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## A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price: Part 7: The Unknown Abraham

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# The Unknown Abraham

## A New Look at The Pearl of Great Price Part 7

By Dr. Hugh Nibley

● *Neglected Evidence:* Until now, all discussions of the authenticity of the Book of Abraham have been based on the assumption that we have to deal with only *two* really important sources of information: the Book of Abraham and the recently published papyri (*Era*, February 1968). Everyone, it would seem, has taken for granted that if we know what the papyri really say, we are in a position to pass judgment on the authenticity of the Book of Abraham—a proposition diligently cultivated by some who have assumed that a knowledge of Egyptian qualifies one to pass judgment on matters that lie completely outside the field. Such a case might stand up if Joseph Smith had specifically designated particular papyri as the source of his information; but he never did so. Professor Klaus Baer begins and ends his exceedingly valuable study with the assertion that Joseph Smith *thought* he was actually translating the so-called “Breathing Permit.”<sup>1</sup> Such testimony would not hold up for three minutes in any court of law. The only evidence for what the Prophet *thought* is the arrangement side by side of very brief Egyptian symbols and some lengthy sections of the Book of Abraham, which has led some to the hasty conclusion that the one column is a would-be *translation* of the other. But the strange juxtaposition of the two texts is itself the best refutation of the argument that it is supposed to present: everyone we know who has ever looked at the two columns (and that includes many a puzzled student long before anybody knew what the Egyptian characters really meant) has been satisfied that the one could not by any effort of the imagination be a translation of the other. But what Mormon ever said it was? The opposition has simply assumed it

in the face of the clearest evidence to the contrary; and on their own assumption, to which a knowledge of Egyptian has no relevance whatever, they have declared the Book of Abraham a fraud.

Fortunately we have much broader and firmer grounds for testing the Book of Abraham than parapsychological reconstructions of schemes and devices 140 years old. Those grounds are furnished by a wealth of apocryphal sources, mostly Jewish, and an impressive mass of Egyptian and classical references and archaeological material to back them up. The nature of these sources will become evident in the course of discussion, but it will be well to point out some significant aspects of their study at the outset.

1. It is now fairly certain not only that the Bible account of Abraham’s life is very sketchy indeed, but also that there existed anciently much fuller written records of his activity. As Father de Vaux noted in a recent and important study, “We could never write a historical biography of Abraham . . . nor even write a real history of the patriarchal period” on the evidence supplied by the Bible alone.<sup>2</sup> “There is strictly speaking,” wrote Foakes-Jackson years ago, “no material for a connected biography of Abraham, the records being taken from a variety of sources.”<sup>3</sup> It is those lost sources that make up the records to which we referred above: Theodor Boehl recently observed that there is obviously a vast body of source material behind the history of Abraham, but that it is nearly all lost.<sup>4</sup> The discovery of the so-called *Genesis Apocryphon* among the Dead Sea Scrolls not only confirms the existence of a very ancient non-biblical history of Abraham, but also gives us a peep into its contents, which present really surprising

parallels to the Book of Abraham.<sup>5</sup> The world is now willing to accept a proposition that it denounced as blasphemous in Joseph Smith's day: "We must not lose sight of the fact," wrote G. Widengren, "that the Old Testament, as it is handed down to us in the Jewish canon, is only part—We do not even know if the greater part—of Israel's national literature."<sup>6</sup>

2. Both the biblical and apocryphal stories of Abraham contain at least kernels of historical truth. The character of Abraham is so vivid and clear-cut in both traditions, according to Otto Eissfeldt, that he must have been a historical personage.<sup>7</sup> While "the 19th century excluded the possibility that the man Abram or Abraham could have been a real historical person," wrote Martin Buber, today "everyone sees a living person," whose true history, however, "science, lacking other evidence, will only be able to surmise."<sup>8</sup> Gustav von Rad describes this peculiar state of things, which leaves us in the position of the medieval schoolmen, who were completely certain *that* God is, but completely uncertain as to *what* he is: so it is with Abraham today—" . . . in spite of the unprecedented progress of modern archaeology, there is still complete disagreement as to the historical reality underlying the patriarchal narratives."<sup>9</sup> Yet there is no more any doubt that there was and is a historical reality. In a study of "the legend of Abraham," M. Mauss concluded that "a number of scholars are beginning to recognize historical foundations to important parts of the tradition."<sup>10</sup> Today there are at last enough documents in the apocryphal area to be checked against each other, so that the resemblances and differences among them really add up to something. Even apparent contradictions are now constructive, as Albright has pointed out: ". . . reconstructing history is quite impossible unless we have different versions of just what happened at a given time and different reactions of contemporaries or successors. . . . Minor discrepancies do not invalidate historicity; they are necessary concomitants of any true history of man."<sup>11</sup>

3. Taken as a whole, the apocryphal accounts of Abraham, whether in Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, Greek, Old Slavonic, etc., and whether recorded in manuscripts of early or later date, agree in telling *essentially the same story*. This story is *not* found in the Bible, but *is* found in the Book of Abraham—which means that our next point is very important.

