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## Jewish Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham

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# JEWISH TRADITIONS ABOUT THE EARLY LIFE OF ABRAHAM

SECTION 2







## EXTRACTS FROM PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA

Philo Judaeus, a Jewish priest of the first century A.D., lived in Alexandria, Egypt, and excelled in both Greek philosophy and Jewish lore. Philo interpreted the Bible allegorically to show that it really taught the then-trendy scholarly fad: Middle Platonic philosophy. He uses nonbiblical traditions to support his allegorical interpretation. Philo's thought was largely ignored by Jews but was preserved because a Christian professor at the University of Alexandria, Clement of Alexandria, quoted his work with such approbation. Copies were transmitted and studied, largely by Christians, as a means of reconciling the Old Testament with Greek philosophy. Philo wrote in Greek, and his work mainly survives in the original language, although some Armenian translations are also extant. Several collections have been made of his works. We use the first English translation, which was originally published in 1854 in London: C. D. Yonge, trans., *The Works of Philo*, new rev. version (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993). The numbers at the end of each selection refer to the pages of this edition.

### *De Cherubim (On the Cherubim)*

4. [B]ut while the name of the man was still Abram, or the sublime father, who 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,<sup>1</sup> which mathematical science claims for itself as the most excellent part of natural philosophy, . . .

7. But when Abram, instead of an inquirer into natural philosophy, became a wise man and a lover of God, having his name changed to Abraham, which being interpreted means the great father of sounds; for language when uttered sounds, and the father of language is the mind, which has attained to what is virtuous. (80)

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1. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.

*De Mutatione Nominum (On the Change of Names)*

66. [F]or the name Abram, being interpreted, means “sublime father,” but Abraham means the “elect father of sound”; and how these names differ from one another we shall know more clearly if we first of all read what is exhibited under each of them.

67. Now using allegorical language, we call that man sublime who raises himself from the earth to a height, and who devotes himself to the inspection of high things; and we also call him a haunter of high regions, and a meteorologist, inquiring what is the magnitude of the sun, what are his motions, how he influences the seasons of the year, advancing as he does and retreating back again, with revolutions of equal speed, and investigating as he does the subjects of the radiance of the moon, of its shape, of its waning, of its increase, and of the motion of the other stars, whether fixed or wandering;<sup>2</sup>

68. for the inquiry into these matters belongs not to an ill-conditioned or barren soul, but to one which is eminently endowed by nature, and which is able to produce an entire and perfect offspring; on which account the scripture calls the meteorologist, “father,” inasmuch as he is not unproductive of wisdom.

69. Now the symbols represented by the name of Abram are thus accurately defined; those conveyed under the name of Abraham are such as we shall proceed to demonstrate. The meanings now are three, “the father,” and “elect,” and “of sound.” Now by the word “sound” here, we mean uttered speech; for the sounding organ of the living animal is the organ of speech. Of this faculty we say that the father is the mind, for it is from the mind, as from a fountain, that the stream of speech proceeds. The word “elect” belongs to the mind of the wise man, for whatever is most excellent is found in him;

70. therefore the man devoted to learning and occupied in the contemplation of sublime subjects, was sketched out according to the former characteristic marks, but the philosopher, or I should rather say the wise man, was exhibited in accordance with those of which we have just given an outline.

Think not, then, any longer that the Deity bestows a change of names, but consider that what he gives is a correction of the moral character by means of symbols;

71. for having invited the nature of heaven, and whom some call a mathematician, to a participation in virtue, he made him wise and called him so. For having given an appropriate name to his transformed disposition, he named him, as the Hebrews would call it, “Abraham,” but in the language of the Greeks, “the elect father of sound”;

72. for says he, On what account dost thou investigate the motions and periods of the stars?<sup>3</sup> and why hast thou bounded up so high from the earth to the heavens? Is it merely that you may indulge your curiosity with respect to those matters? And what advantage could accrue to you from all this curiosity? (346–47)

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2. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18; Facsimile 2.

3. Ibid.



*De Somniis (On Dreams, That They Are God-Sent)*

52. Therefore, having left the land of the Chaldaeans, Terah is said to have migrated to Charran; bringing with him his son Abraham and the rest of his household who agreed with him in opinion, not in order that we might read in the account of the historical chronicles that some men had become emigrants, leaving their native country and becoming inhabitants of a foreign land as if it were their own country, but in order that a lesson of the greatest importance to life and full of wisdom, and adapted to man alone, might not be neglected.

53. And what is the lesson? The Chaldaeans are great astronomers, and the inhabitants of Charran occupy themselves with the topics relating to the external senses. Therefore the sacred account says to the investigator of the things of nature, why are you inquiring about the sun, and asking whether he is a foot broad, whether he is greater than the whole earth put together, or whether he is even many times as large? And why are you investigating the causes of the light of the moon, and whether it has a borrowed light, or one which proceeds solely from itself? Why, again, do you seek to understand the nature of the rest of the stars, of their motion, of their sympathy with one another, and even with earthly things?<sup>4</sup>

54. And why, while walking upon the earth do you soar above the clouds? And why, while rooted in the solid land, do you affirm that you can reach the things in the sky? And why do you endeavour to form conjectures about matters which cannot be ascertained by conjecture? And why do you busy yourself about sublime subjects which you ought not to meddle with? And why do you extend your desire to make discoveries in mathematical science as far as the heaven?<sup>5</sup> And why do you devote yourself to astronomy, and talk about nothing but high subjects? My good man, do not trouble your head about things beyond the ocean, but attend only to what is near you; and be content rather to examine yourself without flattery.

[Philo continues by recommending a study of mankind and the function of body parts.]

57. Mount up then to heaven, and talk arrogantly about the things which exist there, before you are as yet able to comprehend, according to the words of the poet, "All the good and all the evil which thy own abode contains"; and, bringing down that messenger of yours from heaven, and dragging him down from his search into matters existing there, become acquainted with yourself, and carefully and diligently labour to arrive at such happiness as is permitted to man.

[Philo continues his polemic, comparing Terah to Socrates, before returning to Abraham.]

4. Ibid.

5. Cf. Abraham 3:6–10; Facsimile 2, figure 1.

60. Of the number of these men is Abraham, who attained to great progress and improvement in the comprehension of complete knowledge; for when he knew most, then he most completely renounced himself in order to attain to the accurate knowledge of him who was the truly living God. (369–70)

*De Abrahamo (On Abraham)*

60. Now he, being an admirer of piety, the highest and greatest of all virtues, laboured earnestly to follow God, and to be obedient to the injunctions delivered by him, looking not only on those things as his commands which were signified to him by words and facts, but those also which were indicated by more express signs through the medium of nature, and which the truest of the outward senses comprehends before the uncertain and untrustworthy hearing can do so;

61. for if any one observes the arrangement which exists in nature, and the constitution according to which the world goes on, which is more excellent than any kind of reasoning, he learns, even though no one speaks to him, to study a course of life consistent with law and peace, looking to the example of good men. But the most manifest demonstrations of peace are those which the scriptures contain; and we must mention the first which also occurs the first in the order in which they are set down.

62. He being impressed by an oracle by which he was commanded to leave his country, and his kindred, and his father's house, and to emigrate like a man returning from a foreign land to his own country, and not like one who was about to set out from his own land to settle in a foreign district, hastened eagerly on, thinking to do with promptness what he was commanded to do was equivalent to perfecting the matter.

66. But this man with a few<sup>6</sup> companions, or perhaps I might say by himself, as soon as he was commanded to do so, left his home, and set out on an expedition to a foreign country in his soul even before he started with his body, his regard for mortal things being overpowered by his love for heavenly things.

67. Therefore giving no consideration to anything whatever, neither to the men of his tribe, nor to those of his borough, nor to his fellow disciples, nor to his companions, nor those of his blood as sprung from the same father or the same mother, nor to his country, nor to his ancient habits, nor to the customs in which he had been brought up, nor to his mode of life and his mates, every one of which things has a seductive and almost irresistible attraction and power, he departed as speedily as possible, yielding to a free and unrestrained impulse, and first of all he quitted the land of the Chaldaeans, a prosperous district, and one which was greatly flourishing at that period, and went into the land of Charran, and from that, after no very distant interval, he departed to another place, which we will speak of hereafter, when we have first discussed the country of Charran.

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6. We have eliminated the dittograph of the word *few*.



68. The aforesaid emigrations, if one is to be guided by the literal expressions of the scripture, were performed by a wise man; but if we look to the laws of allegory, by a soul devoted to virtue and busied in the search after the true God.<sup>7</sup>

69. For the Chaldaeans were, above all nations, addicted to the study of astronomy, and attributed all events to the motions of the stars, by which they fancied that all the things in the world were regulated,<sup>8</sup> and accordingly they magnified the visible essence by the powers which numbers and the analogies of numbers contain, taking no account of the invisible essence appreciable only by the intellect. But while they were busied in investigating the arrangement existing in them with reference to the periodical revolutions of the sun, and moon, and the other planets, and fixed-stars, and the changes of the seasons of the year, and the sympathy of the heavenly bodies with the things of the earth, they were led to imagine that the world itself was God, in their impious philosophy comparing the creature to the Creator.

70. The man 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,<sup>9</sup> and exerting his care and power in behalf of all those parts of it which are worthy of divine superintendence.

71. In order, therefore, that he may the more firmly establish the sight which has thus been presented to him in his mind, the sacred word says to him, My good friend, great things are often made known by slight outlines, at which he who looks increases his imagination to an unlimited extent; therefore, having dismissed those who bend all their attention to the heavenly bodies, and discarding the Chaldaean science, rise up and depart for a short time from the greatest of cities, this world, to one which is smaller; for so you will be the better able to comprehend the nature of the Ruler of the universe.

72. It is for this reason that Abraham is said to have made this first migration from the country of the Chaldaeans into the land of Charran.

75. Any one who considers this, deriving his proofs not from a distance but close at hand, both from himself and from the circumstances around him, will clearly see that the world is not the first God, but that it is the work of the first God and Father of all things, who, being himself invisible, displays every thing, showing the nature of all things both small and great.

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7. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

8. Some of the stories in this collection indicate that God set Abraham straight on this matter by showing him the heavenly bodies.

9. Cf. Abraham 3:3, 12, 19.

77. And the most visible proof of this migration in which the mind quitted astronomy and the doctrines of the Chaldaeans, is this. For it is said in the scriptures that the very moment that the wise man quitted his abode, "God appeared unto Abraham," to whom, therefore, it is plain that he was not visible before, when he was adhering to the studies of the Chaldaeans, and attending to the motions of the stars, not properly comprehending any nature whatever, which was well arranged and appreciable by the intellect only, apart from the world and the essence perceptible by the outward senses.

78. But after he changed his abode and went into another country he learnt of necessity that the world was subject, and not independent; not an absolute ruler, but governed by the great cause of all things who had created it, whom the mind then for the first time looked up and saw.

81. And there is evidence in support of what has here been said to be derived from the change and alteration of his name: for he was anciently called Abram, but afterwards he was named Abraham: the alteration of sound being only that which proceeds from one single letter, alpha, being doubled, but the alteration revealing in effect an important fact and doctrine;

82. for the name Abram being interpreted means "sublime father"; but Abraham signifies, "the elect father of sound." The first name being expressive of the man who is called an astronomer, and one addicted to the contemplation of the sublime bodies in the sky, and who was versed in the doctrines of the Chaldaeans, and who took care of them as a father might take care of his children.

83. But the last name intimating the really wise man; . . .

91. [T]here having been a barrenness and scarcity of crops for a long time, owing to a long and immoderate period of rain which prevailed at one time, and to a great drought and heat which ensued afterwards. The cities of Syria being oppressed by a long continuance of famine,<sup>10</sup> became destitute of inhabitants, all of them being dispersed in different directions for the purpose of seeking food and providing themselves with necessaries.

92. Therefore, Abraham, hearing that there was unlimited abundance and plenty in Egypt, since the river there irrigated the fields with its inundations at the proper season, and since the winds by their salutary temperature brought up and nourished rich and heavy crops of corn, rose up with all his household to quit Syria and to go thither.

93. And he had a wife of a most excellent disposition, who was also the most beautiful of all women of her time. The Egyptian magistrates, seeing her and admiring her exquisite form, for nothing ever<sup>11</sup> escapes the notice of men in authority, gave information to the king.

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10. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5.

11. We have corrected from the edition's "every."



94. And the king, sending for the woman and beholding her extreme beauty, gave but little heed to the dictates of modesty or to the laws which had been established with respect to the honour due to strangers, but yielding to his incontinent desires, conceived the intention in name, indeed, to marry her in lawful wedlock, but, in fact to seduce and defile her.

95. But she, being destitute of all succour, as being in a foreign land, before an incontinent and cruel-minded ruler (for her husband had no power to protect her, fearing the danger which impended over him from princes mightier than he), at last, with him, took refuge in the only alliance remaining to her, the protection of God.

96. And the merciful and gracious God, who takes compassion on the stranger, and who fights on behalf of those who are unjustly oppressed, inflicted in a moment painful sufferings and terrible chastisements on the king, filling his body and soul with all kinds of miseries difficult to be escaped or remedied, so that all his inclinations tending to pleasure were cut short, and, on the contrary, he was occupied with nothing but cares, seeking an alleviation from his endless and intolerable torments by which he was harassed and tortured day and night;

97. and his whole household also received their share of his punishment, because none of them had felt any indignation at his lawless conduct, but had all consented to it, and had all but co-operated actively in his iniquity.

98. In this manner the chastity of the woman was preserved, and God condescended to display the excellence and piety of her husband, giving him the noblest reward, namely, his marriage free from all injury, and even from all insult, so as no longer to be in danger of being violated; a marriage which however was not intended to produce any limited number of sons and daughters—the most God-loving of all nations—and one which appears to me to have received the offices of priesthood and prophecy on behalf of the whole human race.<sup>12</sup>

[After discussing the commandment Abraham received to sacrifice Isaac and noting that some people had the habit of sacrificing their children (pars. 180–86)]:

188. We must investigate, therefore, whether Abraham was under the influence of any one of the aforesaid motives, custom, or love of glory, or fear, when he was about to sacrifice his son.

Now Babylon and Mesopotamia, and the nation of the Chaldaeans, do not receive the custom of sacrificing their children;<sup>13</sup> and these are the countries in which Abraham had been brought up and had lived most of his time; so that we cannot imagine that his sense of the misfortune that he was commanded to inflict upon himself was blunted by the frequency of such events. (416–19, 427)

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12. Cf. Abraham 1:2–3, 18; 2:9, 11; Facsimile 2, figure 3; Facsimile 3, figure 1.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

*Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin, III (Questions and Answers on Genesis, III)*

1. What is the meaning of the expression, "I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of the Chaldaeans to give thee this land for an inheritance"?<sup>14</sup>

As the literal statement is plain enough, we need only consider the inner meaning, which was meant to be interpreted in this manner.

The law of the Chaldaeans taken symbolically is mathematical speculation, one part of which is recognised to be astronomy, which the Chaldaeans study with great industry and with great success. Therefore God is here honouring the wise man with a gift; in the first place, by taking men out of the sect of the astrologers, that is to say, away from the hallucinations of the Chaldaeans, which, as they are difficult to detect and refute, are found to be the cause of great evils and wickedness, since they ascribe the attributes of the Creator to created things, and persuade men to worship and to venerate the works of the world as God.

In the second place, God honours him by granting to him the wisdom which bears fruit, which he has here symbolically called the earth; but the Father of the universe shows that wisdom and virtue are invariable and immutable, since it is not consistent with his character that God should show to any one that which can undergo any variation or change, for that which is shown by the being who is immutable and consistent must be so too; but that which is liable to change, as being incessantly in the habit of suffering variation, admits of no proper or divine demonstration.

42. What is the meaning of, "And God conversed with him, saying, And I, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of nations"?<sup>15</sup>

Since he had previously used the expression, "treaty," he now proceeds to say, do not seek that treaty in letters, since I myself, in accordance with what has been said before, am myself the genuine and true covenant.

For after he has shown himself and said, "I," he makes an addition, saying, "Behold, my covenant," which is nothing but I myself; for I am myself my covenant, according to which my treaty and agreement are made and agreed to, and according to which again all things are properly distributed and arranged. Now the form of this prototypal treating is put together from the ideas and incorporeal measures and forms in accordance with which this world was made. Is it not therefore a climax to the benefits which the Father bestowed on the wise man, to raise him up and conduct him not only from earth to heaven,<sup>16</sup> nor only from heaven to the incorporeal world appreciable only by the intellect, but also to draw him up from this world to himself, showing himself to him, not as he is in himself, for that is not possible but as far as the visual organs of the beholder who beholds virtue herself as appreciable by the intellect are able to attain to.

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14. Citing Genesis 15:7.

15. Citing Genesis 17:4.

16. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18.



And it is on this account that he says, "Be no more a son but a father; and the father, not of one individual but of a multitude; and of a multitude, not according to a part, but of all nations"; therefore of the revealed promises two admit of a literal interpretation, but the third of one which is rather spiritual. One of those which admit of a literal interpretation is to be construed in this way: in truth thou shalt be the father of nations, and shalt beget nations, that is to say, each individual among thy sons shall be the founder of a nation.

But the second is of this kind; like a father you shall be clothed with power over, and authority to rule, many nations; for a lover of God is necessarily and at once also a lover of men; so that he will diligently devote his attention, not only to his relations but also to all mankind, and especially to those who are able to go through the discipline of strict attention, and who are of a disposition the reverse of anything cruel or hard, but of one which easily submits to virtue, and willingly gives obedience to right reason.

43. What is the meaning of, "Thy name shall not be called Abram, but Abraham shall thy name be"?<sup>17</sup> . . .

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;<sup>18</sup> but wisdom has reference to 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. . . .

Therefore the dissyllabic name Abram is explained as meaning "excellent father," on account of his affinity to the knowledge of sublime wisdom, that is, astronomy and mathematics. But the trisyllabic name Abraham is interpreted "the father of elect sound," being the name of a really wise man; . . . and the father of such a sound is our intellect, and elect intellect is endued with virtue. (841, 854–56)

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17. Citing Genesis 17:5.

18. Cf. Abraham 3:4–10.



## EXTRACTS FROM PIRQE DE RABBI ELIEZER

The Hebrew text *Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer* is attributed to Rabbi Eliezer, son of Hyrkanos, who lived from the mid-first century A.D. through the first decades of the second century. He is the most frequently quoted of the rabbis in the Mishnah and the Talmud. No matter how ancient the traditions reflected in the book, the earliest known manuscript dates to the twelfth or thirteenth century and was probably prepared in Spain. Some fragments also came from the Cairo Genizah, where the first copy of the *Damascus Document*, later discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls, was found. The book is polemical, meant to discuss or even refute the current thought of its day, and it enjoyed great popularity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Hebrew text was first published in Constantinople in 1514. Here, we use the first English translation, Gerald Friedlander, trans., *Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer* (New York: Hermon, 1965), 111, 175–76, 187–91, 198. We have removed the diacritics since they do not follow current usage.

### Chapter 16

The steward of Abraham's household was his servant Eliezer, and whence was his servant? When (Abraham) went forth from Ur of the Chaldees all the magnates of the kingdom came to give him gifts; and Nimrod took his first-born (son) Eliezer and gave him to (Abraham) as a perpetual slave.

### Chapter 24

Nimrod said to his people: Come, let us build a great city for ourselves, and let us dwell therein, lest we be scattered upon the face of all the earth, as the first people (were). Let us build a great tower in its midst, ascending to heaven, for the power of the Holy One, blessed be He, is only in the water, and let us make us a great name on the earth, as it is said, "And let us make us a name."<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Phineas said: There were no stones there wherewith to build the city and the tower. What did they do? They baked bricks and burnt them like a builder (would do), until they built it seven miles high, and it had ascents on its east and west. (The labourers) who took up the bricks went up on the eastern (ascent), and those who descended went down on the western (descent). If a man fell and died they paid no heed to him,

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1. Citing Genesis 11:4.

but if a brick fell they sat down and wept, and said: Woe is us! when will another one come in its stead?

And Abraham, son of Terah, passed by, and saw them building the city and the tower, and he cursed them in the name of his God, as it is said, "Swallow up, O Lord, divide their language."<sup>2</sup> But they rejected his words, like a stone cast upon the ground.

## Chapter 26

Our father Abraham was tried with ten trials, and he stood firm in them all. The first trial was when our father Abraham was born; all the magnates of the kingdom and the magicians sought to kill him, and he was hidden under the earth for thirteen years without seeing sun or moon. After thirteen years he went forth from beneath the earth, speaking the holy language; and he despised idols and held in abomination the graven images,<sup>3</sup> and he trusted in the shadow of his Creator,<sup>4</sup> and said: "Blessed is the man who trusts in thee."<sup>5</sup>

The second trial was when he was put into prison for ten years—three years in Kuthi, seven years in Budri. After ten years they sent and brought him forth and cast him into the furnace of fire, and the King of Glory put forth His right hand and delivered him from the furnace of fire,<sup>6</sup> as it is said, "And he said to him, I am the Lord who brought thee out of the furnace of the Chaldees."<sup>7</sup> Another verse (says), "Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of the furnace of the Chaldees."<sup>8</sup>

The third trial was his migration from his father's house and from the land of his birth; and He brought him to Haran, and there his father Terah died, and Athrai his mother. Migration is harder for man than for any other creature. Whence do we know of this migration? Because it is said, "Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out."<sup>9</sup>

The fourth trial (was the famine). From the day when the heavens and the earth were created, the Holy One, blessed be He, had not brought into the world a famine but only in the days of Abraham, and not in any of the lands but only in the land of Canaan, in order to try him and to bring him down into Egypt, as it is said, "And there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down into Egypt."<sup>10</sup>

The fifth trial was when Sarah his wife was taken to Pharaoh to be (his) wife. And is there any man, who seeing his wife taken away to another man, would not rend his garments? But (he trusted in the Holy One, blessed be He,) that he would not approach

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2. Citing Psalm 55:9.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6, 16–17, 27.

4. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

5. Citing Psalm 84:12.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

7. Citing Genesis 15:7. The reading "furnace" is based on the understanding that the word *Ur* is to be read as "fire."

8. Citing Nehemiah 9:7.

9. Citing Genesis 12:1.

10. Citing Genesis 12:10.



her. Whence do we know that Sarah was taken to Pharaoh to be his wife? Because it is said, "And the princes of Pharaoh saw her."<sup>11</sup>

Rabbi Joshua, son of Korchah, said: In that night when our mother Sarah was taken, it was Passover night, and the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon Pharaoh and upon his house great plagues, to make known that thus in the future would He smite the people of his land, as it is said, "And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great *plagues*."<sup>12</sup> Concerning the Egyptians it is written, "yet one *plague* more will I bring upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt."<sup>13</sup> Was this a plague? Was it not (the slaying of) the first-born of the Egyptians? But the slaying is compared with the plagues, therefore it is said, "And the Lord *plagued* Pharaoh."<sup>14</sup>

Rabbi Joshua ben Korchah said: Because of his love for her, (Pharaoh) wrote in her marriage document (giving her) all his wealth, whether in silver, or in gold, or in manservants, or land, and he wrote (giving) her the land of Goshen for a possession. Therefore the children of Israel dwelt in the land of Goshen, in the land of their mother Sarah. He (also) wrote (giving) her Hagar, his daughter from a concubine, as her handmaid. And whence do we know that Hagar was the daughter of Pharaoh? Because it is said, "Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children; and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar."<sup>15</sup> Pharaoh rose up early in the morning confused because he had not approached her, and he sent and called Abraham, and said to him: Behold, Sarai thy wife is before thee, and all the deeds of her marriage contract are with her, take (her) and go, do not tarry in this land, as it is said, "Now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go."<sup>16</sup> "And Pharaoh gave men charge concerning him, and they sent him forth."<sup>17</sup> And he had Abraham led so as to come to the land of Canaan.

## Chapter 28

Rabbi<sup>18</sup> said: The Holy One, blessed be He, brought Abraham outside (his house) on the night of Passover, and He said to him: Abraham! Hast thou the ability to count all the host of heaven? He said before Him: Sovereign of all worlds! Is there then a limit to Thy troops (of angels)? He said to him: Likewise thy seed shall not be counted owing to their great number, as it is said, "And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be."<sup>19</sup>

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11. Citing Genesis 12:15.

12. Citing Genesis 12:17.

13. Citing Exodus 11:1.

14. Citing Genesis 12:17.

15. Citing Genesis 16:1.

16. Citing Genesis 12:19.

17. Citing Genesis 12:20.

18. Translator's note: "*i.e.* Jehuda the Prince. The first editions read: 'Rabbi Jehuda.'" Rabbi Jehuda (Judah) compiled the Mishnah, also included in this collection.

19. Citing Genesis 15:5.

## EXTRACTS FROM JOSEPHUS

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish priest and general who witnessed the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70. One of his major works was *Antiquities of the Jews*, which recounts stories known from the Bible and other Jewish (and some Greek) literature from the time of Adam until the mid-first century. Josephus wrote *Antiquities* in Greek while living in Rome. His work was preserved by the Christians, partly because of Eusebius's high opinion of Josephus's writings. The Greek text was first published in Basel in 1544. The first English edition appeared in 1602, translated by Thomas Lodge. The Abrahamic passages used here are extracted from William Whiston's translation of *Antiquities*, first published in 1737 and reprinted frequently since then.

### Book I

#### Chapter 6

5. Now Abram had two brethren, Nahor and Haran: of these Haran left a son, Lot; as also Sarai and Milcha his daughters; and died among the Chaldeans, in a city of the Chaldeans, called Ur; and his monument is shewn to this day. These married their nieces. Nahor married Milcha, and Abraham married Sarai. Now Terah, hating Chaldea, on account of his mourning for Haran, they all removed to Haran of Mesopotamia, where Terah died, and was buried, when he had lived to be two hundred and five years old.

[Here follows information on Nahor's descendants.]

