*			*125*	*176-125A-D-Osiris Hymn*
Nb-m-trt[42]	*T III-A II*	*125*				*...125C-125D-146*
Senuseret[43]	*T III-A II*	*125*			*125*	*99-100-125-136B*
Amenhotep Cd[44]	*A II*	*125*			*125*	*99B-125A-D-136B*
Amenhotep Cc[45]	*A II*	*125*	*125*		*125*	*133-125A-D-27*
P. Cairo 2512[46]	*A II*	*125*	*125*		*125*	*147-125A-D-149*
Maiherperi[47]	*T IV*	*125*	*30B*		*125*	*150-125A-D-146*
TT 69[48]	*T IV*		*30B*			
TT 78[49]	*T IV-A III*		*unusual*			
Yuya[50]	***A III***	*125*	*146/99*	*30B*	*125*	*99B-125A-D-100*
Neferwebenef[51]	*A III?*	*125*	*125*		*126!*	*100-125-136B*
TT 50[52]	*Horemheb*	*125*	*125*			*isolated*
Nakht[53]	*Horemheb*		*30B*			*13-125C-136A ... 82-125B-125A-99*
Hunefer[54]	***Sety II***		*30B*[55]			
Pashed[56]	*Ramses II*	*125*				*isolated*
Mose[57]	*Ramses II*		*unusual*			
Wien Aeg. 900[58]	*Dyn 19*	*125*				*isolated*
Berlin 2/63-3/63[59]	*Dyn 19*		*30B*			
Ani[60]	*Dyn 19*	*125*	*30B/125*[61]		*125*	*175-125-42*
Neferrenpet[62]	*Dyn 19?*	*125*		*30B*	*125*	*17-125-100*

36. Dorman, *Tombs of Senenmut*, pls. 30–34. Dated by the cartouches of Hatsheput; see Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 4.
37. Book of the Dead 125 seemingly takes up the entire interior sides of the fragmentary sarcophagus of Senenmut. The order of texts on the exterior right side is BD 34-45-8b-62. BD 76 is on the exterior left side. It is significant that the figure of Nut on the interior bottom of the sarcophagus preserves the text "Senenmut, whom (I) love, to whom (I) have given purification on earth and transfiguration [in heaven.]" See Dorman, *Tombs of Senenmut*, 70–76.
38. Norman de Garis Davies and Alan H. Gardiner, *The Tomb of Amenemhēt (No. 82)*, Theban Tomb Series 1 (London: EEF, 1915), 107–9, pls. XLIV–XLV; Mohamed Saleh, *Das Totenbuch in den thebanischen Beamtsgräbern des Neuen Reiches*, Archäologische Veröffentlichungen 46 (Mainz: von Zabern, 1984), 63; Porter and Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings*, 160, 166. Dated by a dated stele; see Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 4.

39. Munro, *Totenbuch-Handschriften der 18. Dynastie im Ägyptischen Museum Cairo*, 1:41–45, Photo-Taf. 14–19; Dows Dunham, "A Fragment from the Mummy Wrappings of Tuthmosis III," *JEA* 17 (1931): 209–10, pls. XXXI–XXXVI; Georges Nagel, "Le linceul de Thoutmès III Caire, Cat. N° 40.001," *ASAE* 49 (1949): 317–329, pls. I–III. Perhaps one of the most securely dated manuscripts; Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 4.
40. Günther Lapp, *The Papyrus of Nu*, Catalogue of Books of the Dead in the British Museum 1 (London: British Museum, 1997), pl. 64–70; E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Dead: Facsimiles of the Papyri of Hunefer, Anhai, Kerāsher and Netchemet with a Supplementary Text from the Papyrus of Nu* (London: British Museum, 1899), 63; dating in Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 280.
41. Munro, *Totenbuch-Handschriften der 18. Dynastie im Ägyptischen Museum Cairo*, 1:Photo-Taf. 72–74. Dated on stylistic grounds; Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 281.
42. Munro, *Totenbuch-Handscriften der 18. Dynastie im Ägyptischen Museum Cairo*, 1:Photo-Taf, 65, 68. Dated on stylistic criteria; Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 280.
43. Gertrud Thausing and Traudl Kerszt-Kratschmann, *Das grosse ägyptische Totenbuch (Papyrus Reinsich) der Papyrussammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek* (Cairo: Österreichisches Kulturinstitut Kairo, 1969), Tafeln III–IV. Thausing (ibid., 7) seems to date it during the reign of Amenhotep III; Munro (*Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 285–86) dates it to the reign of Thutmosis III or Amenhotep II on stylistic grounds.
44. Munro, *Totenbuch-Handschriften der 18. Dynastie im Ägyptischen Museum Cairo*, 1: Photo-Taf. 51. Dated to the reign of Amenhotep II on the basis of the vignette of BD 1; Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 17–18, 276.
45. Munro, *Die Totenbuch-Handschriften der 18. Dynastie im Ägyptischen Museum Cairo*, 1: Photo-Taf. 27. Dated to the reign of Amenhotep II on the basis of the purification scene; Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 133, 275–76.
46. Munro, *Die Totenbuch-Handschriften der 18. Dynastie im Ägyptischen Museum Cairo*, 1: Photo-Taf. 79. Dated on the basis of the vignettes of BD 1; Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 17–18, 287.
47. Munro, *Totenbuch-Handscriften der 18. Dynastie im Ägyptischen Museum Cairo*, 1:Photo-Taf. 57, 60. Dated on stylistic grounds and on the vignettes for BD 1 even though the name of Hatsheput was written on the linen wrappings of the mummy and the tomb dates from the reign of Hatshepsut or Thutmosis III; Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 4, 17–18, 278.
48. Saleh, *Das Totenbuch in den thebanischen Beamtsgräbern des Neuen Reiches*, 63, 67.
49. Saleh, *Das Totenbuch in den thebanischen Beamtsgräbern des Neuen Reiches*, 64, 98; Porter and Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings*, 1.1:155.
50. Theodore M. Davis, *The Funeral Papyrus of Iouiya* (London: Archibald Constable, 1908), pls. XVI, XXII, XXV–VI; Munro, *Totenbuch-Handschriften der 18. Dynastie im Ägyptischen Museum Cairo*, 1:81–82. Dated on the basis of his son-in-law's reign; Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 5.
51. Suzanne Ratié, *Le Papyrus de Neferoubenef (Louvre III 93)*, BdE 43 (Cairo: IFAO, 1968), pl. xvii. Dating this papyrus by various criteria has presented problems: the vignettes of BD 1 date it to the reign of Amenhotep II; stylistic criteria date it to the reign of Thutmosis IV; various other criteria date it to the beginning of the 19th Dynasty; Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 282–83. The ordering of the chapters in this section compares well with other manuscripts dated to the riegn of Amenhotep II. This suggests that the criteria are not diagnostic.
52. Robert Hari, *La tombe thébane du père divin Neferhotep (TT 50)*, (Genève: Éditions de Belles-Lettres, 1985), 24–25, pls. XI–XII, LX–LXII; Saleh, *Das Totenbuch in den Thebanischen Beamtengräbern des Neuen Reiches*, 70, 98; cf. Porter and Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings*, 1.1:90, 95–97.
53. S. R. K. Glanville, "Note on the Nature and Date of the 'Papyri' of Nakht, B.M. 10471 and 10473," *JEA* 13 (1927): 50–56 (the weighing of the heart with BD 30B may be seen on plate XXI); Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 300.

54. Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 4, 302. Dating from king's name mentioned in title.
55. Photograph in Shaw and Nicholson, *The Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, 30 (photo reversed) wrongly labeling it "the vignette associated with Chapter 125," yet the text in the illustration is that of BD 30B; correct attribution in Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch der 18. Dynastie*, 302.
56. Alain-Pierre Zivie, *La Tombe de Pached à Deir el-Médineh*, MIFAO 99 (Cairo: IFAO, 1979), 80–91, fig. 3, pls. 27–28, 33; for the dating, see pp. 130–32.
57. G. A. Gaballa, *The Memphite Tomb-Chapel of Mose* (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1977), 29, plate XXIX; the identification on pp. 14–15 is wrong. The text is located in the first (southernmost) room to the left (west) off the open court.
58. Egon R. Komorzyński, "Ein Totenbuchfragment aus der Wiener Papyrussammlung," *Archiv für ägyptische Archäologie* 1/6 (June 1938): 141–51.
59. J. S. Karig, "Die Kultkammer des Amenhotep aus Deir Durunka," *ZÄS* 95 (1968): 27–34; Settgast and Wildung, *Ägyptisches Museum Berlin*, 108–9.
60. Eva von Dassow, ed., *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Book of Going Forth by Day* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1994), pls. 3, 30–31; Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie*, 296.
61. The large psychostasy scene accompanies chapter 30B, while chapter 125, located in a completely different section of the papyrus, contains only a small vignette of the weighing of the heart.
62. Louis Speleers, *Le Papyrus de Nefer renpet: Un Livre des Morts de la XVIII^me^ dynastie aux Musées royaux du Cinquantennaire à Bruxelles* (Bruxelles: Vromant, 1917), pls. II, XI.

Chapter 8

The Facsimiles and Semitic Adaptation of Existing Sources

Kevin L. Barney

Latter-day Saint descriptions of the historical background to the Joseph Smith Papyri sometimes set the stage with an account of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798.[1] Napoleon brought with him a small army of scientists and artists, whose published reports of the wonders of Egypt[2] soon fueled a wave of Egyptomania among Europeans. This intense interest in all things Egyptian spurred a demand for Egyptian antiquities, which men like Antonio Lebolo, the excavator of the Joseph Smith Papyri, were all too willing to meet. Thus, Napoleon's scholars and the European reaction to their work established the conditions that would eventually lead to the purchase of a collection of Egyptian antiquities by a group of Latter-day Saints, including Joseph Smith, in Kirtland in 1835. Joseph would go on to translate certain papyri from this collection as the Book of Abraham.

Much like the wide-eyed Europeans of the early nineteenth century, Latter-day Saints (and their critics) have been fascinated by the Egyptian aspects of the Book of Abraham since its first publication in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842. This is a perfectly understandable fascination and one that I myself share. In the twentieth century, the Book of Abraham weathered two critical attacks on its authenticity, both of which were grounded in the Egyptian material related to the book. First, in 1912 Franklin S. Spalding, the Episcopal bishop of Utah, sent copies of the facsimiles from the Book of Abraham to a number of prominent Egyptologists of the day, together with Joseph's proffered explanations. The Egyptologists concluded that

1. See, for instance, H. Donl Peterson, "Antonio Lebolo: Excavator of the Book of Abraham," *BYU Studies* 31/3 (1991): 9–11; H. Donl Peterson, *The Story of the Book of Abraham: Mummies, Manuscripts, and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 36–42; and John Gee, "A History of the Joseph Smith Papyri and Book of Abraham" (FARMS paper, 1999), 1–3.
2. In the many volumes of E. F. Jomard, *Description de l'Egypte,* published between 1809 and 1813.

the Prophet's explanations were not correct.[3] Second, in 1967 a small portion of the original collection of Joseph Smith Papyri was recovered from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, including the original from which Facsimile 1 was taken. Critics argued that Joseph "thought" he was translating the Book of Abraham from a papyrus that was part of this restored collection, called the Sensen Papyrus (now identified as Joseph Smith Papyrus [JSP] I, XI, and X). When modern Egyptologists translated this papyrus, it was found to contain not something like the English text of the Book of Abraham but rather an Egyptian "Book of Breathings."[4] Following each of these events, many critics were certain that the downfall of the Book of Abraham (and, they hoped, the church with it) was imminent. It is no doubt with a sense of frustration that they have witnessed belief in the Book of Abraham and the divine mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proceed apace during the more than thirty years since the recovery of the Joseph Smith Papyri from the Metropolitan Museum.

In this paper, we shall briefly review the Spalding pamphlet and the contemporary LDS response to it. We shall see that the early LDS respondents clearly rejected some of the facile assumptions that some seem to have held about the papyri, most particularly the assumption that the papyri possessed by Joseph represented the actual holographic original penned by Abraham himself (as opposed to being a later copy of Abraham's text). Notwithstanding the early rejection of these assumptions by the LDS respondents, such assumptions have continued to exert a sometimes misleading influence on LDS perceptions of the papyri.

When we, together with the 1912 respondents, properly reject the autographic assumptions about the papyri, we find other possibilities concerning the origins and history of the Book of Abraham. For instance, that book may have had its origin as a Semitic text that experienced the normal transmission processes of copying, translation, and redaction from the time of Abraham in the Middle Bronze Age until the Greco-Roman era when the Egyptian papyrus copies were made.

Specifically, we will suggest that the facsimiles may not have been drawn by Abraham's hand but may have been Egyptian religious vignettes that were adopted or adapted by an Egyptian-Jewish redactor as illustrations of the Book of Abraham. We will illustrate general processes of Jewish adaptation of Egyptian sources and then describe in detail three specific examples from the Greco-Roman period (the same period when the Joseph Smith Papyri were produced) that each relates in some way to Abraham. We will suggest that such Jewish adaptation of Egyptian sources was common during this time period and would explain the adaptation of the facsimiles to illustrate the Book of Abraham, which may have come under this redactor's care as part of the ancient transmission of the text.

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3. See Franklin S. Spalding, *Joseph Smith, Jr., as a Translator* (Salt Lake City: Arrow, 1912).
4. The inauguration of this stage of criticism was marked by a series of articles in *Dialogue* 3/2 (1968), including John A. Wilson, "A Summary Report," 67–85; Richard A. Parker, "The Joseph Smith Papyri: A Preliminary Report," 86–88, and "The Book of Breathings (Fragment 1, the 'Sensen' Text, with Restorations from Louvre Papyrus 3284)," 98–99; Richard P. Howard, "A Tentative Approach to the Book of Abraham Identified," 92–98; and Hugh Nibley, "Phase One," 99–105; followed by Klaus Baer, "Breathing Permit of Hor," 3/3 (1968): 109–34. Issues related to the Sensen Papyrus are in general beyond the scope of this essay. For a bibliography until 1992, see Adam D. Lamoreaux, "Pearl of Great Price Bibliography" (FARMS paper, 1992).

Having articulated this Semitic adaptation theory, we will examine Stephen Thompson's critique of Joseph's interpretations of the facsimiles, showing how this theory resolves the issues raised by Thompson. We shall then conclude by describing the general explanatory power of the Semitic adaptation theory.

The Spalding Pamphlet

Of the two great flurries of activity regarding the Book of Abraham, the more challenging was that of 1912, if only because the Saints lacked a Hugh Nibley to take their part in the discussion. Spalding's pamphlet attracted the Saints' attention for several reasons. The first (and most obvious) reason was the academic prestige of Spalding's panel of experts. Second was the disarming tone of the piece. The Latter-day Saints were accustomed to bitter polemical battles, but Spalding wrote in a friendly manner. He dedicated the pamphlet to his many LDS friends, describing them as "honest searchers after the truth."[5] He also used a little flattery. His opening sentence sets the stage: "If the Book of Mormon is true, it is, next to the Bible, the most important book in the world."[6] Note that Spalding does not use a contrary-to-fact condition; he does not say "if the Book of Mormon *were* true, it *would be*" important. Rather, he gives the appearance of being open minded, of genuinely allowing for the possibility that the book may be true. If in fact it is true, he says, it is of great value to New Testament and other religious scholars, archaeologists, and scientists, including botanists, zoologists, and geologists. He then states that "it is inexcusable that the book has never had the serious examination which its importance demands."[7] With all of these statements, his LDS readers would have been nodding their heads in solemn concurrence.

In several more chapters, he describes how the ultimate test of the correctness of the Book of Mormon translation is not possible, because the plates from which it was taken are not extant. We do, however, have the Book of Abraham with its facsimiles. So here is a way to test Joseph's skill as a translator and indirectly to test the value of the Book of Mormon as a translation. With this setup, in his final chapter he reproduces, without significant comment, letters from eight orientalists, including some of the most prominent Egyptologists of the day, all concluding that Joseph's interpretations of the facsimiles are wrong.

The first Latter-day Saint to respond to Spalding was B. H. Roberts. Roberts was a personal friend of Spalding's, and his initial take was that Spalding had been completely fair in his production, praising Spalding's courtesy and even generosity in prosecuting his case.[8] But as others began to look at the pamphlet more closely,[9] it did not take long to discover that Spalding's fairness was

5. Spalding, *Translator,* 2.
6. Ibid., 3.
7. Ibid., 4.
8. B. H. Roberts, "A Plea in Bar of Final Conclusions," *Improvement Era,* February 1913, 310; this is an expanded version of "Remarks on 'Joseph Smith, Jr., as a Translator': A Plea in Bar of Final Conclusions," *Salt Lake Tribune,* 15 December 1912, 33.
9. Many of the responses appeared in the *Deseret Evening News* and are therefore accessible only with great difficulty in barely legible microfilm copies; fortunately, the more significant pieces were reprinted, sometimes in expanded form, in the *Improvement Era.* Note in particular the following: John Henry Evans, "Bishop

superficial only, a veneer of sheep's clothing covering a wolfish anti-Mormon attack. Particularly vexing was the fact that Spalding never did release the correspondence he had used to solicit the experts' opinions, and the letters of the scholars showed indications of having been prejudiced against Joseph's interpretations by coaching in the solicitation letters (as opposed to a completely blind solicitation).[10] Spalding's failure to trust his position implicitly, which apparently induced him to poison the waters with his scholarly correspondents, was a serious mistake that undercut his credibility with his Mormon audience.

Spalding made other mistakes as well. For instance, in my view, as a forensic matter, it was a strategic error to press an inferential case against the Book of Mormon rather than focusing his effort directly on the Book of Abraham itself. A review of the literature of the controversy discloses additional strategic errors, such as the following: (1) he failed to address the hypocritical double standard of attacking Mormon scripture on the backs of agnostic scholars while simultaneously defending the Bible from the very similar attacks of the higher critics;[11] (2) he apparently was unable to convince his panel of the importance of the inquiry, resulting in the superficial, almost flippant correspondence he received from the experts (who simply made heavily authoritarian

Spalding's Jumps in the Logical Process," *Improvement Era,* February 1913, 343–46; James Edward Homans [Robert C. Webb, pseudo.], "A Critical Examination of the Facsimiles in the Book of Abraham," *Improvement Era,* March 1913, 435–54, "Joseph Smith, Jr., as a Translator," *Improvement Era,* May 1913, 691–702, "Truth Seeking: Its Symptoms and After Effects," *Improvement Era,* September 1913, 1071–99, and "Have Joseph Smith's Interpretations Been Discredited?" *Improvement Era,* February 1914, 313–51; N. L. Nelson, "An Open Letter to Bishop Spalding," *Improvement Era,* May 1913, 603–10; Frederick J. Pack, "An Open Question to Dr. Spalding," *Improvement Era,* May 1913, 702–4, "The Spalding Argument," *Improvement Era,* February 1913, 333–41, "Dr. Pack to Dr. Peters," *Improvement Era,* June 1913, 777–78, and "An Offshoot of the Spalding Argument," *Improvement Era,* June 1913, 778–79; Isaac Russell, "A Further Discussion of Bishop F. S. Spalding's Pamplet," *Improvement Era,* September 1913, 1092–99; Janne M. Sjodahl, "The Book of Abraham," *Improvement Era,* February 1913, 326–33, "The Word 'Kolob,'" *Improvement Era,* April 1913, 620–22, and "A Final Word," *Improvement Era,* September 1913, 1100–105; Sterling B. Talmage, "A Letter and a Protest against Misrepresentation," *Improvement Era,* June 1913, 770–76; Junius F. Wells, "Scholars Disagree," *Improvement Era,* February 1913, 341–43; John A. Widtsoe, "Comments on the Spalding Pamphlet," *Improvement Era,* March 1913, 454–60, and "Widtsoe's Reply to Bishop F. S. Spalding," *Improvement Era,* April 1913, 616–19 [responding to Franklin S. Spalding, "Rev. Spalding's Answer to Dr. Widtsoe," *Improvement Era,* April 1913, 610–16]; Osborne J. P. Widtsoe, "The Unfair Fairness of Rev. Spalding," *Improvement Era,* April 1913, 593–603; Levi Edgar Young, "'The Book of the Dead,'" *Improvement Era,* February 1913, 346–48; and Judge Richard W. Young, "Scientists Not Always Correct," *Improvement Era,* March 1913, 460–64. For a summary of this matter, read Samuel A. B. Mercer, "Joseph Smith as an Interpreter and Translator of Egyptian," *Utah Survey* 1/1 (1913): 4–36 (reprinted by Modern Microfilm Co. and available from Jerald and Sandra Tanner) from the critics' side, and from the side of the Saints, Hugh W. Nibley, "A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price," *Improvement Era,* which ran as a serial from January 1968 through May 1970. (In an ironic note, Mercer's private Egyptological library now sits on the shelves of the Harold B. Lee Library at BYU, primarily in the Ancient Studies Room. I well remember seeing his name written into the front covers of these volumes. On this acquisition, see Nibley, "A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price," *Improvement Era,* May 1968, 55.)

10. See in particular Osborne Widtsoe, "Unfair Fairness," and Nibley, "A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price," *Improvement Era,* February 1968, 14–21.

11. See in particular the discussions of this issue in Roberts, "Plea in Bar of Final Conclusions"; Sjodahl, "Book of Abraham"; and Pack, "Spalding Argument."

statements with little or no analysis or recitation of evidence);[12] (3) he failed to address the apparent contradictions among the scholars in their statements;[13] and (4) in general, his study lacked even the most fundamental scientific rigor.[14]

The third reason Spalding's pamphlet effectively garnered attention was that it was based on a web of assumptions that seem to have been commonly accepted by Mormons at the time. These assumptions included the following:

1. The papyrus from which the Book of Abraham was taken was an original autograph of Abraham and was penned by the great patriarch himself (that is, Abraham's own hand had touched the very papyrus that came into Joseph's possession, as opposed to the papyrus being a later copy of a text written by Abraham).
2. The papyri from which the facsimiles were taken were part and parcel with the Book of Abraham and similarly were autographic documents (that is, they were drawn by Abraham's own hand).
3. Since all these papyri had been written by Abraham himself, it necessarily follows that Abraham originally composed them in the Egyptian language.
4. Accordingly, there was no textual transmission of these documents in antiquity.
5. Therefore, as purely Egyptian documents, the facsimiles could properly be tested without any reference at all to the Book of Abraham (to which they purport to relate).

For convenience of reference, I will refer to these concepts as the *autographic assumptions*. The autographic assumptions, if accepted, gave Spalding an advantage in a couple of important respects. First, by insisting that the papyri underlying the Book of Abraham and the facsimiles were autographic documents, he established a very early baseline for claims of historical anachronisms. Since Abraham is generally believed to have lived around the twentieth century B.C., give or take a few centuries, if documents of the type represented by the facsimiles could be shown to date only to a substantially later period, the facsimiles could not in fact have derived from Abraham. Second, if the papyri were penned by Abraham himself in Egyptian, then the Egyptian content of the facsimiles must have been fully intended by Abraham, and the facsimiles could be judged as ordinary Egyptian documents, just like any other Egyptian papyri. Therefore, it would be proper for the Egyptologists to evaluate the authenticity of Joseph's proffered explanations without taking into account the English Book of Abraham (the papyrus source of which no longer being extant).

While the autographic assumptions seem to have been commonly accepted among the Saints of the day, that was only because they had been unexamined. In fact, if Spalding made strategic errors in his pamphlet, the Saints who responded to him also made missteps. Their first and biggest error was not being prepared, even though they knew (or should have known)

12. A theme of several of the responses but best addressed by Nibley, "A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price," *Improvement Era,* April 1968, 64–69. Several sections of the series have been reprinted in Hugh W. Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt,* 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2000).
13. This observation was made and commented upon by many of the respondents, starting with Roberts, "A Plea in Bar of Final Conclusions."
14. The particular complaint of John A. Widtsoe, "Comments on the Spalding Pamphlet" and "Dr. Widtsoe's Reply to Rev. F. S. Spalding."

from studies or comments circulated earlier that the interpretation of the facsimiles would become an issue.[15] In his review of the incident, Hugh Nibley quite rightly chastised the Latter-day Saint academics of the day for being caught flat-footed.[16] Having no one on their side knowledgeable in the young science of Egyptology was a tremendous disadvantage.

While Spalding's pamphlet caused no little stir over the short term, in the long run it was beneficial to the Saints, because it caused them to reexamine their assumptions (including, in particular, the autographic assumptions) about the facsimiles. This reexamination began almost immediately, as certain respondents challenged the premises on which Spalding's case was built. So, on the supposed autographic nature of the papyri, Homans (Webb) wrote:

> Some of the Latter-day Saints seem to have believed that the papyri in question represented the actual autographic work of Abraham and Joseph—that the hand of Abraham had pressed the very papyrus handled by Joseph Smith. Such a conclusion, however, does not seem to be involved in the text of Smith's account, and need not be considered authoritative.[17]

Osborne Widtsoe objected to the assumptions that the facsimiles (1) had precisely the same provenance as the Book of Abraham and (2) were themselves autographic documents:

> Instead of the three facsimiles forming the original text of the Book of Abraham, they really constitute no part thereof. They were merely found with the mummies. Instead of the facsimilies, being written in Abraham's own hand, and thus recording a unique revelation to Abraham, it is undoubtedly true that they are facsimilies of "a series of documents which were the common property of a whole nation of people." It does not affect the importance of the facsimilies , therefore, if they belong to a period centuries later than that of Abraham.[18]

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15. For Theodule Deveria's early studies of the facsimiles, see his "Specimen de l'Interpretation des Ecritures de l'ancien Egypte" and "Fragments de Mss. Funeraires Egyptiens consideres par les Mormons comme les memoires autographes d'Abraham," in *Theodule Deveria: Memoires et Fragments,* ed. Gaston Maspero (Paris: Leroux, 1896), 165–202. Deveria's work first appeared in Jules Remy, *Voyage au Pays des Mormons,* 2 vols. (Paris: E. Dentu, 1860), which was translated into English in Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, *A Journey to Great-Salt-Lake City,* 2 vols. (London: W. Jeffs, 1861), and republished by T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1873), 513–19. The 1903 correspondence of Henry Woodward and E. A. Wallis Budge is reproduced in Wells, "Scholars Disagree."
16. This famous taking to the woodshed of one generation by a later is to be found in Nibley, "A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price," (January 1968): 23–24, under the subheading "The Mormons Default."
17. Homans [Webb], "A Critical Examination of the Facsimiles," 440. The statement in the manuscript that the record was written "by his own hand upon papyrus," and the apparent historical allusion to Abraham's "signature" being on the papyrus, seem to point to an early belief in the papyri being autographic documents. These statements appear to have been misunderstood; see Nibley, "A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price" (February 1968): 18–21, under the subheading "Some Basic Misconceptions"; John Gee, "Telling the Story of the Joseph Smith Papyri," *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 53–54; and Russell C. McGregor with Kerry A. Shirts, "Letters to an Anti-Mormon," Review of James R. White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, *FARMS Review of Books* 11/1 (1999): 203–5. In my view, even if Joseph or other early brethren did understand the papyri to have been Abrahamic holographs, that was simply a mistaken assumption. Similarly, many early members of the church wrongly assumed that the Book of Mormon lands constituted the whole of the Americas, but the text itself must control, and in this instance trumps these kinds of assumptions. For a lucid discussion of this issue, see John L. Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1990), 5–35.
18. Osborne Widtsoe, "Unfair Fairness," 599–600.

On the question of the original language of the Book of Abraham, as John A. Widtsoe pithily asked, "Who says or has said that Abraham wrote the Book of Abraham in Egyptian?"[19] Since the papyri themselves were written in Egyptian, that is certainly one of the languages we must consider, but if the papyri are not autographic documents, then the great passage of time from the age of Abraham to the date of the papyri hardly makes an Egyptian composition of the book a foregone conclusion. Widtsoe sensed that the answer to this question would probably lie in a careful reading of the Book of Abraham itself, which the experts generally ignored.[20]

When a previously unknown book from antiquity is discovered, scholars do not simply assume that the book was originally composed in the language in which the book happens to be extant. They do not, for instance, assume that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* was composed in Old Slavonic just because that is the language in which the text happens to be preserved. Rather, they examine the book carefully for clues as to its language of composition. Sjodahl made the very sensible and perfectly obvious observation that Abraham was a Semite whose native language would have been Semitic.[21] Much of the material in the Book of Abraham has nothing to do with Egypt. Further, I believe that a careful study of the Book of Abraham itself would likely highlight the book's profoundly Semitic character. In my view, the autographic assumptions are incorrect.[22] It seems much more likely to me that, if Abraham composed the original text from which the Book of Abraham derives, then

1. Abraham may have composed the text in a Semitic language. Whether this would have been an East Semitic language, presumably some form of Akkadian (the Semitic lingua franca of its day), or a West Semitic language, presumably some sort of early Canaanite dialect (analogous to Ugaritic), is difficult to say. It certainly would not have been composed in Hebrew, which did not really come into existence as such until about 1200 B.C. Abraham may have written his text in cuneiform in a medium suitable to that type of writing, such as clay tablets.
2. Between the time of Abraham's composition of the text and the early second century B.C. (or first century A.D.) papyrus copies that later would come into Joseph Smith's possession, there was a transmission of the text. This may have included versional

19. John A. Widtsoe, "Dr. Widtsoe's Reply," 618.
20. Ibid.
21. See, for instance, Sjodahl, "The Word 'Kolob,'" 621.
22. The date of the Book of Breathings to which Facsimiles 1 and 3 were appended is disputed. Nibley, on paleographical grounds (following Klaus Baer), dated the papyri to the Roman period (about the first century A.D.). Gee, on prosopographical grounds (following Jan Quaegebeur and Marc Coenen), dates the papyri to the early Ptolemaic period (that is, early second century B.C.). See John Gee, "The Ancient Owners of the Joseph Smith Papyri" (FARMS lecture, 1999) and *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 15–16. Robert K. Ritner, "The 'Breathing Permit of Hor' Thirty-four Years Later," *Dialogue* 33/4 (2000): 99, acknowledges that the earlier dating is possible, but makes it clear that he prefers the Roman dating. Whichever dating is correct, it should be clear that we are dealing with a late copy of Abraham's text, more than 1,500 years removed from Abraham, and not an Abrahamic holograph. Given these basic facts, the refusal of some Latter-day Saints to acknowledge that the Book of Abraham underwent a textual transmission in antiquity is difficult to fathom.

translation into Egyptian and, possibly, other languages (such as Hebrew), scribal copying, and, possibly, redaction of the text.[23]

3. The facsimiles may not have originated with Abraham; rather, they may have become associated with the Book of Abraham as part of the redaction and transmission of the text. This last point will require some further explanation.