4. Joseph Smith knew nothing about these extracanonical sources for the Life of Abraham. (a) They were not accessible to him: E. A. W. Budge made the significant remark that "the letter press [in 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."<sup>12</sup> But what could Joseph Smith

"Abraham qualifies 'to stand as the most pivotal and strategic man in the course of world history.'"

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, mostly in the British Museum, among original manuscripts to which nobody else had access. There were indeed a number of important apocrypha published in Budge's day—but in the 1830's?<sup>12a</sup> Who has access to the apocryphal Abraham materials even today? The first important collection of them was Jellinek's *Bait ha-Midrash*, first published in 1856, and so rare that we had never seen a copy of it until its reprinting in Israel in 1967. Many Abraham sources were first made known to the world in B. Beer's *Leben Abraham's*, which did not appear until 1859. The extensive Arabic sources were first studied by Schuzinger in 1961. Though Hebrew has been taught on the "graduate level" at the BYU for many years, until very recently none of the basic sources have been available there.

(b) The apocryphal Abraham literature was not read in Joseph Smith's day: As a specialist many years later, Budge recognized authentically apocryphal elements in the Book of Abraham, and duly charged Joseph Smith with having *clearly* drawn on them. Yet those sources were unknown to any of his fellow critics of the Book of Abraham; for them, Joseph Smith's account rang no familiar bells. Over and over again they declared the history to be nothing on earth but the purest product of the Prophet's irresponsible imagination, and repeated with monotonous regularity that there was "not one word of truth" in anything he put down. But if the most learned men in the world detected no other source for the Book of Abraham than Joseph Smith's untutored imagination, what are the chances that the young farmer himself would have had any knowledge at all of an obscure and recondite literature never translated into English? Professor Zucker of the University of Utah has done us the service of showing that the influence of Joseph Smith's Jewish friends and instructors, Seixas and Alexander Neibaur, came much too late to have had any influence on the Book of Abraham,<sup>13</sup> and that the Prophet's knowledge of things Jewish before then was less than elementary; indeed, as Professor Zucker puts it, "A Jew was exceedingly rare in northeastern Ohio in those days . . . before November 9, 1835, few of the Mormons had ever knowingly beheld a Jew."<sup>14</sup>

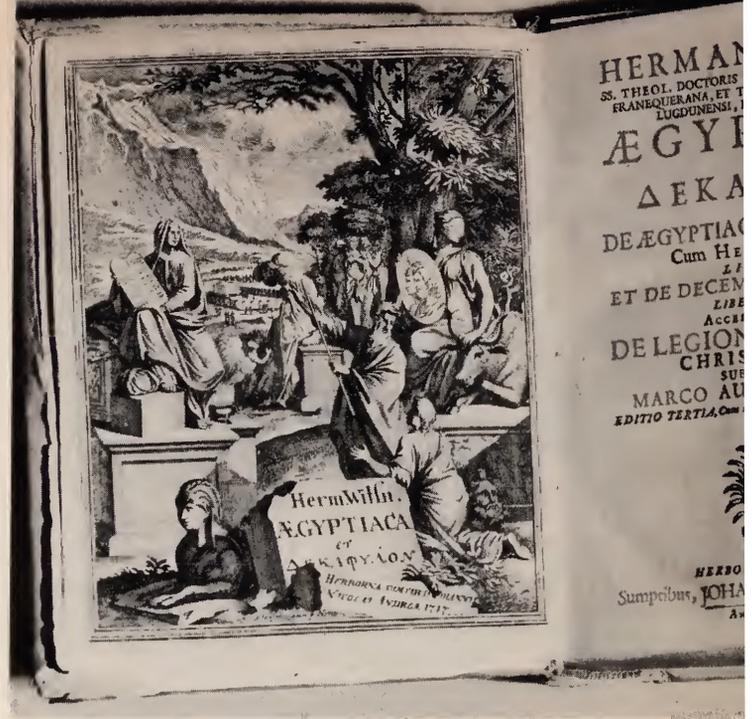
To come down to the present, in 1968 a Jewish

Herman Witz's *Aegyptiaca* (1717) is perhaps the first extensive treatment of the subject of Abraham and the Egyptians; William Hales's *Chronology* (1830) contained everything available to Western scholars in Joseph Smith's time. Neither work would have been of much help to anyone composing *Book of Abraham*.

Rabbi wrote *A Critical Analysis of the Book of Abraham in the Light of Extra-canonical Jewish Writing*, a BYU dissertation, in which for the Life of Abraham he draws upon the Talmud, Josephus, Jubilees, and S. Yetzirah, but makes no mention of any of the sources noted so far in this article or many to follow.<sup>15</sup> Even R. C. Webb, in Chapter 8 of his *Joseph Smith as a Translator*, is impressed only by the contrast between the Book of Abraham and the non-canonical sources available to him, which do not include those really important items. So we ask, if rabbis and researchers in the twentieth century can be excused for not knowing about significant writings about Abraham, what were the chances of Joseph Smith's knowing anything about them? They were nil, though we can confidently predict from past experience that as surely as it begins to appear that the story of Abraham in the Book of Abraham can be matched even in particulars by a number of ancient sources, those same critics who have poured contempt on the total ignorance of Joseph Smith will join Professor Budge in charging the Prophet with having lifted extensively from obscure and recondite sources that even the most learned rabbis had never heard of in the 1830's.