#### Chapter 7

1. Now Abram, having no son of his own, adopted Lot, his brother Haran's son, and his wife Sarai's brother; and he left the land of Chaldea when he was seventy-five years old, and at the command of God went into Canaan, and therein he dwelt himself, and left it to his posterity. He was a person of great sagacity, both for understanding all things and persuading his hearers, and not mistaken in his opinions; for which reason he began to have higher notions of virtue than others had, and he determined to renew and to change the opinion all men happened then to have concerning God; for he was the first that ventured to publish this notion, That there was but one God, the Creator of the universe; and that, as to other [gods], if they contributed anything to the happiness of men, that each



of them afforded it only according to his appointment, and not by their own power. This his opinion was derived from the irregular phenomena that were visible both at land and sea, as well as those that happen to the sun, and moon, and all the heavenly bodies, thus:<sup>1</sup>—"If [said he] 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 in 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." For which doctrines, when the Chaldeans and other people of Mesopotamia raised a tumult against him, he thought fit to leave that country; and at the command, and by the assistance of God, he came and lived in the land of Canaan. And when he was there settled, he built an altar, and performed a sacrifice to God.

2. Berosus 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."<sup>2</sup> But Hecataeus<sup>3</sup> does more than barely mention him; for he composed and left behind him a book concerning him. And Nicolaus of Damascus, in the fourth book of his history, says thus:—"Abram reigned at Damascus, being a foreigner, who came with an army out of the land above Babylon, called the land of the Chaldeans. But after a long time he got him up, and removed from that country also with his people, and went into the land then called the land of Canaan, but now the land of Judea, and this when his posterity were become a multitude; as to which posterity of his we relate their history in another work. Now the name of Abram is even still famous in the country of Damascus; and there is shewn a village named from him, *The Habitation of Abram*."

## Chapter 8

1. Now after this, when a famine had invaded the land of Canaan, and Abram had discovered that the Egyptians were in a flourishing condition, he was disposed to go down to them, both to partake of the plenty they enjoyed, and to become an auditor of their priests, and to know what they said concerning the gods; designing either to follow them, if they had better notions than he, or to convert them into a better way, if his own notions proved the truest. Now, seeing he was to take Sarai with him, and was afraid of the madness of the Egyptians with regard to women, lest the king should kill him on occasion of his wife's great beauty, he contrived this device:—he pretended to be her brother, and directed her in a dissembling way to pretend the same, for he said it would be for their benefit. Now, as soon as he came into Egypt, it happened to Abram as he supposed it would; for the fame of his wife's beauty was greatly talked of; for which reason Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, would not be satisfied with what was reported of her, but

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

2. Ibid.

3. Extracts from the account of Hecataeus are included in the Earliest section of this volume.



would needs see her himself, and was preparing to enjoy her; but God put a stop to his unjust inclinations, by sending upon him a distemper, and a sedition against his government. And when he inquired of the priests how he might be freed from these calamities, they told him that this his miserable condition was derived from the wrath of God, upon account of his inclinations to abuse the stranger's wife. He then out of fear asked Sarai who she was, and who it was that she brought along with her. And when he had found out the truth, he excused himself to Abram, that supposing the woman to be his sister, and not his wife, he set his affections on her, as desiring an affinity with him by marrying her, but not as incited by lust to abuse her. He also made him a large present in money, and gave him leave to enter into conversation with the most learned among the Egyptians; from which conversation, his virtue and his reputation became more conspicuous than they had been before.

2. For whereas the Egyptians were formerly addicted to different customs, and despised one another's sacred and accustomed rites, and were very angry one with another on that account, Abram conferred with each of them, and confuting the reasonings they made use of every one for their own practices, demonstrated that such reasonings were vain and void of truth; whereupon he was admired by them in those conferences as a very wise man, and one of great sagacity, when he discoursed on any subject he undertook; and this not only in understanding it, but in persuading other men also to assent to him. He communicated to them arithmetic, and delivered to them the science of astronomy;<sup>4</sup> for, before Abram came into Egypt, they were unacquainted with those parts of learning; for that science came from the Chaldeans into Egypt, and from thence to the Greeks also.

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4. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE BAHIR

The *Bahir* (or Illumination) was compiled at the end of the twelfth century in southern France from older fragmentary manuscripts attributed to the first-century Rabbi Nehunia ben ha-Kana and other early rabbis. That the work is a compilation is indicated by the disjointed extant text, which sometimes breaks off midsentence. The *Bahir* is one of the earliest kabbalistic works; portions of it appear to come from a much earlier work, the *Sefer Raza Rabbah*. The *Bahir* also contains some gnostic elements. It is written in a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic. Flavius Mitridates translated the *Bahir* into Latin at the end of the fifteenth century. The *Bahir* was first published by a Christian scholar in 1651. We use the first English translation, which is by Aryeh Kaplan, trans., *The Bahir* (York Beach, Maine: Weiser, 1989), 75, 77.

[Commenting on the light of Genesis 1:3:]

190. This is the measure of all merchandise (*Sechorah*) in the world. It is also the power of the precious stones that are called *Socheret* and *Dar*.<sup>1</sup>

And upon what is the attribute of *Dar*?

This teaches us that God took a thousandth of its radiance, and from it He constructed a beautiful precious stone. In it He included all the commandments.

Abraham came, and He sought a power to give him.<sup>2</sup> He gave him this precious stone,<sup>3</sup> but he did not want it. He was worthy and took Kindness as his attribute, as it is written, "Kindness to Abraham."<sup>4</sup>

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1. These stones are mentioned in Esther 1:6 and TB *Megillah* 12a, which is a commentary on the Esther passage. The KJV renders the words *dar* and *socheret* as white and black, respectively; Esther 1:6 is the only place either word is used in the Hebrew Bible.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:2, 4.

3. Cf. Abraham 3:1, 4.

4. Citing Micah 7:20.

192. [It is written that Abraham kept], “My commandments, My decrees, and My Torahs.”<sup>5</sup> He said, “Since I do not want [the precious stone], I will keep all the commandments that are included in it.”<sup>6</sup>

What is the meaning of “My Torahs”? This teaches us that he knew and kept even the decisions (*Horah*) and discussions that are taught on high.<sup>7</sup>

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5. Citing Genesis 26:5.

6. Cf. Abraham 3:1, 4.

7. Cf. the discussion of the heavens in Abraham 4–5.



## EXTRACTS FROM THE APOCALYPSE OF ABRAHAM

The *Apocalypse of Abraham* is thought to have been composed in Hebrew in Palestine in the first or second century A.D. The document survives today in Russian redactions of Old Church Slavonic, dating from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries. The author of the text seems to be using the narrative to explain why Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. The first publication of the Slavonic text appeared in Russia in 1863, and it was translated into German in 1897. The first English version appeared in the Latter-day Saint periodical, the *Improvement Era*, in 1898.<sup>1</sup> The translation used here is by R. Rubinkiewicz in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:689–705.

The Book of the Apocalypse of Abraham, son of Terah, son of Nahor, son of Serug, son of Arphaxad, son of Shem, son of Noah, son of Lamech, son of Methuselah, son of Enoch, son of Jared.

### Chapter 1

1. On the day I was guarding the gods of my father Terah<sup>2</sup> and the gods of my brother Nahor, while I was testing (to find out) which god is in truth the strongest,
2. I (then) Abraham, at the time when my lot came, when I was completing the services of my father Terah's sacrifice to his gods of wood, of stone, of gold, of silver, of copper, and of iron,<sup>3</sup>
3. having entered their temple for the service, I found a god named Marumath, carved from stone, fallen at the feet of the iron god Nakhin.
4. And it came to pass, that when I saw it my heart was perplexed and I thought in my mind that I, Abraham, could not put it back in its place alone, because it was heavy, (being made) of a big stone.
5. But I went and told my father, and he came in with me.

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1. The first English selections of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* were published as "The Book of the Revelation of Abraham: A Translation," trans. E. H. Anderson and R. T. Haag, *Improvement Era* 1 (August–September 1898): 705–14, 793–806. The translators used G. Nathanael Bonwetsch's then unpublished German translation of the original.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

6. And when we both lifted it to put it in its place, its head fell off, even while I was holding it by its head.<sup>4</sup>

7. And it came to pass, when my father saw that the head of his god Marumath had fallen, he said to me, "Abraham!" And I said, "Here I am!"

8. And he said to me, "Bring me the axes and chisels from the house." And I brought them to him from the house.

9. And he cut another Marumath from another stone, without a head, and he smashed the head that had fallen off Marumath and the rest of Marumath.

## Chapter 2

1. He made five other gods and he gave them to me and ordered me to sell them outside on the town road.

2. I saddled my father's ass and loaded them on it and went out on the highway to sell them.

3. And behold, merchants from Phandana of Syria were coming with camels, on their way to Egypt to buy *kokinol* from the Nile.

4. I asked them a question and they answered me. And walking along I conversed with them. One of their camels screamed. The ass took fright and ran away and threw off the gods. Three of them were crushed and two remained (intact).

5. And it came to pass that when the Syrians saw that I had gods, they said to me, "Why did you not tell us that you had gods? We would have bought them before the ass heard the camel's voice and you would have had no loss.

6. Give us at least the gods that remain and we will give you a suitable price."

7. I considered it in my heart. And they paid both for the smashed gods and the gods which remained.

8. For I had been grieving in my heart how I would bring payment to my father.

9. I threw the three broken (gods) into the water of the river Gur, which was in this place. And they sank into the depths of the river Gur and were no more.

## Chapter 3

1. As I was still walking on the road, my heart was disturbed and my mind distracted.

2. I said in my heart, "What is this inequality of activity which my father is doing?

3. Is it not he rather who is god for his gods, because they come into being from his sculpting, his planing, and his skill?

4. They ought to honor my father because they are his work. What is this food of my father in his works?

5. Behold, Marumath fell and could not stand up in his sanctuary, nor could I myself lift him until my father came and we raised him up.

6. And even so we were not able (to do it) and his head fell off of him. And he put it on another stone of another god, which he had made without a head.

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4. Cf. 1 Samuel 5:1-5.



7. And . . .<sup>5</sup> the other five gods which got smashed (in falling) from the ass, who could not save themselves and injure the ass because it smashed them, nor did their shards come up out of the river.”<sup>6</sup>

8. And I said to my heart, “If it is so, how then can my father’s god Marumath, which has the head of another stone and which is made from another stone, save a man, or hear a man’s prayer, or give him any gift?”

#### Chapter 4

1. And thinking thus, I came to my father’s house. And I watered the ass and gave him hay. And I took out the silver and placed it in the hand of my father Terah.

2. And when he saw it, he was glad, and he said, “You are blessed, Abraham, by the god of my gods, since you have brought me the price for the gods, so that my labor was not (in) vain.”

3. And answering I said to him, “Listen, father Terah! The gods are blessed in you, because you are a god for them, because you made them, for their blessing is their perdition and their power is vain.

4. They did not help themselves; how then can they help you or bless me?

5. I was good for you in this transaction, for through my good sense I brought you the silver for the smashed (gods).”

6. And when he heard my speech he became furiously angry with me, because I had spoken harsh words against his gods.

#### Chapter 5

1. But having pondered my father’s anger, I went out. And afterward when I had gone out, he called me, saying, “Abraham!”

2. And I said, “Here I am!”

3. And he said, “Up, gather wood chips, for I was making gods from fir before you came, and prepare with them food for my midday meal.”

4. And it came to pass, when I was choosing the wooden chips, I found among them a small god which would fit . . .<sup>7</sup> in my left hand.

5. And on its forehead was written: god Barisat.

6. And it came to pass when I put the chips on the fire in order to prepare the food for my father, and going out to inquire about the food, I put Barisat near the enkindling fire, saying to him threateningly,

7. “Barisat, watch that the fire does not go out before I come back! If the fire goes out, blow on it so it flares up.”

8. I went out and I made my counsel.

9. When I returned, I found Barisat fallen on his back, his feet enveloped by fire and burning fiercely.

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5. Translator’s ellipsis points; he notes: “Corrupt; perhaps ‘he made’ is omitted.”

6. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

7. Translator’s ellipsis points; he notes: “Slav[onic] *vŭ oslony*, meaning unknown.”

10. And it came to pass when I saw it, I laughed (and) said to myself, "Barisat, truly you know how to light a fire and cook food!"

11. And it came to pass while saying this in my laughter, I saw (that) he burned up slowly from the fire and became ashes.

12. I carried the food to my father to eat.

13. I gave him wine and milk, and he drank and he enjoyed himself and he blessed Marumath his god.

14. And I said to him, "Father Terah, do not bless Marumath your god, do not praise him! Praise rather Barisat, your god, because, as though loving you, he threw himself into the fire in order to cook your food."

15. And he said to me, "Then where is he now?"

16. And I said, "He has burned in the fierceness of the fire and become dust."

17. And he said, "Great is the power of Barisat! I will make another today, and tomorrow he will prepare my food."

## **Chapter 6**

1. When I, Abraham, heard words like this from my father, I laughed in my mind, and I groaned in the bitterness and anger of my soul.

2. I said, "How then is a figment of a body made by him (Terah) an aid for my father?

3. Or can he have subordinated (his) body to his soul, his soul to a spirit, and the spirit to stupidity and ignorance?"

4. And I said, "It is only proper to endure evil that I may throw my mind to purity and I will expose my thoughts clearly to him."

5. I answered and said, "Father Terah, whichever of these gods you extol, you err in your thought.

6. Behold, the gods of my brother Nahor standing in the holy sanctuary are more venerable than yours.

7. For behold, Zouchaios, my brother Nahor's god is more venerable than your god Marumath because he is made of gold, valued by man.

8. And if he grows old with time, he will be remodeled, whereas Marumath, if he is changed or broken, will not be renewed, because he is stone.

9. What about Ioav, the god on the other god, who stands with Zouchaios? For he is also more venerable than the god Barisat; he is carved from wood and forged from silver. Because he too is a term of comparison, being valued by man according to external experience.

10. But Barisat, your god, when he was still not carved,

11. rooted in the earth, being great and wondrous, with branches and flowers; and praise . . .<sup>8</sup>

12. But you made him with an axe, and by your skill he was made a god.

13. And behold he has already dried up and his fatness has perished.

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8. Translator's ellipsis points; he notes: "The whole sentence is obscure, possibly corrupt."



14. He fell from the height to the earth, he came from greatness to smallness,
15. and the appearance of his face wasted away.
16. And he himself was burned up by the fire
17. and he became ashes and is no more.
18. And you say, Let me make another and tomorrow he will make my food for me.
19. But in perishing he left himself no strength for his (own) destruction."

### Chapter 7<sup>9</sup>

1. Abraham, having thought this, came to his father and said, "Father Terah,
2. fire is more venerable than your gods, the gold and silver ones, and the stone and wooden ones, because the fire burns your gods. And your gods being burned obey the fire, and the fire mocks them while it is consuming your gods.
3. But neither will I call it (fire) god, because it is subjugated to the waters.
4. The waters are more venerable than it (fire), because they overcome fire and sweeten the earth with fruits.
5. But I will not call them god either, for the waters subside under the earth and are subject to it.
6. But I will not call it a goddess either, for it is dried by the sun (and) subordinated to man for his work.
7. The sun I call more venerable than the earth, for with its rays it illuminates the whole universe.
8. But I will not call it a god because when night comes it becomes murky with darkness.
9. Nor again shall I call the moon or the stars gods, because they too at times during the night dim their light.
10. But hear this, Terah my father, let me proclaim to you the God who created all things.
11. But this is the true God who has made the heavens crimson and the sun golden, who has given light to the moon and the stars with it, who has dried the earth in the midst of the many waters,<sup>10</sup> who set you yourself among the things and who has sought me out now in the perplexity of my thoughts.
12. If [only] God will reveal himself by himself to us!"<sup>11</sup>

### Chapter 8

1. And it came to pass as I was thinking things like these with regard to my father Terah in the court of my house, the voice of the Mighty One came down from the heavens in a stream of fire, saying and calling, "Abraham, Abraham!"<sup>12</sup>
2. And I said, "Here I am."

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9. For chapter 7, the translator gives two different versions of the text. We use the version based on the manuscripts ABCK.

10. Cf. Abraham 4:9–10.

11. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

12. Cf. Exodus 3:1–4; 19:18–19; 1 Kings 19:12; 1 Nephi 1:6.

3. And he said, "You are searching for the God of gods, the Creator, in the understanding of your heart.<sup>13</sup> I am he.

4. 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."

5. And I went out. And it came to pass as I went out—I was not yet outside the entrance of the court—

6. that the sound of a great thunder came and burned him and his house and everything in his house, down to the ground, forty cubits.<sup>14</sup>

[God then commands Abraham to sacrifice certain animals and sends to him the angel Iaoel, who accompanies the patriarch to mount Horeb, where Abraham offers the sacrifices. The story, found in chapters 9–32, parallels the one found in Genesis 15, but with much more detail. Here, we give only those elements that are relevant to the story in the Book of Abraham.]

## Chapter 19

1. And a voice came to me out of the midst of the fire, saying, "Abraham, Abraham!"

2. And I said, "Here I am!"

3. And he said, "Look at the expanses which are under the firmament to which you have now been directed and see that on no single expanse is there any other but the one whom you have searched for or who has loved you."

4. And while he was still speaking, behold, the expanses under me, the heavens, opened and I saw on the seventh firmament<sup>15</sup> upon which I stood a fire spread out and a light and dew and a multitude of angels and a host of the invisible glory, and up above the living creatures I had seen; I saw no one else there.

5. And I looked from on high, where I was standing, downward to the sixth firmament.

6. And I saw there a multitude of spiritual angels,<sup>16</sup> incorporeal, carrying out the orders of the fiery angels who were on the eighth firmament, as I was standing on its elevation (?).<sup>17</sup>

7. And lo, neither on this firmament was there in any shape any other host, but only the spiritual angels.

8. And the host I saw on the seventh firmament commanded the sixth firmament and it removed itself.

9. I saw there, on the fifth (firmament), hosts of stars, and the orders they were commanded to carry out,<sup>18</sup> and the elements of earth obeying them.<sup>19</sup>

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13. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

14. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29. Other parallel texts say that the house was destroyed because the idols were in it.

15. Cf. Abraham 3:1–3.

16. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.

17. Translator's insertion; his footnote reads: "Unclear; the word appears to mean lit. 'suspensions.'"

18. Cf. Abraham 3:2.

19. Cf. Abraham 4:9–12, 18, 21, 24–25, 31.



## Chapter 20

1. And the Eternal, Mighty One said to me, "Abraham, Abraham!"
2. And I said, "Here I am!"
3. And he said, "Look from on high at the stars which are beneath you and count them for me and tell me their number!"<sup>20</sup>
4. And I said, "When can I? For I am a man."
5. And he said to me, "As the number of the stars and their power so shall I place for your seed the nations and men, set apart for me in my lot with Azazel."<sup>21</sup>
6. And I said, "Eternal and Mighty One. Let your servant speak before you and let your fury not rage against your chosen one."<sup>22</sup>
7. Behold, before you led me up, Azazel insulted me. How then, since he is now not before you, did you establish yourself with them?"

## Chapter 21

1. And he said to me, "Look now beneath your feet at the firmament and understand the creation that was depicted of old on this expanse, (and) the creatures which are in it and the age prepared after it."<sup>23</sup>
2. And I looked beneath the firmament at my feet and I saw the likeness of heaven and the things that were therein.
3. And (I saw) there the earth and its fruit, and its moving things and its things that had souls, and its host of men and the impiety of their souls and their justification, and their pursuit of their works and the abyss and its torments, and its lower depths and (the) perdition in it.
4. And I saw there the sea and its islands, and its cattle and its fish, and Leviathan and his realm and his bed and his lairs, and the world which lay upon him, and his motions and the destruction he caused the world.
5. I saw there the rivers and their upper (reaches) and their circles.
6. And I saw there the garden of Eden and its fruits, and the source and the river flowing from it, and its trees and their flowering, making fruits, and I saw men doing justice in it, their food and their rest.<sup>24</sup>
7. And I saw there a great crowd of men and women and children, half of them on the right side of the portrayal, and half of them on the left side of the portrayal.<sup>25</sup>

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20. Cf. Genesis 15:5. Here, Abraham sees the stars from above; cf. Abraham 3:2.

21. Azazel is a name for the devil. In chapters 13–14, Abraham encounters the devil on the mountain, much as Moses does in Moses 1. See the references to Satan in the premortal existence in Abraham 3:27–28 and Moses 4:1–4.

22. Cf. Abraham's words in Genesis 18:30, 32.

23. Cf. Abraham 4:6–8.

24. Cf. Abraham 5:8–11.

25. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 4–5.

## Chapter 22

1. And I said, "Eternal, Mighty One! What is this picture of creation?"

2. And he said to me, "This is my will with regard to what is in the light<sup>26</sup> 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."<sup>27</sup>

3. And I said, "O sovereign, mighty and eternal! Why are the people in this picture on this side and on that?"

4. And he said to me, "These who are on the left side are a multitude of tribes who existed previously . . .<sup>28</sup> and after you some (who have been) prepared for judgment and order,<sup>29</sup> others for revenge and perdition at the end of the age.

5. Those on the right side of the picture are the people set apart for me of the people with Azazel; these are the ones I have prepared to be born of you and to be called my people."<sup>30</sup>

## Chapter 23

1. "Look again at the picture: Who is the one who seduced Eve, and what is the fruit of the tree?

2. And you will know what will be and how much will be for your seed in the last days.

3. And what you cannot understand, I will make known to you because you have been pleasing before my face and I will tell you what I have kept in my heart."

[God then shows Abraham Adam, and Abraham has a vision of the wickedness that existed during the earlier generations of mankind. In chapter 24, he sees the fall of Adam and Eve and Cain's slaying of Abel.]

## Chapter 25

1. I saw there the likeness of the idol of jealousy, like a carpenter's figure such as my father used to make, and its body was of glittering copper,<sup>31</sup> and before it a man, and he was worshipping it.

26. The translator notes that the word rendered "light" could be read "the council" (something also noted for the version of *Apocalypse of Abraham* 23:14 that is based on readings from the manuscripts DABCK), which we could then compare to the preexistent council of Abraham 3:22–28. The verses that follow in our present text support this reading.

27. Cf. Abraham 4:31–5:5; Moses 3:4–5.

28. Translator's ellipsis points; he explains that a verb must have been lost here.

29. The translator notes that the word he has rendered "order" can also mean "restoration."

30. Cf. Abraham 3:22–23.

31. Cf. Abraham 1:11.



2. And (there was) an altar opposite it and boys being slaughtered on it in the face<sup>32</sup> of the idol.<sup>33</sup>

3. And I said to him, "What is this idol, or what is the altar, or who are those being sacrificed, or who is the sacrificer, or what is the handsome temple which I see, the art and beauty of your glory that lies beneath your throne?"

4. And he said, "Hear, Abraham! 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,<sup>34</sup> where every petition of man will enter and dwell; the ascent of kings and prophets and whatever sacrifice I decree to be made for me among my coming people, even of your tribe.

5. And the body you saw is my anger, because the people who will come to me out of you will make me angry.

6. And the man you saw slaughtering is he who angers me,<sup>35</sup> and the sacrifice is a killing of those who are for me a testimony of the judgment of the completion at the beginning of creation."

## Chapter 26

1. And I said, "Eternal, Mighty One! Why did you establish it to be so and to call on the testimonies of this one?"

2. And he said to me, "Hear, Abraham, and understand what I will explain to you, and answer whatever I ask you.

3. Why did your father Terah not obey your voice and abandon the demonic worship of idols until he perished,<sup>36</sup> and all his house with him?"

4. And I said, "Eternal, Mighty One, surely because it did not please him to obey me, nor did I follow his works."

5. And he said to me, "Hear, Abraham. As the counsel of your father is in him, as your counsel is in you, so also the counsel of my will is ready.

6. In days to come you will not know them in advance, nor the future (men) you will see with your own eyes that they are of your seed."

[After this, God shows Abraham what will befall his seed—for both ill and good.]

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32. The expression "in the face of" is rendered from a Hebrew idiom meaning "in the presence of" or "before" (in either the locative or temporal sense).

33. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

34. Cf. Abraham 1:2–3, 9, 11, 18; Facsimile 2, figure 3; Facsimile 3, figure 1.

35. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

36. Cf. Abraham 2:5.

## AN EXTRACT FROM 4 EZRA

The book of *4 Ezra*, also known as the *Apocalypse of Ezra*,<sup>1</sup> is a Jewish text composed no later than A.D. 120 with chapters later added to the beginning and end by Christian writers. The book was most likely written in Greek, but the place of composition is unknown, perhaps Rome or Palestine. The text is eschatological and is an expansion of 2 Esdras 3–14 found in the Apocrypha. It was first published in English in the early 1500s in the Great Bible. The translation used here, made from the Latin text, is by Bruce M. Metzger in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:528.

### Chapter 3

[After the flood:]

12. When those who dwelt on earth began to multiply, they produced children and peoples and many nations, and again they began to be more ungodly than were their ancestors.

13. And when they were committing iniquity before you,<sup>2</sup> you chose for yourself one of them, whose name was Abraham;

14. and you loved him and to him only you revealed the end of the times, secretly by night.<sup>3</sup>

15. You made with him an everlasting covenant, and promised him that you would never forsake his descendants.

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1. Several works attributed to Ezra and Nehemiah are called different names in different traditions. A useful chart showing the various names can be found in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1:516.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:5–11.

3. Cf. Abraham 3–5.



## AN EXTRACT FROM THE MISHNAH

According to traditional Jewish thought, the Mishnah comprises the oral law that was given to Moses atop Mount Sinai as a complement to the written law or Torah (Pentateuch) given at the same time. Jewish tradition claims that the oral law was vouchsafed to a succession of leaders, the last of whom were the rabbis (M *Aboth* 1:1–2). Others see the Mishnah as the final, written form of oral laws that grew out of living the Mosaic law—some of which became as authoritative as the Mosaic law itself. Whatever its beginnings, the Mishnah as it exists now comprises a collection of rabbinic commentaries said by the Talmud to have been compiled by Rabbi Judah the Prince (A.D. 137–219). Here, we employ the 1933 translation by Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 455; he was the first to publish the whole text in English. The material below is in the Mishnaic tractate *ʿAbot*, also called *Pirque ʿAbot*, “paragraphs of the Fathers.”

### *Aboth* 5

2. There were ten generations from Noah to Abraham, to show how great was his long-suffering, for all the generations provoked him continually<sup>1</sup> until Abraham our father came and received the reward of them all.<sup>2</sup>

3. With ten temptations was Abraham our father tempted, and he stood steadfast in them all, to show how great was the love of Abraham our father.

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:2–3, 18.