To a great extent I believe that Mormon scholars have correctly rejected the false premises of the autographic assumptions on which Spalding's attack was based. But in one very important respect, both critics and too many defenders myopically have continued to look at the facsimiles in much the same way that Spalding and his Egyptologists did. The standard to which Spalding wanted to hold Joseph's interpretations of the facsimiles was whether they accorded with what the facsimiles meant to modern Egyptologists. Mormon scholars have refined this standard somewhat, by asking also what the facsimiles would have meant to an ancient Egyptian.[24] Now, what the facsimiles mean to modern Egyptologists and what they would have meant to ancient Egyptians are both important, necessary questions to ask, and studies along these lines must continue. Nevertheless, it seems to me that they should represent the ultimate question only if we accept Spalding's premise that Abraham drew the facsimiles and was in every respect their creator and author. But what if Abraham did not draw the facsimiles? What if they already existed and were either adopted or adapted by an Egyptian-Jewish redactor as illustrations of the attempt on Abraham's life and Abraham's teaching astronomy to the Egyptians? (For convenience, I shall refer to this hypothetical Jewish redactor as "J-red.") In this case, the facsimiles would have both an Egyptian context (reflecting the religious purpose for which they were originally created by the Egyptians) and a Semitic context (reflecting the religious purpose for which they were adopted[25] or adapted by J-red).[26] Thus, the ultimate question would not be "What do the facsimiles mean to modern Egyptologists?" nor "What would the facsimiles have meant to an ancient Egyptian?" but rather "What would the facsimiles have meant to J-red?"

We have a tendency when looking at the facsimiles to think of Abraham as well schooled and articulate in Egyptian religion, as if he were some sort of an Egyptian priest. But this is only an as-

23. Compare the important comments of John Gee in his "Abracadabra, Isaac, and Jacob," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7/1 (1995): 72–74.

24. In theory, the two standards should be identical, but in practice the knowledge of modern Egyptologists is not perfect, so this does represent a meaningful difference. See John Gee, "Towards an Interpretation of Hypocephali," in *"Le lotus qui sort de terre:" Mélanges offerts a Edith Varga,* ed. Hedvig Győry (Budapest: Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts, 2001), 325, 330–34.

25. If the facsimiles were "adopted" for use as illustrations of the Book of Abraham, then they would be run-of-the-mill Egyptian documents. Any lion couch scene would have done for Facsimile 1, any hypocephalus would have done for Facsimile 2, and any throne scene would have done for Facsimile 3. If they were "adapted" as illustrations of the Book of Abraham, then the artist would have made subtle changes in the typical vignette to represent better the Abrahamic scene being portrayed. I view this as a matter for those with Egyptological training to sort out, and I take no position in this paper as to which is the more likely scenario.

26. Because papyri of the sort represented by the facsimiles (based on present knowledge) substantially postdate Abraham, it seems more likely to me that a redactor first used the papyri as illustrations of the book. Therefore, I will generally refer to J-red in this paper. Conceptually, however, this type of adaptation could have been undertaken by Abraham himself.

sumption. Although according to the biblical canon Abraham visited Egypt, we do not even know whether he learned the Egyptian language, much less became knowledgeable in the Egyptian mysteries. The attempt to sacrifice Abraham did not take place in Egypt, and Abraham received his revelation of the heavens outside of Egypt. When Abraham finally did go to Egypt due to famine, he taught the Egyptians astronomy. But note that Abraham was the one doing the teaching, not vice versa. For all we know, he may have communicated with the Egyptians in his own language through interpreters.

Defenders of the Book of Abraham have long sought to understand Joseph's explanations of the facsimiles in terms of conventional Egyptian religious interpretations. Again, for reasons that will become clear below, I believe that this activity is appropriate and necessary, as far as it goes. But what if we were to take this activity to its logical conclusion: suppose we were to succeed in showing that Joseph's explanations in every way matched those of the Egyptians themselves? That might (or might not) satisfy the critics, but then what would be their religious value to us? Do we worship Atum-Re? Should we revive the Egyptian cultus? It seems to me that these documents have religious value to us only if they are reinterpreted in accordance with Semitic sensibilities as applying to events in the life of Abraham.

I suggest that as part of the redaction of the text, J-red (our hypothetical Egyptian-Jewish redactor) adopted or adapted vignettes from a Book of Breathings and a hypocephalus as illustrations for the Book of Abraham. In co-opting the papyri to a new purpose, this person reinterpreted them in accordance with Semitic religious sensibilities and the requirements of the Abraham story. Therefore, the Egyptian material in the facsimiles has been refracted through a Semitic prism. It is only by viewing the facsimiles through a Semitic lens that we can clearly see how the explanations relate to the figures.

The Instructions of Amenemope

In very general terms, Jewish cultural and religious adaptation of Egyptian materials may be illustrated by the parallels between the Instructions of Amenemope and portions of the book of Proverbs. The Instructions of Amenemope is a collection of wise sayings written in Egypt during the New Kingdom (1550–1069 B.C.) and first published by E. A. Wallis Budge in 1923.[27] The papyrus was found inside a statue of Osiris from a tomb in Thebes. Another fragmentary copy was discovered and published in the 1960s,[28] and additional copies are known from writing boards in the Turin Museum, the Pushkin Museum in Moscow, and the Louvre.[29]

Budge mentioned a couple of parallels between Amenemope and Proverbs, but it was a later article published by Adolf Erman in 1924 that really drew the attention of scholars to such parallels.[30] A

27. E. A. Wallis Budge, *Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum,* 2nd series (London: British Museum, 1923), plates 1–14.

28 B. J. Peterson, "A New Fragment of *The Wisdom of Amenemope,*" *JEA* 52 (1966): 120–28.

29. W. K. Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 241–65. For a basic bibliography of works dealing with the relationship between Amenemope and Proverbs, see John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1997), 207–8 n. 9. The above summary of Amenemope texts is adapted from ibid., 207–10.

30. Adolf Erman, "Eine agyptische Quelle der 'Spruche Salomos,'" *SPAW Philosophisch-historischen Klasse* 15 (1924): 86–93.

tremendous amount of scholarly ink has been spilled since that time attempting to articulate the relationship between the two texts. Most scholars see Proverbs as dependent on either Amenemope or a common source; a small minority argues that the dependence goes the other way; and some scholars argue that there is no connection and that the similarities are to be explained by polygenesis.[31] I would agree with the majority of scholars that Proverbs depends, whether directly or indirectly, on Amenemope (or a common source). These parallels are well accepted. The standard scholar's edition of the Hebrew Bible, in the Latin notation system of its critical apparatus, makes a number of references comparing the Hebrew to the *doctrina Amenemope.*[32] A synopsis of the relationship between the two texts follows this article.[33]

Osiris-Abel

Now to an illustration of a Semitic adaptation of an Egyptian source that is of more specific relevance to the Book of Abraham. A number of Latter-day Saint scholars have commented on the parallels between the Book of Abraham on the one hand and both the *Testament of Abraham* and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* on the other. It is not my intention to revisit those parallels; rather, I will focus here on one particular scene from the *Testament of Abraham* and later on one particular aspect of the *Apocalypse of Abraham.*

First, a brief introduction to the *Testament* is in order. The *Testament of Abraham* was probably composed in Greek[34] and most likely dates to first century (A.D.)[35] Egypt.[36] The text exists in two main recensions, the longer called Recension A and the shorter Recension B.[37] Both recensions exist in a handful of Greek manuscripts and a Romanian version; Recension B also exists in Slavonic, Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions. The *Testament of Abraham* tells the story of how when Abraham had lived the full measure of his mortal existence, God sent the archangel Michael—his "commander in chief"[38]—to

31. See the survey of Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament,* 207–16.
32. Rudolf Kittel, Wilhelm Rudolf, and others, eds. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1990), 1304–5, at apparatus notes 22:18a, 22:20b, 23:7a, 23:7c, and 23:10a.
33. Adapted from James L. Crenshaw, "Proverbs, Book of," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary,* ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:516.
34. Scholars are somewhat split over whether the *Testament* had a Hebrew original or was composed in Greek, with earlier scholars favoring the former view and later scholars the latter. See the discussion in E. P. Sanders, "The Testament of Abraham," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:873–74.
35. The date of this work is uncertain, with arguments ranging from as early as the early third century B.C. to the early second century A.D. First century A.D. seems to be the most commonly accepted date. See ibid., 874–75.
36. The vast majority of scholars accept an Egyptian provenance, although some earlier scholars argued for an origin in Palestine. See ibid., 875–76.
37. Jared W. Ludlow's doctoral dissertation is on this subject, entitled "A Narrative Critical Study of the Two Greek Recensions of 'The Testament of Abraham,'" at the University of California, Berkeley and Graduate Theological Union. See *Insights* (July 2000): 8. This dissertation has now been published as Jared W. Ludlow, *Abraham Meets Death: Narrative Humor in the Testament of Abraham* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).
38. αρχιστρατηγος *archistrategos,* an Egyptian-Jewish title. See Sanders, "Testament of Abraham, Recension A," 882 n. 1c.

inform Abraham so that he might arrange his affairs prior to his death. Abraham refuses to follow Michael, however, and desires a tour of the whole inhabited world before he dies. Michael and Abraham survey the world in a divine chariot, and whenever Abraham sees someone sinning he asks for the sinner to be struck down. God then puts an end to the tour, since his own practice is to be patient with sinners in order to give them an opportunity to repent. Abraham is then shown the judgment, which is the scene we will examine in some detail below. Abraham repents of his harshness, and the sinners who had been struck down at his request are restored to life. Abraham, however, still refuses to follow Michael. So God sends Death, who, by a deception, gets Abraham's soul to accompany him, whence he returns[39] to the presence of God.

For our purposes, the critical part of the story is the judgment scene. As recounted in Recension A, Abraham sees two fiery-looking angels driving myriad souls to judgment. The judgment hall is situated between a narrow gate for the use of the righteous and a broad gate for the wicked. In the judgment hall there is a terrifying throne, and seated on the throne is a wondrous man, with an appearance like unto a son of God. In front of this figure is a crystal-like table, covered with gold and fine linen. Resting on the table is a book. On either side of the table are angels holding papyrus and ink. In front of the table is a light-bearing angel holding a balance, and on his left is a fiery angel holding a trumpet full of fire. The man on the throne judges the souls. The two angels with papyrus record; the one on the right records the deceased's righteous deeds, and the one on the left records sins. The angel with the balance weighs the souls, and the fiery angel tries them with fire. Michael informs Abraham that this scene represents judgment and recompense.

Abraham asks Michael specifically who all of these figures are and is informed that the judge seated upon the throne is Abel, who judges men until the Parousia (second coming). At the Parousia, everyone is to be judged by the twelve tribes of Israel, and, finally, God himself shall judge all men, so that the judgment may be established by three witnesses. Michael tells Abraham that the angels on the right and left record righteous deeds and sins. The sunlike (ηλιμορφο *heliomorphos*) angel holding the balance is the archangel Dokiel,[40] the righteous balance-bearer, who weighs the righteous deeds and sins. The fiery angel who tests the works of men with fire is the archangel Purouel.[41] Everything is tested both by fire and by balance.

In the shorter Recension B, which lacks most of this detail, there is only one recorder, who is identified as Enoch.

This scene is significant because it is widely recognized[42] as having been influenced by an Egyptian psychostasy ("soul weighing") papyrus, which is related to chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead. It may even be that the author was gazing on such a psychostasy papyrus as he penned this account. But while there is a clear relationship between the Egyptian psychostasy scene and the judgment scene of the *Testament of Abraham,* the scene has been transformed to accord with

39. Michael's plea to Abraham is that he "once again [ετι απαξ *eti hapax*] go to the Lord." Ibid., 891.

40. The name is elsewhere unattested. Box proposed a Hebrew original *doqi'el,* which would refer to exactness (in weighing). Schmidt proposed that the original name was Tsedeqiel, "justice of God." See ibid., 890 n. 13e.

41. As "fire" in Greek is πυρ *pur,* this is apparently a graecized form of Uriel. See ibid.

42. See the citations at ibid., 889 n. 12f, and George W. E. Nickelsburg Jr., "Eschatology in the Testament of Abraham: A Study of the Judgment Scene in the Two Recensions," in *Studies on the Testament of Abraham,* ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg Jr. (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976), 23–64.

Semitic needs and sensibilities. Osiris has become Abel; the Egyptian gods have become angels. Our author looks at the Egyptian illustration, yet sees a situation peopled with Semitic characters. I suggest that this scene establishes a paradigm for understanding the facsimiles to the Book of Abraham: "As is the vignette for chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead to the *Testament of Abraham,* so are the facsimiles to the Book of Abraham."

This paradigm can, I believe, best be appreciated by means of an allegory. Imagine that, instead of the Book of Abraham, Joseph Smith translated and published a book called the *Testament of Abraham,* which roughly corresponds to the *Testament of Abraham* as we know it. Further, imagine that, although the *Testament* is authentic and genuinely ancient, no papyrus copy of it has yet been discovered, so the Latter-day Saints accept it on faith while their critics dismiss it as a fantasy. Suppose that together with the text of the *Testament,* Joseph published a facsimile of an Egyptian psychostasy papyrus as an illustration of the judgment scene. For convenience we will refer to this as "Facsimile P" (for psychostasy). (This facsimile looks something like the psychostasy papyrus from the Joseph Smith collection, Joseph Smith Papyri III.) Now, suppose that, together with Facsimile P, Joseph published certain explanations of numbered figures in the facsimile. Without trying to reproduce the full text of what his explanations might have been, below is the substance of them:

1. Represents righteous Abel, the son of Adam, whom wicked Cain slew, and who sits on a throne of judgment. Abel judges the entire creation, examining both the righteous and sinners. [Referring to the seated Osiris figure on the throne.]
2. The balance of judgment, in which the souls of the dead are weighed against God's righteousness. [Referring to the scales.]
3. Represents Dokiel, the righteous balance-bearer, who weighs dead men's souls. [Referring to the Anubis figure on one side of the scales.]
4. Represents Purouel, who tries men's deeds by fire. [Referring to the Horus figure on the other side of the scales.]
5. Enoch, the scribe of righteousness, recording both the good deeds and the sins of the dead in the Book of Life. [Referring to the Thoth figure.]
6. An angel of the Lord. [Referring to the Maat figure.]
7. The soul being presented for judgment. [Referring to the figure representing the deceased.]

After the publication of this *Testament,* some seventy years elapse, and Franklin Spalding submits Facsimile P to a group of Egyptologists, together with the proffered explanations. The Egyptologists promptly declare the interpretations to be "bosh."[43] The Egyptologists refuse even to allow Joseph any lucky guesses, as might be suggested by the explanations that are closest to their Egyptian counterparts, figures 2 and 7. These Egyptologists aver that figure 1 represents Osiris, not the biblical Abel. In figure 3, the name Dokiel is clearly not Egyptian, this being a reference to the Egyptian god Anubis. In figure 4, not only is Purouel not an Egyptian name, it appears to be an inept amalgam of Hebrew and Greek, showing that only an ignorant knave like this Joseph Smith

43. This is the word E. A. Wallis Budge summarily used to dismiss Joseph Smith's interpretations of the facsimiles. See Wells, "Scholars Disagree," 341–43.

fellow could have coined it. The figure actually represents the Egyptian god Horus. Figure 5 does not represent the biblical Enoch but rather the Egyptian god Thoth, and figure 6 is not "the angel of the Lord," but the Egyptian goddess Maat.

The Saints of this hypothetical situation, stunned by these disclosures, scramble for answers. A big debate ensues, the results of which are inconclusive. Over time, defenders of the church claim that the explanations are "generally" consistent with Egyptological understanding, while critics discount any "lucky guesses" and characterize Joseph's explanations as completely incorrect and made up.

And so the matter sits. Now, from our perspective outside of this hypothetical, we can see that people are looking at Facsimile P as if they were in Plato's cave, forced to view mere shadows on a wall. From where we sit, however, we can see clearly that Joseph's explanations are completely correct. The Egyptologists are also correct enough, but only as to the meaning of Facsimile P *in its Egyptian context*. But Facsimile P has another, a *Semitic context,* as an illustration of the *Testament of Abraham*. That context cannot be appreciated by studying Facsimile P in isolation (which leads to the tendency to think of it in purely Egyptian terms); rather, the facsimile must be considered together with the text it purports to illustrate, the *Testament of Abraham*. When viewed in that light, the plausibility of Joseph's explanations is made manifest. If, by some chance, an actual manuscript of the *Testament* were to be discovered in this hypothetical situation, the mystery would be completely solved, and the people would be able to see clearly (as do we) just how Joseph's explanations relate to the facsimile.

From this allegory we can see why it is important to continue to study the Egyptian background of the facsimiles. We have no way of knowing to what extent J-red based his use of the facsimiles on their Egyptian meaning; it is only by careful study of the Egyptian context of the facsimiles that we can determine how much Egyptian content is to be found in the explanations. The reason scholars are able to recognize the Egyptian influence in the *Testament of Abraham* psychostasy scene is that enough Egyptian elements are present for the connection to be drawn. But we can also see why studying only the Egyptian context of the facsimiles will never yield a complete explanation of the significance of Joseph's interpretations. We need to be able to look at them the way J-red did, as Semitized illustrations of the Book of Abraham. When we see them from this perspective, our vision gains clarity, and the facsimiles and Joseph's interpretations come into focus.

Osiris-Abraham

Another example of Egyptian material being refracted through a Semitic lens is provided by the story of the rich man and Lazarus, which is recounted in Luke 16:19–31:

> There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger

> in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

In his important study of this passage, Hugo Gressmann[44] suggested that Luke's account was based on a popular Jewish version, perhaps written in Hebrew, of an Egyptian story. Neither the Egyptian original nor the Jewish version of that original has survived; nevertheless, their existence can be inferred from other documents that do exist. The popular Jewish version can be deduced from seven late rabbinic splinters; these texts almost certainly do *not* derive directly from the Gospel of Luke. The Egyptian original is hypothesized based on the Demotic story of Setna, described below.[45] To analogize the relationship among these texts in genealogical terms, the Egyptian original is like a grandfather, and the popular Jewish version a father, to the account in Luke. The story of Setna is a kind of uncle to the Lucan account, and the seven rabbinic splinters are nieces and nephews of sorts.

The Demotic story of Setna is known from a single papyrus manuscript in the British Museum (Pap. DCIV).[46] It was written on the back of two Greek business documents, one of which was dated in the seventh year of Claudius (A.D. 46–47). We can therefore suggest that the Demotic story was written sometime during the next half century, or roughly A.D. 50–100. According to the story, the magicians of Egypt were challenged by an Ethiopian sorcerer, but no Egyptian was able to best the challenger. So an Egyptian in Amnte, the abode of the dead, prayed in the presence of Osiris, the ruler of Amnte, to return to the land of the living. Osiris commanded that he should, and so the man, though dead for centuries, was reincarnated as the miraculous offspring of a childless couple and given the name Si-Osiris ("Son of Osiris"). Eventually, when the boy turned twelve, he dealt with the foreign sorcerer and then vanished from Earth.

The part of the story that is relevant to Luke 16 takes place while the boy is growing up. One day the boy and his father see two funerals: first, that of a rich man, shrouded in fine linen, loudly lamented and abundantly honored; then, that of a poor man, wrapped in a straw mat,

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44. Hugo Gressmann, *Vom reichen Mann und armen Lazarus: Eine literargeschichtliche Studie* (Berlin: Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1918); K. Grobel, "'. . . Whose Name Was Neves,'" *New Testament Studies* 10 (1963–1964): 373–82. LDS scholars have begun to cite Grobel, as in H. Donl Peterson, "Book of Abraham: Origin of the Book of Abraham," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 1:134. We should note that the first LDS scholar to recognize the significance of Gressmann's and Grobel's work to the Book of Abraham was Blake T. Ostler, "Abraham: An Egyptian Connection" (FARMS paper, 1981). For the original text see Francis Llewellyn Griffith, *Stories of the High Priests of Memphis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), 142–207, and plates.

45. See Grobel's chart, which is also reproduced in Ostler, "An Egyptian Connection," 18.

46. My description of the text closely follows that of Grobel, "Neves."

unaccompanied and unmourned. The father says that he would rather have the lot of the rich man than that of the pauper. Little Si-Osiris, however, impertinently contradicts his father's wish with an opposite one: "May it be done to you in Amnte as it is done in Amnte to this pauper and not as it is done to this rich man in Amnte!" In order to justify himself, the boy takes his earthly father on a tour of Amnte.

Si-Osiris leads his father through the seven classified halls of Amnte. The dead are assigned to one of the halls depending on the merits and demerits of their mortal lives. In the fifth hall they see a man in torment, the pivot of the door being fixed in his right eye socket, because of which he grievously laments. In the seventh they see Osiris enthroned, the ruler of Amnte, and near him a man clothed in fine linen and evidently of very high rank. Si-Osiris identifies the finely clad man as the miserably buried pauper and the tormented one as the sumptuously buried rich man. The reason for this disparate treatment is that, at the judgment, the good deeds of the pauper outweighed the bad, but with the rich man the opposite was true. Now the father is able to understand the filial wish of Si-Osiris.

Once again we are able to see how the Egyptian story has been transformed in Semitic dress. The angels of the Lucan account appear to be an instrumentality substituted for Horus (or the falcon of Horus).[47] The "bosom of Abraham" represents Amnte, the Egyptian abode of the dead. And, most remarkably, Abraham is a Jewish substitute for the pagan god Osiris—just as is the case in Facsimiles 1 and 3. These relationships are summarized in a chart following the article.

The Hypocephalus in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*

A kind of companion text to the *Testament of Abraham* is the *Apocalypse of Abraham.* Like the *Testament,* the *Apocalypse* dates to the first or second century A.D. It tells the story of how Abraham in his youth perceived that idols were simply creations of men and not really gods. After leaving his father's house, Abraham is commanded to offer a sacrifice so that God will reveal great things to him. God sends his angel Iaoel[48] to take Abraham on a tour of heaven, during which he sees seven visions. The text is only extant in a number of medieval Old Slavonic manuscripts, but scholars have deduced from the presence of Hebrew names, words, and phrases, as well as other Hebraisms (such as the use of the positive for the comparative), that the text was most likely originally composed in Hebrew, in which event the probable provenance of the text was Palestine.[49]

Michael Rhodes describes what appear to be possible allusions to a hypocephalus in the *Apocalypse of Abraham.*[50] During his vision Abraham is shown "the fulness of the whole world and its circle," which appears to be a description of a hypocephalus. This vision includes the plan of the universe, "what is in the heavens, on the earth, in the sea, and in the abyss," which are very close to the words used in the left middle portion of the Joseph Smith hypocephalus. The *Apocalypse*

47. Grobel, "Neves," 378.
48. A compound of Yah, a short form of Yahweh, and El.
49. See R. Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* 1:682–83.
50. Michael D. Rhodes, "The Joseph Smith Hypocephalus . . . Seventeen Years Later" (FARMS paper, 1994), 6. This paper is an updated version of Rhodes, "A Translation and Commentary of the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus," *BYU Studies* 17 (spring 1977): 259–74.

also includes a description of four fiery living creatures, each with four faces: that of a lion, a man, an ox, and an eagle. This is almost certainly a Semitic transformation of the Sons of Horus (via Ezekiel 1–2), which are represented as figure 6 of Facsimile 2.[51] These relationships are also summarized in a chart following the article.

Spalding Redivivus

Having articulated this view of the relationship of the facsimiles to the Book of Abraham, we are now in a position to compare and contrast the views set forth by Stephen Thompson in his article entitled "Egyptology and the Book of Abraham."[52] Thompson's article is, in essence, a more up-to-date and sophisticated version of the Egyptologists' reports included in Spalding's pamphlet. I believe that it was necessary for someone to try to set forth in a clear way what contemporary Egyptology makes of the facsimiles. Thompson's article serves this function, thus ultimately advancing the cause of truth.

Thompson quotes Michael Rhodes as stating that "the Prophet's explanations of each of the facsimiles accord with present understanding of Egyptian religious practice."[53] Thompson's burden is to prove this statement untrue. Actually, I would agree with Thompson that, without qualification, the statement as it stands is overbroad. Unfortunately, Thompson lacks any sense of balance, and his own treatment of the facsimiles is excessively narrow. For instance, Thompson disallows Joseph's explanation of the four sons of Horus in Facsimile 2, figure 6, as representing the "earth in its four quarters" on the grounds that the sons of Horus never bear that meaning in a funerary context.[54] I frankly find this to be an astonishingly restrictive reading.[55] I have difficulty seeing how Thompson can refuse to give Joseph even partial credit for this explanation. In any event, I would deny that the Joseph Smith hypocephalus (as reinterpreted by J-red) even has a funerary context, so ultimately for me Thompson's reading is moot.

Thompson gives the Egyptian context for Facsimile 1, figures 12 and 11. Figure 12, which Joseph took as "designed to represent the pillars of heaven," is in fact a palace facade called a *serekh.*[56] Figure 11, which Joseph took as "raukeeyang, signifying expanse or firmament over our heads, but in this case, in relation to this subject, the Egyptians meant it to signify Shaumau, to be high, or the heavens, answering to the Hebrew word Shaumahyeem," are simply waters in which the crocodile (figure 9), representing the god Horus, swims. The waters appear to be above the palace facade, but this is simply an illusion resulting from the perspective used in Egyptian art. Everything above the facade is to be understood as occurring *behind* it.

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51. On the variability of form and cultural adaptation of the sons of Horus, see John Gee, "Notes on the Sons of Horus" (FARMS paper, 1991).
52. Stephen E. Thompson, "Egyptology and the Book of Abraham," *Dialogue* 28/1 (1995): 143–60.
53. Michael D. Rhodes, "Facsimiles from the Book of Abraham," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 1:136–37, as quoted by Thompson, 143 n. 1.
54. Thompson, "Egyptology and the Book of Abraham," 152.
55. If it is really true that the sons of Horus do not represent the cardinal directions, then I believe Thompson is under obligation to engage the Egyptological literature more fully to demonstrate the point, as in both Egyptological and popular literature it is a commonplace.
56. Thompson, 145.

While this is a useful summary of the Egyptian context of these figures, it does not address what I view as the ultimate question: "Do Joseph's explanations make sense as reflecting *J-red's* understanding of the scene?" I believe the answer to this question is a very strong yes. In Hebrew cosmology, the rāqîaʿ (אֶ֫ר ָקִ֥ע) or "firmament" was believed to be a solid dome, supported by pillars.[57] The rāqîaʿ in turn was closely associated with the celestial ocean, which it supported.[58] In the lower half of Facsimile 1, we have the rāqîaʿ (1) connected with the waters, as with the celestial ocean, (2) appearing to be supported by pillars, and (3) being solid and therefore capable of serving itself as a support, in this case for the lion couch. The bottom half of Facsimile 1 would have looked to J-red very much like a microcosm of the universe (in much the same way that the divine throne chariot of Ezekiel 1–2, which associates the four four-faced fiery living creatures with the rāqîaʿ above their heads on which God sits enthroned, is a microcosm of the universe). The Egyptian artist's perspective is not necessarily a limitation on J-red. The stacking effect of waters apparently both being supported and acting as a support would have suggested to J-red the Hebrew conception of the rāqîaʿ.

Joseph also took Facsimile 2, figure 4 (the mummiform hawk with outspread wings in a boat) as a representation of the rāqîaʿ, the figure answering "to the Hebrew word Raukeeyang, signifying expanse, or the firmament of the heavens, also a numerical figure, in Egyptian signifying one thousand." The Book of Abraham uses two alternative English words to translate rāqîaʿ: *firmament,* which highlights its solidity, and *expanse.* English *expanse* derives from Latin *expandere,* "to spread out"; this translation highlights the verbal root from which rāqîaʿ derives, rāqîaʿ which means "to spread out (from beating)," and from there simply "to spread out." I would suggest that to J-red, the outspread wings of the mummiform hawk made for a very natural representation of the rqʿ.[59]

In the middle section of his article, Thompson argues against any possibility that the Book of Abraham is a holographic document. Given that Abraham lived in the Middle Bronze Age and that the Joseph Smith Papyri date to Ptolemaic (or Roman) times, Thompson is certainly correct on this point. He quotes Paul Hoskisson, who in an otherwise excellent article writes that "the content of the Book of Abraham did not pass through numerous revisions, the hands of countless scribes."[60] This statement appears to be based on an assumption that the source for the Book of Abraham was an autographic original. Contra Hoskisson, as I have expressed above, I believe it likely that the Book of Abraham did undergo a textual transmission in antiquity. As a concrete example, I would

57. On the perceived solidity of the firmament, see Paul H. Seely, "The Firmament and the Water Above," *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991): 227–40.

58. For drawings of this basic cosmological understanding, see Keith Norman, "Adam's Navel," *Dialogue* 21/2 (1988): 86, and Anthony Hutchinson, "A Mormon Midrash? LDS Creation Narratives Reconsidered," *Dialogue* 21/4 (1988): 22.

59. This would appear to be a case where Joseph gives both the Semitic context (*rāqîʿa*) and the Egyptian context (the number 1,000) of the figure. A number of LDS scholars (such as Rhodes, "Seventeen Years Later," 10) have noted the connection between the number 1,000 and the ship of the dead. Thompson demurs on this point, arguing that ḫ3 in this context should rather be taken as a reference to lotus blossoms. The question appears to me to be very much open, but even if Thompson is correct, he does not seem to appreciate the irony of castigating Joseph Smith for making a mistake very similar to that made by modern Egyptologists.

60. Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Where Was Ur of the Chaldees?" in *The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God,* ed. H. Donl Peterson and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), 130.

read the back references to Facsimile 1 at Abraham 1:12b and 14 as glosses that would have been added to the text only at the time it was first appended to a scroll containing a Book of Breathings, if in fact that is what happened.[61] Thompson is unwilling to allow this possibility, because in his view the pronoun "I" in verse 12 ("I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of the record") must have been written by Abraham.[62] This insistence on Thompson's part is naive at best; certainly anyone familiar with critical scholarship regarding biblical redaction would not doubt the willingness of a scribe to make such a clarification in words as if from the perspective of an ancient prophet. Deleting these back references not only would do no harm to the flow and sense of the text, it would actually improve them.

Thompson draws three conclusions, which correspond to the three parts of his article. First, he concludes that Joseph Smith's interpretations of the facsimiles are not in agreement with the meanings these figures had in their original, funerary context. I can agree with that statement to a certain extent, although I cannot entirely agree with what I view as Thompson's unduly restrictive handling of the evidence. Second, he concludes that anachronisms in the text of the book make it impossible that it was translated from a text penned by Abraham himself (i.e., without an ancient transmission); based on the dating of the papyri, I would concur that the source text was not a holographic original. Third, Thompson concludes that what we know about the relationship between Egypt and Asia renders the account of the attempted sacrifice of Abraham extremely implausible. Although this third conclusion is beyond the scope of this article, I disagree with it. I see the cult described in the story as being Syro-Palestinian, not Egyptian.[63]

Conclusions

We have reviewed the history of criticism of the facsimiles, beginning with the Spalding pamphlet, and concurred with the early reviewers of the pamphlet in rejecting the autographic assumptions. We showed how the facsimiles can have both an Egyptian context and

61. John Gee argues, based on Gustavus Seyffarth's description of the roll containing the original of Facsimile 3 as it existed in 1856 while it was at the St. Louis Museum, that there may have been another text on the roll following the Book of Breathings ("Eyewitness, Hearsay, and Physical Evidence of the Joseph Smith Papyri," in *The Disciple as Witness: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson,* ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges [Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000], 189). If this argument is correct, and if this additional text was the Book of Abraham, my theory would explain *why* J-red appended that book to a Book of Breathings (because he meant to adopt the vignettes to the Book of Breathings as illustrations for the Book of Abraham). On this reading, the back references to "the commencement of this record" and to "the beginning" were added to point the reader to the beginning of the *scroll,* not the *book.* This would also explain why some of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers show attempts to match characters from the Book of Breathings to the finished English text of the Book of Abraham; those involved in the exercise would have wrongly assumed that the Book of Abraham was the *first* text on the papyrus scroll, whereas in reality it would have been the *second.*

62. Thompson, "Egyptology and the Book of Abraham," 154.

63. I plan to address this point in a future article.

a Semitic context and how Joseph's explanations for the most part could relate to the Semitic context of the figures as illustrations of the Book of Abraham.[64]

In briefly reviewing Stephen Thompson's update to Spalding's pamphlet, we agreed that Joseph's interpretations do not fully reflect the original, funerary context of the facsimiles, and we further agreed that the papyrus copy that came into Joseph's possession was not an Abrahamic holograph. (We disagreed, however, with Thompson's reading of the cult in Abraham 1 as necessarily having been predominantly Egyptian in nature.)

In considering the significance of the theory articulated in this paper, for convenience of reference we shall refer to it as the "Semitic Adaptation" theory. What are the disadvantages of positing the Semitic Adaptation theory? Very few that I can see. This theory entails the rejection of the autographic assumptions, which some Saints might wish to cling to as a more traditional understanding, but it seems to me that the early date of Abraham in the Middle Bronze Age coupled with the late date of the papyri in Ptolemaic (or later) times requires a rejection of the autographic assumptions in any event. The only way to salvage those assumptions would either be to assert that Nibley, Gee, and the non-LDS Egyptologists who have examined the question are all wrong in their dating of the papyri or to assert that the source for the Book of Abraham was not on the roll containing Facsimiles 1 and 3 (since that roll has been dated) and indeed was almost 4,000 years old, notwithstanding that the other papyrus materials in the cache were only about 2,200 years old. I would reject any such attempt to salvage the autographic assumptions.

Inasmuch as clinging to the autographic assumptions, in my judgment, is not a serious option, the only other potential cause for concern I can see is that the Semitic Adaptation theory posits an ancient transmission of the text, including redaction. I can understand the desire of some to posit a text that came to Joseph directly from Abraham's hand without any intermediaries, unsullied by scribal hands. But unless we can place either the papyri in the Middle Bronze Age or Abraham in the Ptolemaic era, neither of which is going to happen, it seems to me that we are constrained to acknowledge that at least one copy of the original Abrahamic text was made. And once we acknowledge that the text was copied and that there is about a 1,700-year time gap between Abraham's original and that late copy, it seems to me that we are then constrained to consider the very real possibility of a transmission of the text in antiquity.

A comparison with the Book of Mormon might be instructive here. The gold plates were untouched by human hands from the time Moroni deposited them in a stone box in the fifth century

64. These conclusions relate to the various LDS theories about the Book of Abraham described in John Gee, *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 20, as follows:
    1. On the relation of the Book of Abraham to the papyri: Although I am open to a "pure revelation" theory, my argument here pursues a "missing papyrus" view.
    2. On the date of the Book of Abraham: I see the book as having an Abrahamic core but with later interpolations resulting from the transmission of the text.
    3. On the date of the Joseph Smith Papyri: I would follow Gee and accept the date of the papyri as the Ptolemaic period (based on prosopography). (Prior to Gee I accepted Nibley's Roman dating, which was based mainly on the hieratic writing style.)
    4. On the transmission of the text: In my view, Abraham's descendants (or others) brought the text into Egypt; it was not an Egyptian composition.

A.D. until Joseph's retrieval of the cache in 1827. Prior to that time, however, the records of the Book of Mormon peoples underwent an express redaction process at the hands of Mormon and Moroni. Similarly, the papyrus source for the Book of Abraham sat untouched from the time it was deposited in the tomb during the Greco-Roman age until Lebolo retrieved it. Before that time, though, it circulated among people and was subject to normal transmission processes. My hypothetical redactor, J-red, was in essentially the same position with respect to the Book of Abraham as Mormon was with respect to the Book of Mormon. The difference is that we know of Mormon and his influence on the text, whereas the existence of J-red is hypothetical and his identity unknown. In this respect the Book of Abraham is more like the Bible, which certainly has undergone redaction processes (even if one rejects the large redactional theories, such as the Documentary Hypothesis, the multiple authorship of Isaiah, or the existence of Q) by nameless redactors. But the fact that the Bible experienced such processes does not interfere with our ability to accept it as scripture. In the case of the Book of Abraham, that it was translated and put forward by a modern prophet should be sufficient to ease any qualms one might have about the effects of an unknown redactor on the text.

The disadvantages to the Semitic Adaptation theory in my view are negligible, yet the explanatory power of that theory is substantial. Note in particular the following:

1. Based on present knowledge, the facsimiles appear to be vignettes that should date to a period of Egyptian history substantially (i.e., more than a millennium) removed from the time of Abraham. There is, therefore, an inherent dating anachronism involved in ascribing the facsimiles to Abraham. The traditional argument would appear to entail that Abraham created these vignettes, and, more than a millennium later, the Egyptians began to adapt Abraham's creation to their own religious purposes. The Semitic Adaptation theory, by allowing separate provenances for the text of the Book of Abraham and its facsimiles, and by allowing the facsimiles to have their origin for Egyptian religious purposes, resolves this issue by permitting the adaptation to flow in the other direction.
2. The extent to which Joseph Smith's explanations of the facsimiles accord with present Egyptological knowledge is debated. Generally, non-LDS Egyptologists who have examined the question have maintained either that the explanations are completely wrong or that they are mostly wrong, with perhaps a few lucky guesses. Understandably, LDS scholars have pressed hard in the other direction, articulating ways in which the explanations can be seen as consistent with Egyptological understanding. As a faithful Latter-day Saint, I am in general sympathetic to the observations along these lines made by LDS scholars. Nevertheless, even putting such efforts in their best light, there remain substantial disconnects between the proffered explanations and those of the Egyptologists. The Semitic Adaptation theory fully explains why such disconnects exist. Under this theory, the Egyptologists are no longer the final arbiters of the correctness of the explanations of the facsimiles.
3. A substantial part of the debate over the facsimiles has revolved around whether the facsimiles were incorrectly restored. While I expect that these debates will continue, ultimately the Semitic Adaptation theory moots the question. That is, for example, even

if the priest standing to the left on Facsimile 1 were wearing the jackal mask of Anubis and did not hold a knife in his hand, it still would have been quite natural for J-red to perceive the scene as showing the attempted sacrifice of Abraham. Therefore, under this theory the details of the reconstruction of the facsimiles become largely immaterial vis-à-vis the explanations of the figures.

4. I believe the Semitic Adaptation theory has the potential to put the "missing papyrus" theory on a sounder footing. John Gee has suggested that there may have been another text on the roll containing the Book of Breathings. The Semitic Adaptation theory explains *why* the text of the Book of Abraham may have been appended to a Book of Breathings: because J-red intended to adapt the vignettes of the Book of Breathings as illustrations for his text, the Book of Abraham. This placement of the text would also explain why the back-references to Facsimile 1 as being at "the commencement of this record" and at "the beginning" (which were meant to refer to the beginning of the scroll, not the beginning of the book) may have been misunderstood and led those involved in the production of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers, in their attempt to reverse engineer the Egyptian language, to begin with the Book of Breathings itself at the beginning of the scroll.
5. The Semitic Adaptation theory, by allowing for an ancient transmission of the text, takes the Book of Abraham seriously as an ancient book. That a 4,000-year-old papyrus was commingled among a cache of 2,200-year-old papyri would be a most difficult proposition to accept. Some acknowledge that the papyrus source of the Book of Abraham is a copy, thus at least nominally rejecting the autographic assumptions, yet continue to be influenced by those assumptions. They therefore seem to want to see the Abrahamic original as drawn with brush and ink on papyrus in Hieratic Egyptian, together with the facsimiles, which papyri then sat untouched for over 1,500 years until they were finally copied—once—and the copy was deposited in a tomb in Thebes. This is not a realistic picture of the history of the text. In my view, allowing for a transmission of the text (including copying, translation, and redaction) is a more realistic means of getting a text from the Semitic, nonnative Egyptian Abraham in the Middle Bronze Age to an Egyptian papyrus in the Ptolemaic era.
6. Thompson posits a number of anachronisms to Abraham's day in the Book of Abraham. As things stand, we would appear to have three choices when faced with a purported anachronism in the text: (a) deny that the anachronism exists and assert that, although it has not yet been attested in an extant source, the posited characteristic does indeed date back to the Middle Bronze Age; (b) acknowledge the anachronism, but assign it to Joseph Smith as a translator's anachronism, which does not in and of itself compromise the Book of Abraham as a translation of an ancient source; or (c) acknowledge the anachronism and assign it to Joseph Smith as the modern author of the text. The Semitic Adaptation theory, by suggesting that the text underwent an ancient transmission, allows a fourth option: that we acknowledge the anachronism but assign it to an ancient redactor.

7. We have pointed to general processes of Semitic adaptation of Egyptian texts and iconography. We have also identified three specific examples that date to Greco-Roman times (the same general time period during which the Joseph Smith Papyri were produced), all of which relate in some way to Abraham. Under traditional theories this evidence is of limited relevance, since it dates almost two millennia after the time of Abraham. Under the Semitic Adaptation theory, however, this evidence now comes from the right time period to say something meaningful about the ancient production of the Book of Abraham and its facsimiles. Under that theory, this evidence is transformed from late (and therefore relatively weak) evidence to becoming a powerful illustration of how Jews during this time period adapted Egyptian sources to their own purposes. The adaptation of an Egyptian psychostasy vignette from chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead in the judgment scene of the *Testament of Abraham,* the adaptation of the Egyptian original underlying the Demotic Story of Setna in a Jewish popular version (replacing Osiris with Abraham), and the adaptation of a hypocephalus in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* provide a stunning glimpse of how J-red, living and working in the same era, may have adapted vignettes from a Book of Breathings and a hypocephalus as illustrations of the Book of Abraham, which had come under his care as a part of the ancient transmission of the text. In my view, the Semitic Adaptation theory turns the facsimiles and their interpretations from a perceived weakness of the Book of Abraham into a real strength.

Synopsis of Relationship between Amenemope and Proverbs

Amenemope	Proverbs	Subject
1. 3/9–11, 16	22:17–18	Appeal to hear
2. 1/7	22:19	Purpose of instruction
3. 27/7–8	22:20	Thirty sayings
4. 1/5–6	22:21	Learning a worthy response
5. 4/4–5	22:22	Do not rob a wretch
6. 11/13–14	22:24	Avoid friendship with violent people
7. 13/8–9	22:25	Lest a trap ruin you
8. 7/12–13	22:28	Do not remove landmarks
9. 27/16–17	22:29	Skillful scribes will be courtiers
10. 23/13–18	23:1–3	Eat cautiously before an official
11. 9/14–10:5	23:4–5	Wealth flies away like an eagle/geese
12. 14/5–10	23:6–7	Do not eat a stingy person's food
13. 14/17–18	23:8	Vomiting results
14. 22/11–12	23:9	Do not speak before just anyone
15. 7/12–15	23:10–11	Do not remove landmarks of widows
16. 11/6–7	24:11	Rescue the condemned

Semitic Transformations from the Vignette to Chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead to the Judgment (Psychostasy) Scene of the *Testament of Abraham*

Egyptian Context	Semitic Context
1. Osiris	Abel
2. Anubis	Dokiel
3. Horus	Purouel
4. Thoth	Enoch or an angel
5. Maat	An angel

Semitic Transformations from Hypothetical Egyptian Original Underlying the Demotic Story of Setna to the Deducible Jewish Popular Version (from which the Lucan Account of the Rich Man and Lazarus Descends)

Egyptian Context	Semitic Context
1. Osiris	Abraham
2. Amnte	Bosom of Abraham
3. Horus (or falcon of Horus)	Angels

Semitic Transformations from a Hypocephalus to the Apocalypse of Abraham

Egyptian Context	Semitic Context
1. A circular disk representing the upper world and the netherworld	Abraham is shown "the fulness of the whole world and its circle"
2. "O Mighty God, Lord of heaven and earth, of the hereafter, and of his great waters" [from Facsimile 2, left middle]	Abraham is shown "what is in the heavens, on the earth, in the sea, and in the abyss"
3. Four Sons of Horus A. Hapy [baboon] B. Imsety [man] C. Duamutef [jackal] D. Qebehsenuf [falcon]	Four fiery living creatures, each with four faces (via Ezekiel 1–2) Lion [or ox] Man Ox [or lion] Eagle

Chapter 9

The Book of Abraham and Muslim Tradition

Brian M. Hauglid

Latter-day Saint biblical scholars have made significant contributions to our understanding of the role of apocryphal and pseudepigraphic materials for Biblical studies. Some of these extra-canonical texts provide useful tools for exploring biblical history, language, and the development of the canonical texts. A few apocryphal texts also include elements that bear some resemblance to various LDS doctrines and practices.[1] Of course, most of the efforts employed by LDS scholars have focused on the Hebrew or Jewish pseudepigraphic materials of the Old Testament and the Christian apocryphal texts of the New Testament. Over the past few decades, however, Islamic texts related to the Bible, and indirectly related to the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price have received increasing attention from LDS scholars. Hugh Nibley is ostensibly the first LDS scholar to incorporate Islamic sources into his research and writings on the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price.[2] (In recent years LDS attention to Islamic materials has broadened even further. For example, the Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts has developed several projects under the general heading of the Middle Eastern Texts Initiative (METI). METI comprises the Islamic Translation Series and the Eastern Christian Texts series. Each of these series has published bilingual translations of significant Muslim or Christian-Arabic works.[3]) For the Book of Abraham in particular the recent publication of *Traditions about the*

1. For a good LDS introduction to the subject see C. Wilfred Griggs, ed., *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1986).
2. See for example, Nibley's *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988); *Abraham in Egypt*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2000).
3. See for example from the Islamic Translation Series, al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers,* trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1997); Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination,* trans. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1999); and from the Eastern Christian Texts Series, Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī, *The Reformation of Morals,* trans. Sidney H. Griffith (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2002).

Early Life of Abraham brings together many extrabiblical Muslim and Arabic sources (as well as Jewish and Christian sources) that clearly demonstrate a Book of Abraham connection to the ancient world.[4] Yet with all this progress, the study of LDS scripture (and particularly the Book of Abraham) using Islamic sources is still a relatively new field of study. This is somewhat understandable as biblical scholars (LDS or not) tend to generally view Muslim sources or traditions as reworkings of Jewish and Christian apocryphal and pseudepigraphic texts that offer nothing new to the Judeo-Christian corpus. It is true that Islamic tradition displays an inherent dependence on the earlier Jewish and Christian materials. Yet it is also true that Muslim tradition developed much the same way as its earlier counterparts. Stephen Robinson outlined four purposes for which Jewish and Christian (and I believe Islamic) apocryphal materials were created: "to fill in the gaps in the scriptural account, to attack opposing theologies, to defend against the attack of others, and to bring about or to legitimize theological change."[5] These purposes also emerge later on as they relate specifically to the Muslim apocryphal corpus.

Therefore, in addition to using the apocryphal texts from Judaism and Christianity to study biblical history and languages, I suggest examining apocryphal texts from Islam as well as Judaism and Christianity. This could be particularly helpful in determining whether a text like the Book of Abraham contains elements of antiquity. I will focus here on how and why Muslim apocrypha developed and what Islamic tradition has to offer. To accomplish this I will use the story of the early life of Abraham to bring out a few general contributions of the Islamic apocryphal tradition.

To consider Muslim extra-Qurʾānic texts a viable literature it is important to first discuss Islamic stories within the general context of the Judeo-Christian apocryphal tradition. Various similarities and differences between these traditions can then be noted from both Muslim and non-Muslim perspectives. In terms of whether the Muslim apocryphal stories about Abraham influenced the Book of Abraham, it is well to briefly examine how much Joseph Smith may have known about Islam and how much Islamic material such as the Qurʾān or extra-Qurʾānic texts were available during his life. Looking at the account of Abraham from the perspective of Islam can reveal the fundamental assumptions that underlie the Muslim apocryphal materials. This will inevitably show a pronounced influence from the Jewish and Christian traditions, but it will also demonstrate the emergence of useful and unique apocryphal elements within the Islamic tradition.

Of course, when closely examining Muslim extra-Qurʾānic sources it will become readily apparent that specific characteristics will emerge that support the Islamic message (i.e., things related to Allāh [the one true God], Muḥammad [his anticipation], and the Qurʾān). However, several points of interest to Latter-day Saints will also surface from the Muslim perspective of Islamic accounts to show Islamic trends and patterns that emerge in the life of Abraham and lend support to the Book of Abraham.

4. John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, comps. and eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), hereafter referred to as *Traditions*.

5. Stephen E. Robinson, "Lying for God: The Uses of Apocrypha" in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints,* 143.

Muslim Tradition as Apocryphal Material

Although Islamic traditions with biblical themes seem to function similarly to Jewish and Christian apocryphal materials (i.e., filling in the gaps of the Qurʾān, attacking opposing theologies, defending attacks from the outside, and legitimizing theological changes), some basic differences certainly exist in the Islamic presentation of the earlier Jewish and Christian apocryphal traditions. If the term *apocryphal* is defined as "hidden" or "secret,"[6] it really does not apply well to Islamic tradition, at least from the Islamic point of view (and also from the historical viewpoint). It is, of course, difficult to determine to what degree the Muslim compilers of biblical accounts viewed the material as hidden or secret, but in general the adoption and integration of the materials in the eighth and ninth centuries was in a very different atmosphere from the climate of the Jewish or Christian compilers centuries earlier. The expansion of Islam in the two centuries after Muḥammad (seventh–eighth centuries) increased the contact between Muslims and their Jewish and Christian neighbors. In the most prolific period of creative activity (eighth–tenth centuries) Muslims produced an enormous amount of materials (including texts with biblical themes) that are still in use today.

Muslims, of course, do not view the Qurʾān as a book that contains Jewish and Christian elements; rather, to them the Qurʾān fulfills or restores truths lost from apostate Judaism and Christianity. If there are any similarities to (or differences from) the Bible it is because the Qurʾān is, for the Muslim, "the most correct (or corrective) book." Muslims do not consider that the Qurʾān is in any way a part of the apocryphal tradition but as the word of God incarnate revealed directly to Muḥammad through Gabriel. Interestingly, however, the Qurʾān contains more of what we consider apocryphal themes than strictly biblical themes.

Several other traditions also developed during the two or three centuries after the death of Muḥammad and the compilation of the Qurʾān. Notably, these traditions fall under four main categories: *taʾrīkh* (history), *ḥadīth* (sayings and acts of Muḥammad), *tafsīr* (Qurʾānic commentary), and *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (stories of the prophets). Because the Qurʾān is not, for the most part, narrative prose and does not address many issues that emerged later in the Muslim communities, other traditions developed to present the Islamic message in narrative prose or to provide commentary on the Qurʾānic passages.[7] Again, from the Muslim point of view, these traditions represent a positive outgrowth (not hidden) of Islam and therefore should not be considered as developing in the same way as apocryphal materials containing hidden or secret teachings.[8] Nevertheless, the *taʾrīkh* and *qiṣaṣ* traditions are closer to the Midrashic, Aggadic, and apocryphal traditions in Judaism and Christianity in that they present stories of the prophets in an Islamicized narrative style, yet all four of the Islamic traditions contain some Jewish and Christian biblical themes.

From a non-Muslim perspective the Islamic traditions seem to be much more in the apocryphal tradition. When we compare the themes and stories of the Muslim narratives with the

6. See ibid., 2, 3, 36.

7. This can also be seen in the development of important Muslim traditions such as the Sharia, or Islamic law, which affects Muslim daily life (one of the main sources of Islamic law is the *hadīth*). Theology, philosophy, and mysticism are other significant traditions that emerged relatively early in Muslim history. These traditions do not generally contain biblical themes and therefore do not concern us here.

8. However, there have been some materials from the mystic and early Shiʿite traditions that are viewed as containing hidden or secret teachings.

apocryphal traditions from Judaism and Christianity, it is apparent that there are clear parallels between these materials. Still, the earlier Jewish and Christian accounts become entirely Islamic in the Muslim narratives. That is to say, whether consciously or unconsciously, Muslims have reoriented and rewritten the same biblical stories to fit an Islamic context. One can say the same thing in regard to the Jewish and Christian apocryphal accounts of biblical materials. These also have been rewritten to fit into a later Jewish or Christian context. The common denominator between all three traditions concerns the question of revelation. As one scholar has noted, apocryphal writings emerged "in a time that no longer believed in continuing revelation by authors who nevertheless wished to effect religious changes."[9] For Muslims, the concept of a closed canon as found in Judaism and Christianity was not the impetus for creating tradition as much as the idea that Muḥammad was the final prophet. It is nevertheless noteworthy that the apocryphal materials in Judaism and Christianity also developed in an atmosphere in which revelation was considered to have ceased.

Islamic traditional accounts of biblical materials provide an opportunity for Latter-day Saints to examine the development of a unique apocryphal literature that can shed light on what may have historically occurred in the development of apocryphal literature in Judaism and Christianity. For instance, it has been stated by some Latter-day Saint General Authorities that Muḥammad received at least "a portion of God's light" in order that a significant amount of God's children be raised to a higher standard of obedience.[10] After the death of the Prophet Muḥammad the revelations ceased, and Muslims were left on their own to interpret the Islamic message without revelatory guidance. Hence, there emerged a desire to fill in the gaps that were created as times and circumstances changed. This is similar to both Judaism and Christianity—both began in revelatory atmospheres but later lost their inspirational impetus and produced apocryphal materials. In sum, Muslim apocryphal tradition developed very much like its predecessors excepting that time and circumstances had changed.[11]

Another important difference between the Muslim and Jewish or Christian apocryphal traditions is the inclusion of the Islamic *isnād* (or chain of transmitters). Before a tradition is cited in the Muslim account it is very often prefaced by a list (either long or short) of individuals who purportedly transmitted the attached report. For instance, one might find something like this: Abū Zayd upon the authority of Ibn Isḥāq upon the authority of Ibn Abbās upon the authority of Abū Hurraira heard the Prophet say such and such. The *isnād* in early Islam became the science *par excellence* of determining the accuracy of statements made by the Prophet Muḥammad as well as determining the validity of biblical stories passed on through Islam. Great effort was expended by Muslim scholars to ascertain the reliability of the transmitters (i.e., their trustworthiness), which produced a complex criteria *(ʿilm al-rijāl, science of men)* and process of checking and recheck-

9. See Robinson's citing of R. H. Charles in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints,* 142.

10. Note the February 1978 announcement of the First Presidency entitled "God's Love for All Mankind." Here several other religious figures are mentioned such as Confucius, the Reformers, Plato, and Socrates. Joseph F. Smith had earlier said, "I believe that Mohammed was an inspired man and the Lord raised him up to do the work he did" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939], 396).

11. Robert J. Matthews compares the development of RLDS tradition in a similar way. See his "Whose Apocrypha? Viewing Ancient Apocrypha from the Vantage of Events in the Present Dispensation," in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints,* 8–12.

ing the *isnāds.* If a tradition was found to contain all trustworthy transmitters, then the tradition was considered strong; if not, then it could be viewed as neutral or weak. The *isnād* is particularly important to the traditional sayings and acts of Muḥammad *(ḥadīth),* but it is also a factor in the other traditions. This is somewhat similar to the rabbinical tradition of quoting important rabbis, but Muslims go much further in validating the tradition by determining the authenticity of the transmitter.[12]

In sum, Islamic apocryphal tradition may not purport to be hidden knowledge, like Jewish and Christian apocrypha, passed on from generation to generation, but it carefully and methodically utilizes a trustworthy chain of transmitters to bring forth traditions that fill in Qurʾānic gaps, defend Islam, and legitimize the Islamic message. In addition, some of these reports contain themes, related to earlier Jewish and Christian traditions, which add support to a wide and varied apocryphal tradition. A number of Abrahamic themes, such as Terah as an idolater and the threatening of Abraham's life, lend support to the Book of Abraham. Is it possible that Joseph Smith had access to the Qurʾān or later Muslim apocryphal traditions about Abraham? Consider the following.

Joseph Smith and Islam

It is difficult to determine exactly how much the Prophet Joseph Smith knew about Islam, but it was probably not very much. Any evidence in support of the Book of Abraham as an ancient document from Muslim sources was very likely not even available to the Prophet. This is true for two main reasons: the general anti-Islamic atmosphere of the nineteenth century and the paucity of English translations of important Muslim sources. In the nineteenth century generally, "the Muslim East was still an enemy, but an enemy doomed to defeat."[13] Prejudices against Muḥammad were especially prevalent. As the noted scholar of Islam, W. Montgomery Watt has said, "Muḥammad's claim to be a prophet and messenger and to receive messages from God to be conveyed to his fellow Arabs has been criticized and attacked almost from the day it was first put forward."[14] Later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars attempted to lessen the vitriol against Muḥammad that had been particularly keen in medieval Europe. In doing this they tried to "save Muḥammad's sincerity, but sometimes at the expense of his sanity."[15] For instance, Gustav Weil argued that Muḥammad suffered from epilepsy and Aloys Sprenger said that in addition he was plagued by hysteria. Another scholar thought Muḥammad had succumbed to the "wiles of Satan," and yet another accused Muḥammad of deliberately mystifying the people, thereby becoming an example of how easily one with unusual powers can fall into dishonesty.[16] Recent scholarship has taken a much more favorable approach of characterizing

12. For the importance of the Muslim *isnād* see James Robson, "The *Isnād* in Muslim Tradition," *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society* 15 (1953–1954): 15–26.
13. Maxime Rodinson, "The Western Image and Western Studies of Islam," in *The Legacy of Islam,* ed. Joseph Schacht and C. E. Bosworth, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 48.
14. W. Montgomery Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qurʾān* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 17.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 17–18.

Muḥammad "as a man who sincerely and in good faith proclaimed messages which he believed came to him from God."[17]

During Joseph Smith's lifetime in particular, the prevailing views of Islam and Muḥammad were also less than complimentary. An example of this can be found in an incident that occurred in October 1838. According to the Prophet, "Thomas B. Marsh, formerly president of the Twelve, having apostatized, repaired to Richmond and made affidavit before Henry Jacobs, justice of the peace, to all the vilest slanders, aspersions, lies and calumnies towards myself and the Church, that his wicked heart could invent."[18] In this affidavit Marsh states, "I have heard the Prophet say that he would yet tread down his enemies, and walk over their dead bodies; and if he was not let alone, he would be a second Mohammed to this generation, and that he would make it one gore of blood from the Rocky mountains to the Atlantic ocean; that like Mohammed, whose motto in treating for peace was, 'the Alcoran or the Sword.' So should it be eventually with us, 'Joseph Smith or the sword.'"[19] Marsh's statement directed at Joseph Smith serves as an indirect polemic against Islam. Recent scholarship has of course modified these earlier views as more information evidences a diplomatic Prophet rather than a Muslim Genghis Khan.[20]

In such an environment as Joseph Smith's, however, it is not likely that much information about Islam existed at all in America. In fact, most of the materials that would later support the Book of Abraham were not translated into English until almost a century after Joseph Smith died. One exception is the Qurʾān, which had been in several English translations since 1649.[21] However, as far as I know, no historical evidence has been found that indicates whether the Prophet ever looked at the Qurʾān, since his scholarly interests seemed to have been directed toward Hebrew studies. In addition, Muslim scholarship in the West was limited to German and French European scholars in the early nineteenth century, which required modern scholars to move from translating their secondary sources to later translating primary Muslim sources.[22]

Biblical Traditions from Muslim Authors

Many Muslim primary sources have been discovered in the last one hundred years. Some have been translated into western languages such as German and French as well as English. Others remain in the Arabic but are accessible to scholars.[23] Many major Muslim authors could be listed, but a few within the previously mentioned four categories should suffice.