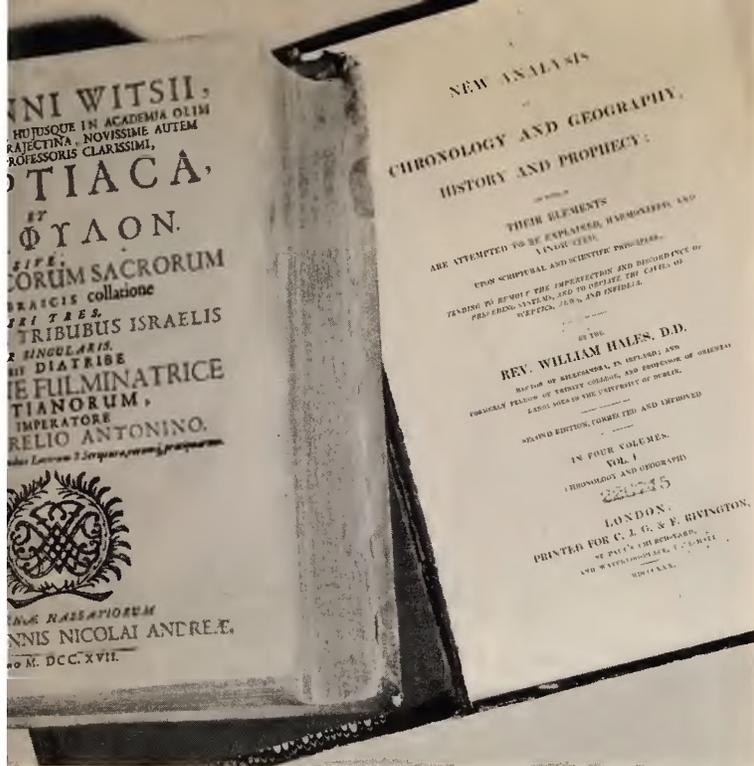
*The Great Debate:* The main theme of the drama of the Book of Abraham is the rivalry between Abraham and a mysterious unnamed king. The king is of "Canaanitish" blood, but he also has enough Egyptian blood to claim the crown of Egypt legitimately. Though four other gods have precedence over "the god of Pharaoh king of Egypt," it is through his Egyptian connections that he "would fain claim . . . the right of the Priesthood" through the line of Ham. Abraham's father was convinced that the claims of the king were legitimate and followed him and his gods.

The rulers of Egypt from the very beginning rested their claim to divine dominion in the earth on the possession of certain documents proving their legitimacy. The most important of such documents were those containing the royal genealogy: it was to preserve them that the "House of Life" was built, and Gardiner even suggested that the main purpose of the Great Pyramid was to house the royal genealogical records on which rested the authority of the king.<sup>16</sup> A recurrent motif in Egyptian literature is the story of the king who spends his days in the temple archives diligently searching for the document that will establish his sure relationship with the gods. The document is never found.<sup>17</sup> Why not? According to the Book of Abraham, the Pharaoh did not possess the all-important papers—because Abraham had them! "But I shall endeavor, hereafter, to 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." (Abr. 1:28. Italics added.) This, then, was a rebuff and check to the ambitions of the king: it was Abraham who actually held the authority he claimed, and the story in the Book of Abraham tells of the showdown between these two rivals for the honor of bearing God's authority on earth.

This brings us to the main theme of the non-canonical traditions of Abraham, which have become the subject of special research in recent years. The theme of these legends is the mortal rivalry between Abraham and an awesome and sinister would-be cosmocrat who is usually designated by the name of Nimrod. The rivalry begins even before the birth of Abraham, when Nimrod's wise men, studying the stars, foretell the birth of one who will in time completely overshadow the power of Nimrod and possess that divine dominion which Nimrod himself has always coveted.<sup>18</sup> "The wise men of Canaan said: 'Behold, Terah will beget a son who will pervert and destroy the precepts of Canaan.'"<sup>19</sup> This is an interesting indication that the issue is to be between Abraham and the people and religion of Canaan, as in the Book of Abraham account. "On the night of Abraham's birth the astrologers at Terah's feast saw a great star that came from the East . . . and swallowed up the four stars at the four corners," i.e. Nimrod's world dominion.<sup>20</sup> In his eagerness to eliminate the infant Abraham, Nimrod authorized a "slaughter of the Innocents" in which, according to some accounts, 70,000 male babies perished.<sup>21</sup> At once we think of Joseph's dream and of the birth of Jesus, and are confronted with the most baffling and fascinating aspect of comparative religious studies: one sees parallels



everywhere; what is one to make of them? Each must be judged on its own merits. History itself is full of the most disturbing parallels—a new classic example is that of the tragic deaths of Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy—which would seem to show that things do tend to fall into patterns. One does not need to regard the star in the East at the birth of Abraham as a borrowing from the New Testament: according to ancient and established teaching, everyone born into the world has his *tālī*, his star in the East; and at no time or place was astrology more diligently cultivated than in Abraham's world. As we shall see, the sacrificing of babies on a huge scale was also part of the picture—no need to trace it to King Herod's outrageous behavior centuries later. Among those things which fall into well-known historical patterns are the atrocities committed by rulers determined to secure their thrones—whole scenes from *Macbeth* and *Richard III* could be switched without jarring the structure of either play.