## EXTRACTS FROM ʿABOT DE RABBI NATHAN

Attributed to Rabbi Nathan, an older contemporary of Judah the Prince (the traditional compiler of the Mishnah), this work is mainly a commentary on the Mishnaic tractate *Pirque ʿAbot* (also cited in this collection). The original was composed before the Mishnah was compiled, i.e., in the second century A.D., though some parts may have been added later. The text has been fairly well preserved, although some manuscripts have been poorly copied. In 1887, Solomon Schechter first published the Hebrew text in Vienna. From among the various manuscripts held in museums, two versions of *ʿAbot de Rabbi Nathan* (meaning “the Fathers of/by Rabbi Nathan”) can be discerned. In the extracts given below, version A is taken from Judah Goldin, trans., *The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 52, 68, while version B is from Anthony J. Saldarini, trans., *The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan: Version B* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 156–57.

### Version A

#### Chapter 8

The camels of Abraham, our father, would not enter into a house in which there was an idol.<sup>1</sup>

#### Chapter 12

One should bend men to and lead them under the wings of the Shekinah the way Abraham our father used to bend men to and lead them under the wings of the

### Version B

#### Chapter 8

[missing]

#### Chapter 26

To everyone who brings one person under the wings of heaven, God accounts it as though he created him and formed him,

1. The same idea seems to be reflected in the Jerusalem Targumim, where we read Laban’s words to Abraham’s servant Eliezer: “*Now Laban thought that he was Abraham*, and he said, ‘Come in, O blessed of the Lord. Why are you standing outside? For I have cleared the house of *idolatry* and I have prepared a place for the camels.’” Michael Maher, trans., *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992), 85. “And he said to him: ‘Come in, blessed of the Lord. Why, I pray, are you standing outside? *Behold*, I have cleansed the house of *foreign worship* and (there is) room for the camels.’” Martin McNamara, trans., *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992), 124. See also *Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 60:7.



Shekinah. And not Abraham alone did this, but Sarah as well; for it is said, *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 made in Haran.*<sup>3</sup>

Now, not all the inhabitants of the world together can create even a single gnat! How then does the verse say, *And the souls that they had made in Haran*? This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, accounted it to Abraham and Sarah as though they had made them.

as Scripture says: "And the persons that they had made in Haran . . ."<sup>2</sup> Did Abraham, our father, may he rest in peace, create them or form them? If all the creatures in the world came (together) to create a single mosquito, they could not. If that is the case, why does Scripture say: "And the persons that they had made in Haran . . ."? To teach you that Abraham our father, may he rest in peace, made the men proselytes and Sarah his wife made the women proselytes,<sup>4</sup> as Scripture says: "And the persons that they had made in Haran . . ."

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2. Citing Genesis 12:5.

3. Citing Genesis 12:5. Note that the ellipses here and following are part of the text, not editorial insertions for this volume.

4. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE TARGUM JONATHAN

Within a century of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the Jews adopted Aramaic, the lingua franca of the day, as their tongue, relegating Hebrew to liturgical use. Ultimately, this change necessitated the translation of the Old Testament into Aramaic. The resultant *targumim*, or “translations,” were often read in the synagogue immediately after the reading of the Hebrew text.<sup>1</sup> The targumim are nearly paraphrastic, reflecting the translators’ understanding of the biblical text. Various targumim were produced, some in Palestine and others in Babylon, apparently even before the time of Christ. Although referred to by early rabbis, some of the targumim are known only from later copies. In this work, we include only those Abrahamic passages in which the targum differs from the Hebrew biblical text. This collection includes extracts from the three major targumim. In all the targumim, italics are used to show portions of text that are not in the Hebrew Bible.

The name *Targum Jonathan* (also known as *Targum Yerushalmi 1*) is the result of an editorial mistake: those printing the *editio princeps* (Venice, 1590–91) read the abbreviation TY as *Targum Yonathan* rather than *Targum Yerushalmi* (Jerusalem). They thus falsely attributed the targum to Jonathan Ben-Uzziel, who lived in the late first to early second century A.D. Although this targum reached its final form in the eighth or ninth century, because it is of Palestinian origin, it must date to before the mid-second century; by that time, the center of rabbinic Judaism had moved to Babylon. Only one manuscript of the work exists, BL Additional 27031, prepared in sixteenth-century Italy. The translation used here is from Michael Maher, trans., *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992), 50–52, 60, 62, 73.

### Genesis 11

4. And they said: “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top *reaching towards* the heavens. Let us make ourselves *an idol<sup>2</sup> at its top, and let us put a sword in its*

1. So powerful was the effect of Aramaic on Jewish life that its form of the alphabet was adopted for Hebrew and became the standard Hebrew alphabet used in most of the Dead Sea Scrolls, in modern Hebrew Bibles, and in the modern state of Israel.

2. The targum reads the Hebrew word *šēm*, “name,” as “idol.” This reading is confirmed in *Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 38:8 and TB *Sanhedrin* 109a, where we read that the word means “idol.”



hand, and let it draw up battle formations against (him) before we are scattered from upon the face of the earth."<sup>3</sup>

27. This is the *line* of Terah: Terah begot Abraham, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begot Lot.

28. *It came to pass, when Nimrod cast Abram into the furnace of fire because he would not worship his idol,<sup>4</sup> the fire had no power to burn him. Then Haran was undecided, and he said: "If Nimrod triumphs, I will be on his side; but if Abram triumphs, I will be on his side." And when all the people who were there saw that the fire had no power over Abram, they said to themselves: "Is not Haran the brother of Abram full of divination and sorcery? It is he who uttered charms over the fire so that it would not burn his brother." Immediately fire fell from the heavens on high and consumed him; and Haran died in the sight of Terah his father, being burned in the land of his birth in the furnace of fire which the Chaldeans had made for Abram his brother.*<sup>5</sup>

29. And Abram and Nahor took wives to themselves; 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—*she is Sarai*.

30. Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

31. Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and they went forth together from *the fire* of the Chaldeans<sup>6</sup> to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and settled there.

32. The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.

## Genesis 12

[God to Abraham:]

3. "I will bless *the priests who stretch out their hands in prayer and bless your children; but Balaam who will curse them I will curse, and they will kill him at the edge of the sword; and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.*"

4. Abram went as the Lord had told him: and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he went forth from Haran.

5. Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all the possessions which they had acquired, and all the persons whom they had *converted* in Haran,<sup>7</sup> and they went forth to go to the land of Canaan.

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3. This verse reads similarly in two fragmentary targumim: MS Paris Bibliothèque nationale Hébr. 110 and MS Vatican Ebr. 440. See also *Targum Neofiti* below.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:7–12.

5. Cf. Abraham 2:1.

6. This is the traditional Jewish understanding of the Hebrew *ʾur kašdîm* which the KJV renders "Ur of the Chaldees."

7. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

**Genesis 14**

1. In the days of Amraphel—he is Nimrod who ordered Abram to be thrown into the fire,<sup>8</sup> he is the king of Pontus . . .<sup>9</sup>

**Genesis 15**

7. He said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you out of *the fiery furnace* of the Chaldeans to give you this land to inherit.”<sup>10</sup>

**Genesis 16**

1. Sarai, Abram’s wife, bore him no children; but she had an Egyptian maid, whose name was Hagar, a *daughter of Pharaoh, whom he gave to her as maid when he took her and was smitten by a word from before the Lord.*

5. Sarai said to Abram, “All my humiliation (comes) from you, because I trusted that you would do me justice, (seeing) that I left my country and my father’s house and went with you into a foreign land. And now because I have not borne children, I set my maid free and gave her (to you) to lie in your bosom. But when she saw that she was with child, my honor was despised in her sight. Now let my humiliation be manifest before the Lord, and let him spread his peace between me and you, and let the earth be filled from us, so that we will not need the children of Hagar, the daughter of Pharaoh, the son of Nimrod,<sup>11</sup> who threw you into the furnace of fire.”<sup>12</sup>

**Genesis 20**

[Abraham’s explanation to Abimelech:]

13. “When *those who worship idols* tried to lead me astray, I went forth from my father’s house, and I said to her, ‘<This><sup>13</sup> is the favor you shall do me: whatever place we go to, say of me: He is my brother.’”

8. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

9. The other targumim do not make this identification, though *Targum Onqelos*, at this point, notes that Amraphel was king of Babylonia (rather than Shinar, as in the Hebrew text and in *Targum Neofiti*). We read elsewhere (Genesis 10:10) that Nimrod began to establish his kingdom at Babel, i.e., at Babylon.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20. This verse reads the same in another, fragmentary targum: MS Vatican Ebr. 440. See also *Targum Neofiti* below.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:20–27. Hugh Nibley often connected Nimrod of the Jewish traditions to Pharaoh of the Book of Abraham.

12. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20. This verse is longer in the two major fragmentary targumim, MS Paris Bibliothèque nationale Hébr. 110 and MS Vatican Ebr. 440, but the last part is quite similar. The Paris manuscript speaks of “Hagar the Egyptian, the servant; she being from the offspring of the nations that cast you into the fiery furnace,” while the Vatican manuscript speaks of “Hagar the Egyptian, the servant, she being from the offspring of the people who cast you into the fiery furnace of the Chaldeans.” See Michael L. Klein, *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch according to Their Extant Sources* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1980), 2:13, 100. Cf. *Targum Neofiti* below.

13. Translator’s note: “Omitted in Lond. [British Library MS 2703] and *ed. pr.* [Venice, 1598].”



## EXTRACTS FROM THE TARGUM NEOFITI 1

*Targum Neofiti*, like *Pseudo-Jonathan*, is of the Palestinian tradition and therefore dates before the mid-second century A.D. It is known from a sixteenth-century codex in the Vatican Library but came to light only in the twentieth century. This targum contains almost the entire Pentateuch. The English translation of the Genesis targum is from Martin McNamara, trans., *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992), 84–86, 95, 98–99, 111. The translation of the Deuteronomy targum is from Martin McNamara, trans., *Targum Neofiti 1: Deuteronomy* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1997), 49.

### Genesis 11

3. And they said to one another: “Come, let us make bricks and heat *them in a furnace*.” And they had bricks for stones and had asphalt for mortar.

4. And they said: “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower, with its top *reaching toward the heavens*; and let us make ourselves *an idol on top of it and let us put in its hand a sword to make war against him before we are scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth*.”

27. This is the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abraham, Nahor, and Haran. And Haran begot Lot.

28. And Haran died *during the lifetime* of Terah his father in the land of his birth, in the *furnace of fire* of the Chaldeans.<sup>1</sup>

29. And Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of <the wife of Abram was Sarai, the name><sup>2</sup> of the wife of Nahor was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah.

30. And Sarai was barren; she had no children.

31. And Terah took Abram his son and Lot, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife, and went forth with them from *the furnace of the fire* of the Chaldeans, to go to the land of Canaan; and they arrived at Haran and dwelt there.

32. And the days *of the life of Terah* were (two) hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.

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1. Cf. Abraham 2:1. “Fire of the Chaldeans” reflects the traditional Jewish understanding of the Hebrew *’ûr kašdîm*, which the KJV renders “Ur of the Chaldees.”

2. Translator’s note: “Missing in text: in m. g. [marginal gloss].”

**Genesis 12**

4. And Abram went as the Lord had spoken with him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years *at the time* he went forth from Haran.

5. And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot, his brother's son, and all their wealth which they had acquired and the souls *they had converted*.<sup>3</sup>

**Genesis 15**

7. And he said to him: "I am the Lord who brought you out of the *furnace of fire* of the Chaldeans<sup>4</sup> to give you this land to inherit it."

**Genesis 16**

5. And Sarai said to Abram: "My judgment and my humiliation, my insult and the beginning of my affliction, are delivered into your hand. I forsook my country, the house of my birth, and the house of my father and I have come *with you with faith*. I went in with you before the kings of the earth, before Pharaoh king of Egypt and before Abimelech king of Gerar and I said: 'He is my brother,' so that they might not kill you. And when I saw that I did not bear I took Hagar the Egyptian, my maid, and gave her to you as wife, and I said: 'She will bear children and I will rear (them). Perhaps I too will get children through her.' But when she saw she had conceived *my honor* was of little value in her sight. And now let the Lord be revealed and let him judge between me and you, and let him spread his peace between me and you, and let the earth be filled from us and we will not need the son of Hagar the Egyptian, who belongs to the children of the sons of the people who gave you into the furnace of fire of the Chaldeans."

**Genesis 20**

[Abraham's explanation to Abimelech:]

13. "And when the nations tried to lead me astray after their idols<sup>5</sup> and the Memra of the Lord took me from the house of my father, I said to her: "This is your favor that you shall do me: in every place where we shall enter, say, I pray, concerning me: He is my brother.""

**Genesis 48**

[Jacob to Joseph:]

22. And I give you a portion more than your brothers: the garment of the first Adam, which Abraham, my father's father, took from the hands of evil Nimrod and gave to Isaac, my father; and Isaac, my father, gave it to Esau, my brother; and I took it from the hands of Esau, not with my sword and my bow, but by my merits and by my good works, which are better for me than my sword and my bow.

3. Cf. Abraham 2:15. Targum Neofiti on Genesis 21:33 indicates that Abraham also converted people when he lived in Beer-sheba.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6, 16–17.



**Deuteronomy 6**

[Jacob to his sons:]

4. Perchance you worship the idols which Abraham's father worshiped . . . ?<sup>6</sup>

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6. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.

## AN EXTRACT FROM THE TARGUM RISHON OF ESTHER

There are two Aramaic translations of Esther, known as *Targum Rishon* (First Translation) and *Targum Sheni* (Second Translation). The *Targum Rishon* is probably a seventh-century Babylonian text that came from the reworking of a Palestinian *Targum Rabbati* that no longer exists. Esther 5:14 of *Targum Rishon* adds verbiage not found in the Hebrew text that speaks of Abraham in the same context that *Targum Sheni* speaks of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, all of whom were cast into the fiery furnace. The English translation used here is from Bernard Grossfeld, trans., *The Two Targums of Esther* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1991), 18:67.

### Esther 5

14. So his [Haman's]<sup>1</sup> wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him: *Into the fire you cannot cast him [Mordecai], for his ancestor Abraham<sup>2</sup> was saved from it.*<sup>3</sup>

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1. These brackets and the next are our editorial insertions.

2. The parallel passage in *Targum Sheni* replaces the name Abraham with those of Daniel's friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, more commonly known to Bible readers under their Babylonian names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.



## AN EXTRACT FROM THE HELLENISTIC SYNAGOGAL PRAYERS

Found within books 7 and 8 of the Christian liturgy known as the *Apostolic Constitutions* are sixteen prayers considered to be remnants of those offered in Jewish synagogues in the Hellenistic world. Composed in Greek, these prayers are thought to come from either Alexandria or Syria and may date anywhere from A.D. 150 to 300. They can be no later than the *Apostolic Constitutions* (dated to 380) in which they appear. They were first translated into English in 1870. The following is from D. R. Darnell's translation in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:693. The portion in italics is thought to be a Christian emendation.

### **Prayer 12:61–62 (Constitution 8.12.22–23)**

You are the one who delivered Abraham from ancestral godlessness,<sup>1</sup> and appointed him heir of the world, *and showed to him your Christ.*<sup>2</sup>

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

2. Cf. Abraham 3:24.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE TARGUM ONQELOS

The Aramaic translation made by Onqelos is first mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud, suggesting that the text was already in use in the fourth century A.D.; it is generally considered to be no later than the second century. *Onqelos* is the targum that agrees most with the Hebrew Bible. Most of the manuscripts are housed in the British Museum and at Cambridge University. Western scholars discussed the Aramaic text as early as 1857. The English translation we use here is from Bernard Grossfeld, trans., *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis* (Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1988), 63, 82. The italics are used to show portions of the text that are not in the Hebrew Bible.

### Genesis 12

4. So Abram went forth, as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him; Abram being 75 years old when he departed from Haran.

5. And Abram took his wife Sarai, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions which they had acquired, *and the persons whom they had subjected to the Law* in Haran,<sup>1</sup> and they set out to go to the land of Canaan, and they came to the land of Canaan.

### Genesis 20

[Abraham's explanation to Abimelech]:

13. *So when the nations erred after the works of their hands and God brought me near to revering Him from the house of my father*, I said to her, "Let this be your kindness that you shall do to me—wherever we go say of me: He is my brother."

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1. Cf. Abraham 2:15.



EXTRACTS FROM  
TANNA DEBE ELIYAHU

The midrashic Hebrew text known as *Tanna debe Eliyahu* comprises two parts designated by the terms *Rabbah* (greater) and *Zuṭa* (lesser). It is traditionally attributed to the prophet Elijah, who is said to have dictated the two parts of the work to Rabbi Anan in the third century A.D. While some accept this early date, others place the text later, usually between 500 and 900. Its place of origin is unknown. The principal extant manuscripts are from the thirteenth century A.D., but since the text is mentioned by Rabbi Natronai, writing in 860, its composition would have preceded that time. It was first published in Venice in 1598; the publication was based on a manuscript dating to 1186. The work's first English translation appeared in 1981. The passage cited here is from *Eliyahu Rabbah* chapter (5) 6. The English translation is from William G. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein, trans., *Tanna debe Eliyyahu: The Lore of the School of Elijah* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981), 102–4. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. How did Abraham come in this world to merit a life with no distress, with no Inclination to evil—a life, indeed, such as God bestows upon the righteous only in the world-to-come? Because for the sake of Heaven he was willing to give up his life in the fire of the Chaldees.<sup>1</sup> And whenever a man is willing to give up his life for the sake of Heaven, he is given back not only his life in this world but full and long life, endless life, in the world-to-come. The proof you can see for yourself. Keep in mind that the household of Abraham's father, idolators all,<sup>2</sup> used to make idols and go out to sell them in the marketplace. One day, when it was Abraham's turn to sell the idols, a man came up to him and asked, "How much is this idol?" Abraham replied, "Three minas," and then went on to inquire, "How old are you?" The man replied, "Thirty." Abraham exclaimed, "Thirty! At your age don't you know any better than to worship this thing which I turned out just today?" Thereupon the man was abashed and went away.

2. Shortly, another man came and asked Abraham, "How much is this idol?" Abraham replied, "Five minas," and then asked, "How old are you?" The man answered, "Fifty." "Fifty!" exclaimed Abraham. "At your age don't you know any better than to worship

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1. This is how the term rendered "Ur of the Chaldees" is understood in Jewish tradition. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

this thing which my father's household turned out just today?" The man was abashed and went away. When what Abraham was saying to would-be buyers came to Nimrod's ears, he sent men to fetch Abraham and had him appear before him. Nimrod then said to him, "Son of Terah, make a beautiful god for me, one which will be uniquely mine." So Abraham went back to his father's house and said, "Make a beautiful idol for Nimrod." When Terah's household got the idol finished, they put a cincture around it and painted it a variety of colors. [After Abraham brought the image to Nimrod, he said to him, "You are a king, and yet you are so lacking in a king's wisdom as to worship this thing which my father's household has just turned out!"]<sup>3</sup> Thereupon Nimrod had Abraham taken out [to be consumed] in a fiery furnace.<sup>4</sup> In tribute to Abraham's righteousness, however, the day turned cloudy, and presently rain came down so hard that Nimrod's men could not get the fire started.

3. Next, as Nimrod sat [in his throne room], surrounded by the entire generation that was to be dispersed [for its transgressions],<sup>5</sup> Abraham was brought in and put in their midst. He approached<sup>6</sup> Nimrod and again voiced his contempt of the king's idol. "If not this idol, whom shall I worship?" Nimrod asked. Abraham replied, "The God of gods, the Lord of lords, Him whose kingdom endures in heaven and earth and in the uppermost heaven of heavens." Nimrod said, "Nevertheless I will rather worship the god of fire, for behold, I am going to cast you into the very midst of fire<sup>7</sup>—let the god of whom you speak come and deliver you from the fire."

4. At once his servants bound Abraham hand and foot<sup>8</sup> and laid him on the ground. They then piled up wood on all sides of him, [but at some distance away],<sup>9</sup> a pile of wood five hundred cubits long to the north, a pile five hundred cubits long to the south, a pile five hundred cubits long to the west, and a pile five hundred cubits long to the east. Nimrod's men then went around and around setting the wood on fire.

5. At that time the entire household of Terah were idolators;<sup>10</sup> not one of them acknowledged his Creator. And so all of Terah's neighbor<s><sup>11</sup> came and jeeringly tapped him on the head, saying to him: "You have been put to bitter shame! That son of yours, of whom you have been saying that he was to be heir of this world and of the world-to-come, Nimrod is having him consumed by fire!"

3. Square brackets indicate clarifications of or restorations to the text by the translators.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

5. Referring to the dispersion at the Tower of Babel.

6. Translators' note: "Literally, 'went down,' perhaps 'went down' in the bowing and prostration required in addressing a king."

7. The fact that Nimrod considered the means of Abraham's death—fire—to be a god suggests that it was his intention to sacrifice Abraham, not simply execute him.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:15; Facsimile 1, figure 2.

9. The translators explain that the Zoroastrians do not allow anything—including a corpse—to defile fire, so Nimrod had the fire so placed that Abraham would die from the heat, not the flames.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6, 16–17, 27.

11. Angle brackets indicate emendations by the editor of the Hebrew text.



6. At once the compassion of the Holy One welled up, and the holiness of His great name came down from the upper heaven of heavens, from the place of His glory, His grandeur, and His beauty and delivered our father Abraham from the taunts and the jeers and from the fiery furnace,<sup>12</sup> as it is said, *I am the Lord that brought thee out of the fire of the Chaldees.*<sup>13</sup>

7. And after God performed His miracle in behalf of our father Abraham, then and there Terah's household had good excuse to open their mouths and return jeer for jeer to the generation that was eventually to be dispersed [for its transgressions]. To Terah and to his son Abraham applies the verse *My son, be wise and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that taunteth me.*<sup>14</sup> The words *him that taunteth me* would thus apply to the generation that was to be dispersed, a generation which if it had had its way would have slain his son Abraham and had him perish in this world as well as in the world-to-come.

8. [After Abraham's deliverance], Terah, for the sake of Heaven,<sup>15</sup> proceeded to quit his dwelling place, as is said, *And Terah took Abram his son, etc.*<sup>16</sup> As a reward for Terah's having quit his dwelling place, for the ensuing thirty-five years of his life<sup>17</sup> he had the honor and distinction of having had his son Abraham established as king<sup>18</sup> by the Holy One.

9. And Abraham and Sarah went to the land of Canaan, as is said, *Abram took Sarai his wife . . .*<sup>19</sup> *and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan.*<sup>20</sup> Abraham grew old and white-haired and abstained from the way of husband and wife in the world; Sarah, too, grew old and white-haired and abstained from the way of husband and wife in the world. True, it is said, *Now Sarah and Abraham were old,*<sup>21</sup> but then Abraham, old and white-haired as he was, found his hair turning black, and he recovered the vigor of his youth. Sarah, likewise, old and white-haired as she was, found her hair turning black. Abraham became a young man again and Sarah became a young woman again. Thereupon, just about everyone in the world gathered around them and asked, "What was so unusual about you both as to have such extraordinary things befall you?" So Abraham sat down, and beginning with his deliverance from the fire of the Chaldees, told everything that had happened to him in the world up to that very hour. Of the things that befell Abraham, it is said, *Who hath raised up one from the east? At whose steps does victory attend? He giveth*

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12. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

13. Citing Genesis 15:7, reading Ur as "fire."

14. Citing Proverbs 27:11.

15. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 30; 2:5.

16. Citing Genesis 11:31.

17. Translators' note: "After the birth of Isaac, who was Abraham's heir, Abraham was king. Since Terah was 70 when Abraham was born, and Abraham was 100 at Isaac's birth, Terah was then 170, and he lived to 205 years (Gen. 11:32). Hence for thirty-five years he saw his son Abraham rule as king."

18. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3.

19. The ellipsis points are in the translation.

20. Citing Genesis 12:5.

21. Citing Genesis 18:11.

*nations before him, and maketh him rule over kings.*<sup>22</sup> And as soon as the gathering heard words of Torah from Abraham, they made him king over them.<sup>23</sup>

[The text then explains that the attack of the kings described in Genesis 14 was launched because some kings allied themselves with Abraham, while others opposed him.]

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22. Citing Isaiah 41:2.

23. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3.



## EXTRACTS FROM THE PESIKTA RABBATI

The *Pesikta Rabbati* is a ninth-century Hebrew document that includes discourses from rabbis of the third to fourth centuries A.D., the majority of which were from Palestine. *Piskas* (sections or paragraphs) begin with a scriptural lesson for the day that serves as a basis for the following discourse. In addition to homiletic discourses and stories from the lives of the teachers named therein, the *Pesikta Rabbati* alludes to events in Jewish biblical and postbiblical history and legend. The work was first published in Prague in 1654. We use the first English translation, by William G. Braude, trans., *Pesikta Rabbati* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968). Braude used two manuscripts, one from the twelfth and one from the eighteenth century. The text is in two volumes with continuous pagination. For reference purposes, we have subdivided the verses using letters of the alphabet and included the page numbers after each entry. We have removed the diacritics from the names.

### Piska 11:4–5

[Commenting on Hosea 2:1 (1:10 in the KJV)]

4a. The passage implies that the Holy One, blessed be He, let Hosea see what He had let Abraham see when He said to him: *Look now toward heaven, and count the stars, if thou be able to count them.*<sup>1</sup> After God had said *count*, He apparently retracted His words in saying *if thou be able to count*; but Scripture is telling you thereby that God let Abraham see first a definite number of stars,<sup>2</sup> and then turned around and let him see an infinite number.<sup>3</sup> How did God do so? At first He let him see one star, then He let him see two, then let him see three,<sup>4</sup> then twelve, then seventy, and finally, He let him see stars whose number was infinite.<sup>5</sup> And why did He show him [heaven]<sup>6</sup> in this way? Because by such symbols He showed him how He would increase the children of Israel in the world. He showed him one star, because at first he would be the only one of his kind in the world—*Abraham was one*<sup>7</sup>—the very first to come and take refuge under the wings of the Pres-

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1. Citing Genesis 15:5.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

3. Cf. Moses 1:33, 35.

4. Cf. Abraham 3:13.

5. Cf. Abraham 3:12, 17.

6. Brackets within the text are part of the translation.

7. Citing Ezekiel 33:24.

ence. God next showed him two stars, to stand for Abraham and Isaac. He then showed him three, to stand for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; then showed him twelve, to stand for the twelve Fathers of the Tribes; then seventy, to stand for the seventy souls that went down to Egypt;<sup>8</sup> and finally stars without end: *And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied . . . and the land was filled with them.*<sup>9</sup>

4b. Hosea also—[at first] God showed him Israel in a definite number, and then in infinite numbers; that is, at their beginning they could be counted, but then they increased to such numbers that they could no longer be counted.