1. *Taʾrīkh* (history). The greatest and most influential Muslim writer of narrative history up to the tenth century is al-Ṭabarī (839–923). His multivolume history is unsurpassed and lays the

17. Ibid., 18.
18. *History of the Church*, 3:166–67.
19. Ibid., 167.
20. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1:192.
21. The 1649 edition was made by the Scotsman Alexander Ross. Others followed: George Sale (1734) and Gustav Flügel (1834). It would be interesting to check the libraries available to the Prophet in Manchester, New York, and Kirtland, Ohio, to see if they had any of these editions of the Qurʾān on hand.
22. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam,* 40.
23. For a history of the Muslim written record see Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 2:1–83.

groundwork for further study in all four of the Muslim traditions.[24] Other important Muslims in this tradition include al-Masʿūdī and Ibn al-Athīr.

2. *Ḥadīth* (sayings and acts of Muḥammad). Because Muslims highly revere Muḥammad as a model Muslim, some Islamic scholars made a major effort during the eighth to tenth centuries to compile as many accounts as possible of what Muḥammad said and did during his life. The mark of authenticity for these reports was a well trusted *isnād,* or chain of transmitters. Al-Bukhārī (d. 870) is said to have collected over three hundred thousand reports from which he produced a book containing over seven thousand traditions. Bukhārī's collection *(Ṣaḥīḥ)* is by far the largest and most used by Muslims. Al-Muslim is another compiler who collected similar reports and produced his own well-known book. Ḥadīth literature contain materials related to many aspects of Muslim life—civil matters, religious laws, and so on—that answer questions not addressed in the Qurʾān. Ḥadīth are also referred to and hold a high place when formulating Islamic law.

3. *Tafsīr* (Qurʾānic commentary). There are literally thousands of authors in this tradition. Some of the most influential include al-Ṭabarī (again), al-Qurṭubī, Zamakhsharī, al-Baiḍāwī, Nasafī, and Ibn Kathīr. These commentators, and many others, painstakingly analyze each verse of the Qurʾān, often giving information and traditions that support the message of Islam, but also drawing upon many Jewish and Christian traditions that are much more ancient in origin.

4. *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (Stories of the Prophets). This tradition gives a coherent narrative that is particularly focused on the lives of the biblical prophets (such as Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, and Solomon) preceding Muḥammad. Though the prophets retain their biblical status, the authors present each prophet as anticipating the Prophet Muḥammad and the final rise of Islam. Some of the most important Muslim authors include Ibn Isḥāq,[25] al-Thaʿlabī,[26] al-Kisāʾī, and the Turkish accounts of al-Rabghūzī. These stories of the prophets vary in degree of scholarship, entertainment, and didactic value among Muslims but contain some of the most interesting materials for the Latter-day Saints.

Abraham from the Perspective of Muslim Tradition

Before proceeding to identify and characterize elements of Muslim tradition that support the Book of Abraham as an ancient text, it is important to look carefully at what the Abraham account says to a Muslim. This approach should serve two purposes for the Latter-day Saint: first to indicate that this material was crafted to bolster Muḥammad and the message of Islam; second to demonstrate that any information in the Muslim account of Abraham that supports the restored version is purely unintentional. Thus, when supportive evidence is encountered in Muslim tradition, it gives that much more force to the uniquely ancient character of the Book of Abraham.

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24. His famous history has been translated into English by numerous scholars and published by the State University of New York Press.
25. Ibn Isḥāq's (d. 767) *al-Mubtadaʾ* has been reconstructed and translated into English by Gordon Newby in *The Making of the Last Prophet* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989). (An excerpt related to Abraham has been reprinted in *Traditions,* 303–9.)
26. Used extensively by Hugh Nibley.

According to Islamic tradition, the time period prior to Abraham's birth is in anticipation of a coming prophet (Abraham) and parallels the period of anticipation (of Muḥammad) prior to Muḥammad's birth. Ibn Isḥāq notes that Muḥammad's father was proposed to by another woman prior to marrying Amīna, the mother of the Prophet. He asked this woman why she had not insisted on marriage, and she replied that her brother, Waraqa b. Naufal, who was a Christian and had studied the scriptures, prophesied that a prophet would be born among the people.[27] In addition, a star appeared indicating the birth of Muḥammad.[28]

Although Muslim accounts place Abraham's birth in an entirely different time period than Muḥammad's, and therefore many details differ, the general motifs of anticipation and the appearance of the star are common to both stories. In short, what seems to have happened is Muslims have adopted themes of the Jewish story of Abraham and reoriented them to Islam. For instance, regarding the star motif, one medieval Muslim mentions that Nimrod saw in a dream a star that outshone the sun and the moon. This is certainly a retelling of a Jewish story concerning the astrologers of Nimrod who, "when they left the house, they lifted up their eyes toward heaven to look at the stars" and "one great star came from the east and ran athwart the heavens and swallowed up the four stars at the four corners."[29] Christians, of course, also accept the appearance of a star at the birth of Christ.[30] Other Muslim commentators have also incorporated the motif of a star appearing to Nimrod in a dream prior to the birth of Abraham.[31] This suggests the likelihood that

27. Ibn Hishām (d. 834), *The Life of Muḥammad: A Translation of Ibn Isḥāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh,* trans. A. Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 68–69. For the Arabic see Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat al-Nabī* (Beirut: Dār Rakyānī, 1965), 61.

28. Ibid., 70. For the Arabic see Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat al-Nabī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūrīya, 1971), 1:166.

29. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968), 1:207. *The Book of Jasher* (Salt Lake City: J. H. Parry & Company, 1973), 8:10, 17 (See also, *Traditions,* 135–36). Patai and Graves similarly note that at Abraham's birth "an enormous comet coursed around the horizon from the east, and swallowed four stars each fixed in a different quarter of Heaven" (Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963], 134). See also D. Sidersky, *Les Origines des legendes Musulmanes* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1933), 31, and Heinrich Schutzinger, who also identifies Jewish legends of a star. See *Ursprung und Entwicklung der arabischen Abraham-Nimrod Legende* (Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1961), 142. It should again be noted that it is not possible to determine the precise direction of influence. One scholar has observed that the material in the *qisas* tradition "is in part borrowed from Jewish sources. . . . In some cases the Islamic legend of Abraham has even influenced the later Jewish tradition" (EI2 "Ibrāhīm" by Rudi Paret). Hence, there may be some Islamic influence on later Jewish tradition. However, an attempt to show direction of influence would be laborious and ultimately speculative at best, and therefore the assumption taken in this study is that, for the most part, the Jewish traditions precede the Islamic traditions.

30. See Matthew 2:2, 9.

31. According to al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), *The History of al-Ṭabarī: Prophets and Patriarchs,* trans. William M. Brinner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), "A star arose over Nimrod so bright that it blotted out the light of the sun and the moon," 53 (*Traditions,* 337). Kisāʾī's (tenth or eleventh century) version in W. M. Thackston Jr., *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisaʾi* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), 137 (*Traditions,* 385); al-Baiḍāwī (d. 1286 or 1293) also notes that Nimrod sees a star in his sleep. See *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-taʾwīl,* 6 vols. (n.p., 1899), 2:432 (*Traditions,* 427). See also Ṭabarsī (d. 1169–1170), *Majmaʿ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Iran: n.p., 1983), 7:325.

the star motif was a widespread part of the belief structures of both the Jews and the Christians before and during the early period of Islam. The Islamic adoption of the star motif anticipating Abraham's birth and connecting it with the same motif prior to Muḥammad's birth reinforces the Muslim view of Islam as a restored religion within the otherwise polluted environment of the Jews and the Christians. In essence, the star of Abraham can be viewed as a prototype of the star of Muḥammad.

Some Muslim accounts also place Abraham in a cave for fifteen days after his birth. During this period his mother was not able to breast-feed him because she could not risk being seen going to the cave and arousing suspicion. One day she sees Abraham sucking his fingers and she notices that from one finger he is sucking milk, from another he is sucking water, from another honey, and from another he is sucking butter. In the fifteen days that Abraham stays in the cave he grows in one day as if it were a month and in one month as if it were a year. Abraham is said to have been the equivalent of fifteen years old when he left the cave.[32] Jewish tradition also places Abraham in a cave at birth. In one tradition God opens two windows in the cave: one puts forth oil and the other a fine flour.[33] In another "Abram, lying alone in the cave without food, began to weep; but God sent the archangel Gabriel to give him milk, which flowed from the little finger of his right hand—and so the child was suckled."[34] The motifs of the cave and miracle feedings can also be found in the Christian tradition in which angels bring sustenance to saints in need.[35] Although this tradition is not in the Qurʾān, other Muslim commentators have transmitted this tradition.[36] The tradition of Abraham miraculously growing in a cave can also be found in Jewish legends as

32. Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Thaʿlabī (d. 1036), *Kitāb ʿArāʾis al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (Egypt: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī), 52 (*Traditions,* 360).
33. Schutzinger, *Ursprung und Entwicklung*, 143.
34. Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis,* 136. Ginzberg notes that Abraham sucked milk from the little finger of his right hand until ten days old. See *Legends of the Jews,* 1:189. See also 5:210 n. 14 in which two spouts spring up in the cave, "one flowing with honey, the other with milk." See also Adolph Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrasch* (Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1967), 1:26 (English translation in *Traditions,* 165).
35. Note the Book of James, or Protevangelium 8:1, "And Mary was in the temple of the Lord as a dove that is nurtured: and she received food from the hand of an angel." In *The Apocryphal New Testament,* trans. M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 42. Perhaps the Book of James provided some of the material about the childhood of Mary in Sura 3:37. See also Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews,* 5: 212 n. 29. Christian tradition has also placed the birth of Jesus in a cave. See *The Apocryphal New Testament,* 46, Book of James 18:1; 19:2. See also Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 323–25.
36. Isḥāq ibn Bishr (*Traditions,* 314). Ṭabarī, of course, relates a similar account. However, instead of Abraham sucking several fingers, he sucks sustenance only out of his thumb (*History,* 2:51; *Traditions,* 336). Al Kisāʾī records that Abraham's mother's breasts flowed with milk and honey in addition to Abraham having honey in his thumb, wine in his index finger, milk in his middle finger, cream in his ring finger, and water in his little finger (Thackston, *Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisaʾi,* 138; *Traditions,* 386). Ibn Isḥāq notes that Abraham was "suckled by wild beasts," in Gordon. D. Newby's *The Making of the Last Prophet,* 68 (*Traditions,* 304). See also al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Badʾ wa-al-taʾrīkh* (Paris: n.p., 1899), 3:54 (*Traditions,* 355); Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233), *Al-Kāmil fī al-taʾrīkh* (Beirut: n.p., 1965), 1:94 (*Traditions,* 422), 3:54; Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl,* 2:433; H. E. Boeschoten, and M. Vandamme, trans. *Al-Rabghūzī* (fourteenth century): *The Stories of the Prophets: Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ: An Eastern Turkish Version* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 1:94, (*Traditions,* 437); (hereafter referred to as al-Rabghūzī, *Stories of the Prophets*).

well as in Muslim traditions.[37] No story of miraculous growth can be found in the traditions surrounding Muḥammad's birth, but there is a tradition of a miraculous feeding. As the story goes, Halima, a wet nurse, goes to Mecca to look for foster children, but because of the rough ride and sleeplessness, she cannot produce any milk, nor can the camel produce milk. Upon arriving, only the orphaned Muḥammad was available because no one wanted an orphan. Halima takes him, and miraculously her breasts fill with milk. Likewise, the camel is able to give milk again. Thus, all are able to drink to their satisfaction.[38] Again, to the Muslim reader the miraculous feeding of Abraham foreshadows or anticipates the miraculous feeding of Muḥammad.

According to the narrative of al-Thaʿlabī, and other Muslim commentators, when Abraham leaves the cave he asks his mother who his Lord is. She replies, "I am." He asks, "Who is your Lord?" She says, "Your Father." He asks, "Who is my father's Lord?" She answers, "Nimrod!" Abraham asks who is Nimrod's Lord and is told to be silent. Later Abraham approaches his father Āzar (Terah) and asks him the same questions and angers his father.[39] Thaʿlabī inserts this tradition just before Abraham has the experience described in Qurʾān 6:76–79:

> When the night descended upon Abraham, he saw a star and exclaimed "This is my Lord!" When the star had set down Abraham said, "I love not those that set." But when he saw the moon rising in splendor he exclaimed, "This is my Lord!" But when it set he said, "Unless my Lord guide me, I shall be as those who have gone astray." When he saw the sun rising in splendor, he exclaimed, "This is my Lord! This is the greatest of them!" But when it set he said, "O people I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to God. I turn my face to the One who created the heavens and the earth. And never shall I give partners to God."[40]

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37. For the Jewish traditions see Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews,* 1:190–91; Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis,* 136–37; Ginzberg also argues there are Christian traditions of this motif. See *Legends of the Jews,* 5:210 n. 15. According to the *Book of Jasher* 8:36, "And the Lord was with Abram in the cave and he grew up, and Abram was in the cave ten years" (p. 19, cf. also *Traditions,* 139). Note that Schutzinger refers to a tradition that has Abraham in a cave for three years. See *Ursprung und Entwicklung,* 143. Later Muslims likely learned of this tradition from Ṭabarī, *History,* 2:51: "One day of growing up was like a month, and a month was like a year" (*Traditions,* 336). For example see Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil,* 1:95 (*Traditions,* 422–23); Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl,* 2:433 (*Traditions,* 429). For a variation on this tradition see Kisāʾī in Thackston, *Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisaʾi,* 138, in which it is implied that Abraham lived in the cave for four years (*Traditions,* 386).

38. Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad,* 70–71. *Sīra* (1965), 64–65.

39. Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ,* 52 (*Traditions,* 360). *The Book of Jasher* has Abraham and Terah hold an extended conversation about the worship of idols. See 11:16–22, 25 (*Traditions,* 140).

40. There is much discussion of these verses in the Muslim histories and commentaries. See Ṭabarī, *History,* 2:51 (*Traditions,* 339); *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwil al-Qurʾān* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1968), 7:247–52 (hereafter referred to as *Jāmiʿ*); Ibn Isḥāq in Newby's *The Making of the Last Prophet* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 68; Kisāʾī in Thackston, *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisaʾi,* 138 (*Traditions,* 386–87); al-Rabghūzī, *Stories of the Prophets,* 1:94–96 (*Traditions,* 437–38); Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil,* 1:95 (*Traditions,* 422–23); al-Maqdisī, *al-Badʾ wa-al-taʾrīkh* (Paris: n.p., 1899), 3:49–50. Baiḍāwī also records Abraham questioning his mother concerning his Lord before his call. *Anwār al-tanzīl,* 2:433 (*Traditions,* 429). See also Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-aḥkām al-Qurʾān* (Egypt: Dār al-Kitāb al-Misriyya, 1966), 7:25–28; Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAthīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Naḥās, 1966), 3:52–57; Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200), *Zād al-masīr fī ʿilm al-tafsīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1994), 3:55–59 (*Traditions,* 418–19); Nasafī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Jalīl* (Al-Qāhira: al-Maṭbaʾa al-Amiriyya Bi-Būlāq, 1936), 1:482; Zamakhsharī (d. 1144),

While Muslim commentators certainly underscore Abraham's call by referring to this sura (i.e., chapter), it is interesting that this sura parallels a very similar, and likely older, account in Jewish literature. According to this tradition:

> When the sun sank, and the stars came forth, he said, "These are the gods!" But the dawn came, and the stars could be seen no longer, and then he said, "I will not pay worship to these, for they are no gods." Thereupon the sun came forth, and he spoke, "This is my God, him will I extol." But again the sun set, and he said, "He is no god," and beholding the moon, he called her his god to whom he would pay Divine homage. Then the moon was obscured, and he cried out: "This, too, is no God! There is one who sets them all in motion."[41]

Abraham's heavenly call seems to anticipate a similar call that would come to Muḥammad through Gabriel. According to tradition, just after Gabriel visits Muḥammad for the first time Muḥammad prepares to climb a mountain and throw himself down to his death. When he is midway up the mountain Gabriel appears and says, "O Muḥammad! thou art the apostle of God and I am Gabriel." Muḥammad raises his head toward heaven and sees Gabriel, but when he turns his head the other way he can still see him in the heavens. Any direction he turns his head, Gabriel is there.[42] Muḥammad's vision of Gabriel in the heavens is a good counterpart to Abraham's vision of the heavens. Both events operate as defining calls to monotheism and both deal with heavenly objects (sun, stars, and moon for Abraham and Gabriel for Muḥammad). Abraham's rejection of the heavenly objects is counterbalanced by Muḥammad's acceptance of the heavenly Gabriel, but both receive reinforcement of their respective divine calls.

Some Muslims record that Āzar/Terah,[43] Abraham's idolatrous father, was a manufacturer and seller of idols who also employed Abraham in his business. This is another Jewish theme[44] that

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Kashshāf ḥaqāʾiq al-tanzīl wa-ʿayūn al-taʾwīl (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1966), 2:30–31; Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ*, 7:322–25.

41. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews,* 1:189. According to Ginzberg, in another tradition Gabriel comes to Abraham after this episode and teaches him. See 5:210 n. 16. See also *The Book of Jasher,* 9:13–19, 20 (*Traditions,* 139). Patai and Graves, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis,* 136; *Apocalypse of Abraham* 19:1–9 in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:698–99 (*Traditions,* 57); D. Sidersky, *Les Origines,* 35–36, for variations of this event. According to Haim Schwarzbaum, this episode "belongs to the cumulative pattern of folktales. . . . This Quranic story is also derived from Jewish sources" (*Biblical and Extra-Biblical Legends in Islamic Folk Literature* [Waldorf-Hessen: Verlag für Orientkunde Dr. H. Vorndran, 1982], 11).

42. Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad,* 106. See also *Sira,* 102.

43. For discussion of the name *Āzar/Terah* among Muslims see Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ,* 7:242–44, who examines most aspects of both names. See also Nasafī, *Tafsīr,* 1:481, who argues that *Āzar* is a surname. Ibn Kathīr says *Āzar* means "the idol" (*Tafsīr,* 3:53). Zamakhsharī proposes that Āzar was the name of an idol (*Kashshāf,* 2:29–30). See also Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl,* 2:430; Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ,* 2:22–23; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr,* 3:54–55.

44. See Schutzinger, *Ursprung und Entwicklung,* 141. Muslim sources suggest that on the Day of Resurrection, Azar will unsuccessfully seek forgiveness from God. See al-Kinānī, *Kitāb al-Ḥaydah* (Damascus: n.p., 1964), 176–79. Bukhārī notes the Prophet said, "On the Day of Resurrection Abraham will meet his father Azar whose face will be dark and covered with dust. (The Prophet) Abraham will say (to him): 'Didn't I tell you not to disobey me?' His father will reply: 'Today I will not disobey you.' Abraham will say: 'O Lord! You promised me not to disgrace me on the Day of Resurrection; and what will be more disgraceful to me than cursing and dishonouring my father?' Then Allah will say (to him): 'I have forbidden Paradise for the disbelievers.' Then he will be addressed, 'O Abraham! Look! What is beneath your feet?' He will look and there he will see . . . (an animal), blood stained,

provides a degree of anticipation for Muḥammad. Just as Abraham received resistance and persecution from someone within his family, so also did Muḥammad receive persecution in the form of the Quraysh (Muḥammad's tribe). Two other themes that typify Muḥammad also present themselves during this period of Abraham's life: idolatry and Nimrod. While in his father's employ Abraham would often ask the people why they would buy a god that cannot hear, see, or move, and thus arouse the suspicions of the people. One day as the people left to go to a feast, Abraham feigns a sickness in order to stay back. He goes to the "Hall of the gods," and with an ax destroys all of the idol gods except the largest one. Abraham places the ax in the hands of the largest god. When the people return and see the gods destroyed they become concerned and question Abraham. Abraham says, "The biggest one did it," and almost convinces the people of the error of worshipping these man-made idols. However, Nimrod, who plays the chief adversary of Abraham, has the people build a large fire, erect a catapult, and throw Abraham into the fire. Abraham is not harmed by the fire but remains in it for seven days and is kept company by the angel Gabriel.[45](As will be seen, the motifs of idolatry and Abraham's life in danger are prominent in the Book of Abraham.) Both the idolatry and Nimrod themes are well-founded in Jewish literature[46] and commented upon by many Muslims.[47] However, as Abraham Geiger observed, the Jewish legend has the dialogue and destruction of the idols occur only between Abraham and his father, whereas the Muslim account takes place between Abraham and Nimrod and his people. According to Geiger this can be "explained by the fact that Abraham is intended to be a type of Muḥammad, and so it is necessary that he should be represented as a public

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which will be caught by the legs and thrown in (Hell) fire." Āzar here is turned into an animal and thrown into hell (*Ṣaḥīḥ* [New Delhi: Kitāb Bhavan, 1987], 4:365; *Traditions,* 327–28).

45. Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ,* 52–54 (*Traditions,* 360–67).

46. For the idolatry and Nimrod motifs in Judaism see Sidersky, *Les Origines,* 36–38; Schutzinger, *Ursprung und Entwicklung,* 145–50, 152–54; Ginzberg, *Legends,* 1:197–203, 5:212 n. 33, 5:215 n. 40; Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis,* 140–42; *The Book of Jasher,* Chapters 11–12, pages 24–33 (*Traditions,* 140–49); *Apocalypse of Abraham* 1–3, Charlesworth, 1:689–90 (*Traditions,* 52–54). According to Schwarzbaum, concerning Abraham's breaking of his father's idols, "the satirical vein exhibited in the story is derived from Talmudic-Midrashic sources, where it is also emphasized that Abraham placed in the hand of the biggest idol a hatchet" (*Biblical and Extra-Biblical Legends,* 11).

47. The idolatry motif in the story of Abraham is discussed extensively among Muslims. See al-Rabghūzī, *Stories of the Prophets,* 1:96–99 (*Traditions,* 438–40); Kisāʾī, in Thackston, *Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisaʾi,* 140–41 (*Traditions,* 392), 146–47; Ibn Isḥāq, Newby, *Making of the Last Prophet,* 68–69 (*Traditions,* 305–8); and Isḥāq ibn Bishr (*Traditions,* 318–20). See also Ṭabarī, *History,* 2:52–57 (*Traditions,* 338–42), *Jāmiʿ,* 7:242–44; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr,* 3:53; Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl,* 2:430 (*Traditions,* 430–31); Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf,* 2:29–30 (*Traditions,* 412–13); Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ,* 7:321–22; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr,* 3:54; Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ,* 7:22–23; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil,* 1:96. Nimrod and the fire of Abraham is also a theme commonly treated by Muslims. See Ibn Isḥāq in Newby's *The Making of the Last Prophet,* 70–71 (*Traditions,* 307–8); Isḥāq ibn Bishr in *Traditions,* 321–24; Newby, 70–71; Ṭabarī, *History,* 2:58–61, *Jāmiʿ,* 15:43–45; al-Rabghūzī, *Stories of the Prophets,* Kisāʾī, Thackston, *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisaʾi,* 140–41 (*Traditions,* 393); 100–105; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil,* 1:99–100; Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl,* 4:258–59 (*Traditions,* 431–32); Zamakhsharī *Kashshāf*, 2:578 (*Traditions,* 412–13); 2:578; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr,* 4:572–73; Nasafī, *Tafsīr,* 2:409; Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ,* 17:54; Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ,* 11:304; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr,* 5:270 (*Traditions,* 419–20); al-Rabghūzī, *Stories of the Prophets,* 100–105 (*Traditions,* 440–44).

preacher."[48] Muḥammad also dealt with both the idolatry and Nimrod motifs. Ibn Isḥāq, in *The Life of Muḥammad,* notes that idolatry was also pervasive prior to and during the time of the Prophet.[49] In addition, he also develops a Nimrod-type archrival to Muḥammad in the person of Abu Jahl, who constantly attempts to thwart Muḥammad at every turn.[50]

Following Abraham's return from Egypt, Islamic texts record that Abraham was given, from Sarah, Hagar, who bore Ishmael. Abraham and Ishmael go to Mecca and together build the Kaʿba.[51] According to Reuven Firestone, the pilgrimage that Abraham learns and institutes "represents the quintessential Hajj, and his very actions provide reason and inform the meaning of the various rituals of the Islamic pilgrimage."[52] Abraham's working with Ishmael to build the Kaʿba and the subsequent establishment of the Pilgrimage anticipates Muḥammad's triumphal entry into Mecca, his restoration of the true worship of Allāh, and his making the Pilgrimage. Concerning the Kaʿba and the Pilgrimage, there seems to be fewer Jewish or Christian parallel materials than other aspects of the Abraham story. Hence, this theme is uniquely Islamic.

Muslim Support for the Book of Abraham

Muslim tradition portrays the Abraham narrative as a unique typology aimed at bolstering the prophethood of Muḥammad and the message of Islam. However, Islamic traditions also include details that lend credence to the story as found in the Book of Abraham. Of course, many of the parallels to the Book of Abraham from Muslim tradition can also be found in Jewish tradition. For instance, as noted above, the Muslim traditions (and the Jewish) have Abraham receiving instruction concerning deity through the instrumentation of heavenly objects. This is shared with the Book of Abraham. In addition, Nimrod in the Muslim tradition (as well as Jewish) serves as the archrival of Abraham, much like the priest who places Abraham on an altar of human sacrifice. Though Islam has preserved many aspects of the restored Abraham story because of its contact with Judaism, Muslim tradition also provides a few unique contributions of its own. Two examples should suffice. First, Kisāʾī and Rabghūzī mention a famine in Chaldea, as does Abraham 1:29–30 and 2:1, 5, while the Jewish and

48. Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, 99.

49. Note pages 35–39 in Guillaume's translation for a good review of idol worship among the Arabs.

50. Note for example pages 119–20, 160–62, 177–79, 283–84, in Guillaume's translation.

51. Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ,* 61–62. For the building of the Kaʿba in Muslim sources see Ṭabarī, *History,* 2:69–72; *Jāmiʿ,* 1:532–41f. According to al-Rabghūzī (*Stories of the Prophets,* 130), "Gabriel quarried the stones and the angels cut them and carved them. After he had cut the stone, Gabriel, at God's command, placed Ishmael on it. The stones walked off like an ambling horse and went to Abraham. Any stone which was flawed and useless became like marble once it came into Abraham's hands." See also Kisāʾī, in Thackston, *Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisaʾi,* 154; Ibn Isḥāq, in Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet,* 74–75; al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Badʾ,* 3:53. See also Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr,* 1:294–300f; Nasafī, *Tafsīr,* 1:86–87f; Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl,* 1:192–96f; Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf,* 1:309–310f. Abraham Katsh has found some Jewish traditions that seem to correspond to the "Station of Abraham" *(maqām al-Ibrāhīm)*. See *Judaism and the Koran,* 101–3. See also Sidersky, *Les Origines,* 53–54. Note Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ,* 4:378–79, in which Abraham and Ishmael build the Kaʿba on a "hillock higher than the land surrounding it" (see also note 35); Joshua Finkel, "Jewish, Christian, and Samaritan Influences on Arabia," *The Macdonald Presentation Volume* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1933), 158.

52. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in the Holy Land* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 100. Firestone also notes that "Abraham's directions for the Pilgrimage were given by Gabriel or God. This detail sets up the Pilgrimage traditions as prototypes for the proper Pilgrimage ritual" (p. 101).

Christian sources are silent on the subject. Second, Kisāʾī and Rabghūzī also describe scenes in which Abraham is allowed to sit on Pharoah's throne (see Abraham, Facsimile 3, figure 1), another subject the other two traditions do not mention. Hence, there are some unique contributions one can glean from Muslim tradition. Note the following comparison between Genesis 11:29–30 and 12:1–5 and Abraham 2. Italicized portions of the verses show additional information that is found in the restored account. In the furthest right column are supporting traditions found in Muslim tradition (but likely also supported by Jewish and sometimes Christian accounts).