In all accounts Terah, the father of Abraham, is solidly on Nimrod's side, as in the Book of Abraham version, and is usually presented as a high official at the court. According to the Book of Abraham, Abraham's family had long been following idolatrous practices, "My fathers having turned from their righteousness . . . unto the worshiping of the gods of the heathen. . . . Therefore they turned their hearts to the sacrifice of the heathen in offering up their children unto their dumb idols." (Abr. 1:5, 7.) There is much apocryphal substantiation for these statements. "Abraham," says the Midrash, "had no trust either in the words of his father or in the words of his mother."<sup>22</sup> "When he said to his father and his people: 'What are

these images to which you are so devoted?' they said, 'We found our fathers worshipping them.' He said: 'Indeed you yourselves as well as your fathers have been in manifest error.'"<sup>23</sup> It was especially in the days of Serug, Abraham's great-grandfather, that "the fear of idols came into the world and the making of idols," the people being at that time subjected to the terror and confusion of the great migrations, "without teachers or leaders."<sup>24</sup> And it was especially at Ur that "the prince Mastemah [Satan] exerted himself to do all this, to make the people zealous in the business of idols, and he sent forth other spirits . . . therefore Seroh was called Serug, 'for everyone was turned to do all manner of sin and transgression.'"<sup>25</sup>

There is a strange, almost obsessive, concern with "the fathers" at the beginning of the Book of Abraham: "It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time . . . [from] our first father, through the fathers unto me," etc. (Abr. 1:3-5.) This is just as conspicuous in our extra-canonical sources, and Theodore Reik would trace this fervid appeal to the fathers to an ancestor cult closely resembling the Egyptian system, which crops up in the earliest Jewish tradition but has been consistently discredited and suppressed by the rabbis.<sup>26</sup> The *Genesis Apocryphon* lays great emphasis on "the line of the fathers" (II, 19ff), and the *Manual of Discipline* designates the righteous in Israel as "those who have a claim on the fathers" (IQS 2:9). Recent studies of the name of Abraham point to the dominance of the concept. According to R. deVaux, Abram is a contraction of Abiram, "My father is exalted," the name being found not only in the Canaanitish Ras Shamrah texts but even in Egypt and Cyprus.<sup>27</sup> Albright sees in it Abam-rama, a West-Semitic name meaning "He is exalted with respect to Father," i.e., "He is of distinguished lineage."<sup>28</sup>

But "in the case of Abraham," as Cyrus Gordon puts it, "there can be no God of the fathers, because his father Terah is the pagan parent of the first true believer according to tradition."<sup>29</sup> Recent studies have placed increasing emphasis on Abraham instead of Moses as the true founder of the Jewish religion, but according to the older traditions, he was the restorer rather than the first founder of the faith—the first true believer *since Noah*: "Ten generations from Noah to Abraham," said R. Nathan, ". . . and there was not one of them that walked in the ways of the Holy One until Abraham our father. . . ." The tradition is frequently mentioned, making Abraham the founder of a dispensation, the first man to receive revelation after Noah.<sup>30</sup> Abraham is depicted as Noah's successor, and even as his student, in some of the earliest sources, which report that Abraham studied with Noah

and Shem for 39 years.<sup>31</sup> It is therefore interesting that Abraham in the Book of Abraham is described specifically as the successor of Noah, the new Noah: “. . . 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. . . .” (Abr. 1:18-19.)

Many stories are told of how the infant Abraham was born in a cave and spent his first days, weeks and even years still concealed in a cave to escape the wrath of Nimrod.<sup>32</sup> At the very first the babe was saved when a slave child was sacrificed by Nimrod, who thought it was Abraham, thus introducing us to the *substitute sacrifice*, which plays such an important role in the Abraham epic.<sup>33</sup> Being miraculously nourished in the cave, Abraham grew physically and mentally with supernatural speed, and in a matter of days or weeks he was searching in his mind to know who might be the true creator of things and the god he should worship. He was moved to such contemplations by the sight of the heavenly bodies that he first beheld upon coming out of the cave. Nimrod, apprised by his soothsayers, sent a great army to the cave to destroy Abraham, but a violent sandstorm screened the child from their view and threw them into such confusion and alarm that they retreated in panic back to Babylon—a 40-day march from the cave.<sup>34</sup>