5a. <Another comment:><sup>10</sup> In *The number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea*,<sup>11</sup> Israel are likened to sand; [elsewhere in the Book of Kings] they are likened to dust; and in Genesis they are likened to stars. Why are Israel's—Jacob's—children likened to stars? [Why is it that] Abraham is likened to the sun, Isaac likened to the moon, but Jacob and his children likened to stars? Because in the time-to-come the sun and the moon, [eclipsed by God's radiance], will be put to shame, but the stars will not know shame. So, too, Abraham and Isaac [will be put to shame]—on account of their children, their faces will turn pale: Abraham's, on account of Ishmael and the children of Keturah;<sup>12</sup> and Isaac's, on account of Esau and his princes.<sup>13</sup> But even as the stars will not know shame, so Jacob will not know shame. (209–11)

#### Piska 21:12

[Commenting on the Hebrew word for "I" in Exodus 20:2:]

a. In the word *ʾnky*, the letter *ʾalef* ("one")<sup>14</sup> represents our father Abraham: *Abraham was one*;<sup>15</sup> the letter *nun*, whose numerical value is fifty, signifies that Abraham was fifty years old when he recognized his Maker.<sup>16</sup> According to both R. Hanina and R. Johanan, it was at the age of forty-eight that Abraham recognized his Creator. According to Resh Lakish, he was three years old, as intimated in the verse *For the time that (ʾkb) Abraham hearkened to My voice, etc.*,<sup>17</sup> a number derived by subtracting 172, the numerical value of the letters in the word *ʾkb*, from 175, which was the number of years he lived. The letter *kaf*, whose numerical value is twenty, signifies that he inaugurated circumcision in the twentieth generation since the creation of Adam. The letter *yod*, whose numerical value

8. See Exodus 1:1–5.

9. Citing Exodus 1:7. The ellipsis points are part of the translation.

10. When the manuscripts do not support the emendations made by the editor of the Hebrew text, the translators use angle brackets to signify their inclusion of those readings.

11. Citing 1 Kings 4:20.

12. See Genesis 25:1–6.

13. See Genesis 36.

14. In later Hebrew, each letter of the alphabet was assigned a numerical value and was used to write a numeral. The first letter, *ʾaleph*, though not meaning "one," represents that number.

15. Citing Ezekiel 33:24.

16. This is at variance with the age as given in other accounts in this collection, i.e., either three, fourteen, or forty-eight years.

17. Citing Genesis 26:5.



is ten, refers to the ten trials whereby Abraham was tested, and in all of which he was found steadfast. (433–34)

**Piska 21:22**

[Commenting on Exodus 20:2:]

a. *Out of the house of bondage.* R. Tanhum bar Hanila'i said in the name of R. Berechiah: Only upon Canaan fell the curse of being a bondman: *And he said: Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.*<sup>18</sup> And whence the proof that all the families of Ham [besides Canaan] are also called bondmen?<sup>19</sup> Because Scripture says, *out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*<sup>20</sup> (452)

**Piska 33:3**

[Commenting on Psalm 45:8 (45:7 in the KJV):]

a. *Thou hast loved righteousness.* Thus did God speak to Abraham. For the Holy One, blessed be He, saw all the generations that worshiped idols, [saw] Abraham rise up and separate himself from the generations because he would not be like them; [saw] that while they worshiped idols,<sup>21</sup> Abraham rose up and learned wisdom by himself so that he came to worship the Holy One, blessed be He. Because God saw the righteousness of Abraham, He described him as the Hebrew,<sup>22</sup> so setting it down in Scripture: *And told Abram the Hebrew.*<sup>23</sup> What is meant by the Hebrew? That he brooded upon God. For the entire world was on one side, and he was on the other side,<sup>24</sup> but he so loved the Holy One, blessed be He, that he would worship Him and no other.<sup>25</sup> Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, called him Hebrew, and also called Hebrew the seed of Abraham who loved Him. For, said the Holy One, blessed be He: *Thou hast loved righteousness*<sup>26</sup> and commanded thy children that they also do righteousness—"that they may keep the way of the Lord to do righteousness and justice."<sup>27</sup>

b. *And,* God went on to say to Abraham, *thou didst hate [the] wickedness*<sup>28</sup> of the wicked in thy generations who worshiped idols.<sup>29</sup> And hast thou perchance, therefore, suffered

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18. Citing Genesis 9:25.

19. Cf. Abraham 1:21–22, 24–25, 27.

20. Citing Exodus 20:2. Of course, the reasoning is false, since Israel was in bondage to the Egyptians, not vice versa.

21. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

22. The Hebrew root from which derives the term *Hebrew* means "to cross over" (e.g., a river) but by extension means "to repent."

23. Citing Genesis 14:13.

24. The text contains a wordplay, using the Hebrew root meaning, variously, "Hebrew," "side," and "to brood."

25. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

26. Citing Psalm 45:8 (45:7 in the KJV).

27. Citing Genesis 18:19.

28. Again citing Psalm 45:8.

29. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

any loss? Behold, ten righteous men, heads of generations, preceded thee, and not one of them had the privilege of being raised up above his fellows except thee: *God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*<sup>30</sup> (632–33)

#### Piska 33:4

a. *Who art thou? That thou art afraid of a little man that shall die, or of the son of man that shall be made as grass?*<sup>31</sup> [Ask yourself, O Israel], Who art thou? And then ask why you should be afraid. Is it possible that you do not know who you are? Are you not the daughter of Abraham, the daughter of Isaac, the daughter of Jacob?—hence the daughter of the three most eminent men in the history of the world.<sup>32</sup> And yet you are afraid of an ordinary creature, a little man who is alive today and dead tomorrow—*of a little man that shall die*. Of course you may not know what I did to all who engaged with the three Patriarchs—to Amraphel<sup>33</sup> who first engaged with Abraham by casting him into a fiery furnace.<sup>34</sup> Did I not deliver Abraham,<sup>35</sup> and did I not finally put Amraphel into Abraham's power? (637)

#### Piska 40:6

a. Another comment on *Moriah*:<sup>36</sup> Abraham said to God: “Master of universes, am I fit to offer Isaac up? Am I a priest? Shem is High Priest.<sup>37</sup> Let him come and take Isaac from me for the offering.” God replied: When thou reachest the place, I will consecrate thee and make thee a priest.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, the term *Moriah* suggests that Abraham was to be a substitute for Shem, his replacement. (714–15)

#### Piska 42:3

a. R. Judah the Levite explained in the name of R. Shallum: Abraham was seventy years old when the Holy One, blessed be He, talked to him at the covenant pledged upon

30. Again citing Psalm 45:8. The phrase quoted here refers in Christian lore to Jesus, whose title Christ, or Messiah, means “anointed one.”

31. Citing Isaiah 51:12.

32. Translator's note: “Literally ‘the three mountains of the world.’”

33. In Jewish tradition, Amraphel of Genesis 14 is identified with Nimrod.

34. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

35. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20. *Pesikta Rabbati* 35:2 notes that it was the angel Gabriel who rescued Abraham's descendants, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego), from the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar.

36. The name of the mountain where Abraham was told to sacrifice Isaac (see Genesis 22).

37. Cf. Doctrine and Covenants 138:41, which speaks of “Shem, the great high priest.” In Jewish tradition, Shem is identified with Melchizedek, to whom Abraham paid tithes (Genesis 14:18–20) and who, according to Doctrine and Covenants 84:14, ordained Abraham to the priesthood.

38. Cf. Abraham 1:2; 2:9, 11; Facsimile 2, figure 3; Facsimile 3, figure 1.



the halves of a heifer, and laid this decree upon him: *Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger.*<sup>39</sup> (738)

### Piska 42:5

a. <Another comment:> *And the Lord remembered Sarah.*<sup>40</sup> These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere: *For though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the bosom of the earth shall yield no nourishment; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will exult in the God of my salvation.*<sup>41</sup> The fig tree in the words *For though the fig tree shall not blossom*, etc., stands for Abraham, as we know from the verse that describes the Fathers, “I saw your Fathers as the first-ripe in the fig tree at her first season.”<sup>42</sup> The vine in the words *Neither shall fruit be in the vines* stands for Sarah,<sup>43</sup> as indicated by the verse “Now Abraham and Sarah were old.”<sup>44</sup> *The labor of the olive shall fail*—[that is, the olive no longer yields any oil]—refers to the fact that “it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.”<sup>45</sup> *And the bosom of the earth shall yield no nourishment* implies that Sarah asked “After I am waxed old, can the exuberance of my youth return [and my bosom yield nourishment]?”<sup>46</sup> (746–47)

### Piska 43:1

a. In his star<sup>47</sup> Abraham saw it written that he would have no children, as is said *Seeing I go hence childless.*<sup>48</sup> But the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Thou didst indeed read the stars correctly, for as thou livest, Abram, as Abram, is not destined to beget children. What then do I mean to do for thee? I will change thy name and thou wilt beget, as it is said *Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham.*<sup>49</sup> Sarai also, as Sarai, is not destined to bear children, as it is said *Sarai was barren;*<sup>50</sup> but as Sarah she will bear children, as is said *The Lord remembered Sarah.*<sup>51</sup> (754–55)

39. Citing Genesis 15:13. This covenant was made *after* Abraham left Haran at the age of seventy-five (Genesis 12:4). Rabbi Judah's comment suggests that Abraham left Haran before that age, which lends support to the contention in Abraham 2:14 that he was sixty-two.

40. Citing Genesis 21:1.

41. Citing Habakkuk 3:17–18.

42. Citing Hosea 9:10.

43. The entire passage, comparing Sarah to the fig and olive trees and to the vine, is reminiscent of *Genesis Apocryphon* XIX, 14–17, which compares Abraham and Sarah to trees. See that passage and its attendant footnote.

44. Citing Genesis 18:11.

45. Ibid.

46. Citing Genesis 18:12.

47. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

48. Citing Genesis 15:2.

49. Citing Genesis 17:5.

50. Citing Genesis 11:30.

51. Citing Genesis 21:1.

**Piska 43:6**

a. [A]s R. Aha said in the name of R. Simeon ben Lakish, . . . Thus it was with Abraham. You find that he deposited souls with the Holy One, blessed be He, as is written *Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, etc., and the souls that they had made in Haran.*<sup>52</sup> But did Abraham make souls? R. Eleazar ben Pedat replied in the name of R. Jose ben Zimra: If all the inhabitants of the world should undertake to create a single gnat they would be unable to do so, therefore how can you speak of *the souls that they had made in Haran*? Is it conceivable that Abraham and Sarah created souls? If not, then what is meant by *souls that they had made*? What is meant is that Abraham converted men to faith in the one God and Sarah converted women.<sup>53</sup> By the making of souls is meant the act of conversion as referred to in the verse *And so I saw the wicked who deserve to be buried, but then they came [into the congregation of the Lord].*<sup>54</sup> It was by their conversion of men and women that Abraham and Sarah are said to have created souls—brought them in under the wings of the Presence.

b. Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said: As ye live, you deposited souls with Me; I will requite your trust in kind. (763–64)

**Piska 51:2**

[Commenting on Leviticus 23:40, which describes the tree parts carried during the circumambulation accompanying the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles:]

a. Another comment: *Take ye . . . the fruit of the tree hadar.*<sup>55</sup> *Hadar* stands for our father Abraham to whom the Holy One gave a majestic bearing in his old age, for it is written “And when Abraham was well on in years, he was majestic in age.”<sup>56</sup> *A branch (kappot) of palm trees* stands for our father Isaac who was tied (*kafut*) and bound upon the altar. *And boughs of a leafy tree* stands for our father Jacob: even as the myrtle tree is rich in leaves, so Jacob was rich in sons. *And willows of the brook* stands for Joseph: as the willow in the lulab cluster wilts before the other three plants do, so Joseph died before his brothers did.<sup>57</sup>

b. Another comment: *Take ye . . . the fruit of the tree hadar.* *Hadar* stands for our mother Sarah to whom the Holy One gave a majestic bearing in her old age, as is written “When Abraham and Sarah were old, they were majestic in age.”<sup>58</sup> *A branch of palm trees* stands for our mother Rebekah: like the palm-tree which bears both fruit and thorns, so Rebekah bore a righteous man and a wicked man. *And boughs of a leafy tree* stands for our mother

52. Citing Genesis 12:5.

53. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

54. Citing Ecclesiastes 8:10.

55. In the KJV, the word *hadar* is omitted (neither translated nor transliterated). The ellipsis is part of the translation.

56. Citing Genesis 24:1.

57. See Genesis 50:24–26.

58. Citing Genesis 18:11.



Leah: as the myrtle tree is rich in leaves, so Leah was rich in children. *And willows of the brook* stands for our mother Rachel: as the willow in the lulab cluster wilts and dries up before the other three plants do, so Rachel died before her sister did.<sup>59</sup> (857–58)

**Piska 52:3**

[Though there is no mention of Abraham's observation of the star in the following passage, it is clearly related to the story found in Piska 43:1 and in other accounts included in this collection.]

a. R. Hunya said in the name of R. Joseph: A change of name or a change in conduct can also avert a harsh decree. A change of name, as is shown by the instance of our father Abraham: *Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham.*<sup>60</sup> Abram as Abram could not beget children, but when renamed Abraham he could beget them. A like instance: *As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.*<sup>61</sup> Sarah as Sarai could not bear children, but when renamed Sarah she could bear them. (875)

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59. The entire passage, comparing the patriarchs and matriarchs to trees, is reminiscent of *Genesis Apocryphon* XIX, 14–17, which also compares Abraham and Sarah to trees. See that passage and its attendant footnote.

60. Citing Genesis 17:5.

61. Citing Genesis 17:15.

## AN EXTRACT FROM THE SEFER HA-RAZIM

The *Sefer ha-Razim* (Book of the Mysteries or Book of Secrets) is a kabbalistic work claiming to have been given by God to Adam and passed down among the patriarchs. Mordecai Margalioth reconstructed this Hebrew text from various fragments found in the Cairo Genizah. The *Sefer ha-Razim* dates to the Talmudic period (third or fourth century A.D.), although it draws on the same earlier pharaonic traditions passed through Greek as the materials contained in the Egyptian traditions section (included later in this volume) with which the *Sefer* is contemporary. The structure of the book has close parallels to Talmudic passages, as well as Enoch and Hekhaloth literature (which were also found in the Cairo Genizah) and other works from ancient Egypt. The work first came to light in 1963 and was first published in Hebrew in 1966. We use the first English translation by Michael A. Morgan, trans., *Sepher ha-Razim: The Book of Mysteries* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 19.

And when he [Noah]<sup>1</sup> came forth from the ark, he used (the book) all the days of his life, and at the time of his death he handed it down to Abraham, and Abraham to Isaac.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Our clarification.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.



## EXTRACTS FROM SEFER YETZIRAH

The *Sefer Yetzirah* or “Book of Creation” is the oldest known of the Jewish kabbalistic texts (although some would argue for the *Bahir*). Many early commentators and other books of kabbalah (such as the *Zohar* and the *Sefer Razi’el*) attribute its authorship to Abraham. Saadia Gaon, writing in the tenth century, noted this tradition; he gave his opinion that while the principles found in the book had been first taught by Abraham, the text itself had been written later. Though there are quotations of a work called the *Sefer Yetzirah* in the first century, the earliest quotation of this *Sefer Yetzirah* is from the sixth century, dating the book to no later than the fifth century. There are six versions of the book. The first three are the long, the short, and one made by Saadia Gaon. The fourth, and most familiar, version began around 1550 when the Spanish Rabbi Moshe Cordevero chose, out of the ten best manuscripts at his disposal, one that most closely fit kabbalistic tradition. The fifth came in the late sixteenth century, when Rabbi Yitzaq Luria reedited the text, producing what is known as the Ari version. In the eighteenth century, Rabbi Eliahu, the Gaon of Vilna, produced the sixth: what is known as the Gra-Ari version. The first English translation was published in 1877. The English translation used here is from Aryeh Kaplan, trans., *Sefer Yetzirah: The Book of Creation* (York Beach, Maine: Weiser, 1990); the pages from which the text of each version is drawn are noted after each entry.

### Gra-Ari Version 6:7<sup>1</sup>

And when Abraham our father, may he rest in peace, looked, saw, understood, probed, engraved and carved,<sup>2</sup> he was successful in creation, as it is written, “And the souls that they made in Haran.”<sup>3</sup> Immediately there was revealed to him the Master of all, may His name be blessed forever; He placed him in His bosom and kissed him on his head, and He called him, “Abraham my beloved.”<sup>4</sup> He made a covenant with him and with his children after him forever, as it is written, “And he believed in God, and He con-

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1. Kaplan divided the text of this version into lines and stanzas. Since the Hebrew reads as prose, we have used paragraphs and thus have added or removed some punctuation and changed some capitals to lowercase.
  2. Jewish kabbalists interpret this as meaning that Abraham made a *golem*, what one would today call an android. But *engraving* and *carving* are also words used in reference to writing. Cf. Abraham 1:31.
  3. Citing Genesis 12:5. Cf. Abraham 2:15.
  4. Citing Isaiah 41:8.

sidered it righteousness.”<sup>5</sup> He made with him a covenant between the ten fingers of his hands—this is the covenant of the tongue, and between the ten toes of his feet—this is the covenant of circumcision, and He bound the 22 letters of the Torah<sup>6</sup> to his tongue and He revealed to him His mystery. He drew them in water, He flamed them with fire, He agitated them with Breath, He burned them with the seven [planets], He directed them with the twelve constellations.<sup>7</sup> (255)

#### Short Version 6:4

And when Abraham our father gazed, he looked, saw, delved, understood, engraved, carved,<sup>8</sup> permuted and depicted, and he was successful. And the Master of all, Blessed be He, revealed Himself to him, and took him in His bosom, [kissed him on the head, and called him, “My beloved”].<sup>9</sup> He made a covenant with him between the ten toes of his feet—this is the covenant of circumcision—and between the ten fingers of his hands—this is the covenant of the tongue. He bound the twenty-two letters to his tongue and revealed their foundation. He drew them in water, burned them in fire, agitated them with breath. He ignited them with the seven (planets), and directed them with the twelve constellations.<sup>10</sup> (267)

#### Long Version 6:8

And when Abraham our father, of blessed memory, came, he looked, saw, probed, understood, engraved, carved,<sup>11</sup> permuted, formed, and thought, and he was successful. The Lord of all, may His name be blessed for eternity, revealed Himself to him, kissed him on the head, and called him, “Abraham My friend.”<sup>12</sup> He made a covenant with him and with his seed forever. “And he believed in God, and He considered it righteousness.”<sup>13</sup> The Glory of God was decreed upon him, as it is written, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.”<sup>14</sup> He made a covenant between the ten fingers of his hands, and this is the Holy Tongue (the Hebrew language). He bound the twenty-two letters on his tongue, and the Blessed Holy One revealed to him their mystery. He drew them in water, ignited them with fire, agitated them with breath, burned them with the seven planets, and directed them with the twelve constellations.<sup>15</sup> (281)

5. Citing Genesis 15:6. We have eliminated the dittograph “and He considered” in Kaplan’s translation.

6. The Hebrew alphabet consists of twenty-two letters.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:31. See n. 2.

9. Citing Isaiah 41:8. The bracketed portions of the text here indicate omissions by Donash ibn Tamim, the commentator from whom this version comes.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:31. See n. 2.

12. Citing Isaiah 41:8.

13. Citing Genesis 15:6.

14. Citing Jeremiah 1:5. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.

15. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.



**Saadia Version 8:5**

And When Abraham our father understood, formed, permuted, probed, thought and was successful, the Blessed Holy One revealed Himself to him, declaring to him, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before [you]<sup>16</sup> emerged from the womb, I sanctified you. I have made you a prophet for the nations."<sup>17</sup> He made him His friend, and made a covenant with him and his children forever and until eternity. (293)

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16. At this point, Kaplan's text mistakenly reads "and" instead of "you."

17. Citing Jeremiah 1:5. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE MIDRASH RABBAH

The *Midrash Rabbah* is an early verse-by-verse rabbinic commentary on the Old Testament books of Genesis through Deuteronomy and a few others. The composition for the Genesis material dates to the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century A.D., although other books are thought to be later; for example, the composition of Exodus may be as late as the twelfth century. The midrashim began to be published in Constantinople in 1512. We are using the first English edition: H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah*, 10 vols. (1939; reprint, London: Soncino, 1961). The numbers at the beginning of each entry denote each *parashah* or explanation, and the numbers at the end are the volume and page from which we draw the material. In the *Midrash*, each *parashah* begins with a partial quotation of a scriptural verse. Before each *parashah*, we cite the King James Version of the verse discussed in the extract. Finally, since we are compiling and not critiquing this material, we have included the same information as many times as the *Midrash Rabbah* has repeated it. We have also removed the diacritics on the names.

### Genesis

#### 14:6

*"And the Lord God formed man."* (Genesis 2:7)

For the sake of Abraham. R. Levi said: It is written, *The greatest man among the Anakim*:<sup>1</sup> "*man*" means Abraham, and why is he called the greatest man? Because he was worthy of being created before Adam,<sup>2</sup> but the Holy One, blessed be He, reasoned: "He may sin and there will be none to set it right. Hence I will create Adam first, so that if he sins, Abraham may come and set things right." R. Abba b. Kahana said: In general practice, when a man joints a pair of beams [so that they meet] at a slope, where does he place them? Surely in the middle of the chamber, so that they may support the beams in front

1. Citing Joshua 14:15.

2. Unlike many Christians, the Jews believed in the premortal existence of man's spirit. This passage suggests the premortal existence of Abraham and Adam; otherwise, it would not have been possible to speak of Abraham's worthiness prior to Adam being placed on the earth. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.



and behind. Even so, why did the Lord create Abraham in the middle of generations? In order that he might bear the generations before and after him.<sup>3</sup> (1:114)

25:3

*"... because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed."* (Genesis 5:29)

R. Berekiah said in R. Helbo's name: There were two famines in the days of Abraham.<sup>4</sup> (1:208)

30:8

*"Noah was a just man."* (Genesis 6:9)

Was. R. Johanan said: Every man of whom it is said that he "was" (*hayah*) remained unchanged from beginning to end. An objection was raised: But it is written, *Abraham was one, and he inherited the land*.<sup>5</sup> was he then unchanged from beginning to end! That too does not refute me, he replied: R. Johanan and R. Hanina both said: Abraham was forty-eight years old when he recognised his Creator. Then how is "was" to be understood in his case? He was destined to lead the whole world to repentance. (1:236)

34:9

*"And the Lord smelled a sweet savour."* (Genesis 8:21)

He smelled the savour of the Patriarch Abraham ascending from the fiery furnace;<sup>6</sup> He smelled the savour of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah ascending from the fiery furnace.<sup>7</sup> (1:273)

38:6

*"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech."* (Genesis 11:1)

That means that they spoke against two who were unique [lit. "one"], viz. against *Abraham who was one*<sup>8</sup> and against *The Lord our God, the Lord is One*.<sup>9</sup>

Said they: "This Abraham is a barren mule and cannot produce offspring." Against *"The Lord our God, the Lord is One"*:<sup>10</sup> "He has no right to choose the celestial spheres for Himself and assign us the terrestrial world! But come, let us build a tower at the top of

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3. Cf. Abraham 2:10–11.

4. The Bible records only one famine in Abraham's time, when he went down to Egypt (Genesis 12:10). But the Book of Abraham indicates that there had been an earlier famine when Abraham lived in Ur of the Chaldees and at Haran (see Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5).

5. Citing Ezekiel 33:24.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

7. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, the three companions of Daniel who were cast into the fiery furnace in Daniel 3.

8. Citing Ezekiel 33:24.

9. Citing Deuteronomy 6:4.

10. Ibid.

which we will set an idol holding a sword in its hand, which will thus appear to wage war against Him." (1:304–5)

38:8

*"And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name."* (Genesis 11:4)

The School of R. Ishmael taught: SHEM (A NAME) means nought else but an idol. (1:307)

38:13

*"And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees."* (Genesis 11:28)

R. Hiyya said: Terah was a manufacturer of idols.<sup>11</sup> He once went away somewhere and left Abraham to sell them in his place. A man came and wished to buy one. "How old are you?" Abraham asked him. "Fifty years," was the reply. "Woe to such a man!" he exclaimed, "you are fifty years old and would worship a day-old object!" At this he became ashamed and departed. On another occasion a woman came with a plateful of flour and requested him, "Take this and offer it to them." So he took a stick, broke them, and put the stick in the hand of the largest. When his father returned he demanded, "What have you done to them?" "I cannot conceal it from you," he rejoined. "A woman came with a plateful of fine meal and requested me to offer it to them. One claimed, 'I must eat first,' while another claimed, 'I must eat first.' Thereupon the largest arose, took the stick, and broke them." "Why do you make sport of me," he cried out; "have they then any knowledge!" "Should not your ears listen to what your mouth is saying," he retorted. Thereupon he seized him and delivered him to Nimrod.<sup>12</sup> "Let us worship the fire!" he [Nimrod] proposed. "Let us rather worship water, which extinguishes the fire," replied he. "Then let us worship water!" "Let us rather worship the clouds which bear the water." "Then let us worship the clouds!" "Let us rather worship the winds which disperse the clouds." "Then let us worship the wind!" "Let us rather worship human beings, who withstand the wind." "You are just bandying words," he exclaimed; "we will worship nought but the fire. Behold, I will cast you into it, and let your God whom you adore come and save you from it." Now Haran was standing there undecided. If Abram is victorious, [thought he], I will say that I am of Abram's belief, while if Nimrod is victorious I will say that I am on Nimrod's side. When Abram descended into the fiery furnace and was saved,<sup>13</sup> he [Nimrod] asked him, "Of whose belief are you?" "Of Abram's," he replied. Thereupon he seized and cast him into the fire; his inwards were scorched and he died in his father's presence.<sup>14</sup> (1:310–11)

11. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.

12. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 30.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

14. The Hebrew idiom that literally means "to the face of" can be rendered either "in the presence of," as it is understood here, or "before" (in either the temporal or locative sense), as in most Bibles. For the death of Haran, cf. Abraham 2:1.