Abraham Comparisons: Ancient and Restored Scripture

(unique elements in italic)

Genesis 11:28–29, 12:1, 11:31	**Abraham 2:1–5**	**Muslim Tradition**
11:28. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.	2:1. NOW the *Lord God caused the famine* to wax sore in the land of Ur, *insomuch that Haran, my brother, died;* but Terah, my father, yet lived in the land of Ur, of the Chaldees.	Kisāʾī Rabghūzī
11:29. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.	2:2. And it came to pass that I, Abraham, took Sarai to wife, and Nahor, my brother, took Milcah to wife, who was the daughter of Haran.	
12:1. NOW the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:	2:3 Now the Lord had said unto me: Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.	
11:31. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.	2:4. Therefore *I left* the land of Ur, of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and *I took* Lot, my brother's son, and his wife, and Sarai my wife; *and also my father followed after me,* unto the land which we denominated Haran.	
	2:5. And the famine abated; and my father tarried in Haran and dwelt there, as there were many flocks in Haran; *and my father turned again unto his idolatry,* therefore he continued in Haran.	60:4 Kisāʾī Thaʿlabī Tayyib Abulfeda

Genesis 12:2–3	**Abraham 2:8–13**	**Muslim Tradition**
	2:8. *My name is Jehovah,* and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee.	
12:2. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:	2:9. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee *above measure,* and make thy name great *among all nations,* and thou shalt be a blessing *unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;*	
	2:10. And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be *accounted thy seed,* and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;	
12:3. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Cf. D&C 132:29–33).	2:11. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee *(that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body)* shall all the families of the earth be blessed, *even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal.*	14:36
	2:12. Now, after the Lord had withdrawn from speaking to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has *sought thee earnestly;* now I have found thee;	Ṭabarī Kisāʾī Thaʿlabī Masʿūdī Rabghūzī
	2:13. Thou didst send thine *angel* to deliver me from the gods of Elkenah, and I will do well to hearken unto thy voice, therefore let thy servant rise up and depart in peace.	Kaʿb al-Aḥbār Ibn Isḥāq Kisāʾī Thaʿlabī Rabghūzī

Genesis 12:4–5	**Abraham 2:14–17**	**Muslim Tradition**
12:4. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram *was seventy and five years old* when he departed out of Haran.	2:14. So I, Abraham, departed as the Lord had said unto me, and Lot with me; and I, Abraham, was *sixty and two years old* when I departed out of Haran.	Masʿūdī Eutychus
12:5. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the *souls that they had gotten* in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.	2:15. And I took Sarai, whom I took to wife when I was in Ur, in Chaldea, and Lot, my brother's son, and all our substance that we had gathered, and the *souls that we had won* in Haran, and came forth in the way to the land of Canaan, and dwelt in tents as we came on our way;	14:36 Ṭabarī Kisāʾī Thaʿlabī Masʿūdī Ibn Isḥāq Rabghūzī
	2:16. Therefore, eternity was our covering and our rock and our salvation, as we journeyed from Haran by the way of Jershon, to come to the land of Canaan.	
	2:17. Now I, Abraham, built an altar in the land of Jershon, and made an offering unto the Lord, *and prayed* that the famine might be turned away from my father's house, that they might not perish.	Kisāʾī Rabghūzī

The above comparative example demonstrates that Muslim tradition supports some of the unique elements in the restored account of Abraham but is silent about many others. For example, on the one hand, like Jewish tradition, Muslim traditions are replete with details related to Abraham's father practicing idolatry, child sacrifice, the sacrifice of Abraham, the rescue of Abraham by an angel (usually Gabriel), destruction of idols, and Abraham and astronomy. On the other hand, Muslim traditions say nothing about gods of wood and stone, Abraham as heir to priesthood, Abraham as holding the priesthood, or that Abraham was a high priest.[53]

Further study is needed to identify and analyze more specific contributions of Islamic tradition to the Book of Abraham. However, I think one can see that although Muslim tradition views and supports the account of Abraham from an Islamic perspective, it also demonstrates that the Muslim textual tradition can be another useful source of material to augment the rich Jewish and Christian apocryphal tradition. I also believe Islamic tradition lends additional credibility to the Book of Abraham as an ancient text.

53. Note the thematic index in the back of *Traditions,* 537–47.

Chapter 10

Sarah and Hagar

Ancient Women of the Abrahamic Covenant

Janet Hovorka

Though we have more information about the relationships between Abraham and his wives than about any other marriages in the scriptures, and though millennia of scholars have thought and written about this great prophet, there are many ostensible relationship problems in these stories that we have not yet begun to understand. Scholars of many faiths have been quick to defend what looks like Abraham's moral lapse in the "she is my sister" episodes (see Genesis 12:10–20; 20:1–18). However, many other questions still remain. Sarah is held as an example of Christian living for us (see Hebrews 11:11; 1 Peter 3:6), and Hagar received two visions of the Lord, and yet they seem to have had many lapses of character. Why did Sarah deal "hardly" with Hagar? Why did the Lord allow Hagar to be driven into the wilderness? Why was Hagar haughty toward Sarah? What was the "mocking" that Ishmael did to Isaac, and why did it inspire Sarah to cast Hagar and Ishmael out? Why was Sarah allowed to remove Ishmael from the line of inheritance? Were Hagar and Ishmael excluded from the blessings of the covenant? Why does the great patriarch Abraham, who some point to today as the instigator of the patriarchal order, sometimes seem so bound by matriarchal rule? Why is the covenant passed down through Abraham's descendants in a matrilineal manner, according to whom the mother of the child was, instead of according to who was the oldest? Why does the youngest of Abraham's descendants in each generation inherit the wealth of the father following ultimogeniture rather than the typical Near Eastern primogeniture succession of the oldest? While the text may not give us the answers to all these questions, there is a need for more LDS reflection on the relationships that existed between Abraham and his wives.[1]

1. Latter-day Saint writings on the relationships between Abraham and his wives include Hugh Nibley, "The Sacrifice of Sarah: A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price, Part 11," *Improvement Era,* April 1970, 79–95, republished in Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 343–81; S. Kent Brown, "Biblical Egypt: Land of Refuge, Land of Bondage," *Ensign,* September 1980, 45–50; Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Mothers in Israel: Sarah's Legacy," in *Women of Wisdom and Knowledge,* ed. Marie Cornwall and Susan Howe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 179–201; Jerrie W. Hurd, *Our Sisters in the Bible* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983);

This preliminary study is intended to look at Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar and their relationship to the covenant. In ancient sources, it appears that the covenant referred to in Genesis and the Book of Abraham was made between Abraham, Sarah, and the Lord, a covenant among three people. Likewise, Hagar becomes part of this covenant to some extent, although from the text that we have, her involvement is harder to ascertain. This joint effort shows that the Abrahamic covenant can be viewed as a type of marriage covenant, and later prophets compared it to a marriage when the promises were passed down to the children of Israel. The Abrahamic covenant viewed as a marriage covenant fits quite well with what Latter-day Saints understand about Abraham and the covenant of marriage entered into in LDS temples in modern times. Three major aspects of the Abrahamic covenant—stipulations, blessings, and tokens or signs—are seen in the examples of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar. When taken together, Genesis, the Book of Abraham, and Doctrine and Covenants 132 reveal ample evidence that Sarah and even Hagar were very active participants in the covenants that were made with the Lord in their time.

What Is a Covenant?

A covenant can be any agreement between two or more consenting parties. The Oxford English Dictionary definition reads, "A mutual agreement between two or more persons to do or refrain from doing certain acts; a compact, contract, bargain."[2] Modern readers sometimes have a hard time understanding how binding these promises were because current covenant relationships are not considered as permanent. Prior to Abraham's time, however, covenants were common throughout the ancient Near East and were strictly binding in social and political situations.[3] In the Old Testament, "covenant" is the translation of the word *bĕrît* (see Genesis 17:7–8). The term does not have an established etymology.[4] One possible Hebrew root, *brh* means to "select" or "choose" and denotes the idea that the parties to the covenant carefully choose each other as partners. Another possible meaning comes from an Akkadian word *birītu,* which is to "fetter" or "join together," and represents an absolute, binding contract. Thirdly, another meaning for the Hebrew root, *brh* is to "eat bread," harking back to Semitic hospitality traditions binding a host to protect his guest. This last definition is reminiscent of the covenant renewal that takes place as part of the sacrament.[5]

Thomas W. Mackay, "Abraham in Egypt: A Collation of Evidence for the Case of the Missing Wife," *BYU Studies* 10/4 (1970): 429–51; Gaye Strathearn, "The Wife/Sister Experience: Pharaoh's Introduction to Jehovah," in *Thy People Shall Be My People and Thy God My God,* Sperry Symposium Series (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 150–65; and S. Michael Wilcox, *Daughters of God: Scriptural Portraits* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998).

2. *The Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd ed., s.v. "covenant."
3. Covenants (treaties) are common from the Early Bronze Age (Ebla, Byblos, etc.) through the Iron Age (Assyria, etc.). Most record a treaty between two political entities and include a structure common to Old Testament covenants including identification, history, stipulations, provisions for periodic reading, witnesses, blessings and curses, ratification, and imposition of the curses. See the overview in George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, *Anchor Bible Dictionary,* ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), s.v. "covenant."
4. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 1:114 n. 18.
5. Victor L. Ludlow, *Principles and Practices of the Restored Gospel* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 289–90. See also Victor L. Ludlow, "Unlocking the Covenant Teachings in the Scriptures," *Religious Studies Center Newsletter,* Brigham Young University 4/2 (1990): 1, 4.

In the Abrahamic covenant and other biblical covenants, the elements of stipulations, blessings, and tokens or signs are set by the Lord. In this type of covenant, "the two parties to the agreement do not stand in the relation of independent and equal contractors. God in his good pleasure fixes the terms, which man accepts."[6] Important to the structure of these covenants are the stipulations—what the recipient agrees to do—and the blessings—what God agrees to do. Van Beek clarifies, "God takes the initiative with a conditional promise, specifying attainable blessings and setting the terms for people to receive them. . . . The terms have been set by the Lord for both the rewards (blessings, salvation, exaltation) and the efforts demanded (obedience to rules and commandments)."[7]

A covenant is usually entered into with some kind of a token or visible sign of the agreement. Ancient Near Eastern covenants had a wide range of signs and ceremonies that brought a group under covenant. The most widespread was that of sacrificing an animal, which often included sharing a meal.[8] In the Old Testament, the words for entering into a covenant are *kārat bĕrît,* translated literally "to cut a covenant." Tokens or covenant entrance ceremonies include the sacrament (or shared meal), baptism, ordinations, weddings, and other temple rites. These visible signs "serve as a signal that individuals enter into or reaffirm personal covenants with the Lord."[9]

There are many types of covenants that the Lord has made with his children. Some of these include baptism, tithing, Sabbath observance, the Word of Wisdom, the united order, and a number of covenants that Latter-day Saints make in the temple.[10] The whole of the gospel is often called the "new and everlasting covenant." "The provisions of this covenant are that if men will believe, repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure in righteousness to the end, they shall have an inheritance in the celestial world."[11]

Temple marriage is a significant example of a covenant between the Lord and his people. A marriage covenant is a promise made between three people—the husband, the wife, and God. James Duke elaborates: "Eternal marriage is a covenant, a sacred promise that a wife and a husband make with each other and with God, attested to by both mortal witnesses and heavenly angels."[12] The husband and wife covenant with each other and with God to remain true and faithful to each other and in return, enjoy the blessings of a happy, eternal family in the life to come. Some of the tokens or signs of the covenant include the sealing ordinance that takes place in the temple and the change of the woman's last name.

Thus, covenants between God and man contain three vital elements: stipulations, blessings, and tokens or signs. When the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, he clearly laid out those three components, and Abraham accepted the terms: "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6).

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6. "Covenant," Bible Dictionary in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints edition of the King James Bible (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), 651.
7. Wouter Van Beek, "Covenants," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 1:332–33.
8. Such ceremonies are seen from Assyria to Rome and are "widespread in both time and space" (Mendenhall and Herion, "covenant").
9. Van Beek, "Covenants," 1:332.
10. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 167.
11. Ibid., 166–67.
12. James T. Duke, "Marriage: Eternal Marriage," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 2:858.

Abraham and the Covenant

For I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran,
and to make of thee a minister to bear my name
in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee
for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice (Abraham 2:6).

The Abrahamic covenant has been aptly explained in other sources, so a brief overview will suffice here.[13] I will use three main texts in which the covenant with Abraham is established—Genesis 15, Genesis 17, and Abraham 2—to illustrate the stipulations, blessings, and tokens or signs of the Abrahamic covenant.

Covenant Stipulations

Obedience to the Lord is prominently stipulated in the sacred texts, and Abraham's life, in particular, is an example of righteousness. In the scriptures, Abraham obeyed every command the Lord asked of him throughout his life. Abraham was told to leave Haran (Abraham 2:6), he was given the commandments included in the gospel (Abraham 2:10), and he was told to be perfect (Genesis 17:1). Twice the Lord asked of Abraham a sacrifice, first of animals (Genesis 15:9–12), and then of his son Isaac (Genesis 22). "Abraham became a man of good repute (Genesis 14:13, 18–20; 23:1–16) and was trusted by God, who commended him, saying, 'I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment' (Genesis 18:19)."[14] Abraham obeyed all of these things; "he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6).[15]

Christ taught that Abraham had been awarded a place in heaven (Matt 8:11; Luke 16:19–31). Paul says that the covenant was confirmed through Abraham's righteousness, "after he had patiently endured" (Hebrews 6:15). In the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith is told, "Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved" (D&C 132:32). He is celebrated in the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 8:2; Jacob 4:5; Alma 5:24), extolled for his great faith (Hebrews 11:8–19; James 2:21–23), and cited as an exemplary tithe payer (Alma 13:15; Hebrews 7:1–2). From the scriptures we know that Abraham kept the stipulations of the covenant and could thus merit the blessings of the covenant.

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13. Besides the sources quoted below, other studies include Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 417–38, 458–80; Edward J. Brandt, "The Covenants and Blessings of Abraham," *Ensign,* February 1973, 42–43; Spencer W. Kimball, *Abraham: An Example to the Fathers* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977); Ellis T. Rasmussen, "Abrahamic Covenant," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 1:9–10; Monte S. Nyman, "Abraham, the Father of the Faithful," Sperry Lecture Series (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1975); Michael S. Wilcox, "The Abrahamic Covenant," in *A Witness of Jesus Christ: 1989 Sperry Symposium on the Old Testament,* ed. Richard D. Draper (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 271–80; and Stephen D. Ricks, "The Early Ministry of Abraham," in *The Pearl of Great Price: Studies in Scripture,* ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1985), 2:221–22.

14. Rasmussen, "Abrahamic Covenant," 9.

15. President Kimball listed the qualities of Abraham that we are called on to follow in Spencer W. Kimball, "The Example of Abraham," *Ensign,* June 1975, 3–7.

Covenant Blessings

The blessings of the Abrahamic covenant can be divided into three main categories that Van Seters identifies as "numerous progeny, the land of Canaan, and the promise to be Abraham's God."[16] The first promise of a numerous posterity is given in Abraham 2:9–11. This promise takes on an added significance because of Sarah's inability to have children. However, Abraham is promised a son—an end to the problem of childlessness. The progression of the promise of a son to the promise of a great posterity entails the blessing of "eternal increase"[17] because "the desire for many descendants cannot be fulfilled in one event, like the birth of a son, but must extend over generations of steady growth."[18]

Secondly, Abraham is given the promise of a land of inheritance for his descendants as recorded in Abraham 2:6, 19. In the ancient Middle East, the promise of a cultivated land meant the difference between life and death. Genesis 17:8 defines this land as the "land of Canaan," but it is also described as "this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18).

Finally, the greatest blessing of the covenant is the Lord's promise to be Abraham's (and later Israel's) God as found in Abraham 2:9–11 and Genesis 12:3, 17:7–8, and 22:18. Included in this blessing are the promises that the Lord would bless him "above measure" and that he and his descendants would receive the "Gospel" and the "Priesthood," which are "the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal" (Abraham 2:9–11). The blessing of God's presence is even more explicit with each succeeding generation when the patriarchal covenant is renewed with Abraham's son and grandson (see Genesis 26:3, 24; 28:15; 31:3; 46:3.)

Covenant Tokens or Signs

The Lord commanded Abraham to observe two tokens or signs of the covenant following the common pattern of covenant establishment. These were to stand as symbols of the binding relationship between the Lord and Abraham. First, Abraham was required to change his name from Abram to Abraham (Genesis 17:5), for a name change was a common ancient sign of making a covenant.[19] One of the most famous examples from the ancient Near East is that of Amenhotep IV, who changed his name to Akhenaton when he introduced a monotheistic reform in New Kingdom Egypt.[20] Abraham's name change also signifies a change in religion. The first name, Abram, means

16. John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 288.
17. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine,* 13. See also Bruce R. McConkie, "The Promises Made to the Fathers," in *The Old Testament: Genesis to 2 Samuel: Studies in Scripture,* ed. Kent P. Jackson and Robert Millett (Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1985), 3:47–62.
18. Claus Westermann, "Promises to the Patriarchs," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* ed. Keith Crinn et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), supl.: 692b.
19. On name changes and covenants see Truman G. Madsen, "'Putting on the Names': A Jewish-Christian Legacy," in *By Study and Also by Faith,* ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 1:458–81; Bruce H. Porter and Stephen D. Ricks, "Names in Antiquity: Old, New and Hidden," in *By Study and Also by Faith,* 1:501–22; Stephen D. Ricks and John J. Sroka, "King Coronation and Temple: Enthronement Ceremonies in History," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism,* ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 236–64; and Hugh W. Nibley, "On the Sacred and the Symbolic," in *Temples of the Ancient World,* 535–621.
20. G. H. R. Horsley, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary,* s.v. "Names, Double." Name changes for religious reasons are especially common in Roman, Ptolemaic, and early Christian periods.

"the father is exalted" while the name Abraham means "father of a multitude."[21] Thus, the name change not only symbolizes a new life and new covenant for Abraham but also serves as a reminder of the promise of a great posterity.

As a second token, the Lord commanded Abraham to perform the rite of circumcision.[22] The Lord said to Abraham, "And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you" (Genesis 17:11). The Lord also instructed that Abraham's children be circumcised by the time they were eight days old (Genesis 17:12–13). Abraham immediately circumcised Ishmael and those in his household, as well as Isaac when he was eight days old (Genesis 17:23–27; 21:4). It is evident that the token of circumcision was vital to the covenant, because the Lord stated that one who was not circumcised "shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (Genesis 17:14).

Abraham honored his part of the covenant with the Lord through his adherence to the stipulations, his receipt of the blessings, and his obedience to the tokens, allowing the covenant to endure in this form throughout the generations of his descendants. Thus, "the covenant relationship between God and his people involved blessings and responsibilities. [Now] we must inquire how far the women of Israel received the blessings and how far they shared in the responsibilities."[23]

Sarah and the Covenant

That face is fair, wherein we trace
The seal of God's sustaining grace;
And they are brilliant, who are bright
With sacred truth's unerring light.[24]

Sarah is revered in scripture, biblical commentary, and literature as a strong and beautiful matriarch of the house of Israel. Her beauty is cited as the main reason for Pharaoh's interest in her (Genesis 12:11). Jewish legend records that "she was a helpmeet worthy of Abraham," who was compassionate, generous, and considered a prophetess who could bring her people closer to God.[25] The Midrash states that it was Sarah who taught and converted the women while Abraham taught the men.[26] However, her relationship with the Lord and participation in the covenant is a subject of much debate. In general, her association with the covenant is either met with silence,[27]

21. A. R. Millard, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary,* s.v. "Abraham."
22. For a general overview of the token of circumcision, see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 1:46–48.
23. Mary J. Evans, *Woman in the Bible: An Overview of All the Crucial Passages on Women's Roles* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1983), 27.
24. Francis M. Caulkins, *Eve and Her Daughters of Holy Writ* (New York: American Tract Society, 1861), 17.
25. Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), 1:203; see also 3:206, 5:258, 5:215.
26. *Midrash Rabbah Song of Songs* 1:3 and *Midrash Exodus* 50:1.
27. Besides commentaries already listed in this study, some of the major works on Genesis that are silent on the subject include Robert Davidson, *Genesis 12–50* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); J. Gerald Janzen, *Abraham and All the Families of the Earth: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis 12–50* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Claus Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary,* trans. David E. Green (Grand

disdain that she was not included,[28] or a cursory mention that she was included in the covenant.[29] As yet, no in-depth study has shown how she relates to the covenant. Nonetheless, she certainly participated in the covenant if she fulfilled the stipulations, received the blessings, and had tokens similar to Abraham's.

Covenant Stipulations

Like Abraham, Sarah was under the same obligations in keeping the covenant. According to the scriptures, Sarah followed every command that the Lord required of her, and she is, like Abraham, held up as an example of righteousness.

Sarah's behavior when taken by Pharaoh and Abimilech is an excellent example of her obedience and commitment to the covenant (Genesis 12, 20; Abraham 2). These rulers posed a major threat to Abraham's family.[30] The Lord instructed Abraham to have Sarah say she was his sister in order to preserve his life (Abraham 2:22–25). Such a statement required great faith on her part, because these rulers could have endangered her and her marriage. However, Sarah kept her covenant with the Lord as well as her marriage covenant with Abraham. Nibley observed, "Of course, Pharaoh wanted to have Sarah for his wife, but Abraham and Sarah had made a covenant to each other, and Abraham in this story (1Q GenApocr, the *Genesis Apocryphon*) is outside the palace walls all night and prays to God to spare Sarah."[31] Like Abraham, Sarah had many opportunities

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Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987); P. A. Verhoef, "Abraham/Abram" in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis,* ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 4:351–58; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament,* trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949); G. Charles Aalders, *Genesis, Bible Student's Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981); Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972); and Walter Russell Bowie, "Genesis," in *The Interpreter's Bible,* ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al. (New York: Abingdon, 1952), 1:458–65.

28. Some examples include the following: "When the new God enters into a covenant with the first patriarch, the first woman in patriarchal history is entirely passive. A relation is established between Yahweh and Abraham—if Sarah is a participant we do not know, perhaps she doesn't know herself. While her husband talks with, or even argues with God, establishes a new religion, conquers and distributes new territory, looks after herds, erects altars, goes to war, etc., Sarah is depicted as living in a narrow and limited world, entirely concentrated upon the potential of her uterus" (Inger Ljung, *Silence or Suppression: Attitudes Towards Women in the Old Testament* [Uppsala: S. Academiae Upsaliensis, 1989], 93). Likewise, "It is a covenant with those who are competent to enter into such a thing; that is to say with the men; they represent the people. . . . Woman has no place in this revelation, therefore she is a constant danger to the worship of Yahweh" (Ludwig Koehler, *Old Testament Theology,* trans. A. S. Todd [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957], 69).

29. Some examples include the following: "With them were restored the covenants and promises of our first parents" (Hugh Nibley, "Patriarchy and Matriarchy" in *Old Testament and Related Studies* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986], 1:98); and "Women were full members of the covenant community" (Evans, *Woman in the Bible,* 32).

30. A wonderful analysis is found in Strathearn, "The Wife/Sister Experience: Pharaoh's Introduction to Jehovah," 150–65. See also Thomas W. Mackay, "Abraham in Egypt: A Collation of Evidence for the Case of the Missing Wife." Nibley wrote that it was Sarah's royal blood that brought the problem about: "It was also a pharaoh who sought the hand of Sarah, the true princess, in order to raise up a royal progeny by her" ("Patriarchy and Matriarchy," 99).

31. Hugh Nibley, *Ancient Documents and the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, Utah: BYU Division of Continuing Education, 1986), 11.

to lose sight of the promises the Lord had made. Among these were various threats to the fulfillment of the covenant, such as barrenness (Genesis 11:30, 16:1), age (Genesis 17:17, 18:12), and the binding (Akedah) of Isaac (Genesis 22).[32]

When we look at her standing in other scripture, it becomes clear that Sarah, like Abraham, kept the stipulations of the covenant. Peter held her up as an example to women in his day (1 Peter 3:5–6); likewise, Paul noted that it was through Sarah's faith that Isaac was conceived "because she judged him faithful who had promised" (Hebrews 11:11). Isaiah said, "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you" (Isaiah 51:2). On one occasion the Lord even instructed Abraham to follow Sarah's counsel (Genesis 21:10–12). Every scriptural reference to Sarah evidences that she is a model example for the righteous to follow. Consequently, she was also given the blessings the Lord had promised her.

Covenant Blessings

Like Abraham, Sarah received the same three promises and blessings of the Abrahamic covenant—a numerous posterity, a land of inheritance for her descendants, and the blessing of God's presence in her life. The Lord saw Sarah as important, not simply as a physical vessel to bring about a temporary fulfillment of the covenant, for "Sarah, of course, figures indispensably in the blessing given to Abraham, and the Lord promised her explicitly that she would be 'a mother of nations' (Genesis 17:16)."[33]

Sarah played a key role in Isaac's physical and spiritual development. Mary Pratt Parish suggests that "his faith in the one true God would depend largely on the influence his mother would have upon him. Through her he would learn of the covenant the Lord had made with Abraham. . . . In this sense, Sarah was the guardian of the covenant, for its continuance would depend largely on her influence."[34]

To the Israelites, having Sarah as an ancestress was just as important as having Abraham as an ancestor. David Bakan observes that "not all the offspring of Abraham are Israelites; the Israelites stem only from Sarah. Sarah is more definitely the ancestor of the Israelites than Abraham."[35] Even in Judaism today, the importance of matrilineal descent remains. "Circumcision is not the only requirement for Jewish males; they must also be born of Jewish mothers. And whether the man who impregnates a Jewish woman is circumcised or not, her offspring will automatically be recognized as a Jew, a member of her group."[36] Therefore, Sylvia Aschliman correctly concludes that "women were not nominal to God's covenant. They too were central to the experience of promise and fulfillment."[37]

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32. See also J. Cheryl Exum, "The Mothers of Israel: The Patriarchal Narratives from a Feminist Perspective," *Bible Review* 2/1 (1986): 60–67; Dixon Sutherland, "The Organization of the Abraham Promise Narratives," *Zeitschrift fur die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 95/3 (1983): 337–43; John H. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed: The Status of Women in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 79; Naomi Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis: A Household Economic Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 54; Hugh Nibley, "Patriarchy and Matriarchy," 98.
33. Sydney Smith Reynolds, "Mother in Israel," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 2:963.
34. Mary Pratt Parrish, "Guardians of the Covenant," *Ensign,* May 1972, 26.
35. David Bakan, *And They Took Themselves Wives* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 73.
36. Teubal, *Sarah the Priestess,* 139.
37. Sylvia Albrecht Aschliman, "A New Look at Women of Old," *Bible Today* 28/6 (1990): 353.

As mentioned above, Abraham rejoiced concerning Ishmael, saying, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" (Genesis 17:18). Yet "without diminishing the stature of the patriarch—who is obviously content with his offspring Ishmael, and is blessed by El Shaddai with a promise of twelve princes as progeny—a covenant is made with Sarah."[38] The text explicitly mentions Sarah's posterity and not just Abraham's. In verse 16 of the King James Version, the Lord tells Abraham, "And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her." The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Syriac versions of the Bible read, "I will bless him. . . . He will give rise to nations; rulers of people shall stem from him," apparently referring to Isaac. However, in the Masoretic text the whole verse refers to Sarah using the words *bēraktîhâ, kaytâ,* and *mimmennâ:* "I will bless her . . . she will give rise . . . (will come) from her." Victor Hamilton asserts that the Masoretic version is more logically accurate, noting that "Sarah is central to this part of the unit. Isaac will come later."[39]

The second blessing of a land of inheritance was also given to both Abraham and Sarah. Sarah certainly benefited from the protection and security a land of inheritance could afford her. Some have suggested that the gifts that Pharaoh gave the pair in Egypt were gifts bestowed on her.[40] Specifically, Pharaoh is also said to have given Sarah the land of Goshen.[41] In biblical times, a mother with wealth would bequeath it to her children separate from the estate of their father.[42]

The question of inheritance through a legitimate son seems to have some affinity to ancient Mesopotamian religious practices. Savina Teubal has suggested that Sarah may have belonged to a group of Mesopotamian priestesses comparable to that of the Akkadian *nadītu.* Such a priestess would have considerable wealth of her own. Teubal writes: "That Abram is laden with wealth (that includes assets of the priestess) reflects Babylonian custom, where the husband administered the possessions of his *nadītu*-wife."[43] It was also the practice of the *nadītu* that they remained childless and other women were designated to have children to become their heirs. Teubal uses the hypothesis to explain that Sarah was childless by choice and was given a companion (Hagar) to have children for her. The Lord may have alluded to such a tradition when he said in Doctrine and Covenants 132:34 that "God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law."

When Isaac was born, a break in the *nadītu* tradition was established, and Hagar and her son were disinherited from Sarah's wealth but not necessarily Abraham's. The "she is my sister" episodes may also be explained as a "heiros gamos" with a *nadītu* priestess. Likewise, there is a precedent in the *nadītu* tradition for when Sarah "dealt hardly" with Hagar. Given all of the correlation between the actions of the patriarchs' wives and the *nadītu,* it is quite possible that the function of a priestess may have influenced Sarah and Hagar before they were introduced to the priesthood of Yahweh.

38. Teubal, *Sarah the Priestess,* 29. Again, the covenant motif is not carried further by Teubal.
39. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17,* 475 n. 2.
40. Nibley, "Patriarchy and Matriarchy," 99.
41. *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer,* 36:1, cited in Aaron Rothkoff, "Sarah/In the Aggadah," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* ed. Cecil Roth et al. (Jerusalem: Keter, 1994), 14:868, and Jacob Zallel Lauterbach, "Sarah in Rabbinical Literature," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia,* ed. Isidore Singer et al. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1905), 11:55.
42. Savina J. Teubal, *Ancient Sisterhood: The Lost Traditions of Hagar and Sarah* [previously published as *Hagar the Egyptian*] (Athens: Swallow Press, 1990), 115.
43. Teubal, *Ancient Sisterhood,* 125.

Finally, Sarah experiencing the blessing of God's presence is well documented in the scriptures. For instance, the Lord commanded Abraham to follow her counsel, at one point saying, "In all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice" (Genesis 21:12). In addition, Peter and Paul both cited her example as one that the women in their day should follow (1 Peter 3:5–6; Hebrews 11:11). Thus, Sarah received the same blessings as Abraham. She was promised and attained the blessings of posterity, a land of inheritance for her children, and the companionship of the Lord.

Covenant Tokens or Signs

It is clear that Sarah participated in a name change that marked her acceptance of the covenant. Concerning this token, Gordon Wenham writes: "To mark these great promises, the names of Abram and Sarai are changed to the more familiar Abraham and Sarah and the national rite of circumcision is instituted as a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham's descendants."[44] Like Abraham's name change, the change from Sarai to Sarah marked entry into the covenant. It appears this alteration was more symbolic than a mere change in definition. However, this change certainly signifies entry into the covenant. Gale Yee mentioned, "Sarai's name is changed to Sarah, just as Abram's name becomes Abraham. Name changes signify a new reality. Thus, the barren Sarah is brought into God's covenantal promise as the mother of many nations and kings."[45]

It could be argued that when the covenant was established in Genesis chapters 15 and 17, Sarah was not present and thus the covenant did not involve her directly. For example, Trevor Dennis points out that while the Lord acknowledged her blessings, "Not once [did] he address them to Sarai."[46] However, this need not be interpreted as evidence that Sarah was not as much a part of the covenant as Abraham.