All the cave stories—the desertion by father and mother, visitation and instruction by angels, lone vigils under the stars, miraculous feeding, and so forth—aim at emphasizing the all-important point that Abraham was alone with God, dependent on no man and on no tradition, beginning as it were from scratch. Thus, the babe was nourished by sucking milk and honey from his own fingers, even as he acquired wisdom: When a Jewish child displays great precocity or unaccountable knowledge or insight, it is said, “He gets it out of his fingers, like Abraham.”<sup>35</sup> Everything points up Abraham’s complete break with the past; having no human teachers, he must think things out for himself, until he receives light from above.<sup>36</sup> Intellectually oriented rabbinical Jewry liked to think that Abraham, by purely rational mental processes, arrived at a knowledge of the true nature of God in the manner of the medieval schoolmen, and they depict him demonstrating his wit and his knowledge in formal disputations in which he confounds Nimrod and his wise men with all the old familiar chestnuts of the schools.<sup>37</sup> In the older accounts, however, it is by the light of revelation that he arrives at a knowledge of the truth.<sup>38</sup> But all emphasize that sublime independence which alone qualifies Abraham to stand “as the most pivotal and strategic man in the course of world history.”<sup>39</sup>

When Nimrod’s army got back to Babylon, they found that Abraham had already arrived there before them, miraculously transported by the angel Gabriel, and was busy going about preaching the True God to the people, including his own family, who were duly shocked and alarmed: “Who rules me?” he asked his mother. “I do,” she replied. “And who is your lord?” “Azar [Terah] your father.” And who is the Lord of Azar? “Nemrod.” “And who is the Lord of Nemrod?” “It is dangerous to ask more!”<sup>40</sup> To counteract Abraham’s dangerous influence, which was already undermining his authority, Nimrod, on the advice of his public relations experts, decided to hold a great seven-day feast at which all were required to be in attendance. The officious Terah brought his son to court “to worship Nimrod in his palace,” but instead the youth disputed with the doctors and rebuked Nimrod for not acknowledging God’s authority, and when he placed his hand upon the throne of the king, he caused it to shake violently, so that Nimrod and all his court fell on their faces in terror. After lying paralyzed for the space of two hours, the chastened Nimrod raised his head and asked, “Is it thy voice, O Abraham, or the voice of thy God?” And when he learned the truth he declared, “Verily, the God of Abraham is a great and powerful God, the King of kings.”<sup>41</sup> So Abraham was allowed to depart and secretly spent the next 39 years studying with Noah and Shem.<sup>42</sup>

Thus Nimrod was again bested in his great debate with Abraham on the subject of divine authority. At their first face-to-face meeting, Nimrod cried out to the youth: “My power is greater than that of your God!” And when Abraham observed that his God had power to give life or death, Nimrod in reply uttered his terrible and blasphemous boast: “It is I who give life, and I who take it away!” and demonstrated to Abraham that he had the power to spare the life of a prisoner, subject, or any other human being, or to take it, as he chose. This was the secret of his ancestor Cain and was anciently regarded as the ultimate blasphemy, the unholy power of the man with the gun (Nimrod’s bow) to take or spare life as he chooses. The point of the story, as Schutzinger observes, is that Nimrod is the reverse image of Abraham in everything, being “a projection of the sins of Canaan.”<sup>43</sup> At their first meeting, Nimrod even offered to make Abraham his successor if he would only bow down and worship him—familiar motif!<sup>44</sup> And of course Nimrod is haunted by dreams in which he sees Abraham push him from his throne.<sup>45</sup> According to the Midrash, Abraham and Nimrod are the arch-types of the righteous and the wicked in this world.<sup>46</sup> The two wage a whole series of combats, with Nimrod always the challenger, culminating in his mad attempt

to fly to heaven (or reach it by his tower) and dispatch the God of Abraham with his arrow. But always his monstrous pretention collapses ludicrously and pitifully; his flying machine falls, breaking his arms and legs; his throne collapses; his tower is overthrown by a wind or an earthquake, and so forth. The classic conclusion is when God sends a tiny gnat (the weakest and poorest of creatures) up the mighty Nimrod's nose while he is asleep to tickle his brain and so bring insanity and death.<sup>17</sup> Though he must admit Abraham the victor in the contest, even in his humiliation Nimrod stubbornly insists that his opponent has won not by real divine power but only by trickery and magic—for that is the issue: who has the real priesthood.<sup>18</sup> “I have a better right to the city than you,” Abraham tells Nimrod in the Antar legend, “because it was the seat of my father and my forefathers, before Canaan came and settled here without right.”<sup>19</sup> And so the issue is drawn, each accusing the other of being a false ruler and usurper.

The real showdown with Nimrod began with the affair of the idols, the most famous episode from the youth of Abraham. In *Jubilees*, Terah secretly agrees with his son in deploring the worship of idols; but like many another, he is afraid to buck public opinion and advises Abraham to keep his thoughts to himself and avoid trouble.<sup>50</sup> But Abraham was of sterner stuff and protested in public and in private against the errors of the time, so that he finally had to leave home: “. . . thinking of his father's anger, left him and went from the house.”<sup>51</sup> As long as he was in Mesopotamia, “the people of the Chaldeans and other peoples of Mesopotamia raised a tumult against him”;<sup>52</sup> in particular “the wise men of Chaldea attacked Abraham, our father, for his belief.”<sup>53</sup> It was Abraham against the whole society: “When the people of the land led astray, every man after his own devices, Abraham believed in me and was not led aside after them.”<sup>54</sup>