## 38:14

*"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. But Sarai was barren; she had no child."* (Genesis 11:29–30)

Abram was a year older than Nahor and Nahor was a year older than Haran; [hence Abram was] two years older [than Haran]; [now deduct] the year of pregnancy with Milcah and the year of pregnancy with Iscah, and you find that Haran begot children at six years of age, yet you say that Abram could not beget a child! [The reason, however, was]: AND SARAI WAS BARREN; SHE HAD NO CHILD.<sup>15</sup> (1:311–12)

## 39:3

*"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee . . ."* (Genesis 12:1)

*"We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for? If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar. I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour"* (Song of Solomon 8:8–10)

R. Berekiah commenced: *We have a little sister*<sup>16</sup>—*aḥoth*: this refers to Abraham, who united (*iḥah*) the whole world for us. Bar Kappara observed: Like a person who sews a rent together. "*Little*": even while young he stored up pious acts and good deeds. *And she hath no breasts*: no breasts suckled him in piety or good deeds. *What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?* i.e. on the day when the wicked Nimrod ordered him to be cast into the fiery furnace. *If she be a wall, we will build upon her*: if he resists [Nimrod] like a wall, He [God] will build up [a defence] for him. *And if she be a door* (deleth), *we will enclose* (*naḥur*) *her with boards of cedar*: if he is poor (*dal*) in piety and noble deeds, "*We will enclose* (*naḥur*) *her with boards of cedar*": and just as a drawing (*ḥurah*) [on boards] is only temporary, so will I protect him only for a time. Said he [Abraham] to Him: "Sovereign of the Universe! *I am a wall*: I stand as firm as a wall; . . . my sons are Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah." . . . he entered [the fiery furnace] in peace and left it unscathed: hence, NOW THE LORD SAID UNTO ABRAM: GET THEE.<sup>17</sup> (1:313–14)

## 39:7

*"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee . . ."* (Genesis 12:1)

Now what precedes this passage? *And Terah died in Haran*,<sup>18</sup> [which is followed by] NOW THE LORD SAID UNTO ABRAM: GET THEE (LEK LEKA).<sup>19</sup> R. Isaac said: From the point

15. Citing Genesis 11:30. This explanation is repeated verbatim in *Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 45:1 in reference to the phrase "Now, Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children," in Genesis 16:1.

16. The scriptural citations in this passage all come from Song of Solomon 8:8–10.

17. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

18. Citing Genesis 11:32.

19. The Hebrew text could be read as God saying, "Go, go" to Abraham.

of view of chronology a period of sixty-five years is still required.<sup>20</sup> But first you may learn that the wicked, even during their lifetime, are called dead. For Abraham was afraid, saying, "Shall I go out and bring dishonour upon the Divine Name, as people will say, 'He left his father in his old age and departed'?" Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, reassured him: "I exempt thee (*leka*) from the duty of honouring thy parents, though I exempt no one else from this duty. Moreover, I will record his death before thy departure." (1:315–16)

39:8

*"Get thee out of thy country."* (Genesis 12:1)

R. Judah said: "*Lek leka*" (Go, go) is written twice, one passage [referring to his departure] from Aram Naharaim, and the other [to his departure] from Aram Nahor. R. Nehemiah said: "*Lek leka*" is written twice, one passage [referring to his departure] from Aram Naharaim and Aram Nahor, and the other intimating that He made him fly from the Covenant between the pieces<sup>21</sup> and brought him to Haran. (1:316)

39:10

*"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee."* (Genesis 12:1)

R. Berekiah b. R. Simon said in R. Nehemiah's name: This may be illustrated by a king who was passing from place to place, when a gem fell from his head. Whereupon the king halted and stationed his retinue there, gathered the sand in piles, and brought sieves. He sifted the first pile but did not find it; the second but did not find it; but in the third he found it. Said they: "The king has found his pearl." Similarly, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham: "What need had I to trace the descent of Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, and Terah?<sup>22</sup> Was it not on thy account?" (1:318–19)

39:14

*"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."* (Genesis 12:5)

R. Leazar observed in the name of R. Jose b. Zimra: If all the nations assembled to create one insect they could not endow it with life, yet you say, AND THE SOULS THAT THEY HAD MADE!<sup>23</sup> It refers, however, to the proselytes [which they had made]. Then let

20. First, Terah's death is noted one verse before Abraham is told to leave his father's house (Genesis 11:32–12:1). According to Genesis 11:26, Terah was 70 years old when Abram was born. Since Abram left Haran at the age of 75 (Genesis 12:4), Terah would have been only 145 years of age at the time, although Genesis 11:32 says he died 60 years later, at the age of 205. Cf. Abraham 2:14, which says the patriarch was 62 when he left Haran.

21. Refers to the events in Genesis 15.

22. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

23. The word rendered "gotten" in the KJV of Genesis 12:5 usually means "made."



it say, "That they had converted"; why THAT THEY HAD MADE? That is to teach you that he who brings a Gentile near [to God] is as though he created him. Now let it say, "That he had made"; why THAT THEY HAD MADE? Said R. Hunia: Abraham converted the men and Sarah the women.<sup>24</sup> (1:324)

**39:16**

*" . . . there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord."*  
(Genesis 12:8)

Another interpretation of AND CALLED: he began to make converts.<sup>25</sup> (1:325)

**40:1**

*"And there was a famine in the land."* (Genesis 12:10)

It is written, *Behold, the eye of the Lord is toward them that fear him:*<sup>26</sup> this alludes to Abraham, of whom it is written, *For now I know that thou art a God-fearing man.*<sup>27</sup> . . . *Thou wilt show faithfulness to Jacob, mercy to Abraham.*<sup>28</sup> *To deliver their soul from death:*<sup>29</sup> from the death decreed by Nimrod. *And to keep them alive in famine: . . .* (1:326)

**40:3**

*"And there was a famine in the land."* (Genesis 12:10)

Ten famines have come upon the earth. One in the days of Adam: . . . R. Berekiah said in R. Helbo's name: There were two famines in the days of Abraham. R. Huna said in R. Aha's name: There was one in the days of Lamech and one in the days of Abraham.<sup>30</sup> (1:327)

**40:5**

*"And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair."* (Genesis 12:14)

And where was Sarah? He had put her in a box and locked her in it. When he came to the customs-house, he [the customs officer] demanded, "Pay the custom dues." "I will pay," he replied. "You carry garments in that box," said he. "I will pay the dues on garments." "You are carrying silks," he asserted. "I will pay on silks." "You are carrying pre-

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24. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

25. Ibid.

26. Citing Psalm 33:18.

27. Citing Genesis 22:12.

28. Citing Micah 7:20.

29. This and the next scriptural quotation citing Psalm 33:19.

30. Repeated from *Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 25:3. The Bible recounts only one famine in Abraham's time, when he went down to Egypt (Genesis 12:10), but the Book of Abraham indicates that there had been an earlier famine when Abraham lived in Ur of the Chaldees and at Haran (Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5).

cious stones." "I will pay on precious stones." "It is imperative that you open it and we see what it contains," he insisted. As soon as he opened it the land of Egypt was irradiated with her lustre [beauty]. (1:329)

#### 41:1-2

*"And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife."* (Genesis 12:17)

1. . . . It is written, *The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*<sup>31</sup> As the palm and the cedar<sup>32</sup> have neither crooked curves nor excrescences, so the righteous have neither crookedness nor excrescences; as the shadow of the palm and the cedar is cast afar, so is the reward of the righteous far away [in the future world]; as the heart of the palm and the cedar is directed upward, so are the hearts of the righteous directed toward the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is written, *Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He will bring forth my feet out of the net;*<sup>33</sup> as the palm and the cedar have desire, so have the righteous desire. And what is their desire? The Holy One, blessed be He. R. Tanhuma said: There was once a palm tree in Amatho that did not yield fruit. A palm-gardener passed and saw it; said he: "This ungrafted tree looks to [a male palm] from Jericho." As soon as they grafted it, it yielded fruit. Or [will you argue]: as we cannot make utensils from a palm tree, so are the righteous! Therefore, it says *"like a cedar."* R. Huna observed: There [in Babylonia] utensils are manufactured from it [the palm tree]. Then will you say: as the cedar does not produce fruit, so are the righteous? Therefore it is stated, *"The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree"*: as no part of the palm has any waste, the dates being eaten, the branches used for Hallel, the twigs for covering [booths],<sup>34</sup> the bast for ropes, the leaves for besoms, and the planed boards for ceiling rooms, so are there none worthless in Israel, some being versed in Scripture, others in Mishnah, some in Talmud, others in *Haggadah*. And as whoever climbs to the top of the palm and the cedar and does not take care of himself falls and is killed, so whoever comes to attack Israel eventually receives his deserts on their account, the proof being that because Pharaoh took possession of Sarah for one night he and his household were smitten with plagues, as it is written, *AND THE LORD PLAGUED PHARAOH*, etc.

2. R. Simeon b. Lakish said in Bar Kappara's name: Pharaoh was smitten with lupus. R. Simeon b. Gamaliel said: An old man suffering with boils met me in Sepphoris; said he to me: "There are twenty-four varieties of boils, and out of all these the only one upon

31. Citing Psalm 92:13 (92:12 in the KJV).

32. This parashah is included because it cites passages regarding cedars and palms in connection with Genesis 12:17. Similarly, *Genesis Apocryphon* XIX, 14-17 uses these two trees to represent Abram and Sarai when they went into Egypt. The same comparison is made in Zohar Genesis 82a, cited below.

33. Citing Psalm 25:15.

34. The *sukkah*, or tabernacle, is constructed during the feast of Sukkot, or Tabernacles, during which worshipers carry palm fronds in hand while reciting the Hallel (praise) psalms from the Bible (Psalms 111-18).



which a woman has an injurious effect is lupus"; and therewith was the wicked Pharaoh smitten.

AND HIS HOUSE. R. Aha said: Even the beams of his house were smitten, and all exclaimed, "It is BECAUSE OF SARAI ABRAM'S WIFE." R. Berekiah said: Because he dared to approach the shoe of that lady. And the whole of that night Sarah lay prostrate on her face, crying, "Sovereign of the Universe! Abraham went forth [from his land] on Thine assurance, and I went forth with faith; Abraham is without this prison while I am within!" Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to her: "Whatever I do, I do for thy sake, and all will say, 'It is BECAUSE OF SARAI ABRAM'S WIFE.'" R. Berekiah said: Because he dared to approach the shoe of that lady.<sup>35</sup> R. Levi said: The whole of that night an angel stood with a whip in his hand; when she ordered, "Strike," he struck, and when she ordered, "Desist," he desisted. And why such severity? Because she told him [Pharaoh], "I am a married woman," yet he would not leave her. R. Leazar said (the same was also taught in the name of R. Liezer b. Jacob): We know that Pharaoh was smitten with leprosy and Abimelech with the closing up [of the orifices]: how do we know that what is said here is to be applied there, and vice versa? Because "*for the sake of*"<sup>36</sup> occurs in both places, that an analogy may be drawn.<sup>37</sup> (1:332–34)

#### 42:3

*"And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations; that these made war . . ."* (Genesis 14:1–2)

R. Aha said: This is written *hu* (he): it was he [Abraham] that sanctified (*kiddash*) the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, in the fiery furnace.<sup>38</sup> Hence when barbarians came to attack him, all began lamenting "woe!"; thus "There was woe in the days of Amraphel." (1:342)

#### 42:4

*"And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel . . ."* (Genesis 14:1)

He was called by three names: Cush, Nimrod, and Amraphel. Cush, because he was indeed a Cushite;<sup>39</sup> Nimrod, because he incited the world to revolt (*himrid*);<sup>40</sup> Amraphel denotes: he made a declaration (*amar imrah*), "I will cast down (*appilah*)."<sup>41</sup> [Another interpretation is] that he made sport of (*amar we-afle*) the world, also that he made sport of Abraham; again, that he ordered Abraham to be thrown (*amar we-hippil*) into the furnace.<sup>41</sup> (1:346)

35. This is a deliberate repetition.

36. The same Hebrew idiom is variously rendered "because of" or "for the sake of" in the KJV.

37. Much of this explanation is repeated verbatim in *Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 52:13, in connection with a similar event involving Sarah and the Philistine king Abimelech.

38. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

39. The term *Cushite* usually refers to black Africans. Nimrod's father was Cush, son of Ham.

40. The rabbis derived the name Nimrod from the root *mrd*, "to rebel."

41. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

## 42:5

*"... the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale." (Genesis 14:17)*

*The vale of Shaveh:* R. Berekiah and R. Helbo in the name of R. Samuel b. Nahman said: It was so called because there all the peoples of the world became unanimous (*hushewu*), felled cedars, erected a large dais for him [Abraham] and set him on top, while uttering praises before him, saying: *"Hear us, my lord: thou art a prince of God among us; in the choice,"* etc.<sup>42</sup> They said to him: *"Thou art king over us, thou art a god to us."*<sup>43</sup> But he replied: *"The world does not lack its king and the world does not lack its God."* (1:347)

## 42:7

*"... which is Kadesh. . . . And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain." (Genesis 14:7, 10)*

THE SAME (HI) IS KADESH: R. Aha said: This is written *hu* (he): it was he [Abraham] that sanctified (*kiddash*) the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, in the fiery furnace.<sup>44</sup> . . .

But on the view of R. Nehemiah, R. 'Azariah and R. Jonathan in R. Isaac's name gave the following further explanation: When Abraham descended into the fiery furnace and was rescued,<sup>45</sup> some of the nations believed [that it had happened], while others disbelieved. But when the King of Sodom descended into the slime and was rescued, then all believed in Abraham retrospectively. (1:348–49)

## 43:5

*"... the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale." (Genesis 14:17)*

R. Berekiah and R. Helbo in the name of R. Samuel b. Nahman said: It was so called because there all peoples of the world became unanimous, and said to Abraham: *"Be thou king over us."* But he replied: *"The world does not lack its king and its God"* (1:355).

## 43:7

*"And he [Melchizedek] blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth." (Genesis 14:19)*

R. Isaac said: Abraham used to entertain wayfarers, and after they had eaten he would say to them, *"Say a blessing."* *"What shall we say?"* they asked. *"Blessed be the God of the Universe of Whose bounty we have eaten,"* replied he. Then the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: *"My Name was not known among My creatures, and thou has made it known among them: I will regard thee as though thou wast associated with Me in the*

42. Citing Genesis 23:6.

43. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3, figure 1.

44. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

45. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.



creation of the world." Hence it is written, AND HE BLESSED HIM, AND SAID: BLESSED BE ABRAM OF THE GOD MOST HIGH, WHO [SC. ABRAHAM] HAS ACQUIRED HEAVEN AND EARTH.<sup>46</sup> (1:357)

#### 44:4

*"[T]he word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."* (Genesis 15:1)

R. Levi explained this in two ways, . . .

The Rabbis explained it thus: Abraham was filled with misgivings, saying to himself, "I descended into the fiery furnace and was delivered;<sup>47</sup> I went through famine and war and was delivered: perhaps then I have already received my reward in this world and have nought for the future world?" Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, reassured him: "FEAR NOT, ABRAM, I AM THY SHIELD (MAGEN),<sup>48</sup> meaning, a gift of grace (*maggan*) to thee, all that I have done for thee in this world I did for nought; but in the future that is to come, THY REWARD SHALL BE EXCEEDING GREAT."<sup>49</sup> (1:362–63)

#### 44:7

*"Fear not, Abram."* (Genesis 15:1)

*"So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil."* (Isaiah 41:7)

R. Berekiah said: . . . *The refiner*: This is Abraham, whom the Holy One, blessed be He, refined [tried] in the fiery furnace.<sup>50</sup> . . . *Saying of the join: It is good*: This refers to the nations of the world, who said: It is better to be joined to the God of Abraham than to the idol of Nimrod.<sup>51</sup> (1:365)

#### 44:10

*"And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed."* (Genesis 15:3)

R. Samuel b. Isaac commented: [Abraham said:] My planetary fate oppresses me and declares, "Abram cannot beget a child." Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: "Let it be even as thy words: Abram and Sarai cannot beget but Abraham and Sarah can beget." (1:367)

46. This explanation presumes Abraham, not God, to be the possessor of heaven and earth. Cf. Doctrine and Covenants 132:29, 37, 49.

47. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

48. Citing Genesis 15:1.

49. Ibid. Cf. Doctrine and Covenants 132:29, 37, 49.

50. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

51. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

## 44:12

*"And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them." (Genesis 15:5)*

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—ḥūzōth.*<sup>52</sup> R. Judah b. R. Simon said in R. Johanan'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.<sup>53</sup> 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.*<sup>54</sup>

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.*<sup>55</sup> your ancestor Abraham wished to entertain this belief long ago, but I would not permit him. (1:367–68)

## 44:13

*"And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it." (Genesis 15:7)*

R. Liezer b. Jacob said: Michael descended and rescued Abraham from the fiery furnace.<sup>56</sup> The Rabbis said: The Holy One, blessed be He, rescued him; thus it is written, I AM THE LORD THAT BROUGHT THEE OUT OF UR OF THE CHALDEES. And when did Michael descend? In the case of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.<sup>57</sup> (1:369)

## 45:1

*"... and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar." (Genesis 16:1)*

R. Simeon b. Yohai said: Hagar was Pharaoh's daughter. When Pharaoh saw what was done on Sarah's behalf in his own house, he took his daughter and gave her to Sarah, saying, "Better let my daughter be a handmaid in this house than a mistress in another house." (1:380)

52. Citing Proverbs 8:26.

53. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18.

54. Citing Genesis 20:7.

55. Citing Jeremiah 10:2.

56. Cf. Abraham 1:15; 2:13; Facsimile 1, figure 1.

57. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who were cast into the fiery furnace in Daniel 3.



# 46:5

*"And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly."*  
(Genesis 17:2)

R. Ishmael and R. Akiba [reasoned as follows]. R. Ishmael said: Abraham was a High Priest, as it says, *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever after the manner of Melchizedek.*<sup>58</sup> (1:392)

# 48:1

*"And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day."* (Genesis 18:1)

*"Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great."* (Psalm 18:35)

*"Thou hast also given me Thy shield of salvation"*<sup>59</sup> alludes to Abraham; *"And Thy right hand hath holden me up"*—in the fiery furnace,<sup>60</sup> in famine, and in [my battle with] the kings; *"And thy condescension hath made me great"*: with what condescension did the Lord make Abraham great? In that he sat while the *Shechinah* stood; thus it is written, AND THE LORD APPEARED UNTO HIM . . .<sup>61</sup> AS HE SAT. (1:406)

# 48:2

*"And the Lord appeared unto him."* (Genesis 18:1)

Abraham said: After I circumcised myself, many proselytes came to attach themselves to this sign [of the covenant].<sup>62</sup> (1:406)

# 48:6

*"And the Lord appeared unto him."* (Genesis 18:1)

*"He shall dwell on high."* (Isaiah 33:16)

R. Judah b. R. Simon and R. Hanin in R. Johanan's name said: He lifted him [sc. Abraham] up above the vault of heaven; hence He said to him, *Look now (habbeṭ) at heaven:*<sup>63</sup> *"habbeṭ"* is applicable only when one looks downward from above.<sup>64</sup> (1:408)

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58. Citing Psalm 110:4. Cf. Abraham 2:9, 11; Facsimile 2, figure 1.

59. All italics in this selection citing Psalm 18:36 (18:35 in the KJV).

60. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

61. Ellipsis points are part of the quoted text.

62. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

63. Citing Genesis 15:5.

64. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

## 49:11

*"And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." (Genesis 18:27)*

He said: Had Nimrod slain me, would I not have been dust, and had he burnt me, would I not have been ashes? (1:431)

## 53:4

*"And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said." (Genesis 21:1)*

*"Thy word standeth fast in heaven." (Psalm 119:89)*

*For ever, O Lord, Thy word standeth fast in heaven*<sup>65</sup>—but not on earth? But it means, what Thou didst say to Abraham in heaven: *At the set time I will return unto thee*, etc. Hence, AND THE LORD REMEMBERED SARAH.<sup>66</sup> (1:463)

## 55:6

*"God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am." (Genesis 22:1)*

R. Joshua said: On two occasions Moses compared himself to Abraham, and God answered him, *Glorify not thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men.*<sup>67</sup> Now Abraham said, HERE AM I—ready for priesthood, ready for kingship, and he attained priesthood and kingship.<sup>68</sup> He attained priesthood,<sup>69</sup> as it says, *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever after the manner of Melchizedek;*<sup>70</sup> kingship: *Thou art a mighty prince among us.*<sup>71</sup> Moses too said, *Here am I*<sup>72</sup>—ready for priesthood, ready for kingship—but God answered, *Draw not nigh hither*—halom; now "drawing nigh" refers to priesthood, . . . while "halom" connotes kingship. (1:485–86)

## 55:7

*"And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering." (Genesis 22:2)*

R. Judah said: He [Abraham] said to Him: "Sovereign of the Universe! Can there be a sacrifice without a priest?" "I have already appointed thee to be a priest," replied the Holy One, blessed be He: thus it is written, *"Thou art a priest for ever."*<sup>73</sup> (1:488)

65. Citing Psalm 119:89.

66. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

67. Citing Proverbs 25:6.

68. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3, figure 1.

69. Cf. Abraham 2:9, 11; Facsimile 2, figure 1.

70. Citing Psalm 110:4.

71. Citing Genesis 23:5 (23:6 in the KJV).

72. This and the next quotation citing Exodus 3:4, 5.

73. Citing Psalm 110:4.



**63:2**

*"And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: . . ." (Genesis 25:19)*

R. Huna and R. Jeremiah in the name of R. Samuel b. R. Isaac said: Abraham was saved from the fiery furnace<sup>74</sup> only for Jacob's sake. (2:556–57)

**64:2**

*"And there was a famine in the land." (Genesis 26:1)*

R. Berekiah said in R. Helbo's name: There were two famines in the days of Abraham.<sup>75</sup> (2:573)

**64:4**

*"Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." (Genesis 26:5)*

R. Hanina and R. Johanan both said: Abraham was forty-eight years old when he recognised his Creator. R. Levi said in the name of Resh Lakish: He was three years old, for Abraham hearkened to the voice of his Creator to keep His charge [for as many years as] the numerical value of עֶקֶב.<sup>76</sup> (2:575)

**84:4**

*"And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger." (Genesis 37:1)*

Abraham made proselytes, for it is written, *And Abraham took Sarai his wife . . .*<sup>77</sup> *and the souls that they had made in Haran.*<sup>78</sup> R. Eleazar observed in the name of R. Jose b. Zimra: If all the nations assembled to create one insect, they could not endow it with life, yet you say, *"And the souls that they had made in Haran!"* It refers, however, to the proselytes. Then let it say, *"That they had converted"*: why, *"Which they had made"*? That is to teach you that if one brings a proselyte near [to God] it is as though he created him. Now let it say, *"That he had made"*; why *"That they had made"*? Said R. Hunia: Abraham converted the men and Sarah the women.<sup>79</sup> (2:771)

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74. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

75. Repeated from *Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 25:3 and 40:3, where we noted that the Bible indicates only one famine in Abraham's time, when he went down to Egypt (Genesis 12:10), but the Book of Abraham describes an earlier famine when Abraham lived in Ur of the Chaldees and at Haran (Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5).

76. This is the Hebrew word rendered *because* at the beginning of the (biblical) passage. Its numerical value derives from its three consonants, which Rabbi Levi interpreted as how long Abraham had been keeping the Lord's commandments.

77. Ellipsis points are part of the text.

78. Citing Genesis 12:5.

79. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

95:3

*"Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." (Genesis 26:5)*

At what age did Abraham recognise his Creator? R. Hananiah said: He recognised his Creator when one year old. R. Levi said in the name of R. Simeon b. Lakish: He was three years old, for it says, *‘Eḳeb* (because): [thus he served God] the number [of years] intimated by *‘eḳeb*: *‘ayin* is seventy, *ḵuf* one hundred, and *beth* two, while Abraham lived one hundred and seventy-five years in all. From this you learn that Abraham recognised his Creator when three years old, and he kept even the minutiae of the Torah. (2:883)

## Exodus

15:12

*"And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire." (Exodus 12:8)*

*"This is for the sake of Abraham whom I saved from the fiery furnace."*<sup>80</sup> (3:175)

18:5

*"And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote . . ." (Exodus 12:29)*

When Sennacherib attacked us, Thou didst overthrow him at night. . . . Michael came out and smote them,<sup>81</sup> and Gabriel, at God's behest, delivered Hananiah and his companions. Why was this? Because God had made a condition with them thus. When? When He desired to descend in order to deliver Abraham from the fiery furnace, Michael and Gabriel said: "Let us go down and deliver him."<sup>82</sup> But He said to them: "Had he descended into the fiery furnace for the sakes of one of you, then you would have delivered him. But since he went down for *My* sake, I Myself will descend and save him," as it says: *I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees.*<sup>83</sup> (3:219–20)

23:4

*"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel." (Exodus 15:1)*

From the day when God created the world until the Israelites stood near the sea, no one save Israel sang unto God. He created Adam, yet he did not utter Song; He delivered Abraham from the fiery furnace and from the kings,<sup>84</sup> and he did not utter Song; Isaac, also when saved from the knife, did not utter Song, nor did Jacob when he escaped alive from the angel, from Esau and from the men of Shechem. (3:281)

80. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

81. The attack launched against the kingdom of Judah by the Assyrian king Sennacherib is described in 2 Kings 18–19; 2 Chronicles 32; and Isaiah 36–37.

82. Cf. Abraham 1:15; 2:13; Facsimile 1, figure 1.

83. Citing Genesis 15:7. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

84. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.