Some scholars have suggested that in Genesis 18:9–15, when Sarah "laughed" at the angels' announcement that she would have a son, Abraham kept the covenant to himself and did not share it with her because of his "reticence" described in Genesis 17:17.[47] In my view Sarah's laugh was not a laugh of surprise or ridicule. The Hebrew term for "laugh" is *tiṣḥaq,* from the root *ṣḥq,* meaning "to laugh" (the name Isaac also derives from this Hebrew term).[48] This term is used previous

44. Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16–50,* ed. David A. Hubbard et al. (Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 2:17.
45. Gale A. Yee, *Anchor Bible Dictionary,* s.v. "covenant," 5:981.
46. Trevor Dennis, *Sarah Laughed* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 37.
47. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17,* 477. Ljung writes of the patriarch's wives: "They are curious, dishonest, and distrustful and thus not worthy of being addressed by Yahweh. For when he finally turns to the mother of his chosen people, he does this with an unfriendly admonition, consisting of three words: 'You did smile'. Prior to this he has discussed Sarah with Abraham, even though he knew that Sarah was eavesdropping behind the tent door. Eavesdropping is a bad thing, both in the Old Testament and today—but what else can Sarah do, if she wants to know what is discussed or planned: Yahweh doesn't address her, and her husband doesn't report anything to her. This becomes evident in Sarah's laughter, an echo of Abraham's earlier laughter (17:17)—had he then told her about Yahweh's promise, she would not have been surprised now. The unequality is apparent and carried out in detail: When Abraham laughs, Yahweh patiently repeats his plan, when Sarah laughs, she receives a snub as an answer" (*Silence or Suppression,* 94). This theory forgets that Sarah must have been told because her name was changed.
48. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1906), 850.

to Sarah's experience in Genesis 17:17 when Abraham initially laughs at the news that Sarah will bear a son. Significantly, Joseph Smith changed the word *laughed* to *rejoiced* (Genesis 17:17 JST). With this change in mind, it stands to reason that Sarah also likely rejoiced at the news[49] and that Isaac was named after this laughing *(ṣḥq)* out of a spirit of joy and rejoicing. Furthermore, certainly Abraham would have informed Sarah about the covenant if her name was to change (Genesis 17:15). Thus, this name change provides ample support that Sarah was included in the covenant.

The covenant's second token of circumcision was not required for Sarah.[50] This commandment was simply irrelevant because it applied only to males. Mary Evans has observed that the "women's lack of circumcision is not seen as excluding them from the covenant, although it may indeed reflect their lower status in society. In fact, the passage in Genesis 17 where circumcision is introduced as a covenant sign is interrupted by the special mention of the blessing on Sarah."[51] Thus, Sarah enjoyed all the blessings and benefits of the covenant. She obeyed the Lord's commandments, proved true while suffering trials, and became an example of righteousness. She was blessed with a great posterity and an inheritance of land for her children, as well as the Lord's presence in her life. However, the clearest indication of Sarah's active participation in the covenant occurred when she took upon herself a new name.

Hagar and the Covenant

Thus Hagar found relief and peace
Through tenderness divine,
While time unrolled the wondrous lease
Of Ishmael's mighty line.[52]

Hagar's role has been perceived and interpreted in somewhat negative ways in both Latter-day Saint and Christian circles. Her story, says Teubal, "has sanctioned the inferiority of women and the endorsement of slavery."[53] For many Christians, the Lord's command that Hagar return to Sarah's control makes it difficult for them to accept that the Lord loves all people. Megan McKenna asserts that "we tend to identify with Sarai and not with Hagar, who, annoyingly, keeps being inserted into the story and complicating matters by her behavior and the events surrounding her and Sarai."[54]

Scripture gives much more information about Sarah than Hagar. And what is available about Hagar is tightly focused on three events—the conception of Ishmael, the fleeing from Sarah, and the banishment (Genesis 16, 21). It is therefore more difficult to ascertain the extent of her involvement in the covenant. However, a careful examination of the biblical text shows that Hagar enjoyed many of the same aspects of the Abrahamic covenant that Sarah and Abraham did. Although the Lord in Genesis 17 states that he would establish his covenant with Isaac (v. 21), Hagar and her

49. Wilcox, *Daughters of God: Scriptural Portraits,* 26.
50. For a general overview of the token of circumcision, see also De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions,* 1:46–48.
51. Evans, *Woman in the Bible,* 27.
52. Caulkins, *Eve and Her Daughters of Holy Writ,* 29.
53. Teubal, *Ancient Sisterhood,* xxi.
54. Megan McKenna, *Not Counting Women and Children: Neglected Stories from the Bible* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994), 174.

descendants occupy a position that denotes some sort of covenantal relationship with the Lord as well. Like Abraham and Sarah, Hagar obeyed the commandments of the Lord, was deemed righteous by Him, and shared in the same blessings of the Abrahamic covenant: a great posterity, a land of inheritance for her children, and the companionship of the Lord.

According to Genesis 16:1, Hagar was an Egyptian who became Sarah's handmaid. Jewish legend asserts that she was Pharaoh's daughter, given to Sarah because Pharaoh was so impressed with Sarah's character.[55] Don Benjamin notes that "Sarah negotiates a covenant with Hagar to be a surrogate mother for her . . . . [then] Peace is restored when Yahweh negotiates a covenant with Hagar and Abraham which is virtually identical to the covenant negotiated with Sarah and Abraham."[56]

Covenant Stipulations

Like Sarah and Abraham, Hagar sacrificed to follow the dictates of the Lord. It is difficult to determine exactly what happened between Sarah and Hagar in chapter 16 that prompted Hagar's obedience. When Hagar "saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes" (v. 4), and "when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face" (v. 6). Sarah's reaction to Hagar's animosity can be better understood in light of common Near Eastern practices.

A similar situation to Sarah and Hagar's is found in Hammurabi Law number 146: "When a seignior married a hierodule [*nadītu* priestess] and she gave a female slave to her husband and she has then borne children, if later that female slave has claimed equality with her mistress because she bore children, her mistress may not sell her; she may mark her with the slave-mark and count her among the slaves."[57] In "dealing hardly" with her, Sarah may have returned her to the status of handmaid as was her right according to common Near Eastern practice. Other parallels are found in the Nuzi tablets,[58] an Egyptian text,[59]Assyrian marriage contracts,[60] and a neo-Assyrian text from Nimrud.[61] These examples demonstrate that a barren wife can give her husband another woman to bear children, but the wife is not allowed to treat the handmaid or the children badly.[62]

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55. R. Simeon b. Yohai said: "Hagar was daughter of Pharaoh. When he saw the wonderful deeds that were done for Sarah when she was in his house, he took his daughter and gave her to Sarai, saying, 'It is better that my daughter should be a servant girl in this household, rather than a matron in some other house'" (*Genesis Rabbah* 45:1, *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis: A New American Translation,* trans. Jacob Neusner, Brown Judaic Studies, vol. 105 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985], 2:146).
56. Don C. Benjamin, "Stories of Hagar," *The Bible Today* 35 (January 1997): 29.
57. Theophile J. Meek, trans., "Code of Hammurabi 146," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating To the Old Testament,* ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 172. See also G. R. Driver and John C. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952–55), 1:245–65, and 2:57.
58. Theophile J. Meek, trans., "Mesopotamian Legal Documents," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating To the Old Testament,* 220.
59. Alan H. Gardiner, "Adoption Extraordinary," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 26 (1940): 23–29.
60. Julius Lewy, "On Some Institutions of the Old Assyrian Empire," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 27 (1956): 8–10; Driver and Miles, *Babylonian Laws,* 1:369–70.
61. B. Parker, "The Nimrud Tablets 1952—Business documents," *Iraq* 16 (1954): 37–39.
62. For a summary of scholarly consensus on the application of Hammurabi's Law to this text see Teubal, *Sarah the Priestess,* 33–37. See also John Van Seters, "The Problem of Childlessness in Near Eastern Law and the Patriarchs of Israel," 401–8; Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition,* 68–71; Mary Callaway, *Sing O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash,* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 13–16; Speiser, *Genesis,* 119–21; André

After Hagar fled into the wilderness, an angel of the Lord visited her and told her, "Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands" (Genesis 16:9). This passage need not be viewed only as a divine sanction or a command of subjugation to Sarah. Perhaps the Lord sought to keep Hagar and Ishmael in the house of Abraham as a protection until they could establish a house of their own. According to Elsa Tamez, "What God wants is that she and her child should be saved, and at the moment, the only way to accomplish that is not in the desert, but by returning to the house of Abraham. Ishmael hasn't been born. The first three years of life are crucial. Hagar simply must wait a little longer, because Ishmael must be born in the house of Abraham to prove that he is the firstborn (Deuteronomy 21:15–17), and to enter into the household through the rite of circumcision (Genesis 17). This will guarantee him participation in the history of salvation, and will give him rights of inheritance in the house of Abraham."[63] Similarly, D. S. Williams notes, "God apparently wants Hagar to secure her and her child's well-being by using the resources Abram has to offer."[64] Hagar needed the security of Abraham's family to see Ishmael through the vital years of his childhood, and Ishmael needed the companionship and example of his father, Abraham.

Finally, Hagar was judged worthy to receive a visit from an angel of the Lord on two separate occasions. Both episodes are exceptional in the Bible because they are granted to a woman who was Egyptian. John Otwell observed, "Both of these passages reveal that the two narrators and their auditors took it for granted that a woman could receive a theophany. Only the use of the messenger (the angel) sets the structure of the incidents apart from similar theophanies to Abraham."[65] These angelic visitations show that the Lord cared about Hagar and desired to give her covenantal promises.

Covenant Blessings

Hagar was also given the same three blessings of the Abrahamic covenant as Abraham and Sarah: posterity, a land for her descendants' inheritance, and the presence of God. First, in both of her theophanies in the desert, the Lord promises Hagar a great posterity, saying, "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude" (Genesis 16:10), and again, "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation" (Genesis 21:18). Both promises were made directly to Hagar (unlike the promises made to Sarah.)[66] The posterity of Hagar also fulfills the Abrahamic covenant. Doctrine and Covenants 132:34 reads, "From Hagar sprang many people. This, therefore, was fulfilling, among other things, the promises."[67] Abraham

Parrot, *Abraham and His Times* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 102–4; Sidney B. Sperry, *Doctrine and Covenants Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), 731–32; and Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), 239. S. Michael Wilcox presents an interesting scenario for "dealing harshly." He likens the incident to a bishop who will not issue a temple recommend to an unworthy member for a wedding (*Daughters of God: Scriptural Portraits,* 30–31).

63. Elsa Tamez, "The Woman Who Complicated the History of Salvation," *Cross Currents* 36/2 (1986): 137.
64. Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenges of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993), 21. Also, "She has to think of her child, not herself" (McKenna, *Not Counting Women and Children,* 177).
65. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed,* 163.
66. Phyllis Trible writes that "this promise to her lacks the covenant context that is so crucial to the founding fathers" but does not substantiate the claim (*Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 16).
67. Sidney B. Sperry also wrote, "From Hagar there sprang many descendants of Abraham, thus fulfilling the promises made to him" (*Doctrine and Covenants Compendium,* 732).

too received a promise of the Lord concerning Ishmael, saying, "I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation" (Genesis 17:20). Indeed, this promise was realized when Ishmael, like Jacob, fathered twelve sons (see 1 Chronicles 1:29–31).

From the text it is apparent that Hagar also enjoyed the second blessing of a land of inheritance for her children. The separation of Hagar and Ishmael from Sarah and Isaac was likely a way to divide the inheritances and provide Ishmael with a land of his own. Sarah said, "For the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac" (Genesis 21:10). Sarah was not being spiteful in her request. According to Josephus, Sarah "loved Ismael, who was born of her own handmaid Hagar, with an affection not inferior to that of her own son."[68]

The departure of Hagar and Ishmael may also have been a way to grant Hagar freedom from her handmaid status. Hagar's position turns "more servile" in chapter 21 before she is released, giving emphasis to the fact that she is leaving a menial situation.[69] Some scholars have noted similarities between Hagar's exodus into the wilderness in chapter 21 and the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.[70] McKenna writes, "Theirs is a mini-version of the larger story to come when Yahweh will hear the cry of a whole people in bondage and lean down to their cries as God leans down to this woman and child."[71] Hence, the parallels within the two stories of the exodus and Hagar's separation strongly suggest that Hagar was granted freedom and given a place of inheritance.

Hagar also enjoyed the third promise of the Abrahamic Covenant—the companionship of the Lord. Her two visions are as substantial as any vision recorded in the scriptures (Genesis 16:7–14 and 21:17–19). In both, Hagar is told of the great love the Lord has for her and her posterity. The second vision, in particular, occurs after Hagar leaves Abraham's household; the Lord comforts her and reminds her of his promises. "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink" (Genesis 21:17–19). Teubal writes that these theophanies were singular in the scriptures. She states, "Notwithstanding, the Hagar episodes record the only time in the bible that God is given a name, and the name is given by a woman. Hagar's god is a god who knows her, who addresses her in familiar terms: 'What troubles you, Hagar?' he asks with the tender concern of a loving relative."[72] McKenna also notes that the visions were affirmations of an impartial God. He is seen "taking note of her, just a maid, a pregnant slave, and an Egyptian,

68. Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1.12.3, in *The Works of Josephus,* trans. William Whiston (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996), 42.

69. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* 51. The word is *ammah,* discussed below.

70. Phyllis Trible suggests that there is a contrast between the exodus story and Hagar's "banishment," and yet her argument is completely unconvincing. She notes that in the exodus story the Hebrews are "sent away" *(slḥ),* using the same word as in the Hagar story and yet sees freedom for the Hebrews but banishment for Hagar. The parallels point to freedom for both rather than contrasts (*Texts of Terror,* 16).

71. McKenna, *Not Counting Women and Children,* 181. See also Trible, *Texts of Terror,* 9–35, for a discussion of how Hagar's being oppressed under the Hebrews is a "precursor of Israel's plight under Pharaoh" (p. 13).

72. Teubal, *Ancient Sisterhood,* xxxvi.

not even a Jew! God cares about everyone."[73] In sum, Hagar, like Abraham and Sarah, enjoyed the threefold blessings of the Covenant—great posterity, a land for her descendants' inheritance, and the companionship of the Lord.

Covenant Tokens or Signs

The biblical account does not mention any tokens given to Hagar in a covenant setting. However, in Jewish tradition Hagar's name is later changed to Keturah, the name of the third wife of Abraham (Genesis 25:1). In light of the first covenant token of Abraham and Sarah, a name change to Keturah could suggest Hagar's entry into the covenant. Jewish sources cite Hagar's piety as the reason for her name change.[74] "[Hagar's] fidelity is praised, for even after Abraham sent her away she kept her marriage vow, and therefore she was identified with Keturah."[75] Likewise, "She was so called, because after having gone astray after idols, she again attached herself to a life of virtue."[76] It is possible that after the death of Sarah, Hagar fully entered the covenant and her name changed to Keturah, thus becoming an undiminished wife of Abraham.

Was there a change in Hagar's position in Abraham's life? There is some question as to Hagar's status. She is sometimes called handmaid, sometimes bondwoman, sometimes wife. She probably held different roles or a combination of roles at different times in her life. Whatever the position she held, Teubal rightly asserts, "It is important that we free ourselves from the paradigm of the nuclear family so we are not tempted to compress the biblical family into that structure."[77] In other words, we must be careful to not project our modern moral structure into the relationship between Abraham and Hagar.

Three Hebrew terms describe Hagar's status in the family of Abraham: *šipḥâ, ʾiššâ,* and *ʾāmâ. Šipḥâ* is usually rendered "handmaid"[78] and refers to a maid belonging to a woman.[79] In Genesis 16:3, Sarah takes her *šipḥâ* Hagar and gives her to Abraham to be his *ʾiššâ* or wife.[80] There is debate as to how *ʾiššâ* should be translated here. Some render it "concubine," some "wife."[81] It is significant that the specific word for concubine, *pilegeš,*[82] doesn't ever appear in reference to Hagar.[83] However, even though Hagar may have legally been Abraham's wife, Genesis 16 only refers to her once as *ʾiššâ,* and every other time as *šipḥâ.* According to James E. Talmage this is explainable because, "Hagar, . . . though his wife, was still the servant of Sarai."[84] Genesis 21 describes Hagar's

73. McKenna, *Not Counting Women and Children,* 178.
74. See *Midrash Rabbah Genesis* 61:4 in Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah,* 334–35.
75. Hartwig Hirschfeld, "Hagar," in *Jewish Encyclopedia,* 6:138.
76. Elimelech Epstein Halevy, "Hagar," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* 7:1076.
77. Teubal, *Ancient Sisterhood,* 115.
78. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* 1046.
79. Teubal suggests that Hagar's main function was as companion to Sarah and possibly as a lay priestess who would bear children for her *nadītu* companion (*Ancient Sisterhood,* 49–62).
80. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* 61.
81. For discussion of scholarly views on the status of Hagar, see Trible, *Texts of Terror,* 11.
82. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* 811.
83. Doctrine and Covenants 132 does not clear up the status of Hagar. Verse 34 notes that "Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife," while verse 37 tells us that "Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children." It is not clear whether Hagar was included among the concubines.
84. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), 414.

status as changing exclusively to *ʾāmâ,* which is another word for "handmaid" but more demeaning.[85] Evidence for this can be found in Hammurabi Law 146, where someone like Hagar may be marked with "the slave-mark." This contrasts nicely with her servitude to Sarah and her freedom recorded at the end of chapter 21. However, Doctrine and Covenants 132 refers to Hagar only as Abraham's "wife" (vv. 34 and 65).

There is similar ambiguity as to Keturah's status.[86] There are two words used to describe her: *ʾiššâ,* "wife" (Genesis 25:1), and *pilegeš,* "concubine" (1 Chronicles 1:32–33). If Hagar was released from her handmaid condition in chapter 21, she was free then to be a full and unhindered wife of Abraham and may have been accepted into the covenant with a name change to Keturah.

Of course, the second token of the covenant, circumcision, did not apply to Hagar. However, Ishmael, like Isaac, shared the blessings of posterity and land which spring from the covenant of Abraham. As stated earlier, when Abraham and Sarah's covenant was established, the Lord also promised, "And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly . . . twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation" (Genesis 17:20).

Therefore, Hagar very likely participated in a covenant with the Lord. Like Abraham and Sarah, Hagar followed the will of the Lord and was considered worthy of angelic visions. She was blessed with a great posterity, a land inheritance for her descendants, and the Lord's presence in her life. And, at least according to Jewish tradition, her name was changed, suggesting entry into the covenant.

The Abrahamic Covenant as a Marriage Covenant

The relationships between Abraham and Sarah and Abraham and Hagar clearly illustrate the principles of a marriage covenant. For instance, to aid in the fulfillment of the covenant, Abraham and his wives made a joint effort. In addition, when the Abrahamic covenant was passed down through Abraham's descendants, later prophets often compared it to a marriage with the Lord.

Joint Effort

Isaiah wrote that the Lord "called him [Abraham] alone" (Isaiah 51:2). Was the Abrahamic covenant an agreement between the Lord and Abraham alone? Isaiah answers in the same verse, "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you." The word translated as "alone" in this verse is *ʾeḥād,* the same word as the numeral one. However, *ʾeḥād* can also mean "united" or "each one."[87] Further, the male preposition in Hebrew is inclusive of the female. So Isaiah 51:2 can also be translated, "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you, for I called them as one united, and blessed them and increased them each one."

Hugh Nibley has observed that it took great humility for Abraham to ask Sarah to say she was his sister and for Sarah to ask Abraham to go in unto Hagar.[88] It also took great humility for Hagar to return from the wilderness and submit to Sarah, for Abraham to accept Hagar as his wife, and

85. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* 51.
86. Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis,* 85. See also Westermann, *Genesis* 12–36, 396.
87. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* 25.
88. Nibley, "Patriarchy and Matriarchy," 99.

for Hagar to become a second wife to Abraham. Concerning Sarah's actions in the episode with Pharaoh, Douglas Clark wrote, "Her sacrifice demonstrated her equality with Abraham and their mutual dependence."[89] Sacrifice made it possible for Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar to realize a true unity. Indeed, all three exhibited great interdependence on each other and on God. This interdependence was mirrored in the covenants they unitedly made with the Lord.

Prophetic Comparisons to a Marriage

As the Abrahamic covenant was passed down from generation to generation, biblical prophets would compare it to a marriage covenant between Israel and the Lord. Isaiah 54:5–6 is a good example: "For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God."[90] This allegory continued throughout the Bible into the New Testament. Mendenhall and Herion write, "The relationship between God and Israel was also very frequently viewed as analogous to that of a husband and wife. . . . This metaphor continued in use not only in early rabbinic Judaism but also in NT Christology, where Christ is portrayed as the 'bridegroom' and the Church as 'bride.'"[91]

Hence, the Abrahamic covenant is closely connected with the covenant of marriage. Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar approached it as joint effort, and the ancient prophets compared the continuation of the covenant with Israel to a marriage.

Abrahamic Covenant and Latter-day Saint Marriage Covenants

Modern Latter-day Saints believe the Abrahamic covenant is very similar to the covenants made at the altars in the Lord's temples in modern times. The requirements are similar to those asked of Abraham and his wives. The blessings of the Abrahamic covenant are passed on to modern Latter-day Saints in the covenant of marriage. There are also tokens to an LDS marriage covenant as well.

For Latter-day Saints the *stipulations* within a temple marriage covenant are clear. Obedience to the Lord is foremost in such matters as belief in God, repentance, attending meetings, sustaining leaders, and obeying the Word of Wisdom, which are prerequisites to entering into the temple. LDS sealing covenants thus require the same kind of obedience to the Lord required in ancient times.

The *blessings* given in the Abrahamic covenant are quite similar those promised to LDS couples when they are married in the temple.[92] "When a worthy couple kneels at the sacred marriage altars

89. E. Douglas Clark, "Abraham," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 1:8.

90. See also Hosea 1–3, Jeremiah 3:14, Jeremiah 31:32, and Ezekiel 16, to name a few.

91. Mendenhall and Herion, "covenant."

92. It appears that the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were restored to Joseph Smith shortly after the restoration of the principle of celestial marriage. Specifically referring to the Abrahamic blessing of the priesthood, Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon Cook found in the Joseph Smith diary that "Joseph Smith, however, clarifies that Abraham's endowment (Abraham Facsimile Number 2, figure 3 and 7) was greater than that which his descendants Aaron and Levi would be allowed; and thus 'Abraham's' Patriarchal Priesthood (the ordinances of the endowment and patriarchal marriage for time and eternity) comprehended the Aaronic portion of the endowment. . . . Aside from this theological commentary, it is important to point out that the Prophet's teachings fit perfectly within a historical context. . . . The Prophet and his wife, Emma . . . were sealed on 28 May 1843. . . . But the higher ordinances that confer the fullness of the priesthood had not as yet been administered. However one

of the temple . . . [they] are promised the same blessings that were bestowed upon Abraham in ancient days. That is, they are assured of an eternal posterity, the rights and powers of the priesthood of God, and an eternal family relationship based upon the patriarchal order."[93]

To modern Latter-day Saints, the *tokens* of entering the marriage covenant are comprised within the temple sealing ceremony. For example, Joseph Smith taught that the blessing of a great posterity—an Abrahamic blessing—is dependent on a temple marriage: "Except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant and be married for eternity, while in this probation, by the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, they will cease to increase when they die; that is, they will not have any children after the resurrection. But those who are married by the power and authority of the priesthood in this life, and continue without committing the sin against the Holy Ghost, will continue to increase and have children in the celestial glory."[94]

It is a widespread practice today for the wife to take the family name of the husband as her own. This tradition is also found in the Bible. David Anderson wrote, "Yet another situation giving rise to renaming is marriage. Isa 4,1 indicates that upon marriage, the wife would be called by the name of the husband. This does not mean that she no longer used her own name, but that her husband's name was an additional appellation for her."[95] However, prior to an LDS temple sealing both the bride and groom receive a new name in the endowment, which could be viewed as a sign or token preparatory to the marriage covenant.

To clarify the LDS connection between the marriage covenant and the Abrahamic covenant, we must also look at Doctrine and Covenants 132. The Lord talks of the Abrahamic covenant as the fulfillment of a marriage covenant in this section. The whole section discusses the eternity of the celestial marriage covenant or temple sealing covenant. As part of the blessings of the covenant the Lord speaks about the blessings given to Abraham:

> Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and the fruit of his loins—from whose loins ye are, namely, my servant Joseph—. . . both in the world and out of the world should they [Abraham's seed] continue as innumerable as the stars; or, if ye were to count the sand upon the seashore ye could not number them.
>
> This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham; and by this law is the continuation of the works of my Father, wherein he glorifieth himself.
>
> Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved.
>
> But if ye enter not into my law ye cannot receive the promise of my Father, which he made unto Abraham. (30–33)

The "law" referred to in this passage is the law of celestial marriage.[96] Joseph Smith is promised that he will receive the same blessings that Abraham obtained if he will observe the law of celestial marriage.

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month and a day after this 27 August 1843 discourse, Joseph and Emma received the anointing and ordination 'of the highest and holiest order of the priesthood'" (*The Words of Joseph Smith* [Orem, Utah: Grandin, 1991], 303 n. 21, citing Joseph Smith diary, 28 September 1843, Family and Church History Department Archives).

93. L. G. Otten and C. M. Caldwell, *Sacred Truths of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 2:360.
94. *History of the Church,* 5:391.
95. T. David Anderson, "Renaming and Wedding Imagery in Isaiah 62," 76.
96. Though clear in the context of the section, another interpretation of the "law" in this passage to be celestial marriage can be found in Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine,* s.v. "Abrahamic Covenant," 13.

The Lord also instructs that it is through this law that the Father is glorified; it is through the formation of kingdoms that the Father's work rolls forward. It is interesting to note that this section was revealed while Joseph Smith was translating the section of the Old Testament that deals with the patriarchs.[97]

In other words, modern Latter-day Saints believe the Abrahamic covenant is passed on in a temple marriage. The requirements of obedience are similar to those for Abraham's covenant. The blessings promised are explicitly the same. The sealing ceremony name changes are tokens of the covenant and associated with LDS temple marriages.

Conclusion

Richard Weis has written an insightful article about six different readings of the Sarah and Hagar stories. These six interpretations range from Elsa Tamez's portrayal of Hagar as a symbol of liberation and exodus to Phyllis Trible's idea that God collaborates with Sarah to oppress Hagar. Weis's article illustrates how many interpretations can come from a biblical story so steeped in millennia of feminist and androcentric interpretation. He writes, "As we have seen, the experience, perceptions and visions of the world, as well as the networks of relationships and group memberships, associated with and composing a reader's social location provide the fund of stories from which the reader draws the story or stories by which she or he organizes a reading of a biblical text. . . . Thus every statement about the meaning of a text is also a statement about the reader's experience, perceptions and visions of the world."[98] Modern Latter-day Saints also see a reflection of their "experience, perceptions and visions of the world" in the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar. They see these parallels irrespective of how far removed they are in time.

To bring an LDS point of view to the text, along with commentary and scripture peculiar to the LDS faith, the Abrahamic covenant is a marriage covenant. In this respect, modern LDS women and men see Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar's experience as their own. Elder McConkie writes, "And so I go to the Salt Lake Temple and marry my wife for time and for all eternity, and so begins a new kingdom of God. And if we are faithful, that marriage exists here and it exists hereafter. And I have been given through that ordinance every promise that Abraham received. It is given on a conditional basis. We must be true and faithful and keep the covenant we make in the temple, but if we are faithful, we will receive the blessings. That is what is meant by the promises made to the fathers."[99] In the example of Abraham and Sarah there is the foundation of eternal increase that LDS families believe they are building today.

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97. B. H. Roberts, "Introduction to Volume V," in *History of the Church,* 5:xxix–xxx. See also Sperry, *Doctrine and Covenants Compendium,* 712; and Otten and Caldwell, *Sacred Truths of the Doctrine and Covenants,* 2:356.

98. Richard D. Weis, "Stained Glass Window, Kaleidoscope or Catalyst: The Implications of Difference in Readings of the Hagar and Sarah Stories," in *A Gift of God in Due Season: Essays on Scripture and Community in Honor of James A. Sanders,* ed. Richard D. Weis and David M. Carr (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 268–69. One of the most interesting interpretations I have seen is found in McKenna, *Not Counting Women and Children.* She writes about Hagar's "haughtiness": "There is indignation and interpretations of jealousy and pettiness against Hagar among women who are educated and economically stable; there is laughter and delight among poor women" (p. 175). She writes that a group of Latin-American hotel maids were exhilarated with the story of Hagar and revolted against an oppressive boss.

99. McConkie, "Promises Made to the Fathers," 61.

LDS writer Edward Tullidge taught that Sarah was the paradigm for which women should strive: "The Mormon woman is Sarah in the covenant. . . . She has appropriated the text of the covenant. She claims her mother Sarah's rights. She invokes her mother Sarah's destiny: 'She shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.'"[100] Sarah and Hagar are examples for all LDS women. We should keep in mind the eternal picture of the blessings received by Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, and obtain them in our own lives.[101] Such a broad eternal perspective would ideally make modern family life more purposeful and fulfilling.

According to Parley P. Pratt, this expansive outlook creates a deep, eternal love that improves family relationships:

> It was from him [Joseph Smith] that I learned that the wife of my bosom might be secured to me for time and all eternity . . . while the result of our endless union would be an offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, or the sands of the sea shore.
>
> It was from him that I learned the true dignity and destiny of a son of God, clothed with an eternal priesthood, as the patriarch and sovereign of his countless offspring. It was from him that I learned that the highest dignity of womanhood was, to stand as a queen and priestess to her husband, and to reign for ever and ever as the queen mother of her numerous and still increasing offspring.
>
> I had loved before, but I knew not why. But now I loved—with a pureness—an intensity of elevated, exalted feeling, which would lift my soul from the transitory things of this grovelling sphere and expand it as the ocean.[102]

Elder Pratt could see that the stipulations, blessings, and tokens of the Abrahamic covenant were part of the eternal marriage relationship. That connection is well substantiated in the ancient world. It was a joint effort to fulfill the Abrahamic covenant, and Latter-day Saints believe it still is today.