Archæology has shown in our own day “that Abraham the iconoclast is not merely a children's tale . . . the extensive findings of Mari gods and goddesses, revealing the elaborate and pervasive cult of idolatry.”<sup>55</sup> It was indeed a land of “crass polytheism and demonology, governed by a multitude of priests, diviners, and magicians under the rule of the great temples and their hierarchies. There was no room in that Mesopotamia for an individual who could not join in the worship and in the magical practices of his fellows. Abraham must have felt early the pressing need to remove himself from a stifling environment.”<sup>56</sup> This is exactly the situation when the Book of Abraham opens: “In the land of the Chaldeans, at the residence of my father, I, Abraham, saw that it

was needful for me to obtain another place of residence.” (Abr. 1:1.) “Abraham was alert to the contaminating pagan influence of the ethnic stock from which he came,” wrote D. M. Eichhorn,<sup>57</sup> and Leo Trepp reflects that “Abraham's migration established a great principle: to follow the truth is better than culture . . . the motto of Jewish history.”<sup>58</sup> We must bear in mind in reading the reflections of modern Jewish scholars on the subject that “nowhere in Genesis is there reference to a battle with idolatry, nor do the patriarchs ever appear as reproaching their contemporaries for idolatry. The tension between Israel and the pagan world arises first with Moses.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, the opening verses of the Book of Abraham strike off in a direction completely unfamiliar to biblical tradition.

(To be continued)

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Klaus Baer, “The Breathing Permit of Hoor,” *Dialogue*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Autumn 1968), pp. 111, 133.

<sup>2</sup>R. de Vaux, in *Revue Biblique*, Vol. 72 (1965), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Biblical History of the Hebrews* (Cambridge, 1917), p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>F. M. Th. Bochl, in *Ex Oriente Lux*, Vol. 17 (1963), p. 126, noting that Genesis 14 is a surviving fragment of this lost literature.

<sup>5</sup>N. Avigad & Y. Yadin, *A Genesis Apocryphon* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1956), p. 23: “The scroll explains the story of Sarai and the King of Egypt in a manner different from that of all the midrashim on the subject . . . this interesting legend which is not found in Midrashic or Apocryphal literature and of which there is no other version known to us, should be studied very thoroughly,” coming from the same Essene and Ebionite environment as the Dead Sea Scrolls are the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and the *Testament of Abraham*; also first appearing in this century are the *Cave of Treasures* and the writings on Abraham by Ka'ab al-Akhbar. First published in 1956 in A. Jellinek's *Bat-ha-Midrash* are the *Ma'ase Abraham*, an important *Midrash on Abraham—Our Father*, and a *History of Abraham* from the Pentateuch Commentary of Bekhayi ben Ashi.

<sup>6</sup>G. Widengren, in S. H. Hooke (ed.), *Myth, Ritual and Kingship* (Oxford, 1958), p. 158.

<sup>7</sup>O. Eissfeldt, in *Ex Oriente Lux*, Vol. 17 (1963), p. 160.

<sup>8</sup>Martin Buber, in *Judaism*, Vol. 5 (1956), p. 291. By the time of World War I, “practically all scholars of standing in Europe and America considered these stories fictitious.”—S. H. Horn, in *Christianity Today*, Vol. 12 (1968), p. 925.

<sup>9</sup>G. von Rad, in *Expository Times*, Vol. 72 (1960), p. 215.

<sup>10</sup>M. Mauss, in *Revue des Etudes Juives*, Vol. 82 (1926), p. 35.

<sup>11</sup>W. F. Albright, in *Christianity Today*, Vol. 12 (1968), p. 917.

<sup>12</sup>E. A. W. Budge, cited in *Era*, Vol. 16 (1914), p. 342.

<sup>13</sup>Rev. William Hales, *A New Analysis of Chronology and Geography, History and Prophecy* (London, 1830) in 4 volumes, was the most complete and conscientious work available to contemporaries of Joseph Smith. None of the Oriental sources of episodes of the Abraham story appear in this work. It would have been of no help whatever in writing the Book of Abraham.

<sup>14</sup>L. C. Zucker, in *Dialogue*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Summer 1968), p. 44.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>16</sup>Rabbi Nissim Wernick, *A Critical Analysis of the Book of Abraham in the Light of Extra-Canonical Jewish Writings* (BYU dissertation in the Department of Religious Instruction, 1968).

<sup>17</sup>A. Gardiner, in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Vol. 11 (1925), pp. 3-4.

<sup>18</sup>We discuss this theme later. A classic instance is found at the beginning of the Neferhotep story, with the king and his court diligently searching the archives; M. Pieper, *Die grosse Inschrift des Königs Neferhotep in Abydos* (Leipzig, 1929). “The impression made on the modern mind is that of a people searching in the dark for a key to the truth . . . retaining all lest perchance the appropriate one should be lost”—I. E. S. Edwards, *The Pyramids of Egypt* (Penguin Books, 1952), pp. 27f.