**38:6**

*"And this is the thing [word] that thou shalt do . . ." (Exodus 29:1)*

It is written, *For ever, O Lord, Thy word standeth fast in heaven.*<sup>85</sup> Does then the word of God stand fast only in heaven, but not on earth? R. Hezekiah b. Hiyya said: This is because God made a promise in heaven, which was fulfilled on earth for that righteous man [Abraham] after two hundred and ten years.<sup>86</sup> How so? When the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham: *"Get thee out of thy country. . . and I will make of thee a great nation,"*<sup>87</sup> the latter replied: "Lord of the Universe! What benefit do I derive from all these blessings since I am about to depart from this world childless?" Said God to him: "Art thou sure that thou wilt no longer give birth to a child?" The reply was: "Lord of the Universe! My planet tells me that I will be childless." "So thou art afraid of the planet?" God retorted; "as thou livest, it will be as impossible to number thy offspring as it is to number the stars of heaven." R. Judah b. R. Simon said in the name of R. Hanin: It was then that God raised Abraham above the vault of the heavens<sup>88</sup> and said to him: *Look now toward heaven, and count the stars, if thou be able to count them; and He said unto him: So shall thy seed be,*<sup>89</sup> that is: Just as thou seest all these stars and canst not count them, so [numerous] will thy children be, for none will be able to number them. (3:453–54)

**44:5**

*"Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel." (Exodus 32:13)*

Why are the three patriarchs here mentioned?—Because, said the Sages, Moses argued: "If it is burning that they deserve, then remember, [O Lord,] Abraham who jeopardised his life in the fiery furnace in order to be burnt for Thy name and let his burning cancel the burning of his children." (3:510)<sup>90</sup>

**49:2**

*"And every wise hearted man among them that wrought the work of the tabernacle . . ." (Exodus 36:8)*

What was the work which they wrought? If you would know, see what is written: *And this is the offering which ye shall take of them, [gold, and silver, and brass].*<sup>91</sup> . . . Another explanation of "gold" is that it refers to Abraham who was tried in the fiery furnace like gold. (3:555)

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85. Citing Psalm 119:89.

86. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.

87. Citing Genesis 12:1–2. The ellipsis points are part of the text.

88. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18.

89. Citing Genesis 15:5.

90. Cf. Zohar Exodus 83b, where we read that "it was the merit of Abraham which saved Israel from hell fire" because Abraham had pled their case before God. Harry Sperling, Maurice Simon, and Paul P. Levertoff, trans., *The Zohar* (New York: Bennet, 1958), 3:251–52.

91. Our insertion. Citing Exodus 25:3.

## Leviticus

11:7

“ . . . which is Kadesh.” (Genesis 14:7)

R. Aha said: . . . he [i.e. Abraham] who had sanctified (*kiddesh*) the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, by having entered the fiery furnace. (4:144)

25:6

“And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food . . .” (Leviticus 19:23)

It was taught at the school of R. Ishmael: The Holy One, blessed be He, sought to make Shem the progenitor of the priesthood; for it says, *And Melchizedek king of Salem . . . was priest of God.*<sup>92</sup> But when he blessed Abraham before blessing the Omnipresent and Abraham said to him: “Should the blessing of the servant be given priority over the blessing of the Master?”, the Holy One, blessed be He, took the priesthood away from him and gave it to Abraham; as may be proved by the fact that it says, *The Lord saith unto my lord,*<sup>93</sup> and after this it is written, *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever after the manner (dibrathi) of Melchizedek;*<sup>94</sup> this means: after the speech (*dibbur*) of Melchizedek. Hence it is written, *Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Maker of heaven and earth.*<sup>95</sup> R. Ishmael and R. Akiba reasoned differently. R. Ishmael holds that Abraham was a High Priest.<sup>96</sup> Thus it is written, “*The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever.*”<sup>97</sup> (4:319–20)

27:5

“When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat is brought forth, . . . it shall be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the Lord.” (Leviticus 22:27)

“And God seeketh that which is pursued.”<sup>98</sup> . . . Abraham was pursued by Nimrod, and the Holy One, blessed be He, chose Abraham, as it says, *Thou art the Lord the God who didst choose Abram.*<sup>99</sup> (4:348)

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92. Citing Genesis 14:18. In Jewish tradition, Melchizedek is identified with Shem, the son of Noah and ancestor of Abraham. The ellipsis points are part of the text.

93. Citing Psalm 110:1.

94. Citing Psalm 110:4.

95. Citing Genesis 14:19.

96. Cf. Abraham 2:9, 11; Facsimile 2, figure 1.

97. Citing Psalm 110:4.

98. Citing Ecclesiastes 3:15. The KJV is significantly different than that of the *Midrash Rabbah* here.

99. Citing Nehemiah 9:7.



## 28:4

"Ye shall bring a sheaf . . ." (Leviticus 23:10)

[Referring to the war against the kings in Genesis 14:]

It bears on what is written in Scripture: *Whose harvest the hungry eateth up.*<sup>100</sup> "*Whose harvest*" applies to Nimrod; "*The hungry eateth up*" applies to Abraham our father, peace be upon him; . . . *And the allies trample upon their substance*: who was it that trampled upon the wealth of Nimrod? Abraham and all his followers. (4:361–62)

## 30:10

"And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days." (Leviticus 23:40)

Another exposition of the text, THE FRUIT OF THE HADAR TREE.<sup>101</sup> HADAR symbolises Abraham, whom the Holy One, blessed be He, honoured (*hiddero*) with good old age; as it says, *And Abraham was old, well stricken in age*,<sup>102</sup> and it is written, *And honour* (we-hadarta) *the face of the old man*.<sup>103</sup> BRANCHES (KAPPOTH) OF PALM-TREES symbolises Isaac who had been tied (*kafuth*) and bound upon the altar. AND BOUGHS OF THICK TREES symbolises Jacob; just as the myrtle is crowded with leaves so was Jacob crowded with children. AND WILLOWS OF THE BROOK symbolises Joseph; as the willow wilts before the other three species, so Joseph died before his brethren. Another exposition of the text, THE FRUIT OF THE HADAR TREE. HADAR symbolises Sarah whom the Holy One, blessed be He, honoured (*hidderah*) with a good old age; as it says, *Now Abraham and Sarah were old*.<sup>104</sup> BRANCHES OF PALM-TREES symbolises Rebekah; just as the palm-tree contains eatable fruit as well as prickles, so Rebekah brought forth a righteous man and a wicked one. AND BOUGHS OF THICK TREES symbolises Leah; just as the myrtle is crowded with leaves so was Leah crowded with children. AND WILLOWS OF THE BROOK symbolises Rachel; just as the willow wilts before the other three species, so Rachel died before her sister. (4:391–92)

## 36:4

"Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob." (Leviticus 26:42)

R. Berekiah and R. Levi in the name of R. Samuel b. Nahman said: Abraham was saved from the fiery furnace only for the sake of Jacob. This is like the case of a man who was standing for trial before a governor and sentence was passed upon him by the gov-

100. Citing Job 5:5 throughout.

101. Citing Leviticus 23:40. Note the differences in translation here: the word *hadar* is neither retained nor translated in the KJV.

102. Citing Genesis 24:1.

103. Citing Leviticus 19:32.

104. Citing Genesis 18:11.

ernor to be burned. The governor looked into his horoscope and saw that the man was destined to beget a daughter who would be married to the king, so he said: "He deserves to be saved for the sake of the daughter whom he is destined to beget." It was so with Abraham. He had been sentenced by Nimrod to be burned, but the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that Jacob was destined to spring from him, so he said: "He deserves to be saved for the sake of Jacob." Hence it is written, *Thus saith the Lord concerning the house of Jacob who redeemed Abraham.*<sup>105</sup> (4:461–62)

## Numbers

### 2:12

*"These are those which were numbered of the children of Israel . . ."* (Numbers 2:32)

Thus it is written, *And the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea. . . .* For the Holy One, blessed be He, had made a promise to Abraham. . . . *And Abram said: O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing that I go childless?*<sup>106</sup> For Abraham knew from observation of his planet that he was not destined to beget children. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do at that instant? R. Judah, son of R. Simon, citing R. Hanin, who heard it from R. Johanan, said: We may infer that the Holy One, blessed be He, lifted him up to a position high above the vault of the sky<sup>107</sup> and said to him, "From that very planet which showed you that you are not destined to have any progeny, I will prove to you that you will have progeny"; as it is stated, *And He brought him forth abroad, and said: Look (habet) now toward heaven, etc.*<sup>108</sup> The expression *habet* (look), said R. Samuel son of R. Isaac, is addressed only to one who is placed above an object; as it is said, *Look from heaven, and behold.*<sup>109</sup> *And He said unto him: So shall thy seed be.*<sup>110</sup> . . . So it was when the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world. Twenty generations came and went, but no good was found in them, neither did a single righteous man rise up among them.<sup>111</sup> Beyond the twenty generations the Holy One, blessed be He, espied Abraham, deposited in the land of Babylon. . . . The Holy One, blessed be He, thought, "Can one be certain that he will have the power to stand?" When he was cast into the fiery furnace<sup>112</sup> and sanctified the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, and thus stood his test, the Holy One, blessed be He, immediately brought him to the Land of Israel. (5:41–43)

105. Citing Isaiah 29:22.

106. Citing Genesis 15:2.

107. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

108. Citing Genesis 15:5.

109. Citing Psalm 80:15 (80:14 in the KJV).

110. Citing Genesis 15:5.

111. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

112. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.



## 2:14

*"These are those which were numbered of the children of Israel . . ." (Numbers 2:32)*

The Holy One, blessed be He, showed Hosea a similar vision to that which he had shown Abraham, to whom He had said, *"Look now toward heaven, and count the stars, if thou be able to count them."*<sup>113</sup> How can this thing be, *"And count the stars if thou be able to count"*? Having told him *"and count,"* why does He in the next instance say *"if thou be able to count"*? To inform you that in the first instance He showed him only a few stars; first one, then two, then three, then twelve, then seventy, and finally He showed him countless constellations.<sup>114</sup> Why did He show them to him in this manner? He gave him an indication of the manner in which He would multiply them. He showed him one star, because at first he [Abraham] was alone in the world; for he was the first to seek shelter beneath the wings of the *Shechinah*; as it is said: *Abraham was one, and he inherited the land; but we are many; the land is given us for an inheritance.*<sup>115</sup> Next He showed him two, symbolising Abraham and Isaac. Next He showed him three, representing Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then again He showed him twelve, alluding to the twelve tribes. After that, seventy; corresponding to the seventy souls that went down to Egypt,<sup>116</sup> and finally He showed him countless constellations, indicating that in the distant future Israel will be fruitful and multiply until they become innumerable; as it is said: *And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly.*<sup>117</sup> So it was with Hosea. He showed him Israel with and without number; for at first they could be numbered, but afterwards they multiplied indefinitely; therefore it is stated: *"Which cannot be measured nor numbered,"* etc.<sup>118</sup> Another interpretation: In this world they can be numbered, as it is said: *And ye shall be left few in number, etc.,*<sup>119</sup> but in the Messianic era *"The children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea which cannot be measured nor numbered."* (5:48–49)

## 3:1

*"Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest . . . and they shall keep his charge . . . , to do the service of the tabernacle."* (Numbers 3:6–7)

Thus it is written: *The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the Lord, they shall flourish on the courts of our God.*<sup>120</sup> . . .

R. Tanhuma said: There was once a palm-tree in Hammethan which would not bear fruit. They grafted it and still it would bear no fruit. A palm-gardener said to them: She sees a palm-tree at Jericho and longs for it. So they brought a portion of it and grafted it

113. Citing Genesis 15:5.

114. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

115. Citing Ezekiel 33:24.

116. Cf. Exodus 1:5.

117. Citing Exodus 1:7.

118. Citing Hosea 2:1 (1:10 in the KJV).

119. Citing Deuteronomy 4:27.

120. Citing Psalm 92:13–14 (92:12–13 in the KJV).

and forthwith it bore fruit. In the same way all the longing and all the hope of the righteous are for the Holy One, blessed be He. As the palm-tree never bears less than three new shoots, so Israel never lacks three righteous men in the world—like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.<sup>121</sup> . . . Just as any one who ascends to the top of the palm-tree and cedar and does not take care of himself will fall and die, so any one who comes and joins issue with Israel will ultimately receive his due at their hands. This is proved by the case of Sarah. Because Pharaoh seized her for one night, he and his household were smitten with plagues; as it is said: *And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.*<sup>122</sup> (5:64–66)

#### 4:8

*"Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel . . ."* (Numbers 3:45)

Our Rabbis have said: Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, order the firstborn Israelites to be redeemed by means of the Levites? Because originally, before the tribe of Levi arose, the firstborn performed the sacrificial service. . . . There is proof that Shem offered sacrifices; since it says: *And Melchizedek,<sup>123</sup> king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he was priest of God the Most High.*<sup>124</sup> Now was it to him that the priesthood was given? The priesthood, surely, was not given to any man until Aaron arose. What then is the meaning of the statement here, *"and he was priest"*? Because he offered sacrifices like priests. Shem died and handed it on to Abraham.<sup>125</sup> But was Abraham a firstborn? The fact is that because he was a righteous man the birthright was transferred to him, and he offered sacrifices; as it says: *And offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son.*<sup>126</sup> (5:101–2)

#### 10:1

*"When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite . . ."* (Numbers 6:2)

*And Saul built an altar unto the Lord, etc.*<sup>127</sup> Now did not the ancients build ever so many altars? Noah built an altar, Abraham built an altar,<sup>128</sup> Isaac built an altar, Jacob built an altar, Moses built an altar, Joshua built an altar, yet you say, *He was the first to build an altar unto the Lord!*<sup>129</sup> (5:337)

121. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who like Abraham were cast into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:17–28).

122. Citing Genesis 12:17.

123. Melchizedek is identified as Shem in Jewish tradition.

124. Citing Genesis 14:18.

125. Cf. Abraham 1:2–3, 18; 2:9, 11; Facsimile 2, figure 3; Facsimile 3, figure 1.

126. Citing Genesis 22:13.

127. Citing 1 Samuel 14:35.

128. Cf. Abraham 1:19; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

129. Citing 1 Samuel 14:35.



**12:8**

*"And it came to pass on the day . . ." (Numbers 7:1)*

He [God] made peace between the fire and Abraham,<sup>130</sup> between the knife and Isaac, and between the angel and Jacob. (5:471)

**14:2**

*"On the seventh day Elishama the son of Ammihud, prince of the children of Ephraim, offered: . . ." (Numbers 7:48)*

This bears on the text, *Whoso hath anticipated Me I will repay him*.<sup>131</sup> . . . Another explanation is that the text "*Whoso hath anticipated Me, I will repay him*" speaks of Abraham who, of himself, recognised the existence of the Holy One, blessed be He. . . . The Holy One, blessed be He, therefore said to Him: "Abraham! The celestial and terrestrial regions are Mine; as you read, '*Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine,*' and as it says, *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*,"<sup>132</sup> and you have made My name known in the world. By your life! I will give you possession of both the celestial and terrestrial regions";<sup>133</sup> as it says, *And he blessed him, and said: Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth*.<sup>134</sup> (6:567–68)

**14:11**

*". . . both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: . . ." (Numbers 7:79)*

This implies that Abraham and Sarah were BOTH OF THEM full of good deeds; as is inferred from the text, *And the souls that they had made in Haran*,<sup>135</sup> which teaches that Abraham converted the men and Sarah converted the women.<sup>136</sup> (6:616)

**18:21**

*(Referring to the Hebrew letters in the words of Numbers 16.)*

The letters *menazpak* have double forms, and were instituted by the prophets. The double *kaf* hinted at Abraham, in the expression, *Lek leka*—get thee out, which intimated that he would have a child at the age of one hundred. The double *mem* hinted at Isaac. . . . *Three hundred and eighteen* alludes to Eliezer. *Because (עֵקֶב) that Abraham hearkened to My voice, and kept my charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.* Abraham learned to know Him at the age of three. (6:734–35)

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130. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

131. The next three biblical citations are Job 41:11.

132. Citing Psalm 24:1.

133. Cf. Doctrine and Covenants 132:29, 37, 49.

134. Citing Genesis 14:19.

135. Citing Genesis 12:5.

136. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

## 19:1

*"This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot." (Numbers 19:2)*

It bears on the text, *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? is it not One?*<sup>137</sup> For example, Abraham out of Terah;<sup>138</sup> Hezekiah out of Ahaz; Josiah out of Amon; Mordecai out of Shimei; Israel out of the idolaters; the future world out of this world. (6:745)

## 29:33

*"Then Israel sang this song, . . ." (Numbers 21:17)*

This is one of the three things said by Moses to the Holy One, blessed be He, to which the latter replied: "You have taught Me something." He said to Him: . . . "Sovereign of the Universe! Many are the wicked who have begotten righteous men. Shall the latter bear some of the iniquities of their fathers? Terah worshipped images, yet Abraham his son was a righteous man.<sup>139</sup> . . . Is this proper, that the righteous should be punished for the iniquity of their fathers?" (6:782–83)

## Deuteronomy

## 2:26–27

*"Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan toward the sunrising; That the slayer might flee thither." (Deuteronomy 4:41–42)*

What made Moses set his heart so much on Cities of Refuge? . . . R. Isaac said: Come and see that God's way of doing things is not like man's way of doing things. . . .

A man acquires for himself a Patron and he commits a crime, and the judges sentence him to be burned; where is he and where is his Patron? But with God it is not so. The ministering angels declared before God: "Abraham, Thy protégé, has been arrested." God replied: "I will protect him." They said to him: "Lo, he is standing before Amraphel;<sup>140</sup> lo, his sentence is being pronounced; lo, he is about to be burnt." He replied: "I will protect him." When he was cast into the fiery furnace, God came down and delivered him.<sup>141</sup> Whence this? For it is said, *I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees.*<sup>142</sup> (Deuteronomy, 7:57–58)

137. Citing Job 14:4.

138. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

139. Ibid.

140. Jewish tradition identifies Nimrod with Amraphel of Genesis 14. Cf. *Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 42:4, above.

141. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

142. Citing Genesis 15:7.



**2:33**

*"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord."* (Deuteronomy 6:4)

This bears out what Scripture says, *My son, fear thou the Lord and the king,*<sup>143</sup> etc. What is the force of "*And the king*"? Abraham who feared Me—did I not proclaim him as king in the world,<sup>144</sup> as it is said, *At the vale of Shaveh—the same is the king's vale.*<sup>145</sup> (Deuteronomy, 7:61)

**9:4**

*"And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die."* (Deuteronomy 31:14)

Another explanation: Moses said to God: "Master of the Universe, must I die after my eyes have witnessed all that glory and that power?" Whereupon God replied: "Moses, *What mighty man is he that liveth and shall not see death.*"<sup>146</sup> . . . R. Tanhuma said: What mighty man is there like Abraham who went down into the fiery furnace and was saved, and yet afterwards Scripture says of him, *And Abraham expired, and died?*<sup>147</sup> (Deuteronomy, 7:159–60)

## Ruth

**Proem 7:1**

*"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land."* (Ruth 1:1)

R. Tanhuma in the name of R. Hiyya Rabbah and R. Berekiah in the name of R. Eliezer said: The following exposition has been transmitted to us from the Exile; wherever it is said *wayyehi* (and it came to pass), it denotes trouble. . . . *And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel.*<sup>148</sup> What trouble was there in that case? *That they made war.* . . . R. Aha said: They came to attack the eyeball of the world; that eye which brought the Attribute of Justice to the world, ye wish to blind? "*The same is Kadesh.*"<sup>149</sup> R. Aha said: "*He is Kadesh,*" meaning, that is our father Abraham who sanctified His Name in the fiery furnace. (Ruth, 8:9–10)

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143. Citing Proverbs 24:21.

144. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3, figure 1.

145. Citing Genesis 14:17.

146. Citing Psalm 89:49 (89:48 in the KJV).

147. Citing Genesis 25:8.

148. This and the next scriptural quotation are citing Genesis 14:1–2. The passage refers to Abraham's battle with the kings.

149. Citing Genesis 14:7.

2:2

*"The sons of Shelah, the son of Judah: Er the father of Lecah, . . . and Saraph, who had dominion in Moab, and Jashubi-lehem."* (1 Chronicles 4:21–23)<sup>150</sup>

*"And Saraph,"*<sup>151</sup> since he made mention of the deeds of those that were willing to be burnt [saying], *O Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers.*<sup>152</sup> (Ruth, 8:26)

## Ecclesiastes

3:11.2

*"He hath made everything beautiful in his [its] time."* (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

R. Bun explained it in two ways. R. Bun said: Abraham deserved to be created before Adam; but the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "If I create Abraham first, should he act corruptly there would be nobody to follow him and make amends; but I will create Adam, and if he acts corruptly Abraham will follow him and make amends." . . . Abraham should have been created the first man, as it is said, *"The greatest man among the Anakim."*<sup>153</sup> Why was he called "greatest"? Because it was proper for him to be created first. Only the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "If I create him first, should he act corruptly there would be nobody to follow him and make amends; but I will create Adam first, and if he acts corruptly, Abraham will follow him and make amends."<sup>154</sup> (Ecclesiastes, 8:88)

3:15.1

*". . . and God requireth that which is past."* (Ecclesiastes 3:15)<sup>155</sup>

R. Huna said in the name of R. Jose: God always seeks that which is pursued. You find that when a righteous man pursues a righteous man, God seeks him who is pursued. . . . In every instance He seeks the pursued. . . . Abraham was pursued by Nimrod and the Holy One, blessed be He, chose Abraham. (Ecclesiastes, 8:99)

150. No passage in Ruth is given for interpretation here. Instead the commentators discuss this passage in Chronicles, possibly to show the connection to Moab through Saraph. All the names in the genealogy are interpreted allegorically by the commentators.

151. The Hebrew word *saraph* means "flame" and derives from a verb meaning "to scorch."

152. Citing 1 Chronicles 29:18.

153. Citing Joshua 14:15.

154. This story presupposes the premortal existence of Adam and Abraham. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.

155. The *Midrash Rabbah* has this passage as "and God seeketh that which is pursued."



## 4:8.1

*"There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother."*  
(Ecclesiastes 4:8)

Another interpretation: THERE IS ONE refers to Abraham, as it is said, *Abraham was one*,<sup>156</sup> AND HE HATH NOT A SECOND: he has no equal. YEA, HE HATH NEITHER SON NOR BROTHER: he had neither son nor brother when he descended into the furnace.<sup>157</sup> (Ecclesiastes, 8:118)

## 4:14.1

*"Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished. For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor."* (Ecclesiastes 4:13–14)

Another interpretation of BETTER IS A POOR AND WISE CHILD, i.e. Abraham, THAN AN OLD AND FOOLISH KING, i.e. Nimrod. What means *At the vale of Shaveh*?<sup>158</sup> It was so called because there they became unanimous (*hushewu*) and cut down cedars and constructed from them a high platform on which they seated Abraham,<sup>159</sup> praising him and saying, *Hear us, my lord, thou art a mighty prince among us*.<sup>160</sup> ALTHOUGH IN HIS KINGDOM HE WAS BORN POOR: in the dominion of Abraham the poverty of Nimrod was born. (Ecclesiastes, 8:123–24)

## Esther

## Proem 11

*"Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, . . ."* (Esther 1:1)

R. Tanhuma, R. Berekiah and R. Hiyya Rabbah in the name of R. Eleazer explained: . . . that wherever Scripture uses the expression *wayyehi* (and it came to pass), it presages trouble. . . . Said R. Samuel b. Nahman: This expression is found five times. (1) *And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel*.<sup>161</sup> What trouble occurred there? *That they made war*, etc. . . . Abraham our father was the friend of the Holy One, blessed be He, . . . and for his sake God used to take an interest in all His world. Then it says, *They came to En-mishpat* [lit. "eye of judgment"]—*the same is Kadesh*.<sup>162</sup> . . . "*The same (hi) is Kadesh*": R. Aha said: The word is written *hu* (he): he it was [Abraham] that sanctified the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, and went down into the fiery furnace. (Esther, 9:11)

156. Citing Ezekiel 33:24.

157. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

158. Citing Genesis 14:17.

159. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 1, figure 3.

160. Citing Genesis 23:6.

161. These italics and the next are citing Genesis 14:1–2. The passages quoted here refer to Abraham's war with the kings in which he rescues Lot.