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100. Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877), 534.

101. Carol Cornwall Madsen laments that we have sometimes lost this perspective: "If the concept of mother in Israel, as applied to Latter-day Saint women, seems foreign and unrelated to modern times, it is, perhaps, that we are too far spiritually distanced from those who knew themselves to be chosen out of the world to lay the foundation of a new dispensation and to restore and receive the blessings of God's covenant with Abraham. If the patriarchal promises seem excessive to modern ears, it is, perhaps, that we are no longer so clearly attuned to the scriptural cadences that informed the religious learning of an earlier generation steeped in biblical imagery, versed in biblical narrative, and grounded in religious symbolism. The linking of Latter-day Saints with their Israelite heritage has more than symbolic value, however. It provides a spiritual as well as lineal continuity that connects Mormonism solidly with its biblical roots. The latter-day mother in Israel is not an anachronism but a modern manifestation of a biblical reality" ("Mothers in Israel: Sarah's Legacy," 196).

102. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 260.

Chapter 11

The Redemption of Abraham

Jennifer Lane

While the covenant of Abraham and the blessings of Abraham are familiar to us, less known is the idea of the redemption of Abraham. The phrase is used by Isaiah when he refers to the God of Israel as "the Lord, who redeemed Abraham" (Isaiah 29:22). This oblique reference to the redemption of Abraham has generated little notice among the scholarly world that begins its recognition of biblical redemption with Moses and the deliverance of Israel from Egypt.[1]

Latter-day scripture, however, combined with additional understanding of the significance of redemption to the Israelites, shows the great import of this little reference. These insights reveal that the redemption of Abraham lies at the very heart of Abraham's relationship with the Lord. I believe the redemption of Abraham is one of the many "plain and precious truths" lost in the transmission of the Bible and that understanding the redemption of Abraham gives us a new appreciation for the covenant and blessings of Abraham. We will see that redemption has both physical and spiritual dimensions. To clarify the redemption of Abraham, I will examine both a cultural context for redemption in the ancient Near East and the spiritual insights into redemption from the bondage of sin.

1. A standard account of redemption can be found in Jeremiah Unterman, "Redemption (OT)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary,* ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992) and J. Murray, "Redeemer; Redemption" in *The International Standard Biblical Encyclopedia,* ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979). A view that recognizes the connection between redemption and covenant can be seen in: William G. Most, "A Biblical Theology of Redemption in a Covenant Framework," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 29 (January 1967): 1–19 and Stanislas Lyonnet and Léopold Sabourin, *Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice: A Biblical and Patristic Study* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 121. Lyonnet and Sabourin are rare in their recognition that in the description of redemption in Exodus 6:5–7 and Deuteronomy 7:6–9 Jehovah redeems Israel from Egypt to keep his covenant with Abraham.

Physical and Spiritual Redemption

What does it mean to say that Abraham was redeemed? Throughout scripture we can easily recognize many examples of both physical and spiritual redemption. Deliverance from physical bondage occurs repeatedly. The Old Testament tells how the children of Israel were redeemed from bondage in Egypt. In the Book of Mormon we see how numerous peoples were delivered from bondage and captivity. This physical intervention for the preservation of his people demonstrates the Lord's faithfulness to his covenants (Exodus 6:4–8; Mosiah 24:13–16). In addition, physical deliverance functions as a type of spiritual deliverance. It points to something that is just as real but not visible. It is this spiritual redemption from sin and death that the Lord seeks to make available to us through covenants. As we shall see in greater depth, these covenants allow us to receive the redeeming power of the atonement in our lives.

The first chapter of the Book of Abraham offers us a prime illustration of physical redemption. It not only demonstrates physical redemption but also indicates how the Lord is leading Abraham toward a spiritual redemption. Abraham states that his fathers had turned "from their righteousness . . . unto the worshiping of the gods of the heathen" (Abraham 1:5). So while he sought for the blessings of the fathers, they "utterly refused to hearken to [his] voice" (Abraham 1:5). Instead of receiving the blessings of the fathers, Abraham was offered up as a sacrifice to the gods of the heathen by his father. On the altar as he was about to be sacrificed by the priest of Elkenah, Abraham prayed for deliverance and received a "vision of the Almighty." He recorded that "the angel of his presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands" (Abraham 1:15).

In addition to this physical deliverance from immediate destruction, Abraham received promises of spiritual blessings. The Lord identified himself as Jehovah and told Abraham that he would be taken from his father's house to a strange land. He promised Abraham, "I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee. As it was with Noah so shall it be with thee; but through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever, for I am thy God" (Abraham 1:18–19). Here Abraham is told that he will be entering into a new relationship with the Lord. The Lord promises that he will be with Abraham and that he will "put upon [him] [His] name, even the Priesthood of [his] father." The blessings of the fathers for which Abraham sought—"to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace"—will be his through his faithfulness to this covenant relationship.

Redemption and Covenant in Israelite Society

Before we look at how Abraham entered into this covenant relationship with the Lord, it will be helpful to more fully explain the relationship between redemption and covenant in Israelite society. Some may point out that Abraham did not live in Israelite society and that therefore these cultural patterns might not apply to him. My suggestion is that, just as the covenant of Abraham continues to be central to the life of Israel, the nature of redemption in Israelite society is likewise a continuation of the Lord's dealings with Abraham.

I believe there is a *plan* of redemption that reflects a general pattern of the Lord's relationship with his children. As Joseph Smith explained, "all that were ever saved, were saved through the power of this great plan of redemption, as much so before the coming of Christ as since; if not,

God has had different plans in operation, (if we may so express it,) to bring men back to dwell with himself; and this we cannot believe."[2] This great plan of redemption is universal, and a central aspect of that plan is revealed in the role of a redeemer among the Israelites.

The first point in understanding Israelite redemption is distinguishing between deliverance and redemption. Simply put, deliverance requires merely a show of power, but redemption requires that a price be paid.[3] Physical redemption of individuals from slavery was a common practice in Israel, as well as in the rest of the ancient Near East.[4] People became slaves because they were prisoners of war or because they had sold themselves (or were sold) to pay off their debts.

Here is where the redeemer enters, and it is in Israel where we find a special practice. An Israelite redeemer was a close relative who was obliged by family bonds to redeem his kin. In fact, the term in Hebrew for redeemer, *gōʾēl,* is best translated "kinsman-redeemer."[5]

Another important Israelite concept that can help us decipher redemption in the scriptures is *covenant.* A covenant in Israel was far from our twentieth-century concept of a contractual bargain. Covenants were seen as the creation of a new relationship and the bringing of people into a family relationship.[6] Family relations were the basis of society, but strangers could enter into households by covenants that implied "an adoption into the household, an extension of kinship, the making of a brother."[7] This can be seen in such covenant-making ceremonies as the covenant meal, which "means admission into the family circle of another, since only the kinsmen will eat together."[8] This use of a meal to signify covenant adoption can be seen in the Old Testament where Moses and the elders of Israel partake of a ritual meal with the Lord in Exodus 24:9–11, as part of the covenant at Sinai.[9]

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2. *The Evening and the Morning Star* (March) 1834, 143.
3. In the Old Testament there are two words, *gāʾal* and *pādâ,* that are primarily translated as "redeem" in English. Both incorporate the idea of "buying back" or "release by the payment of a price" (Murray, "Redeemer; Redemption").
4. For an introduction to redemption in Israel and the ancient Near East, see the articles referred to in footnote 1.
5. The family member who carries the responsibility of redemption is known as the *gōʾēl,* the present participle of *gāʾal.* One of the best translations of *gōʾēl* that I have found captures both the family relationship and the action: "kinsman-redeemer" (Robert L. Hubbard, "The Go'el in Ancient Israel: Theological Reflections on an Israelite Institution," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 1 [1991]: 3). The *gōʾēl* was responsible for buying back sold property; buying back a man who had sold himself to a foreigner as a slave; avenging blood and killing a relative's murderer; receiving atonement money; and, figuratively, being a helper in a lawsuit (Helmer Ringgren, "gaʾal," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament,* ed. G. Johannes Butterweck and Helmer Ringgren [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975], 2: 350–55). All of these duties involve the kinsman-redeemer intervening to restore people to their original state, usually through payment. The *gōʾēl* has been described as the "cultural gyroscope of Israel" whose purpose was to restore equilibrium in the society (Michael S. Moore, "Hagoʾel: The Cultural Gyroscope of Ancient Hebrew Society," *Restoration Quarterly* 23/1 [1988]: 31).
6. The Hebrew word for covenant is *bĕrît,* but the range of the covenant concept in the Old Testament surpasses the use of the term to include actions creating a relationship. Dennis J. McCarthy comments that the relationship is more important than the word, and even though the word might not be there, the relationship can still exist (*Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament* [Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978], 16). He also notes different suggestions for the translation of *bĕrît* and cautions against a rigid definition (22).
7. Paul Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982), 204–5.
8. Ibid., 205 n. 32.
9. McCarthy comments: "To see a great chief and eat in his place is to join his family . . . the whole group related by blood or not which stood under the authority and protection of the father. One is united to him as a client to

Covenants could be seen as an adoption. While the metaphor of adoption was very important in expressing the relationship between the Lord and his people, it is not the only one used—the metaphor of a marriage relationship between the Lord and Israel also figures prominently in the Old Testament. This is particularly true when prophets are calling Israel to repent of unfaithfulness: "For the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord" (Hosea 1:2). While I believe that understanding the use of this metaphor is essential to a study of the Old Testament, I do not see it as informative in clarifying the relationship of individuals to the Lord. This relationship is characterized in terms of an adoption or a new birth throughout scripture.

An interesting feature of Israelite covenants is the giving of a new name that often marked this new covenant relationship.[10] This new name reflected the new nature that was part of the new relationship. There are several instances of name changing in the Old Testament. A name change indicates a corresponding change in character and conduct, illustrating the Hebrew belief that names represent something of the essence of a person. A new name shows a new status or the establishment of a new relationship. Sometimes "symbolic" new names are given that are not supposed to replace the old but are to give information as to the character of the recipient.[11]

It is also noteworthy that these covenants were often made in sacred spaces. Throughout the ancient Near East, sacred space was known as the meeting place of heaven and earth and the site of hierophany, or the appearance of the divine. I believe that it is in scripture, however, that we see covenants made in sacred places. The experiences of Jacob, while slightly later than those of Abraham, are the clearest biblical examples of the relationship between sacred place, covenant, and redemption.

After Jacob's experience at Peniel where he wrestled with an angel, he has an experience of covenant renewal at Beth-el. The Lord appears to Jacob and tells him "Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel" (Genesis 35:10). With this repetition of the new name comes a repetition of covenant blessings. Jacob is promised that "a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land" (Genesis 35:11–12).

This promise is a renewal of the promise that Jacob received earlier in the same location. As Jacob journeyed to find a wife he lay down to sleep and dreamed of a "ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven" (Genesis 28:12). In his dream the Lord appeared to him and promised him the land and a great posterity. After he awoke Jacob exclaimed: "How dreadful is this

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his patron who protects him and whom he serves . . . *covenant is something one makes by a rite, not something one is born to or forced into, and it can be described in family terms.* God is patron and father, Israel servant and son" (McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant,* 266; emphasis added).

10. The Hebrew word *šem,* usually translated "name," can also be rendered "remembrance" or "memorial," indicating that the name acts as a reminder to its bearers and others. The name shows both the true nature of its bearer and indicates his relationship to others. See G. F. Hawthorne, "Name," in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; D. Stuart, "Names, Proper," in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* 3:483–88; and Bruce H. Porter and Stephen D. Ricks, "Names in Antiquity: Old, New, and Hidden," in *By Study and Also by Faith,* ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 1:501–22.

11. Andersen notes that "in these cases an element of the meaning of the name seems to be indicating ownership or belonging—a common function of naming (cf. [Isaiah 44:5])" (T. David Andersen, "Renaming and Wedding Imagery in Isaiah 62," *Biblica* 67/1 [1986]: 76).

place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:17). He then used his stone pillow as a pillar and poured oil on it.[12]

When we apply these cultural practices of a kinsman-redeemer and an adoptive covenant relationship to a spiritual plane, we can see that the status of Jehovah as the Redeemer of Israel was a result of Israel's adoptive covenant relationship with him. The Lord promised to act as a redeemer because of his family relationship to Israel created by covenant. Indeed, this is the pattern of spiritual redemption that we find over and over throughout scripture. There is a covenant that functions as an adoption, there is a new name reflecting the new relationship and new nature, and there is the promise of redemption. As King Benjamin said, "Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you. . . . And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God and that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives" (Mosiah 5:7–8).

This is the same pattern that we see in the life of Abraham. Jehovah became Abraham's redeemer because he became Abraham's spiritual father by covenant—"I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed . . . to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Genesis 17:7). This expression functioned as an adoption formula in the ancient Near East. This is parallel to the declaration to the children of Israel that "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God" (Exodus 6:7). This promise of a covenant between Israel and the Lord is also set in the context of the covenantal adoption of the patriarchs as a basis for the redemption of Israel. The Lord tells Israel, "I have also established my covenant with them" (v. 4) and "I will rid you out for their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm" (v. 6). There are other, more explicit references following this adoption formula that refer to individuals or Israel as son and God as Father (see 2 Samuel 7:14; 1 Chronicles 17:13, 22:10; Hosea 1:9–10).[13]

The accompanying name change from Abram to Abraham signified this new adoptive covenant relationship (Genesis 17:5). Through this covenant Jehovah became Abraham's kinsman-redeemer.

12. Many elements of this experience correspond to temple typology. Stephen Ricks has argued that this story is an example of dream incubation that usually occurred in temples or other sacred space. He suggests an alternate translation of "How dreadful is this place [*māqôm*]!" as "How awesome is this shrine!" (Stephen D. Ricks, "Jacob: Trial and Triumph," unpublished paper in possession of author, 7). Jacob repeats *māqôm* as a description of the location, saying, "Surely the Lord is in this place [shrine]" (v. 16), and the biblical narrative comments, "he called the name of that place [shrine] Beth-el" (v. 19). Ricks notes that such stone pillars mark sacred space and that the pouring of the oil "marks that site off as particularly significant" (9). He also comments that the ladder that Jacob saw reaching to heaven could also be translated "ramp" or "staircase." The notions of ascension and connection with the divine realm are principle temple motifs, and the same staircase construction can be seen in the Mesopotamian ziggurat (10). Andrew Skinner suggests that this encounter was Jacob's "first temple experience," where he made covenants and received conditional promises. Through Jacob's faith and obedience these promises were finally realized at Peniel where he was able to enter the presence of God and have "every promise of past years sealed and confirmed upon him," an experience after which he declared that he had been redeemed "from all evil" (Genesis 48:16) (Andrew C. Skinner, "Jacob in the Presence of God," *Thy People Shall Be My People and Thy God My God: The 22nd Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994]: 147).

13. Moshe Weinfeld notes that this use of adoption language was widespread in the ancient Near East during this era, saying "the whole diplomatic vocabulary of the second millennium is rooted in the familial sphere" ("The

There are several biblical passages that demonstrate that the Lord's acts of redemption came directly as a result of this covenant relationship. In Deuteronomy 7:8 Moses tells the children of Israel, "because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." Likewise, Nephi explains to his rebellious brothers, "[The Lord] loved our fathers, and he covenanted with them, yea, even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and he remembered the covenants which he had made; wherefore, he did bring them out of the land of Egypt" (1 Nephi 17:40). The Lord was the Redeemer of Israel because of his covenant relationship with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Spiritual Insights

This paper started with a passing biblical reference to the redemption of Abraham. By examining the Israelite cultural practices of a kinsman-redeemer and an adoptive covenant, we have been able to see how redemption was a central part of the Abrahamic covenant. Abraham's covenant created a new adoptive relationship with Jehovah that allowed the Lord to act as his kinsman-redeemer. This adoptive covenant relationship is further witnessed by Abraham's new name and by the Lord's acts of redemption on behalf of his covenant people—Abraham's posterity.

But in what sense can we say that Abraham himself was redeemed? We've seen the redemption of his posterity because of his covenant relationship, but there seems to be no more biblical evidence to demonstrate the personal significance of Abraham's adoptive covenant relationship with Jehovah. This is where the Book of Mormon provides a much deeper insight into the relationship between covenants and spiritual redemption than that found in the Bible (see 1 Nephi 13:23–26, 40). Through the Book of Mormon we can see that the redemption of Abraham is more than the deliverance of his posterity. Redemption is a process of personal deliverance from the spiritual captivity from which Abraham, like all of us, needs a redeemer.

When we think of Abraham, of course, we do not think of a sinful, degraded man caught in the "chains of hell" and "the bonds of sin." Nevertheless, the Book of Mormon prophets make it clear that all of us are lost and in spiritual bondage. Again, all of us, even Abraham, need a redeemer. Nephi rejoiced: "I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell" (2 Nephi 33:6). The Book of Mormon records that Abraham had the same experience: "Abraham saw [Christ's] coming, and was filled with gladness and did rejoice" (Helaman 8:17).

Abraham was not a bad person, but he wanted to be better than he was. He wanted "to be a greater follower of righteousness," and he knew that he could not do it by himself (Abraham 1:2). So he sought a new relationship with the Lord. He made covenants and received a new name, and Jehovah became his kinsman-redeemer.

Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90 [1970]: 194). An additional discussion of adoption formulae can be found in Shalom M. Paul, "Adoption Formulae: A Study of Cuneiform and Biblical Legal Clauses," *Maarav* 2/2 (1979–80): 179. The biblical use of father-son terminology is discussed in F. Charles Fensham, "Father and Son as Terminology for Treaty and Covenant," *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright,* ed. Hans Goedicke (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 129–31.

We see the same pattern in the Book of Mormon. In Mosiah chapter 18, those who covenanted with the Lord through baptism at the waters of Mormon were also seeking to be greater followers of righteousness. They wanted to enter into a new relationship with the Lord. They wanted "to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people . . . that [they might] be redeemed of God" (Mosiah 18:8–9). The baptismal covenant created a new relationship between these individuals and the Lord so that they were adopted as his people. It was because of this adoptive covenant relationship that they could trust that the Lord would be their redeemer.

The Book of Mormon explains how we can be assured that we have a redeemer. It follows the same pattern that we have seen in the Old Testament—covenants create an adoptive relationship. A covenant gives us the assurance that we have a redeemer. A covenant relationship with Jehovah as our kinsman-redeemer is an assurance that even though we are in bondage, the price of our redemption has been paid by Jesus Christ. As part of the covenant relationship we receive a new name that represents the new relationship and a new nature. King Benjamin exhorts us—"therefore I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye shall be obedient unto the end of your lives" (Mosiah 5:8).

It was through his lifelong obedience that Abraham kept his covenant relationship. Through faithfulness to his covenant, Abraham allowed the Lord to be his redeemer. As the spiritual insights of the Book of Mormon clarify, this redemption occurred as Abraham was freed from the bondage of the natural man and received a new nature. Sanctification is the process of being redeemed and purified from our sins. As Abraham became a "greater follower of righteousness," he left the bondage of sinfulness.

This change of nature brings the possibility of an ultimate redemption—of leaving behind the fallen world and entering into the presence of the Lord. In Helaman 8 the prophet Nephi explains that not only did Abraham, Moses, and other prophets foresee the redemption of Christ, but that he redeemed them, a redemption that meant entering into his presence: "And behold, he is God, and he is with them, and *he did manifest himself unto them, that they were redeemed by him;* and they gave unto him glory, because of that which is to come" (Helaman 8:23; emphasis added).

Christ manifested himself unto the prophets. Abraham saw Christ and was redeemed by him. This ultimate redemption of entering into the presence of the Lord can also be seen in the example of the brother of Jared.[14] The Lord told him that because of his faith and knowledge he was redeemed and could enter into the Lord's presence: "Because thou knowest these things ye are *redeemed* from the fall; *therefore ye are brought back into my presence;* therefore I show myself unto you. Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters" (Ether 3:13–14; emphasis added).

This confidence in the redemption prepared from the foundation of the world was the foundation of Abraham's faithfulness to covenant. It was this faith in the redemption of Christ that made it possible for Abraham to remain faithful to his covenants and offer up his son. As Paul taught: "By

14. This text was not available to the Nephites until later in their history, and it demonstrates the continuity of the Lord's relations with mankind throughout different dispensations (see Mosiah 28:17–19).

faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (Hebrews 11:17–19).

The Lord made covenant promises to Abraham about his posterity but then tried his faithfulness. In Abraham's covenant the Lord had promised him deliverance from the bondage of childlessness, but with the command to sacrifice Isaac it would seem that Abraham was being thrust back into bondage. Only Abraham's faith in his covenant relationship with the Lord gave Abraham the confidence that, despite the present circumstances, the Lord was truly his redeemer and would not abandon him. Abraham was confident that even if he slew Isaac, his son would be raised up again. The covenant promise was "in Isaac shall thy seed be called"(Hebrews 11:18), and so Abraham knew that the Lord would be faithful to his promise and give him back his son.

Likewise, the Lord has promised that the seed of Abraham, his modern covenant people, "must needs be chastened and tried, even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his only son. For all those who will not endure chastening, but deny me, cannot be sanctified" (D&C 101:4–5). In these trials we may feel that we are being thrust into bondage rather than being redeemed from it. In times such as these we must completely rely on the arm of our Redeemer. We need to know that he is tied to us through covenant. We need to know that he is our spiritual father. We need to know that he will not abandon us.

Abraham's faith in his redemption can be a model for us. Once we recognize that Abraham's covenant with the Lord created an adoptive relationship, we can understand the foundation of faith upon which Abraham relied. Abraham knew that the Lord was his kinsman-redeemer. He knew that the price of his redemption had been paid through the atonement of Christ. His confidence in his Redeemer's covenant promises was such that he was willing to offer up his son, knowing that God "was able raise him up, even from the dead" (Hebrews 11:19) in order to fulfill the promise of the covenant "in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Hebrews 11:18).

The degree of faith epitomized by Abraham was made possible by his covenant relationship with the Lord. His confidence that the Lord was his Redeemer and would fulfill his promises is a perfect illustration of a statement from the *Lectures on Faith:*

> For a man to lay down his all, his character and reputation, his honor, and applause, his good name among men, his houses, his lands, his brothers and sisters, his wife and children, and even his own life also—counting all things but filth and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ—requires more than mere belief or supposition that he is doing the will of God; but actual knowledge, realizing that, when these sufferings are ended, he will enter into eternal rest, and be a partaker of the glory of God.[15]

Because of his covenant relationship, Abraham was confident that through his faithfulness he would be redeemed from the fallen world and "enter into eternal rest, and be a partaker of the glory of God." He was confident the Lord would redeem him.

15. *Lectures on Faith* 6:5.

Chapter 12

A Wanderer in a Strange Land

Abraham in America, 1800–1850

Andrew H. Hedges

In recent years, critics of Joseph Smith have charged that very little, if any, of what the prophet taught and practiced was unique on the American scene. From major themes taught in the Book of Mormon to plans for establishing a Zion society in Missouri, all his "innovations," so the argument goes, resonated with the ideas and movements of his contemporaries. More a charismatic leader than a restorer or creator of doctrines and ideas, Joseph at best modified existing philosophies and practices and at worst borrowed them wholesale.[1]

The Book of Abraham provides scholars with an excellent way to put this increasingly strident charge to the test. First published in Nauvoo in 1842, the Book of Abraham purports to be nothing less than the autobiographical writings of the ancient patriarch himself, originally written in Egypt several thousand years before Joseph Smith came on the scene.[2] Although brief and incomplete—Joseph indicated there was much more to the record than the five chapters he translated and published in 1842—the book is replete with insights into Abraham's character, his covenant with God, his understanding of astronomy, and his understanding of the creation. No mention is made of some of the more pivotal and riveting experiences in the patriarch's life so ably described in the biblical text, including the command to sacrifice Isaac, his rescuing Lot, and his taking Hagar to wife.[3] In general terms, however, the narrative of the Book of Abraham follows the outline of the

1. For examples of this argument, see John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993); and Dan Vogel, ed., *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990).
2. For an overview of current theories about the date of the papyri and the date of the text of the Book of Abraham, see John Gee, *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 23–28.
3. If the papyri contained Abraham's account of these events, they had not come to light by the time Joseph was killed in 1844.

biblical narrative as far as it goes, with Abraham leaving the land of his nativity in the midst of a famine, entering into a covenant with the Lord, traveling to Canaan, and moving on to Egypt.

This paper looks at how Joseph's contemporaries understood Abraham and compares their understanding and use of the Abraham narrative with the focus, content, and Latter-day Saint use of the Book of Abraham. From the outset, such a comparison is fraught with peril because the thousands of sermons of the time that were recorded comprise only a fraction of the hundreds of thousands of sermons delivered at various pulpits in the United States during Joseph's lifetime. Most of what people heard or thought about religion during this period—including the Abraham narrative—was never recorded, so any reconstruction of the religious culture of the times is necessarily based on woefully incomplete evidence and cannot even begin to circumscribe the full scope and variety of religious experiences and ideas that made up that culture. As difficult to surmount as this obstacle may be for the historian, however, it is important to note that early America was a very literate place and that the printed word did ensure at least some degree of uniformity in how most Christians used and interpreted the Bible. Publishing religious pamphlets and books and the collected sermons of eminent lecturers had been a big business over the course of the colonial period, with the works of noted authorities, reformers, and scholars being published and republished, and read and reread, by several generations of Americans. By the late colonial and early national periods, these writings, taken together, constituted a sort of American Christian midrash of the Bible with acceptable interpretations of its doctrines and events. Quoted in newspapers, incorporated into children's reading primers, read at church, and collected and debated in a growing number of biblical commentaries, parts of this collected and generally accepted wisdom were available, in one form or another, to most Americans by Joseph's time, even those of relatively modest means and education.[4] Although the full variety and richness of the American religious experience was distilled into popular literature by educators, clergy, and biblical commentators, this corpus of religious literature gives us at least a basic understanding of what Americans were teaching and thinking about religion and the Bible—and Abraham—in the early nineteenth century.

Comprising fifteen printed pages in the 1981 edition of the Latter-day Saint scriptures, the Book of Abraham represents, at the very least, a tremendous interest in the ancient patriarch among early Latter-day Saints.[5] If the critics' accusation that Joseph Smith merely copied or modified the ideas and concerns of his contemporaries is correct, we would expect to find this same

4. Evidence suggests that Joseph Smith himself, for example, whose means and education as a youth were as modest as anyone's, ran into at least one Bible commentary in his early life. Emma Smith's uncle, Nathaniel Lewis, who doubted Joseph's use of the Urim and Thummim, owned a copy of Clarke's commentary, a popular biblical commentary of the time. At one point, Lewis apparently asked Joseph if "anybody else [could] translate strange languages by the help of them spectacles?" When Joseph allegedly answered in the affirmative, Lewis reportedly responded, "I've got Clarke's Commentary, and it contains a great many strange languages; now if you will let me try the spectacles, and if, by looking through them, I can translate these strange languages into English, then I'll be one of your disciples" (Emily C. Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County Pennsylvania* [Baltimore: Regional, 1970], 104–5).

5. In comparison, the *full* Genesis account of Abraham comprises twenty printed pages in the 1981 LDS edition of the Bible.

preoccupation with Abraham evidenced elsewhere in America and in a large enough part of Joseph's culture that he would feel the need to make it part of "his" church. We would expect, too, to see Abraham filling the same roles in nineteenth-century LDS theology, worship, and religious instruction that he filled in other churches. And finally, we would expect the Book of Abraham to reflect early American ideas regarding Abraham's character, his relationship with God, and the seminal experiences in his life. Granting the critics' contention that Joseph could, and did, modify the ideas of his contemporaries at many points, we might expect to see a few innovations of sorts along all three of these lines but nothing that wouldn't ultimately be visibly grounded upon well-known ideas of the time. In short, if the critics' charge is correct, we would expect to find very little difference between the focus, content, and Latter-day Saint use of the Book of Abraham and what Joseph's religious contemporaries were teaching about, and doing with, Abraham.

Abraham in the Polls, 1630–1850

A discussion on the first of these points—that is, on Abraham's relative importance in the religious culture of Joseph Smith's time—requires a brief review of how the ancient patriarch had been perceived by earlier generations of Americans. Without question, Abraham's career in America got off to a good start. The English Puritans who settled New England in the early part of the seventeenth century carried with them the idea that they were reestablishing the "covenant society" that had existed between ancient Israel and God. Viewing themselves as the modern Israel and America as the new promised land, this first generation of Puritans found much in the Abraham narrative and its emphasis on covenant with which they could identify and frequently alluded to the ancient patriarch and his seed in their sermons, laws, and public statements.[6] Introspective to a fault and wary of mankind's native ability to do anything good, these early Puritans' chief concern was that they keep their part of the covenant—that God would keep his end of the deal was a given. To keep themselves on the straight and narrow, they passed and enforced strict laws based on the legal sections of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and churchgoers were warned on a regular basis that they, like Israel of old, would forfeit the blessings of the covenant if they fell into error.[7]

The religious fervor of these first English immigrants failed to reproduce itself in succeeding generations of colonists. Lacking their fathers' soul-searching zeal and unable to square Calvin's unfavorable evaluation of human nature with Enlightenment thought, colonists of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were a far more liberal lot than their fathers would have approved of and had rejected in large measure the strict legalism of the 1630s and 1640s. In spite of this cooling off toward religion, however, the idea that America was heir to the promises given

6. Perry Miller, "The Old Testament in Colonial America," in *Historical Viewpoints,* ed. John A. Garraty (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 1:96–98. Miller has waded through more sermons, published and unpublished, of the colonial period than any other historian, and I am indebted to his research and conclusions for the generalizations I am giving here concerning Abraham's significance in the culture of colonial America.