<sup>19</sup>A useful collection and discussion of this phase of the story in H. Schützinger, *Ursprung und Entwicklung der arabischen Abraham-Nimrod Legende* (Bonn: Oriental Seminar, 1961), p. 23. The most instructive single source is the *Ma'ase Abraham* in A. Jellinek, *Bat ha-Midrash* (3rd ed., Jerusalem, 1967), Vol. 1, pp. 25-34; cf. 118-19. The most valuable Arabic version is Ka'f al-Akhbar, Qissah Ibrahim Abinu, in *Revue des Etudes Juives*, Vol. 7 (1920), pp. 37ff. The complete collection of Abraham apocrypha is by M. J. bin Gorion, *Die Sagen der Juden* (Frankfurt, 1919ff.); the Abraham material is mostly in Vol. 2, 1914.

<sup>20</sup>*The Cave of Treasures* (by Ephraim the Syrian), 25:7-9, 11-14.

<sup>21</sup>L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1908-1938), Vol. 1, p. 202. This is all from the *Ma'ase Abraham*.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>23</sup>W. G. Braude, *The Midrash on Psalms* (Yale University, 1959), Ps. 118:11.

<sup>24</sup>Koran, Sura 21:53-55. Traditions recorded in the Koran often go back to very ancient independent Jewish sources; G. Abrahams, *The*

*Jewish Mind* (Boston: Beacon, 1962), p. 49, n. 1.

<sup>21</sup>*Cave of Treasures*, 25:7-9.

<sup>22</sup>*Book of Jubilees*, 11:2-5.

<sup>23</sup>Theodore Reik, *Pagan Rites in Judaism* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1964), pp. 31, 35-39.

<sup>24</sup>R. de Vaux, in *Revue Biblique*, Vol. 72 (1965), pp. 7-8.

<sup>25</sup>W. F. Albright, in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 54 (1935), p. 179, cf. pp. 193-203.

<sup>26</sup>C. Gordon, *Before the Bible* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 257.

<sup>27</sup>A. Wuensche, *Der Midrasch Bereschit Rabba* (Leipzig, 1881), p. 175. The ten generations of silence followed the first ten generations of Patriarchs, F. Hommel, in *Bibl. Arch. Soc. Proc.*, Vol. 15 (1893), p. 243. A much-discussed topic among the Rabbis was, "When did the Fathers cease to be worthy?" *Sabb.*, fol. 55a.

<sup>28</sup>*Sefer ha-Yashar*, c. 24-27, citing *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, Ch. 26 (G. Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* [New York: Hermon, 1965]). The Pseudo-Enoch makes Terah a flood-hero, according to S. Kraeling, in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 66 (1947), p. 292, whose "name could be an abridgment of Atrahasis or Atarhasis," the Babylonian flood hero. In Arabic sources, Terah is regularly called Azar.

<sup>29</sup>Cave stories are collected by B. Beer, *Leben Abraham's* (Leipzig, 1859), pp. 2ff, 102; B. Chapira, in *Revue des Etudes Juives*, Vol. 69

(1919), p. 95; B. Heller, *Revue des Etudes Juives*, Vol. 85 (1928), p. 117; Noel & Millin, *Dizionario*, Vol. 1, p. 33. The motif is part of the tradition of divine kingship, G. Binder, *Die Aussetzung des Königskindes Kyros und Romulus* (Meisenheim/Glau: Hain, 1964), p. 27. *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, Vol. 26, p. 187, says "he was hidden underground for 13 years without seeing the sun or moon."

<sup>30</sup>*S. ha-Yashar*, 24-27; *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, Ch. 26; B. Beer, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup>Sources in Beer, p. 3 (with notes); B. Chapira, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-96, 103; L. Wolf, *Falasha Anthology* (Yale University, 1951), p. 26; Tha'labi, *Qissas al-Anbiya* (Cairo, 1921), p. 51. On the importance of Tha'labi as an early Jewish source, see H. Nibley, in *Revue de Qumran*, Vol. 18 (1965), pp. 177f.

<sup>32</sup>It is even said that God "appointed the two reins of Abraham to act as two teachers and that they . . . taught him wisdom every night," J. Goldin, *The Fathers According to Rabba Nathan* (Yale University, 1955), p. 131.

<sup>33</sup>*Bereshit Rabba*, 39:1; see E. S. Speiser, in *Israel Exploration Journal*, Vol. 8 (1957), p. 21.

<sup>34</sup>A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud* (New York: Dutton, 1949), pp. 1-2; B. Beer, *op. cit.*, p. 86; Tha'labi, *op. cit.*, p. 52; *Koran*, 6:79f.

<sup>35</sup>Convinced that his father was in error, "he began to pray to the Creator of all things that he might save him from the errors of the children



Richard L. Evans

## The Spoken Word

Some laws too seldom considered . . .

**I**n our concern for liberty, and law, and lawlessness, and what is or isn't legal or moral or permissible, there sometimes seems to be too much complexity. The endless process of passing many laws and the endless legal quibbling and contention suggest the need for something simpler—something too seldom considered—even something seldom if ever read or seldom heard by some: something such as the Ten Commandments. While they may not cover all the intricacies of modern life, they do provide the basic principles. "And the Lord came down . . . and . . . called Moses up to the top of the mountain . . . And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him . . . saying:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . .

"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them. . . .

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. . . .

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the

Lord thy God giveth thee.

"Thou shalt not kill.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery.

"Thou shalt not steal.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness. . . .

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, . . . thy neighbour's wife, . . . nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

"And all the people answered together, and said, all that the Lord hath spoken we will do. . . . And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, . . . that ye sin not. . . . And the Lord said, . . . Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven."<sup>1</sup> It is nowhere written, that we know of, that these principles have been repealed—but only added unto, so far as we are aware. And despite all technicalities, all attempt to dispute, to dilute, to rationalize the law, these are the commandments God has given—these, with others from the same source—which would make a good place to begin to solve our problems, to heal the heart-aches, to halt the violence, to clean out the clutter of sin, and to quiet the sorrow in the lives of perplexed people. This is the way; this is the counsel God has given.

<sup>1</sup>See Exodus 19, 20

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of men," *Jubilees*, 11:16f. The early sources of Abraham's conversion are given in G. H. Box, *Apocalypse of Abraham* (1918), pp. 89-96. "But how Abraham became a worshipper of the Lord, or why God singled him out . . . is left to surmise," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, p. 85.

<sup>39</sup>J. M. Adams, *Ancient Records and the Bible* (Nashville, 1946), p. 187. The whole world was in error "until Abraham came and preached the doctrine of immortality," *Nishmat Chayim*, fol. 171.

<sup>40</sup>H. Schützinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-87; B. Chapira, *op. cit.*, p. 96; *Ma'ase Abraham*, in *Bait ha-Midrash*, Vol. 1, pp. 25ff. The dialogue is in Noel, *Dizionario*, Vol. 1, p. 33.

<sup>41</sup>*Ma'ase Abraham*, in *B. H. M.*, Vol. 1, pp. 24-30; L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, Vol. 1, p. 194; Beer, *Leben Abraham's*, p. 5, citing P. R. Eliezer and Jubilees; a twelfth century geniza, cited by B. Chapira, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>42</sup>Beer, *loc. cit.*, citing P. R. Eliezer and S. Hayashar.  
<sup>43</sup>Schützinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 28, 93f, 113f, 126; Tha'labi, pp. 52-53. For sources on Nimrod's boast, Chapira, *REJ*, Vol. 69, p. 106; discussed by us in *Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 2, (1949), pp. 339ff.

<sup>44</sup>Schützinger, p. 178; cf. F. Weber, *System der altsynagogalen Palästinischen Theologie* (Leipzig, 1880), p. 257.

<sup>45</sup>W. G. Braude, *Midrash*, on Ps. 1, 13.

<sup>46</sup>For the series of combats, Schützinger, pp. 96-100, 38f, 110f; for

Nimrod's childishness, G. Weil, *Biblische Legenden der Muselmänner* (Frankfurt, 1845), pp. 51f. Sources for the gnat story are given by D. Sidersky, *Origines des Legendes Mussulmanes dans le Coran et dans les Vies des Prophetes* (Paris, 1933), p. 41.

<sup>47</sup>Sidersky, *loc. cit.* Cf. the fallen Goliath's protest that he has been tricked, in the *Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, Vol. 61, p. 8 (ed. M. R. James, London: SPCK, 1917), p. 235. Terrified by Abraham's challenge, Nimrod cries, "This man is crazy—take him away!" though he is the crazy one; Schützinger, p. 38.

<sup>48</sup>Antar, cited by Schützinger, p. 103.

<sup>49</sup>*Jubilees*, 12:1ff, 6, 8.

<sup>50</sup>L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, Vol. 1, p. 211.

<sup>51</sup>G. H. Box, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, p. 88.

<sup>52</sup>Rab. Saadia, quoted by A. Franck, *The Kabbala* (Hyde Park, N.Y., 1967), p. 31.

<sup>53</sup>*Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, Vol. 23, p. 5.

<sup>54</sup>E. Feldman, in *Tradition*, Vol. 7 (1965), p. 72.

<sup>55</sup>M. H. Segal, in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 52 (1961), p. 45.

<sup>56</sup>D. M. Eichhorn, *Conversion to Judaism* (New York: Ktav, 1965/6), p. 14.

<sup>57</sup>L. Trepp, *Eternal Father, Eternal People* (Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 5.

<sup>58</sup>A. D. Matthews, in *Church Quarterly Review*, 1965, p. 141.

## If I Were Satan

By S. Dilworth Young

*If I were Satan,  
I would not need  
To be on hand to win  
My cause.  
I'd need but to pause  
Long enough  
To whisper in an ear  
Some envious thought,  
Or some thin hint  
Of greedy gain  
From some advantage bought  
By bribing men.*

*I'd hint but once about  
seduction,  
Or power from a rigged  
election.*

*From then the evil men  
Of earth, of their free will—  
God's gift, not mine, perverted  
To my purposes—  
Would win the world for me,  
And circumvent the work  
Of God and Christ.*

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