162. Citing Genesis 14:7.

6:2

*"Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai." (Esther 2:5)*

Some say he [Mordecai]<sup>163</sup> was equal to Abraham in his generation. Just as our father Abraham allowed himself to be cast into the fiery furnace<sup>164</sup> and converted his fellow-men<sup>165</sup> and made them acknowledge the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, as it says, *And the souls which they had gotten in Haran*,<sup>166</sup> so in the days of Mordecai men acknowledged the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He. (Esther, 9:74)

6:3

*"Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai." (Esther 2:5)*

Both R. Hanina and R. Johanan said: Abraham recognised his Creator at the age of three years, as it says, *Because that* (עֵקֶב) *Abraham hearkened to My voice*,<sup>167</sup> implying that Abraham hearkened to the voice of his Creator for the number of years signified by "עֵקֶב"; and he lived altogether a hundred and seventy-five years. What does he understand about him from the word *hayah*? That he was predestined [from birth] to direct the whole world in the path of repentance.<sup>168</sup> (Esther, 9:74)

## Song of Songs

1:3.3

*"Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." (Song of Solomon 1:3)*

R. Johanan applied the verse to our father Abraham. . . . THEREFORE DO WORLDS [E.V. "THE MAIDENS"] LOVE THEE. God said to him: Here are many worlds for thee,<sup>169</sup> as it is written, *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 made* [E.V. "gotten"] *in Haran*.<sup>170</sup> Now if all mankind come together in an endeavour to create one insect they cannot do it: what it [the word "made"] means, therefore, is the proselytes whom Abraham and Sarah converted. Therefore it is said, *And the souls which they made in Haran*. R. Hunia said: Abraham used to convert the men and Sarai the women. Then why is it stated, *"which they made in Haran"*? It teaches that Abraham our father used to bring them into his house

163. Our insertion.

164. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

165. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

166. Citing Genesis 12:5.

167. Citing Genesis 26:5.

168. Cf. Abraham 3:22–23.

169. Cf. Doctrine and Covenants 132:29, 37, 49.

170. Citing Genesis 12:5.



and give them food and drink and be friendly to them and attract them and convert them and bring them under the wings of the *Shechinah*. You learn from this that if a man brings one creature under the wings of the *Shechinah*, it is accounted to him as if he had created him and formed him and moulded him.<sup>171</sup> (Song of Songs, 9:38–39)

#### 1:12.1

*“While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.”* (Song of Solomon 1:12)

R. Eliezer b. Jacob and the Rabbis, too, gave different explanations. R. Eliezer said: While the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, was still at His table in the firmament, Michael the great prince had already descended and delivered our father Abraham from the fiery furnace.<sup>172</sup> The Rabbis, however, say that God Himself came down and delivered him, as it says, *I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees*.<sup>173</sup> And when did Michael come down? In the time of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. (Song of Songs, 9:78)

#### 1:13.1

*“A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me.”* (Song of Solomon 1:13)

R. ‘Azariah in the name of R. Judah applied the verse to our father Abraham. Just as myrrh is the most excellent of spices, so Abraham was the chief of all righteous men. Just as myrrh gives off its perfume only when brought near the fire, so the worth of Abraham was not known till he was cast into the fiery furnace.<sup>174</sup> (Song of Songs, 9:81)

#### 2:5.1

*“Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.”* (Song of Solomon 2:5)

STAY YE ME WITH DAINTIES (ASHISHOTH). This means, with two fires (*ishoth*), with the heavenly and the earthly. . . . Another explanation: STAY YE ME WITH DAINTIES: with many fires—with the fire of Abraham, and of Moriah, and of the bush, with the fire of Elijah and of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. (Song of Songs, 9:104)

#### 3:6.2

*“Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh . . . ?”* (Song of Solomon 3:6)

This refers to our father Abraham. Just as the myrrh is the foremost of spices, so our father Abraham was the foremost of all the righteous. Just as myrrh makes the hands of anyone that gathers it smart, so Abraham our father used to afflict and castigate himself

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171. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

172. Cf. Abraham 1:15; 2:13; Facsimile 1, figure 1.

173. Citing Genesis 15:7.

174. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

with penances. Just as myrrh emits its fragrance only when put in the fire, so Abraham's virtues were brought out only in the fiery furnace.<sup>175</sup> (Song of Songs, 9:152)

### 3:11.1

*"Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon."* (Song of Solomon 3:11)

He [God] caused the fire to be at peace with Abraham our father; He caused the sword to be at peace with Isaac; He caused the angel to be at peace with Jacob. (Song of Songs, 9:171)

### 5:15.1

*"... set upon sockets of fine gold: ..."* (Song of Solomon 5:15)

It is written, *And Saul built an altar unto the Lord; the same was he the first to build, etc.*<sup>176</sup> But what of all the altars built by his predecessors? Noah built an altar, Abraham built an altar,<sup>177</sup> Isaac built an altar, Jacob built an altar, Moses built an altar, Joshua built an altar. (Song of Songs, 9:250)

### 5:16.1

*"His mouth is most sweet ..."* (Song of Solomon 5:16)

It is written, For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel: *Seek ye Me, and live.*<sup>178</sup> Could any dainty be sweeter to the palate than this? . . . It was taught: How old was Abraham when he recognised his Creator? R. Hanina and R. Johanan agreed in saying that when he was forty-eight years old Abraham recognised his Creator. R. Simeon b. Lakish said: He was three years old, as it says, *Because* (‘eḳeb) *that Abraham hearkened to My voice*<sup>179</sup>—that is, he hearkened to the number [of years] signified by “‘eḳeb.” R. Levi said: It means, from the time that he was able to lift his foot (‘eḳeb)<sup>180</sup> from the ground by himself. (Song of Songs, 9:250–51)

### 7:1.2

*"Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies."* (Song of Solomon 6:13)

"Have you ever heard of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshipping idols that their descendants after them should so worship? Our fathers did not worship idols, and we will not worship idols." (Song of Songs, 9:276)

175. Ibid.

176. Citing 1 Samuel 14:35.

177. Cf. Abraham 1:19; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

178. Citing Amos 5:4; cf. Abraham 2:12.

179. Citing Genesis 26:5.

180. Literally, "heel," which is the root from which the name Jacob derives (see Genesis 25:24–26). For an explanation of how Rabbi Levi determined how old Abraham was when he began worshipping God, see the note to *Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 64:4 above.



### 8:8.2

*"We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?"* (Song of Solomon 8:8)

R. Berekiah interpreted the verse as applying to our father Abraham. WE HAVE A LITTLE SISTER (AḤOTH): this is Abraham, as it says, *Abraham was one* (eḥad) *and he inherited the land*;<sup>181</sup> he, as it were, stitched together (*iḥa*) all mankind in the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He. . . . WHAT SHALL WE DO FOR OUR SISTER IN THE DAY WHEN SHE SHALL BE SPOKEN FOR:<sup>182</sup> the day when the wicked Nimrod sentenced him to be thrown into the fiery furnace.<sup>183</sup> (Song of Songs, 9:311)

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181. Citing Ezekiel 33:24.

182. Citing Song of Solomon 8:8.

183. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD

The Babylonian Talmud is a commentary on the Mishnah (which is a commentary on the law of Moses) which further expands and explains the rabbinic rules governing interpretation of the law. The Talmud is made up of the same series of tractates as the Mishnah, each of which centers around specific aspects of the law. It was completed between the fifth and eighth centuries A.D. but cites many earlier rabbis. There is also a Jerusalem Talmud, which varies considerably from the Babylonian Talmud, but the Babylonian Talmud has always been the preeminent version. This Talmud was first published in English in 1896; the version we use here is that published by the Soncino Press in London, under the editorship of Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud*, 18 vols. (1935–52; reprint, London: Soncino, 1961). Each entry begins with the name of the tractate followed by the folio number and the column(s). Diacritics on the names have been removed.

### Shabbath 156a–b

Rab Judah said in Rab's name: . . . Abraham pleaded before the Holy One, blessed be He, "Sovereign of the Universe! *one born in mine house is mine heir.*"<sup>1</sup> "Not so," He replied, "*but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels.*"<sup>2</sup> "Sovereign of the Universe!" cried he, "I have looked at my constellation and find that I am not fated to beget child."<sup>3</sup> "Go forth from [i.e., cease] thy planet [gazing], for Israel is free from planetary influence. What is thy calculation? [156b] Because *Zedek* [Jupiter] stands in the West? I will turn it back and place it in the East."

### Erubin 53a

*And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel.*<sup>4</sup> Rab and Samuel are at variance. One holds that his name was Nimrod; and why was he called Amraphel? Because he ordered our father Abraham to be cast<sup>5</sup> into a burning furnace.<sup>6</sup> But the other holds that his name was

1. Citing Genesis 15:3.

2. Citing Genesis 15:4.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

4. Citing Genesis 14:1.

5. Reading the name Amraphel as "he said, 'cast.'"

6. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.



Amraphel; and why was he called Nimrod?<sup>7</sup> Because in his reign he led all the world in rebellion against himself.

### **Pesahim 118a**

[For] when the wicked Nimrod cast our father Abraham into the fiery furnace,<sup>8</sup> Gabriel said to the Holy One, blessed be He: "Sovereign of the Universe! Let me go down, cool [it], and deliver that righteous man from the fiery furnace."<sup>9</sup> Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: "I am unique in My world, and he is unique in his world: it is fitting for Him who is unique to deliver him who is unique."<sup>10</sup> But because the Holy One, blessed be He, does not withhold the [merited] reward of any creature, he said to him, "Thou shalt be privileged to deliver three of his descendants."<sup>11</sup>

### **Yoma 28b**

Or [one might say]: It was different with Abraham whose heart [mind] knew great astronomical speculation.<sup>12</sup>

### **Nedarim 32a**

R. Ammi b. Abba also said: Abraham was three years old when he acknowledged the Creator, for it is written, *Because* [Heb. *ʿeḳeb*] *that Abraham obeyed my voice*:<sup>13</sup> the numerical value of *ʿeḳeb* is 172.

### **Nedarim 32b**

R. Zechariah said on R. Ishmael's authority: The Holy One, blessed be He, intended to bring forth the priesthood from Shem, as it is written, *And he* [sc. Melchizedek] *was the priest of the most high God*.<sup>14</sup> But because he gave precedence in his blessing to Abraham over God, He brought it forth from Abraham; as it is written, *And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be the most high God*.<sup>15</sup> Said Abraham to him, "Is the blessing of a servant to be given precedence over that of his master?" Straightway it [the priesthood] was given to Abraham,<sup>16</sup> as it is written, *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*; <sup>17</sup> which is followed by, *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek*; <sup>18</sup> meaning, "because of the words of Melchizedek." Hence

7. Understanding the root of Nimrod to be *mrd*, "to rebel."

8. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:15; 2:13; Facsimile 1, figure 1.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

11. Referring to the delivery of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego from the fiery furnace in Daniel 3.

12. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

13. Citing Genesis 26:5.

14. Citing Genesis 14:18. In Jewish tradition, Melchizedek is identified with Shem, son of Noah.

15. Citing Genesis 14:19–20.

16. Cf. Abraham 2:9, 11; Facsimile 2, figure 1.

17. Citing Psalm 110:1.

18. Citing Psalm 110:4.

it is written, *And he was a priest of the most High God*, [implying that] he was a priest, but not his seed.

### Sanhedrin 69b

*Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor and Haran.*<sup>19</sup> Now Abraham must have been [at least] one year older than Nahor, and Nahor one year older than Haran; hence Abraham was two years older than Haran. And it is written, *And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai;*<sup>20</sup> *and the name of Nahor's wife Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.*<sup>21</sup> Whereon R. Isaac observed: Iscah was Sarai, and why was she called Iscah? Because she foresaw [the future] by holy inspiration;<sup>22</sup> hence it is written, *In all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice.*<sup>23</sup>

### Sanhedrin 93a

*Because they have committed villainy in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives etc.*<sup>24</sup> What did they do? They went to Nebuchadnezzar's daughter: Ahab said to her, "Thus saith God, 'Give thyself unto Zedekiah'"; whilst Zedekiah said to her, "Thus saith God, 'Surrender to Ahab.'" So she went and told her father, who said to her, "The God of these hates unchastity: when they [again] approach thee, send them to me." So when they came to her, she referred them to him. "Who told this to you?" asked he of them. "The Holy One, blessed be He," replied they. "But I have enquired of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,<sup>25</sup> who informed me that it is forbidden." They answered, "We too are prophets, just as he: to him He did not say it, but to us." "Then I desire that ye be tested, just as Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were," he retorted. "But they are three, whilst we are only two," they protested. "Then choose whom ye wish to accompany you," said he. "Joshua the High Priest," they answered, thinking, "Let Joshua be brought, for his merit is great, that he may protect us." So he was brought, and they were all thrown [into the furnace]. They were burned, but as to Joshua the High Priest, only his garments were singed, for it is said, *And he shewed me Joshua the High Priest standing before the angel of the Lord;*<sup>26</sup> and it is written, *And the Lord said unto Satan, the Lord rebuke thee, O Satan etc.*<sup>27</sup> [Thus] said he to him, "I know that thou art righteous, but why should the fire have affected thee even slightly; Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were not affected at all." "They were three," said he, "but I am only one." "But," he remonstrated,

19. Citing Genesis 11:27.

20. Citing Genesis 11:29.

21. Ibid.

22. Here, the name Iscah is compared to the Aramaic root *skʿ*, "to gaze, to look."

23. Citing Genesis 21:12.

24. Citing Jeremiah 29:23.

25. These are the Hebrew names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who were cast into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3).

26. Citing Zechariah 3:1.

27. Citing Zechariah 3:2.



"Abraham [too] was only one." "No wicked were with him, so the fire was not empowered [to do any harm];<sup>28</sup> but here, I had wicked men with me, so the fire was enabled [to do its work]," he rejoined.

#### **Sanhedrin 108b**

R. Hana b. Liwai said: Shem, [Noah's] eldest son, said to Eliezer [Abraham's servant], "When the kings of the east and the west attacked you, what did you do?"—He replied, "The Holy One, blessed be He, took Abraham and placed him at His right hand, and they [God and Abraham] threw dust which turned to swords, and chaff which turned to arrows, as it is written, *A Psalm of David. The Lord said unto my master, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*;<sup>29</sup> and it is also written, *Who raised up the righteous man* [sc. Abraham] *from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings*?<sup>30</sup> *he made his sword as the dust, and his bow as driven stubble.*"<sup>31</sup>

#### **Abodah Zarah 3a**

Let Nimrod come and testify that Abraham did not [consent to] worship idols.<sup>32</sup>

#### **Abodah Zarah 9a**

From when are the two thousand years of the Torah to be reckoned? Shall we say from the Giving of the Torah at Sinai? In that case, you will find that there are not quite two thousand years from then till now [i.e., the year 4,000 after the Creation], for if you compute the years [from the Creation to the Giving of the Torah] you will find that they comprise two thousand and a part of the third thousand; the period is therefore to be reckoned from the time when Abraham and Sarah *had gotten souls in Haran* for we have it as a tradition that Abraham was at that time fifty-two years old.<sup>33</sup> Now, to what extent does our Tanna encroach [on the other thousand]? Four hundred and forty-eight years! Calculate it and you will find that from the time when *they had gotten souls in Haran* till the giving of the Torah there are just four hundred and forty-eight years.

#### **Abodah Zarah 14b**

Said R. Hisda to Abimi: There is a tradition that the [tractate] Abodah Zarah of our father Abraham consisted of four hundred chapters;<sup>34</sup> we have only learnt five, yet we do not know what we are saying.

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28. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

29. Citing Psalm 110:1.

30. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3, figure 1.

31. Citing Isaiah 41:2.

32. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

33. Cf. Abraham 2:14.

34. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

### ‘Abodah Zarah 25a

*And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed until the nation had avenged themselves of their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jashar.* What is the book of Jashar? —Said R. Hiyya b. Abba in the name of R. Johanan: It is the book of Abraham,<sup>35</sup> Isaac and Jacob, who are designated as righteous.

### Baba Bathra 16b

R. Eliezer the Modiite said that Abraham possessed a power of reading the stars for which he was much sought after by the potentates of East and West.<sup>36</sup> R. Simeon b. Yohai said: Abraham had a precious stone hung round his neck which brought immediate healing to any sick person who looked on it, and when Abraham our father departed from this world, the Holy One, blessed be He, suspended it from the orb of the sun.<sup>37</sup>

35. Ibid.

36. The translators quote V. Bacher, *Agada der Tannaiten*, I, 200: "A variant rendering: 'He possessed an astrological instrument.' Current texts have 'in his heart'—Tosef. Kid. V, reads 'in his hand.'"

37. Cf. Abraham 3:1, 4. Although the stone discussed in this sentence is a healing stone, the information comes upon the heels of a statement about Abraham's astronomical capabilities.



## EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK OF NOAH

The *Book of Noah* is a medieval text related to the *Sefer ha-Razim*; it speaks of a hidden book given by God to Adam and passed down among the patriarchs. The book is known from the eleventh century onward; it was first published in Amsterdam in 1854. Three versions of the Hebrew text were published together in Adolph Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* (1853; reprint, Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1967), 3:155–60. The translation that follows was prepared by John A. Tvedtnes expressly for this collection. It draws upon versions B and C, the only ones that name Abraham as a recipient of the book.

### Version B

Noah was guided by the wisdom of this book and made known to his son Shem that from it he had understood about the ark, and his son Shem was guided by it, and he held it thus after him in its holiness, and Shem transmitted it to Abraham.<sup>1</sup>

### Version C

And by the wisdom of the book, Noah learned to make an ark of gopher [wood] and to hide from the waters of the torrent and from the waters of the flood, to bring with him two and seven [animals] and to bring in all food and nourishment. And he placed it [the book] in a box of gold, and he brought it at the beginning to the ark to know from it the times of day and times of night, and by these times he could stand to pray. And when he went out from the ark, he used it all the days of his life. At the time of his death, he transmitted it to Shem, and Shem to Abraham.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

2. Ibid.

## EXTRACTS FROM RASHI

Rashi is an acronym (using the first letters in the Hebrew) for Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitshaq. Rashi lived in Troyes, France, from 1040 to 1105. He is considered one of the greatest Jewish commentators who ever lived, having written on nearly every major Jewish work; owing to this esteem, his commentary has been well preserved. This material comes from his commentary on the Torah (or Pentateuch). The Hebrew text, with an English translation and additional commentary, was first published beginning in 1929 by A. M. Silbermann, et al., trans., *Pentateuch with Targum Onkelos, Haphtaroth and Rashi's Commentary* (reprint, Jerusalem: Silbermann Family, 1973), 1:47–49, 51. John A. Tvedtnes translated these passages from the Hebrew in the Silbermann work, making it possible to leave out the parenthetical explanations added to the English text by Silbermann, et al. and to use the more familiar KJV for the biblical passages.

### Regarding Genesis 11:28:

“Before<sup>1</sup> his father Terah.” In the lifetime of his father. Now the *Midrash Aggadah* says that because of his father he [Haran] died, that Terah complained about Abraham his son before Nimrod<sup>2</sup> because he smashed his idols,<sup>3</sup> and he cast him into the furnace of fire.<sup>4</sup> And Haran waited and thought, “If Abram prevails, I am of his [part], but if Nimrod prevails I am of his.” So when Abraham was delivered, they said to Haran, “Of whose [part] are you?” Haran said to them, “I am of Abraham’s [part].” They cast him into the furnace of fire, and he was burned, hence Ur of the Chaldeans.<sup>5</sup>

### Regarding Genesis 11:29:

“Iscah.” This is Sarah;<sup>6</sup> . . .

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1. The Hebrew idiom rendered “before” in Genesis 11:28 and elsewhere is sometimes rendered “in the presence of.” Its literal meaning is “to the face of,” and it can denote “before” in both the temporal and locative senses.
  2. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 30.
  3. Cf. Abraham 1:20.
  4. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 11–12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.
  5. Cf. Abraham 2:1. “Fire of the Chaldeans” reflects the traditional Jewish understanding of the Hebrew *ʾur kaśdîm*, which the KJV renders “Ur of the Chaldees.”
  6. Genesis 11:29 reads, “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



**Regarding Genesis 11:32:**

"And Terah died in Haran." After, Abraham went out from Haran and came to the land of Canaan, and he lived there more than sixty years. For behold it is written: "And Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran."<sup>7</sup> Now Terah was 70 years old when Abraham was born,<sup>8</sup> so Terah was 145 [years old] when Abraham left Haran; there yet remained many of his years. So why does the scripture place the death of Terah before Abraham's departure?<sup>9</sup> That the thing not be known to all and they say, "Abraham has not maintained respect for his father," for he abandoned him as an old man and went away. For this reason the scripture calls him [Terah] dead, for the wicked are even in their lifetime called dead.

**Regarding Genesis 12:5:**

"[The souls] that they had gotten in Haran." For they brought them under the wings of the Shekhinah.<sup>10</sup> Abraham converted the men and Sarah converted the women,<sup>11</sup> and the scripture considers them as if they had made them. But the plain meaning of the Bible text is servants and handmaidens they had acquired for themselves.

**Regarding Genesis 12:14:**

"And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt." Shouldn't it say, "When they came to Egypt"? This means that he hid her in a box, and when they [the Egyptians] asked for the tariff, they opened and saw her.

**Regarding Genesis 12:17:**

"And the Lord plagued Pharaoh." With the *ra'atan*<sup>12</sup> disease was he stricken, which [makes] intercourse difficult. . . .

"Because of Sarai."<sup>13</sup> Because of her saying; she said to the angel, "Smite," and he smote.

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of Iscah." From this verse, it is clear that Milcah and Iscah were sisters, but nothing is said of Sarai's parentage. Jewish tradition holds that Iscah was an alternative name for Sarai. The parallel passage in earlier editions of Abraham 2:2 reads, "And it came to pass that I, Abraham, took Sarai to wife, and Nahor, my brother, took Milcah to wife, who were the daughters of Haran."

7. Citing Genesis 12:4.

8. See Genesis 11:26.

9. I.e., Genesis 11:32 before Genesis 12:1.

10. The term *Shekhinah*, literally "dwelling place," is used in the Old Testament to denote the dwelling place of God between the wings of the cherubim atop the ark, i.e., in the temple or tabernacle. In later Judaism, it came to refer to the divine presence and sometimes to what Christians would term the Holy Ghost or Spirit of God. The wings of the Shekhinah, originally referring to the cherubic wings on the ark, came to denote God's protection. In this passage, Rashi uses "brought them under the wings of the Shekhinah" to describe the conversion of people in Haran to Judaism.

11. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

12. The meaning of this word is unknown. Some think it is a skin disease, while others consider it to be gonorrhea.

13. The Hebrew expression is idiomatic, but Rashi here takes it literally, "upon the word of Sarai."

## EXTRACTS FROM THE MEDIEVAL TESTAMENT OF NAPHTALI

While there was an older *Testament of Naphtali*—known principally from Greek, Slavonic, and Armenian copies—a significantly different Hebrew text was circulating in the Middle Ages. A thirteenth-century manuscript found around the turn of the twentieth century in the Cairo Genizah is housed at Oxford University, while a twelfth-century manuscript is located in Paris. In 1890, Wertheimer published another manuscript in Jerusalem. Moses Gaster published an English translation of the Hebrew version in the December 1893 and February 1894 issues of the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, and Robert H. Charles included Gaster's translation in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, ed. Robert H. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 2:363; this is the translation used here. Note that these selections are quotations of Naphtali speaking to his children.

### Chapter 9

1. And on that day Michael took a message from the Lord, and said to the seventy nations, to each nation separately:

2. "You know the rebellion you undertook,<sup>1</sup> and the treacherous confederacy into which you entered against the Lord of heaven and earth, and now choose to-day whom you will worship,<sup>2</sup> and who shall be your intercessor in the height of heaven."

3. Nimrod the wicked answered and said, "For me there is none greater than he who taught me and my people in one hour the language of Kush."

4. In like manner also answered Put, and Migrain,<sup>3</sup> and Tubal, and Javan, and Mesech, and Tiras; and every nation chose its own angel, and none of them mentioned the name of the Lord, blessed be He.

5. But when Michael said unto Abraham our father, "Abram, whom dost thou choose, and whom wilt thou worship?" Abram answered, "I choose and select only Him who said, and the world was created; Who formed me in the womb of my mother, body within body; Who placed in me spirit and soul;<sup>4</sup> Him I choose, and to Him I will cleave, I and my seed, all the days of the world."

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1. Referring to the construction of the Tower of Babel.

2. Cf. Joshua 24:14–15.

3. Biblical Mizraim, eponymous ancestor of the Egyptians.

4. Cf. Abraham 3:21–23.



## Chapter 10

1. Then the Most High dispersed the nations, and apportioned and allotted to every nation its share and lot.<sup>5</sup>

2. And from that time all the nations of the earth separated themselves from the Lord, blessed be He; only the house of Abraham remained with his Creator to worship Him;<sup>6</sup> and after him Isaac and Jacob.

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5. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:8, cited in Acts 17:26.

6. Cf. Abraham 2:12–13.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE CHRONICLES OF JERAHMEEL

The *Chronicles of Jerahmeel* is one of a number of medieval compilations made by Jewish chronographers, who drew upon the Bible, midrashic sources, and earlier chronicles, both Jewish and non-Jewish. It was purportedly written in the twelfth century by Jerahmeel ben Solomon. It was certainly known by the fourteenth century: Rabbi Eleazar ben Asher the Levite, who lived in the Rhine provinces, included it in the compilation *Sefer ha-Zikhronot*. Here, we draw on the first English edition, Dr. Moses Gaster's translation of a manuscript in the Bodleian Library in Oxford: Moses Gaster, trans., *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel; Or, the Hebrew Bible Historiale* (1899; reprint, New York: Ktav, 1971), 71–78. Some verses, or paragraphs, were incorrectly numbered in Gaster's edition, mistakenly giving the appearance that parts of the text were omitted.

[In chapters 31–32, the *Chronicles* recount the rise to power of Nimrod, his son Bel, and his grandson Ninus, who succeeded him. Ninus is said to have erected a statue of his father Bel, which became an object of worship. According to this account, which the author calls a "legend," Abraham was ten years old when Ninus died. The story in chapter 33 is at variance with this figure, however, as the author notes.]

### Chapter 33

1. As this is simply to be taken as a legend, we do not care to reconcile it with the other, which makes Abraham live in the time of Nimrod the Wicked. According to the latter we find that Nimrod acted as judge over him, since it is related that the whole household of Abraham's father were idol-worshippers,<sup>1</sup> moreover they made idols and sold them in the streets. But when a man approached Abraham to sell him an idol, he would ask him, "How much is this image?" "Three manas," he would reply. "How old art thou?" Abraham would add. "Thirty years." "Thou art thirty years of age, and yet worshippest this idol which we made but to-day!" The man would depart and go his way. Again, another would come to Abraham, and ask, "How much is this idol?" "Five manas," he would say. "How old art thou?" would Abraham continue. "Fifty years." "And dost thou, who art fifty years of age, bow down to this idol which we made but to-day?" With this the man would depart and go his way.

1. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.



2. When Nimrod heard of Abraham's utterances, he ordered him to be brought before him, and said, "Thou son of Terah, make me a beautiful god." Abraham then entered his father's house, and said, "Make a beautiful image for me." They accordingly made it, finished it, and painted it with many colours. He went and brought it to Nimrod. [Here probably a lacuna in MS.]

3. And on that day Abraham's righteousness shone forth. It was a cloudy day, and rain fell. Therefore, when they were about to thrust him into the burning furnace, Nimrod sat down, and all the people of the dispersion did likewise. Abraham then entered, and standing in the centre, he pleaded his cause. After which Nimrod asked, "If not the gods, whom shall I serve?" Abraham replied, "The God of gods and Lord of lords, whose kingdom is everlasting in heaven and on earth, and in the heavens of the high heavens." "I shall worship," said Nimrod, "the god of fire; and, behold, I shall cast thee therein. Let, then, the God to whom thou testifiest deliver thee from the burning furnace."

4. They then immediately bound him strongly and tightly,<sup>2</sup> and placed him on the ground. They then surrounded him with wood on the four sides, 500 cubits thickness to the north, 500 cubits to the south, 500 to the west, and 500 to the east. They then set the pile on fire.

5. The whole house of Terah were worshippers of idols,<sup>3</sup> and until that moment had not recognised their Creator. Their neighbours and fellow-citizens assembled, and, beating their heads, said to Terah, "O shame—great shame! thy son, of whom thou didst say that he will inherit this world and the world to come has Nimrod burnt in the fire."<sup>4</sup>

6. Immediately then God's mercy was moved, so that He descended from the habitation of His glory, His greatness, His majesty, and the holiness of His great name, and delivered Abraham, our ancestor, from that shame, from that reproach, and from the burning furnace,<sup>5</sup> as it is said, "I am the Lord who brought thee out of the fire of the Chaldeans";<sup>6</sup> and since a miracle was wrought for our forefather Abraham, he and Terah were able to refute the generation of the Dispersion, as it is said, "Be wise, O my son, and let my heart rejoice, and then I shall be able to answer those who reproach me."