7. For examples of New England laws based on the Pentateuch, see *An Abstract of the Lawes of New England as They Are Now Established* (London: Coules and Ley, 1641), reprinted in Peter Force, comp., *Tracts and Other Papers, Relating Principally to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America, from the Discovery of the Country to the Year 1776,* vol. 3 (New York: Peter Smith, 1947).

to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived on but with an important shift in focus reflective of the more liberal attitudes of the time. Rather than fearing that they lacked ability to fulfill their part of the covenant, later colonists began looking anxiously for signs that God was fulfilling his. This shift in focus became more pronounced as tensions mounted between the colonists and the crown in the 1760s and 1770s, with many preachers and ministers finding the parallels between the colonists under British rule and the Israelites under Egyptian rule so compelling that they explicitly identified themselves with captive Israel.[8] The anticipation at this point was that God would emerge from his hiding place in a show of strength and keep his part of the bargain by delivering his people from their oppressors; feeling they had already lived up to their part of the covenant, colonists were not concerned at this point about their worthiness for this deliverance. Secure in their new home, prosperous, and confident, Revolution-minded Americans no longer identified themselves with the wandering, introspective Abraham with whom the early Puritans found so much in common but with Abraham's seed of several hundred years later—numerous, powerful, and ready to reap the blessings promised to the fathers.

Abraham's popularity in America, and his relevance for Americans, continued to lose ground following the Revolutionary War. This was partly because the covenant between God and America had, in everyone's eyes, so obviously been fulfilled in the nation's independence from England. With the covenant having run its course to its successful conclusion, there was simply nothing more to be gained for Americans by invoking it in their behalf or by identifying themselves with God's ancient covenant people. Replacing this centuries-old concern with the covenant and its fulfillment was a growing preoccupation among ministers and laymen alike with *personal conversion*—that is, the degree to which individual Americans demonstrated, both publicly and privately, their acceptance of a personal Savior and his teachings. Beginning about 1800 and lasting for some fifty years, this national preoccupation with personal conversion—dubbed the Second Great Awakening by historians—found its expression in protracted "camp meetings," highly emotional revivals, and large numbers of people joining and forming various churches. Underlying the entire movement was a renewed interest in the New Testament, with its emphasis on baptism, rebirth, and Christ.[9] Denominations like the Presbyterians and Congregationalists, which had previously emphasized the need for an educated clergy teaching their laymen the gospel of the ancient covenant, suddenly found themselves being outstripped by Baptists, Methodists, and break-offs from their own ranks who repudiated the Old Testament bias of traditional American Christianity by teaching that salvation was a function of giving one's heart to Christ rather than of adherence to an ancient code of laws. Denominations split and fragmented over the issue, with the increasingly fewer conservatives accusing the rising generation of ministers of "throwing away the Old Testament."[10] While the orientation toward the New Testament was nationwide, the fires of revival burned most fiercely in the western, "frontier" regions of the country, which included, as the century wore on, upstate New York, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri.

8. Mark A. Noll, "The Image of the United States as a Biblical Nation," in *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History,* ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 40–44.
9. Miller, "The Old Testament," 99–100.
10. Ibid., 100.

The Old Testament was not forgotten or completely neglected during this period, conservatives' accusations notwithstanding. But it certainly was, on the whole, receiving far less emphasis than it had in the past. Abraham, who had been a figure of towering importance to the early Puritans, suffered with the rest of the Old Testament, being recognized—when he was recognized at all[11]—for his interesting history, but little else. What all of this means for our present discussion is that between 1835, when Joseph purchased the Abraham papyri from Michael Chandler, and 1842, when the Book of Abraham was published, Abraham's stock in American religious culture was at an all-time low, making Joseph's concern with the ancient patriarch, and the publication of his record, all the more noteworthy and unique.

Making Use of Abraham

What we have discussed so far has been the trend in Abraham's relative importance and significance in the history of American religious thought. While his importance relative to other biblical figures and religious concerns steadily diminished over the course of the colonial and early national periods, it would be a mistake to conclude that by Joseph Smith's time it had evaporated altogether. Ministers and laymen continued to refer to Abraham in various contexts, and for various reasons, long after the flames of the revivals and camp meetings had dimmed the light of his star. This later Abraham was not the man he had been earlier, however, and he was vastly different from the Abraham of the Latter-day Saints.

Sources

Relatively few sermons or books devoted solely to Abraham were in print in America in the first half of the nineteenth century. The majority of those that were available had been written and published in England before making their way to American shores. One of the more popular was Henry Blunt's *Twelve Lectures upon the History of Abraham,* published in London in 1831, and part of the author's series of books on various biblical figures.[12] Blunt reviews the seminal events in Abraham's life and uses them as springboards into discussions on various religious topics, providing historians with a wealth of information on how Abraham was seen and used by at least some of Joseph's contemporaries.[13]

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11. Reflecting the biases of the time, Parley P. Pratt recorded in his autobiography how, under his mother's direction, he began his study of the scriptures by reading about Joseph in Egypt, David and Goliath, Saul and Samuel, and Samson and the Philistines before studying the life of Jesus. The absence of any mention of Abraham is not accidental. See Parley P. Pratt, ed., *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 2.
12. Henry Blunt, *Twelve Lectures upon the History of Abraham* (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1831). Blunt wrote books on the history of Jacob, Elisha, Paul, and Peter as well.
13. Other monographs on Abraham from this era include Charles Bowles, *A Sermon on the Covenant of Grace, which God made with Abraham* (Oxford: W. E. Chapman, 1841); George Frederick Tavel, *Christian Faith Illustrated by the Faith of Abraham* (London: Deighton and Sons, 1824); Samuel Waters, *Meditation on Abraham's conduct in sending his servant to take a wife for his son, Genesis xxiv chapter* (Worcester, Mass.: Isaiah Thomas, 1793); David Peabody, *The Patriarch of Hebron: or, The History of Abraham* (New York: J. C. Meeks, 1841). All these except Bowles are quite rare today, and I have been unable so far to obtain copies of any of them.

Shorter lectures on Abraham were also in print during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Two of the more popular were William Whiston's "Dissertation Concerning God's Command to Abraham to offer up Isaac his Son for a Sacrifice" and Richard Watson's entry under "Abram" in his *Biblical and Theological Dictionary.* Whiston appended his Abraham "Dissertation" onto his 1737 English translation of *The Works of Flavius Josephus,* a work first published in England and so highly acclaimed that it went through several editions in both England and America over the course of the next century.[14] His lecture on Abraham, although brief and limited to his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, nevertheless has some points of interest to students of the Book of Abraham. Watson's brief discussion of Abraham recounted Abraham's experiences before attempting to delineate what these events teach us about Abraham himself and how they apply to people of a more modern age.[15] Like Blunt's *Twelve Lectures,* his entry provides historians with important information about the role Abraham played in Joseph Smith's America.

Those interested in learning how the best minds in England and America interpreted Abraham during Joseph's time also had recourse to several excellent commentaries, whose authors systematically examined both the Genesis account and the New Testament references to Abraham verse by verse, providing their readers with pages of notes in the process. Three commentaries commonly used by scholars, ministers, and churchgoers alike in early America were the multivolume sets by Thomas Scott, Adam Clarke, and Matthew Henry. All three authors were university-trained scholars, and one need read only a page or two of their work to see that each was bringing several years' worth of intense research to his study. Originally published in 1706, Henry's work was the most dated by Joseph Smith's time but was still recognized by Clarke as one of the most "orthodox, generally judicious, and truly pious and practical" commentaries available in the early nineteenth century.[16] Clarke, the most scholarly of the three, used the Hebrew and Septuagint texts extensively in preparing his commentary on Abraham, as well as various rabbinic sources. Scott was a bulwark of faith and conservativeness, deferring more to the "standard of truth, or the rule of duty" than to variant readings or traditions for his information.[17] All three drew freely on the insights of earlier commentators in their respective efforts to provide their readers with the most plausible, up-to-date interpretation of the scriptures, and all three had gone through several revisions and editions by Joseph Smith's time.

Abraham's Role in Nineteenth-Century America

Using these sources as our guides, it is evident that Abraham filled at least two important roles in early nineteenth-century America, notwithstanding his diminished importance relative to other biblical figures and religious concerns. First, some of Joseph's contemporaries advocated reading

14. William Whiston, *The Works of Flavius Josephus. . . .* 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J. Grigg, 1835). All subsequent references to this book are to this 1835 Philadelphia edition.
15. Richard Watson, *A Biblical and Theological Dictionary* (New York: Lane and Scott, 1851), 9–13.
16. Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments: With a Commentary and Critical Notes* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, n.d.), 1:10. Clarke died in 1832, yet his commentary continued to be published, unaltered in content, for several decades. The edition used here was probably published after his death.
17. Thomas Scott, *The Holy Bible; Containing the Old and New Testaments, . . . with Explanatory Notes, Practical Observations, and Copious Marginal References,* 6 vols. (London: James Nisbet, 1866), 1: b5.

about Abraham purely for his story's literary value.[18] This tendency—small at first, but growing over time—had its roots in the literary flowering that swept the nation following the Revolutionary War. Fueled, historians argue, by the young nation's desire to develop a unique American literary tradition that celebrated the ideals of individualism, morality, and social order, this interest in literature found expression in the works of James Fenimore Cooper, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, and others.[19] The Genesis account of Abraham fit neatly into this celebration of American ideals: a foreigner holding his own in Pharaoh's court and among the idolatrous Canaanites; his deference to Lot for the sake of peace; his courage in recovering Lot after the battle of the kings; his obedience to God, even to the point of being willing to sacrifice his own son. These resonated with the ideals of self-reliance, courage, order, and religious commitment receiving such emphasis in America at the time. Recognizing these traits in Abraham, however, came at the expense of remembering his religious significance. In the eyes of the age's secular literati, the Abraham story's value lay in it being an "authentic history of a great and powerful prince"[20] and not in any information it gave about God's covenants with mankind or the role Abraham's seed would play in the history of the world. Through these lenses, the patriarch was simply another Natty Bumppo—remarkable and exemplary in his inner goodness and strength but little more.

This tendency to view Abraham's history as little more than a good story was rather limited, for most Americans were willing to concede Abraham's prophetic calling. Similarly, most of Joseph's contemporaries accepted the idea that Abraham knew of Christ and his role as Savior of the world.[21] Consequently, a far more popular and widespread view of Abraham was that he was an excellent example of Christian living, worthy of the notice and emulation of all striving to walk the strait and narrow path.[22] Five of the six commentators we are examining here, for example, spent the majority of their time drawing little lessons from Abraham's story, tediously delineating how, at almost every turn, Abraham shines as the quintessential Christian, or how events in his history reflect deeper principles of the gospel.[23] Commenting on Abraham's building an altar after having

18. Blunt, *Twelve Lectures,* 2.

19. Vernon Louis Parrington, *The Romantic Revolution in America, 1800–1860* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1927), and Van Wyck Brooks, *The Flowering of New England, 1816–1865* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1936).

20. Blunt, *Twelve Lectures,* 2.

21. With the exception of Whiston (whose topic does not lend itself to a discussion of Abraham's knowledge of the Savior), the commentators mentioned above argue that Abraham knew of Christ and his role. They derive this information not so much from the Genesis account but from the several New Testament references to Abraham that suggest Abraham's knowledge of the Savior (John 8:56; Galatians 3:16). Using Hebrews 11:17–19 as his guide, Watson suggests that it was Abraham's "intentional offering up [of] Isaac, with its result, [that] was probably that transaction in which Abraham, more clearly than in any other, 'saw the day of Christ, and was glad'" (Watson, *Biblical and Theological Dictionary,* 12). Armed with these scriptural assurances of Abraham's personal knowledge of the Savior, several of the commentators suggest that the God who appeared to Abraham from time to time was Jesus Christ himself. See Blunt, *Twelve Lectures,* 26–29; Scott, *Holy Bible,* 1:H7–8, I2; Clarke, *Holy Bible,* 1:94–95.

22. The title of George Tavel's sermon—*Christian Faith Illustrated by the Faith of Abraham*—reflects this use of Abraham; see note 13 above for bibliographic information.

23. The exception is Whiston, whose discussion of the command to sacrifice Isaac is largely limited to a defense of Abraham's willingness to comply with such a terrible and repugnant directive.

pitched his tent between Bethel and Hai (Genesis 12:8), Clarke, for example, exclaimed, "How few who build houses ever think on the propriety and necessity of building an altar to their Maker! The house in which the worship of God is not established cannot be considered as under the Divine protection."[24] Many of the lessons drawn reflected the early nineteenth century's concern with conversion. Abraham's willingness to leave Ur, for example, was a lesson for all that "*[i]mplicit faith* in the promise of God, and *prompt obedience* to his commands, become us, not only as HIS *creatures,* but as *sinners* called to separate from evil workers and wicked ways, and travel, by that faith which worketh by love, in the way that leads to the paradise of God."[25] Interpreting Abraham's history this way was immensely popular during Joseph's time, and examples to this end from all five commentators could be multiplied "exceedingly."[26]

As flattering as all this may seem for Abraham, it must be noted that these commentators used the lives of all worthy biblical figures in essentially the same way they employed the Abraham narrative—that is, as examples of righteous living. Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and a host of others met the nineteenth century's ideal of a pious man, and the commentators spared no pains pointing out the hundreds of lessons these narratives contained for the aspiring or practicing Christian. Teaching and learning the proper duties of Christian living by using the life stories of pious individuals as guides was such a popular practice during this time that ministers and laymen alike began searching for more modern examples of piety. The result was a unique genre of literature whose subject matter was the lives and dying speeches of exemplary Christians of the colonial and early national periods.[27] Viewed in this context, the commentators' praise for Abraham is a little less flattering. The patriarch was simply one of dozens of good examples of Christian living, ancient and modern, to which people had recourse for instruction but was not really distinctive in any way. His experiences with the divine were instructive but not pivotal or revolutionary.

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24. Clarke, *Holy Bible,* 1:95.
25. Ibid., 1:97.
26. Henry excelled at this didactic method, drawing moral lessons from events ranging from Terah's death in Haran to Abraham's being informed by a Sodomite of Lot's capture. Commenting on the former, Henry intoned, "Many reach to Charran, and yet fall short of Canaan; they are not far from the kingdom of God, and yet never come thither," while the latter demonstrated that "[t]he worst of men, in the day of their trouble, will be glad to claim acquaintance with those that are wise and good." Matthew Henry, *An Exposition on the Old and New Testament . . . with Practical Remarks and Observations* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1853), 1:85, 94.
27. One of the more popular was Sereno Edwards Dwight's *Memoirs of the Rev. David Brainerd; Missionary to the Indians on the Borders of New-York, New-Jersey, and Pennsylvania* (New Haven: S. Converse, 1822). Brainerd's missionary diary was billed as "probably the best manual of christian experience, ever yet published," and the editor opined that the missionary himself "would probably be selected by all denominations of christians as the *holiest missionary,* if not the *holiest man,* of modern times" (Dwight, *Memoirs,* 9, emphases in original). Other examples of this literature include Experience Mayhew, *Indian Converts: or, Some Account of the Lives and Dying Speeches of a considerable Number of the Christianized Indians of Martha's Vineyard, in New-England* (London: n.p., 1727); *The Pleasures of Piety in Youth Exemplified, in the Life and Death of Several Children* (Boston: Lincoln and Edmands, 1819); *Accounts of the Happy Deaths of Two Young Christians* (Boston: Willis, 1819); *Early Instruction Recommended in a Narrative of the Life of Catherine Haldane: with an Address to Parents of the Importance of Religion* (New Haven: Sidney's, 1819), 9, 13–23; George Hendley, *A Memorial for Sunday School Girls, being the Second Part of an Authentic Account of the Conversion, Experience, and Happy Death, of Twenty-five Children* (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1819).

The Abraham of the Latter-day Saints played a far more significant and distinguished role. As an important source of information on such doctrines and issues as the nature of God and the Godhead, premortal life, the creation, the Savior, priesthood, covenants, the purpose of life, and Satan, to name a few, Abraham stood out for Latter-day Saints—at least following the publication of the Book of Abraham—as one of the "noble and great ones" in a sense few of Joseph's fellow Christian ministers could have appreciated.[28] As the recorder of these otherwise lost doctrines and teachings and as the one through whose lineage these and other doctrines of the gospel would be taken to all the world in the latter days, Abraham towered above other biblical figures in the minds of the Latter-day Saints. Far more than just another good example, Abraham, for the Saints, was one of the most important figures in the history of the world, and his relationship with God one of the most pivotal and far reaching.

Abraham the Man

The Book of Abraham commences with Abraham's experiences in Ur and closes with his account of the creation, which information he apparently received prior to entering Egypt during the famine. This corresponds to a mere twenty verses in the Genesis account (Genesis 11:26–12:13). None of Abraham's experiences recounted after Genesis 12:13—including his experiences in Egypt, his relationship with Lot, the birth of his children, and the command to sacrifice Isaac—are mentioned in the Book of Abraham. Relatively few points of contact exist, therefore, between the Abraham of the papyri and the Abraham of Joseph's contemporaries. The points of contact and comparison that do occur, however, demonstrate clearly that Joseph's inspiration for the Book of Abraham was something other than the ideas of his fellow countrymen.

Focus of the Book of Abraham versus Contemporary Emphasis

That so little of Abraham's history is part of the Book of Abraham is noteworthy in itself. While the commentators of Joseph's time drew lessons from virtually every step Abraham took, the events that received their greatest attention took place after his return from Egypt. His magnanimity with Lot, his courage against the kings, his pleading with the Lord in behalf of Sodom—these were the events Joseph's contemporaries dwelt upon. That which received the greatest attention, predictably, was the near-sacrifice of Isaac. The entire text of Whiston's popular "dissertation" revolved around the lessons taught in Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son. Blunt categorized the command to slay Isaac as "Abraham's greatest and severest trial" and prayed that "every portion of this affecting and improving narrative" might be carried to the hearts of his listeners.[29] Clarke, Scott, and Henry had lengthy discourses on the faith and obedience demonstrated in Abraham's willingness to carry out this command and commended this story to their readers with special urgency.[30] If Abraham

28. John Gee has explored the role played by the Book of Abraham in the restoration of the gospel to an extent, but more work needs to be done in this area. See John Gee, "The Role of the Book of Abraham in the Restoration" (transcript, Ancient Scriptures and the Restoration Conference, FARMS, 1997).

29. Blunt, *Twelve Lectures,* 203.

30. Clarke, *Holy Bible,* 1:138–42; Scott, *Holy Bible,* 1:K4–K8; Henry, *Exposition,* 128. Henry concludes his commentary on Abraham's picking up the knife to slay Isaac by crying, "Be astonished, O heavens, at this; and wonder, O earth! Here is an act of faith and obedience, which deserves to be a spectacle to God, angels, and men" (Henry, *Exposition,* 128).

were known for any one thing during Joseph's time, it was his straightforward obedience to this dreadful command—a command the Book of Abraham falls far short of ever addressing.

Covenant in the Book of Abraham versus Contemporary Views

Noteworthy, too, is these commentators' understanding of the covenant God made with Abraham. Using Galatians 3:16 as their guide,[31] all who addressed the topic agreed that the way in which Abraham and his seed would be a blessing to the earth was through the Savior.[32] With the exception of Scott, who quoted an earlier commentator to the effect that much good has been wrought in ages past by many of Abraham's seed,[33] none interpreted this part of the covenant to refer to anyone other than Christ. And even Scott, notwithstanding his insights into all that the seed of Abraham had done in the past, was silent regarding future roles of Abraham's seed. While the Book of Abraham account of this promise (Abraham 2:11) alludes to the Savior as well, its repeated references to "the Priesthood" that would be held by Abraham's seed suggests that many of Abraham's descendants would be involved in taking "the blessings of the Gospel" to "all the families of the earth." Other modern-day revelations do much to flesh out the role that Abraham's seed—individuals and whole tribes—are to play in the salvation of the world.[34]

The commentators also largely agreed in their interpretation of the Lord's covenant promise to give Abraham and his seed the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. Unable to reconcile the promise with the hard fact that Abraham's seed through Isaac was not in possession of Palestine in the early nineteenth century, the commentators went to great lengths to show that the promise of an eternal land of inheritance was not to be taken in the literal, earthly sense. Clarke, for example, argued that the word "forever," as used in God's promise to Abraham, meant "a *hidden, unknown period,* such as includes a *completion or final termination* of a particular *era, dispensation,* &c."[35] Armed with this definition, he was then able to save the Lord from the apparent embarrassment of not having come through on his promise by arguing that "it is literally true that the Israelites possessed the land of Canaan till the Mosaic dispensation was terminated in the complete introduction of that of the Gospel." Even then, he suggested, the whole problem is avoided simply by viewing the phrase "everlasting possession" to refer to the (undefined) "spiritual blessings pointed out by the temporal covenant."[36] Scott, similarly, interpreted "everlasting" in this context to mean "*perpetual,* and *unalterable* [only] *while the same state of things continues*" and argued that Abraham's seed would inherit the land "till the coming of the Messiah, when, according to the whole tenour of prophecy, that state of things was to terminate."[37] Henry, apparently less threatened than the others by the Lord's apparent failure to make good on this promise in the literal sense, made no attempt to find any sort of literal, earthly interpretation for this part of the covenant, arguing that "here, where [the land of Canaan] is promised for an everlasting possession, surely it must be looked upon as a type of heaven's happi-

31. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."
32. Henry, *Exposition,* 86, 129; Clarke, *Holy Bible,* 1:94, 141; Scott, 1:G2, K6.
33. Scott, 1:G1.
34. 2 Nephi 3:4–21; D&C 133:26–34.
35. Clarke, *Holy Bible,* 1:99.
36. Ibid., 1:114.
37. Scott, *Holy Bible,* 1:H6.

ness, that everlasting rest which remains for the people of God."[38] Needless to say, these ideas contrast sharply with that of Abraham 2:6 and other scriptures coming through Joseph Smith, which suggest that God's promise to Abraham regarding land will be very literally fulfilled in the latter days.[39]

The Book of Abraham parted company with nineteenth-century commentators regarding the Abrahamic covenant in at least one other respect. Good Protestants that they were, these men viewed the covenant as evidence for the doctrine of "free justification by faith,"[40] and took some pains to show how Abraham, "[a]s a sinner, . . . was justified before God by faith alone."[41] Abraham 2:11, in contrast—and in keeping with Latter-day Saint theology generally—makes no such claims; indeed, the Book of Abraham avoids the justification question altogether. The Abrahamic Covenant as taught in Abraham 2 is just that—a covenant between God and man in which the Lord promises great blessings, both spiritual and temporal, to those willing to keep his commandments in all things.

Egypt and Stars

Astronomy, Egypt, and the idolatry of the Egyptians play prominent roles in the Book of Abraham. Abraham 1 and 3 are devoted almost entirely to these themes, while two of the three facsimiles (1 and 3) depict high and low points of Abraham's involvement with the Egyptians along these lines. In contrast, the Genesis account mentions very little about Abraham's contact with the Egyptians, limiting its discussion to his and Sarah's brief sojourn there during the famine in Canaan (Genesis 12:10–13:1) and mentioning nothing about idolatry or Abraham's understanding of astronomy. Abraham's involvement with these things is discussed, however, in several nonbiblical sources—sources that were available and known to English and American scholars during the first half of the nineteenth century. These include *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Targum Onqelos,* the writings of Philo Judaeus, the works of Rashi, the Qurʾān, and the works of Josephus. Admittedly, few scholars and even fewer laymen could read these works,[42] but the traditions they contained about Abraham and his knowledge of astronomy or his conflict with idolatry were well enough known to find their way into the talks of several Latter-day Saints in early Utah.[43]

As accessible as these nonbiblical traditions were, the commentators of the time gave them only passing notice—if they noticed them at all. With the exception of Whiston, all the commentators

38. Henry, *Exposition,* 107.

39. In Abraham 2:6, the Lord tells Abraham, "I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice." Compare 2 Nephi 10:7 and Mormon 5:14.

40. Watson, *Biblical and Theological Dictionary,* 12.

41. Scott, *Holy Bible,* 1:K6. Cf. Scott, *Holy Bible,* 1:H5; Henry, *Exposition,* 107; and Bowles, *A Sermon on the Covenant of Grace, which God made with Abraham.*

42. Clarke's impression was that although these traditions were "easily found," few scholars took the time to read them because most were "written in the corrupt Chaldee dialect, and in general printed in the *rabbinical character*" (Clarke, *Holy Bible,* 1:5). This limitation did not apply to the works of Josephus, however, which William Whiston had translated into English in 1737 and which contains interesting traditions about Abraham's stand against idolatry and his teaching arithmetic and astronomy to the Egyptians.

43. John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, comps. and eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), xxiii–xvi.

examined here note Abraham's father's idolatry, apparently using Joshua 24:2 as their source. Watson alone referred to "Arabian and Jewish legends" that speak of Abraham's "early idolatry, his conversion from it, and of his zeal in breaking the images in his father's house" but quickly dismissed these sources as unreliable.[44] None of these commentators mentioned the available traditions concerning attempts to sacrifice Abraham himself, as far as I have been able to find, and only Whiston mentioned human sacrifice in Egypt specifically.[45] Whiston, too, was alone in discussing Abraham's wisdom—meaning his knowledge of arithmetic and astronomy—and his teaching it to the Egyptians.[46] Whiston's alertness to Egyptian idolatry and Abraham's knowledge is nothing remarkable, as he had come across these traditions while translating the works of Josephus. What is remarkable, however, is that Scott, Blunt, Clarke, and Watson, who wrote their commentaries long after Whiston's work was completed, and who had access to numerous other sources discussing Egyptian idolatry and Abraham's knowledge of astronomy, failed to include this information in their own work.[47] Why this material was neglected is hard to say,[48] but it is clear that what little interest had been manifested during colonial times in these and related topics had largely evaporated by the time Joseph Smith acquired the papyri.

Creation

In light of the Genesis and nonbiblical accounts of Abraham's life, the Book of Abraham's emphasis on the creation is even more exceptional than its lengthy discussions on Egypt, idolatry, and astronomy. Two of the Book of Abraham's five chapters are devoted entirely to the creation, yet none of the sources available in the early nineteenth century (at least as far as I am aware) contained any traditions suggesting that Abraham had a detailed knowledge of the creation. If such sources were available, certainly none of the commentators examined here referred to them, suggesting that the idea was completely original (at least as far as Americans living in the early nineteenth century knew) with Joseph Smith.

Sarah

One of the more interesting, if less significant, points of comparison between the Book of Abraham and the commentators is Abraham's telling Sarah to tell the Egyptians that she was his sister rather than his wife. This deception on the part of an otherwise exemplary individual elicited a variety of responses from Joseph's learned countrymen. Henry viewed Abraham's instructions to his wife as "[a] great fault," rooted in a "jealous timorous fancy he had" about how the Egyptians

44. Watson, *Biblical and Theological Dictionary,* 9. Blunt is so bold as to conclude that "in all probability in his earlier years, Abram himself [was] idolatrous." Although he only cites Joshua 24:2 as evidence, his willingness to conclude thus may reflect a familiarity with the numerous nonbiblical traditions that would support this charge. Blunt, *Twelve Lectures,* 4.

45. Whiston appealed to various Greek authors for his information on human sacrifice in Egypt; see "Dissertation," 543.

46. Ibid., 548. In my efforts to find mention of Abraham's familiarity with the stars and his teaching the Egyptians, I examined each commentator's observations on Genesis 12:10–30; 15:5; and 22:17.

47. Henry's commentary predates Whiston's work.

48. My own guess is that such topics had little relevance for a nation preoccupied with personal conversion and proper Christian living.

would respond to Sarah's striking beauty.[49] Scott, similarly, found "the conduct of Abram . . . exceedingly culpable, and inconsistent with the character of 'the father of the faithful.'" "His counsel to Sarai could arise from nothing but distrust and unbelief," he intoned, "[a]nd his language implied a strong dependence on the success of his carnal policy."[50] Jumping to Abraham's defense, Clarke argued that "Abram did not wish his wife to tell a *falsehood,* but he wished her to suppress a part of the *truth,*" while Watson saw the whole affair as "perhaps no more than an act of common prudence, as the Seraglio of the Egyptian monarch was supplied by any means, however violent and lawless."[51] One gets the impression that there were as many interpretations of Abraham's conduct here as there were commentators, but accusers and defenders alike seem to agree that Abraham was acting on his own recognizance at this point.

The Book of Abraham's account of this story, of course, clears Abraham of any wrongdoing by simply pointing out that Abraham was not acting on his own. As the record makes clear, it was the Lord who "informed" Abraham of his wife's beauty, who warned Abraham that the Egyptians would indeed kill him if they knew he was her husband, and who commanded him to have her tell the Egyptians that she was his sister (Abraham 2:22–25). Abraham was obeying, that is, more than he was lying, and that which evoked such strong statements and opinions from among Joseph's learned contemporaries was a nonissue for the Latter-day Saints.

Conclusion

Critics' charges that Joseph Smith borrowed and adapted popular ideas in the production of Latter-day Saint scripture and doctrine are unfounded in the case of the Book of Abraham. The Book of Abraham was published when American interest in the ancient patriarch was very limited. When Abraham was invoked by religious Americans at this time, he was usually being used as an example of pious Christian living and was hardly distinguishable from the hundreds of other such examples—ancient and modern—from which aspiring and practicing Christians were taking their cues. The Book of Abraham recounts very few of the events in Abraham's life that Joseph's contemporaries found most noteworthy but rather focuses on events and topics—like his experiences with idolatry and his knowledge of astronomy—that, although known through nonbiblical sources in the early nineteenth century, received only minimal attention from scholars and laymen outside the church. Had the ideas of his neighbors been Joseph Smith's inspiration for the Book of Abraham, in short, the book would have been a very different thing than it actually is.

49. Henry, *Exposition,* 88.

50. Scott, *Holy Bible,* 1:G2–3.

51. Clarke, *Holy Bible,* 95; Watson, *Biblical and Theological Dictionary,* 10.

Citation Index

Subject Index

Foreign Terms Used in this Volume

(alphabetized according to the conventions of each language)

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