## Chapter 34

1. The sages tell that when our forefather Abraham was born a star appeared, which swallowed up four other stars from the four sides of the heavens.<sup>7</sup> When the astrologers of Nimrod saw this they forthwith went to Nimrod and said, "Nimrod, of a certainty there is born to-day a lad who is destined to inherit both this world and the world to come. Now, if it is thy wish, let us give his father and mother a large sum of money, and then

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2. Cf. Abraham 1:15; Facsimile 1, figure 2.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

6. Citing Genesis 15:7. This is the traditional Jewish understanding of the Hebrew *ʾur kašdīm*, which the KJV renders "Ur of the Chaldees."

7. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 2, figure 6.



kill him. Whatever his father and mother wish shall be given to them." "What kind of child is he whom ye seek to kill?" asked Nimrod. "A boy," said they, "was born to-day, and a star appeared which swallowed up four stars of the heavens, and he is destined to inherit this world and the world to come."

2. Then said Terah, for Terah, the father of Abraham, was present there, "This thing which you suggest is to be compared to a mule, to which man says, 'I will give thee a quantity of barley, as much as a houseful, on condition that I cut off thy head.' The mule replies, 'Fool that thou art; if thou cuttest off my head, of what use will the barley be to me, and who will eat it when thou givest it to me?' Thus I say unto you, if ye slay the son, who will inherit the goods and the money which ye give to his parents?" To this they answered, "From thy words we perceive that a son has been born to thee." "A son has been born to me, but he is now dead." "But we speak of a living son, and not of one dead," added they.

3. When Terah heard their words he immediately went home, and hid his son Abraham in a cave for three years. After that time he brought him forth. As soon as Abraham saw the rising sun in the east he said to himself, "Of a certainty this is the lord of the whole world, and to him I pray; he created me and the whole world." When he saw the moon he said, "This is the lord of the whole world, and to him I shall supplicate; he created me and the whole world." Thus when evening came, and the sun had set and the moon had risen, he prayed to the moon the whole night. When, however, the morning came, the moon set and the sun rose. As soon as he saw the sun on the morrow Abraham said, "Now do I know that neither the one nor the other is lord of the world, but that both of them are servants of another Master, and that is the Lord who created the heavens and the earth and the whole world."<sup>8</sup>

4. Then Abraham forthwith asked his father, "Who created this world, the heavens, and the earth?" And Terah, his father, replied, "This great image is our god." "If this is true," said Abraham, "I shall bring a sacrifice to him, and he will be pleased with me, as he is with other people." He thereupon went to his father, and said, "Make for me a cake of fine flour that I may offer it to him." His father, complying with his request, made him a cake of fine flour, which Abraham took and offered before the great idol, saying, "Accept this offering from me"; but he neither took it nor ate it nor drank it.<sup>9</sup>

6. When Abraham saw this he went to his mother, and said, "Make me a meal offering better than this, that I may offer it to the god of my father." When she made it Abraham took the meal offering to the little image, saying, "Accept thou this meal offering from my hand, and be pleased with me as thou art with other men." Seeing that he did not reply, Abraham said, "This offering has not been made to his liking."

7. Then going once more to his mother, he said, "Prepare a meal offering better still than this." She did so, and Abraham presented the offering to the image. When he perceived that it neither ate nor drank nor answered him a word he went once more to the

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8. Cf. Abraham 4:1; 5:4.

9. The paragraphs are misnumbered occasionally in the translation.



large image, and said, "I entreat thee to receive this offering from me; do thou eat and drink and be pleased with me as thou art with other men." But as neither of them replied to him, Abraham waxed very angry, and the spirit of prophecy rested upon him, and he said, "They have eyes, but see not; ears, but hear not; they have hands, but do not move them; and feet, but do not walk; nor do their throats give utterance."<sup>10</sup> Like them are their makers and all those who trust in them." He then kindled a fire and burned them.<sup>11</sup>

9. When Terah arrived home and found his idols burnt, he went to Abraham, and said, "Who has burnt my gods?" And Abraham replied, "The large one picked a quarrel with the little ones, and burnt them because he was angry with them." "Fool that thou art," said his father, "how canst thou say that he who cannot see nor hear nor walk, that he who has no power could burn them?" Then said Abraham to his father, "O my father, hear what thy mouth utters; why dost thou forsake the living God who created the heavens and the earth, and servest gods that neither see nor hear?"

10. Thereupon Terah took Abraham, our ancestor, and went with him to Nimrod. And Terah said to Nimrod, "O my lord the king, judge this my son who has burned my gods, and find out who is the God which he makes for himself." "Who is this man?" said Nimrod. "My son." Then added Nimrod, "Why hast thou acted thus and burned the idols?" "I did not do this, nor did I burn them," said Abraham. "Who, then, did act thus and burn them?" "The great idol burnt them," said he. "Fool that thou art," replied Nimrod. "How canst thou say that that which cannot stand by itself, cannot hear nor see, nor hath any power could burn them?" "Hear thou, my lord, what thy mouth utters. Why dost thou forsake the living God, who created the heavens and the earth and who created thee, and in whose hand is the Spirit of all living, and worshippest other gods of wood and stone,"<sup>12</sup> which do not hear nor see nor speak?"<sup>13</sup>

11. "Who, then," said Nimrod, "created the heavens and the earth, if not I?" "Art thou he?" queried Abraham. "I am," replied he. "Then by this I shall know that thou art the creator of everything. Behold, the sun rises in the east and sets in the west: if thou canst by thy command cause the sun to rise in the west and to set in the east, I shall then know and believe that thou didst create all." When Nimrod heard Abraham's words he was dumbfounded; he put his hand to his beard and was wonderstruck at his words.

12. As soon as the astrologers saw Abraham they recognised him at once, and said to Nimrod, "O lord the king, this is the child of whom we spoke on the day of his birth, and whom thou didst desire to slay. If it be thy will, we shall bring thee wood and burn him to death, and then compensate his parents with a large sum of money. Now, O lord, since he has come into our hands, let us burn him in the fire." "Do then your will," said Nimrod. They forthwith went away, and having heated the furnace for seven (whole) days, cast him into it.<sup>14</sup>

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10. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:28; Revelation 9:20.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

12. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

13. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:28; Revelation 9:20.

14. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.



13. Then spake the angels to God, saying, "O Lord of the universe, let us go and deliver this man from the fiery furnace." At that moment a dispute arose among the angels who said, "Let us descend and deliver this man from the furnace."<sup>15</sup> One said, "I shall go down to deliver him," and another said, "I shall go down to deliver him." Michael said, "I shall go down," and Gabriel said, "I shall go down." Then spake God himself to Gabriel, and said, "I am One in My world, and so is this man, who was the first to declare the unity of My name in the world. It is, therefore, meet that I the One should go down and rescue him who is also one in his generation. It is pleasing to Me to descend and rescue him from the fiery furnace." At that moment God descended in His glory and in His strength, and delivered him from the furnace of fire.<sup>16</sup> He brought him forth without a blemish. When all the nations saw that Abraham was thus delivered from the burning furnace, they forthwith sanctified the name of God, and some of them were made proselytes through the means of Abraham our ancestor.<sup>17</sup>

### Chapter 35

1. These are the generations of Terah, etc.: Haran, the firstborn, begat Lot and Yiskah,<sup>18</sup> *i.e.*, Sarai, and Milkah. And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in Ur of the Chaldees. On account of the idols of Terah he died in the fire of the Chaldeans, for the Chaldeans worshipped the fire. Terah used to make the idols of their gods, and Haran, his eldest son, used to sell them. But Abram did not worship them. The Chaldeans came to dip both Haran and Abram in the fire, for they were accustomed to dip them in the fire, just as some nations dip their sons in the water. Abram, who did not worship, and who did not bow down to the idol, was saved from the fire of the Chaldeans and was not burnt; but Haran, who feared the idols, who honoured them and sold them for worship, was burnt in the fire of the Chaldeans and died.<sup>19</sup> When Terah saw that God delivered Abram, he deserted his former faith,<sup>20</sup> and went forth with him (Abram) to dwell in a foreign country; and he gave Milkah, the daughter of Haran, to Nahor, his son, to wife, and Yiskah, that is Sarai, he gave to Abram, his youngest son, after he had weaned her and brought her up in his own house on the death of her father Haran. And he gave Lot, the son of Haran, to Abram as an adopted son, for Sarai was barren. And they went forth towards the land of Canaan.

2. Now, it came to pass, when Abram came from Babylon—*i.e.*, Ur of the Chaldees—he betook himself to Damascus, he and his household, and was made king over that city; for Eliezer was then the ruler of Damascus; but when he saw that the Lord was with Abram he presented him with the kingdom and surrendered himself to his service. And I, Jerahmeel, have discovered in the Book of Nicolaos of Damascus that there existed a

15. Cf. Abraham 1:15; 2:13; Facsimile 1, figure 1.

16. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

17. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

18. Biblical Ischah.

19. Cf. Abraham 2:1.

20. Cf. Abraham 1:5, 30; 2:5.



certain neighbourhood in Damascus called the dwelling-place of Abram.<sup>21</sup> This they honoured exceedingly.

3. And the Lord said to him (Abram), "I am the Lord, who brought thee forth from the fire of the Chaldeans."<sup>22</sup> The sages say that when Nimrod the Wicked cast Abram into the fiery furnace, Gabriel said to God, "I shall go down and cool the furnace, and deliver this righteous man."<sup>23</sup> But God replied, "I am One in My world, and he is one in this world; it is therefore proper for the One to deliver the other one." But since God does not withhold reward from any creature, He added to Gabriel, "Thou shalt deliver three of his posterity." For when Nebuchadnezzar cast Hananya, Mishael, and 'Azaria, into the burning furnace<sup>24</sup> Laqmi (לאקמי), the angel who rules over hail, spake to God, and said, "I shall go down and cool the furnace, and thus deliver the righteous men." But Gabriel interposed, and said, "The greatness of God would not be shown in this manner, for thou art the ruler over hail, and all people know that water quenches fire; but I who am the ruler over fire shall go down and cool the inside while I am at the same time heating the outside of the furnace. Thus I shall perform a double miracle." Then spake God to Gabriel, "Descend." And Gabriel at once exclaimed, "The truth of God is everlasting."

4. And Abram was rich in cattle, silver, gold, and in all the wisdom of "hermetica" and astrology which he had acquired in Egypt from Pharaoh's magicians, so that there was none so wise as he.<sup>25</sup> From Egypt these sciences spread over Greece. And Abram was able to foretell the future by the observance of the stars,<sup>26</sup> and was very wise in astrology. He taught his magic science to Zoroastres,<sup>27</sup> the philosopher, and he saw from the planets that the order of the world was not as before, for the order of creation was changed on account of the flood and the dispersion. Rabbi El'azar, of Modiin, asserted that Abraham was exceedingly great in magic, so much so that all the kings of the East and West waited upon him.

21. All of this information is in Josephus, whose account of Abraham is included in this collection.

22. Citing Genesis 15:7. This is the traditional Jewish understanding of the Hebrew *ʾur kaśdîm*, which the KJV renders "Ur of the Chaldees."

23. Cf. Abraham 1:15; 2:13; Facsimile 1, figure 1.

24. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, the companions of Daniel who were cast into the fiery furnace in Babylon (Daniel 1:6–7; 3).

25. According to Facsimile 3 and other accounts included in this collection, it was Abraham who taught astronomy to the Egyptians.

26. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18.

27. The usual English spelling is Zoroaster, though the founder of the ancient religion of the Persians was really named Zarathustra. One of the infancy gospels indicates that the Wise Men came to seek Christ because of a prophecy of Zoroaster.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK OF JASHER

This *Book of Jasher* (or simply *Jasher*) is not the book of that name mentioned in the Bible (see Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18) but is almost equally shrouded in mystery. It is a narration containing some rather old Jewish traditions about the book of Genesis; the Jewish name for the book is *Sefer ha-Yashar*. The author is unknown, but it is thought that his teacher may have been Nathan ben Joel Falaquera, a thirteenth-century Spanish Jew. Leopold Zung asserted that the book was published in 1552 or 1613, but no known copies dating to that period are extant. The earliest attested Hebrew printing was in Venice in 1625, but no early or complete manuscripts exist. The English translation used here was made anonymously and first published in New York in 1840,<sup>1</sup> but it is most familiar to Latter-day Saints in the 1887 edition: *The Book of Jasher* (1840; reprint, Salt Lake City: Parry, 1887), 17–22, 24–40.

### Chapter 7

50. And Terah took a wife and her name was Amthelo the daughter of Cornebo; and the wife of Terah conceived and bare him a son in those days.

51. Terah was seventy years old when he begat him, and Terah called the name of his son that was born to him Abram,<sup>2</sup> because the king had raised him in those days, and dignified him above all his princes that were with him.

### Chapter 8

1. And it was in the night that Abram was born, that all the servants of Terah, and all the wise men of Nimrod, and his conjurors came and ate and drank in the house of Terah, and they rejoiced with him on that night.

2. And when all the wise men and conjurors went out from the house of Terah, they lifted up their eyes toward heaven that night *to look* at the stars, and they saw, and behold one very large star came from the east and ran in the heavens, and he swallowed up the four stars from the four sides of the heavens.<sup>3</sup>

1. The appearance of the English translation was noted by the church's *Times and Seasons* 1 (June 1840): 127 (see also 2 [15 May 1841]: 421), which also published extracts. *Ibid.*, 5 (15 Dec. 1844): 745–46. It was duly noted, however, that the biblical book of Jasher had not yet been found; *ibid.*, 6 (14 Feb. 1845): 800.

2. Cf. Genesis 11:26–27.

3. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 2, figure 6.



3. And all the wise men of the king and his conjurors were astonished at the sight, and the sages understood this matter, and they knew its import.

4. And they said to each other, This only *betokens* the child that has been born to Terah this night, who will grow up and be fruitful, and multiply, and possess all the earth, he and his children for ever, and he and his seed will slay great kings, and inherit their lands.

5. And the wise men and conjurors went home that night, and in the morning all *these* wise men and conjurors rose up early, and assembled in an appointed house.

6. And they spoke and said to each other, Behold the sight that we saw last night is hidden from the king, it has not been made known to him.

7. And should this thing get known to the king in the latter days, he will say to us, Why have you concealed this matter from me, and then we shall all suffer death; *therefore*, now let us go and tell the king the sight which we saw, and the interpretation thereof, and we shall *then remain* clear.

8. And they did so, and they all went to the king and bowed down to him to the ground, and they said, May the king live, may the king live.

9. We heard that a son was born to Terah the son of Nahor, the prince of thy host, and we yesternight came to his house, and we ate and drank and rejoiced with him that night.

10. And when thy servants went out from the house of Terah, to go to our respective homes to abide there for the night, we lifted up our eyes to heaven, and we saw a great star coming from the east, and the same star ran with great speed, and swallowed up four great stars, from the four sides of the heavens.<sup>4</sup>

11. And thy servants were astonished at the sight which we saw, and were greatly terrified, and we made our judgment upon the sight, and knew by our wisdom the proper interpretation thereof, that this thing applies to the child that is born to Terah, who will grow up and multiply greatly, and become powerful, and kill all the kings of the earth, and inherit all their lands, he and his seed forever.

12. And now our lord *and* king, behold we have truly acquainted thee with what we have seen concerning this child.

13. If it seemeth good to the king to give his father value for this child, we will slay him before he shall grow up and increase in the land, and his evil increase against us, that we and our children perish through his evil.

14. And the king heard their words and they seemed good in his sight, and he sent and called for Terah, and Terah came before the king.

15. And the king said to Terah, I have been told that a son was yesternight born to thee, and after this manner was observed in the heavens at his birth.

16. And now *therefore* give me the child, that we may slay him before his evil springs up against us, and I will give thee for his value, thy house full of silver and gold.

17. And Terah answered the king and said to him: My Lord *and* king, I have heard thy words, and thy servant shall do all that his king desireth.

18. But my lord *and* king, I will tell thee what happened to me yesternight, that I may

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4. Ibid.



see what advice the king will give his servant, and then I will answer the king upon what he has *just* spoken; and the king said, Speak.

19. And Terah said to the king, Ayon, son of Mored, came to me yesternight, saying,

20. Give unto me the great and beautiful horse that the king gave thee, and I will give thee silver and gold, and straw and provender for its value; and I said to him, Wait till I see the king concerning thy words, *and* behold whatever the king saith, that will I do.

21. And now my lord *and* king, behold I have made this thing known to thee, and the advice which my king will give unto his servant, that will I follow.

22. And the king heard the words of Terah, and his anger was kindled and he considered him in the light of a fool.

23. And the king answered Terah, and he said to him, Art thou so silly, ignorant, or deficient in understanding, to do this thing, to give thy beautiful horse for silver and gold or even for straw and provender?

24. Art thou *so* short of silver and gold, that thou shouldst do this thing, because thou canst not obtain straw and provender to feed thy horse? and what is silver and gold to thee, or straw and provender, that thou shouldst give away that fine horse which I gave thee, like which there is none to be had on the whole earth?

25. And the king left off speaking, and Terah answered the king, saying, Like unto this has the king spoken to his servant;

26. I beseech thee, my lord and king, what is this which thou didst say unto me, saying, Give thy son that we may slay him, and I will give thee silver and gold for his value; what shall I do with silver and gold after the death of my son? who shall inherit me? *surely* then at my death, the silver and gold will return to my king who gave it.

27. And when the king heard the words of Terah, and the parable which he brought concerning the king, it grieved him greatly and he was vexed at this thing, and his anger burned within him.

28. And Terah saw that the anger of the king was kindled against him, and he answered the king, saying, All that I have is in the king's power; whatever the king desireth to do to his servant, that let him do, *yea*, even my son, he is in the king's power, without value in exchange, he and his two brothers that are older than he.

29. And the king said to Terah, No, but I will purchase thy younger son for a price.

30. And Terah answered the king, saying, I beseech thee my lord and king to let thy servant speak a word before thee, and let the king hear the word of his servant, and Terah said, Let my king give me three days' time till I consider this matter within myself, and *consult* with my family concerning the words of my king; and he pressed the king greatly to *agree* to this.

31. And the king hearkened to Terah, and he did so and he gave him three days' time, and Terah went out from the king's presence, and he came home to his family and spoke to them all the words of the king; and the people were greatly afraid.

32. And it was in the third day that the king sent to Terah, saying, Send me thy son for a price as I spoke to thee; and shouldst thou not do this, I will send and slay all thou hast in thy house, so that thou shalt not even have a dog remaining.



33. And Terah hastened, (as the thing was urgent from the king), and he took a child from one of his servants, which his handmaid had born to him that day, and Terah brought the child to the king and received value for him.

34. And the Lord was with Terah in this matter, that Nimrod might not cause Abram's death, and the king took the child from Terah and with all his might dashed his head to the ground,<sup>5</sup> for he thought it had been Abram; and this was concealed from him from that day, and it was forgotten by the king, as it was the will of Providence not to suffer Abram's death.

35. And Terah took Abram his son secretly, together with his mother and nurse, and he concealed them in a cave, and he brought them their provisions monthly.

36. And the Lord was with Abram in the cave and he grew up, and Abram was in the cave ten years, and the king and his princes, soothsayers and sages, thought that the king had killed Abram.

## Chapter 9

1. And Haran, the son of Terah, Abram's oldest brother, took a wife in those days.

2. Haran was thirty-nine years old when he took her; and the wife of Haran conceived and bare a son, and he called his name Lot.

3. And she conceived again and bare a daughter, and she called her name Milca; and she again conceived and bare a daughter, and she called her name Sarai.

4. Haran was forty-two years old when he begat Sarai, which was in the tenth year of the life of Abram; and in those days Abram and his mother and nurse went out from the cave, as the king and his subjects had forgotten the affair of Abram.

5. And when Abram came out from the cave, he went to Noah and his son Shem, and he remained with them to learn the instruction of the Lord and his ways, and no man knew *where* Abram was, and Abram served Noah and Shem his son for a long time.

6. And Abram was in Noah's house thirty-nine years, and Abram knew the Lord from three years old, and he went in the ways of the Lord until the day of his death, as Noah and his son Shem had taught him;<sup>6</sup> and all the sons of the earth in those days greatly transgressed against the Lord, and they rebelled against him and they served other gods,<sup>7</sup> and they forgot the Lord who had created them in the earth; and the inhabitants of the earth made unto themselves, at that time, every man his god;<sup>8</sup> gods of wood and stone which could neither speak, hear, nor deliver, and the sons of men served them and they became their gods.<sup>9</sup>

7. And the king and all his servants, and Terah with all his household were then the first of those that served *gods* of wood and stone.<sup>10</sup>

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5. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:19; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

8. Cf. Isaiah 2:20.

9. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:28; Revelation 9:20.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5. For gods of wood and stone, cf. Abraham 1:11.

8. And Terah had twelve gods of large size, made of wood and stone, after the twelve months of the year, and he served each one monthly, and every month Terah would bring his *meat* offering and drink offering to his gods; thus did Terah all the days.

9. And all that generation were wicked in the sight of the Lord, and they thus made every man his god, but they forsook the Lord who had created them.

10. And there was not a man found in those days in the whole earth, who knew the Lord (for they served each man his *own* God) except Noah and his household, and all those who were under his counsel knew the Lord in those days.

11. And Abram the son of Terah was waxing great in those days in the house of Noah,<sup>11</sup> and no man knew it, and the Lord was with him.

12. And the Lord gave Abram an understanding heart, and he knew all the works of that generation were vain, and that all their gods were vain and were of no avail.

13. And Abram saw the sun *shining* upon the earth, and Abram said unto himself Surely now this sun that shines upon the earth is God, and him will I serve.

14. And Abram served the sun in that day and he prayed to him, and when evening came the sun set as usual, and Abram said within himself, Surely this cannot be God?

15. And Abram still continued to speak within himself, Who is he who made the heavens and the earth? who created upon earth? where is he?

16. And night darkened over him, and he lifted up his eyes toward the west, north, south, and east, and he saw that the sun had vanished from the earth, and the day became dark.

17. And Abram saw the stars and moon before him, and he said, Surely this is the God who created the whole earth as well as man, and behold these his servants are gods around him: and Abram served the moon and prayed to it all that night.

18. And in the morning when it was light and the sun shone upon the earth as usual, Abram saw all the things that the Lord God had made upon earth.<sup>12</sup>

19. And Abram said unto himself Surely these are not gods that made the earth and all mankind, but *these are* the servants of God; and Abram remained in the house of Noah and there knew the Lord and his ways,<sup>13</sup> and he served the Lord all the days of his life, and all that generation forgot the Lord, and served other gods of wood and stone,<sup>14</sup> and rebelled all their days.<sup>15</sup>

20. And king Nimrod reigned securely, and all the earth was under his control, and all the earth was of one tongue and words of union.

[Here follows the story of the tower of Babel (*Jasher* 9:21–39), the genealogies of the sons of Noah (*Jasher* 10:1–39), and details of the reign of Nimrod, including the death of Nahor, grandfather of Abram (*Jasher* 11:1–12).]

11. Cf. Abraham 1:19; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

12. Cf. Abraham 4–5.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:19; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

14. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

15. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.



**Chapter 11**

13. And in the fiftieth year of the life of Abram son of Terah, Abram came forth from the house of Noah, and went to his father's house.

14. And Abram knew the Lord, and he went in his ways and instructions, and the Lord his God was with him.<sup>16</sup>

15. And Terah his father was in those days, still captain of the host of king Nimrod, and he still followed strange gods.

16. And Abram came to his father's house and saw twelve gods standing there in their temples, and the anger of Abram was kindled when he saw these images in his father's house.

17. And Abram said, As the Lord liveth these images shall not remain in my father's house; so shall the Lord who created me do unto me if in three days' time I do not break them all.

18. And Abram went from them, and his anger burned within him. And Abram hastened and went from the chamber to his father's outer court, and he found his father sitting in the court, and all his servants with him, and Abram came and sat before him.

19. And Abram asked his father, saying, Father, tell me where is God who created heaven and earth, and all the sons of men upon earth, and who created thee and me. And Terah answered his son Abram and said, Behold those who created us are all with us in the house.

20. And Abram said to his father, My lord, shew them to me I pray thee; and Terah brought Abram into the chamber of the inner court, and Abram saw, and behold the whole room was full of gods of wood and stone, twelve great images and others less than they without number.

21. And Terah said to his son, Behold these are they which made all thou seest upon earth, and which created me and thee, and all mankind.

22. And Terah bowed down to his gods,<sup>17</sup> and he *then* went away from them, and Abram, his son, went away with him.

23. And when Abram had gone from them he went to his mother and sat before *her*, and he said to his mother, Behold, my father has shown me those who made heaven and earth, and all the sons of men.

24. Now, therefore, hasten and fetch a kid from the flock, and make of it savory meat, that I may bring it to my father's gods as an offering for them to eat; perhaps I may thereby become acceptable to them.

25. And his mother did so, and she fetched a kid, and made savory meat thereof, and brought it to Abram, and Abram took the savory meat from his mother and brought it before his father's gods, and he drew nigh to them that *they* might eat; and Terah his father, did not know of it.

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16. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

17. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.

26. And Abram saw on the day when he was sitting amongst them, that they had no voice, no hearing, no motion, and not one of them *could* stretch forth his hand to eat.

27. And Abram mocked them, and said, Surely the savory meat that I prepared has not pleased them, or *perhaps* it was too little for them, *and* for that reason they would not eat; therefore to-morrow I will prepare fresh savory meat, better and more plentiful than this, *in order* that I may see the result.

28. And it was on the next day that Abram directed his mother concerning the savory meat, and his mother rose and fetched three fine kids from the flock, and she made of them some excellent savory meat, such as her son was fond of, and she gave it to her son Abram; and Terah his father did not know of it.

29. And Abram took the savory meat from his mother, and brought it before his father's gods<sup>18</sup> into the chamber; and he came nigh unto them that they might eat, and he placed it before them, and Abram sat before them all day, thinking perhaps they might eat.

30. And Abram viewed them, and behold they had neither voice nor hearing, nor did one of them stretch forth his hand to the meat to eat.

31. And in the evening of that day in that house Abram was clothed with the spirit of God.

32. And he called out and said, Wo unto my father and this wicked generation, whose hearts are all inclined to vanity, who serve these idols of wood and stone<sup>19</sup> which can neither eat, smell, hear nor speak, who have mouths without speech, eyes without sight, ears without hearing, hands without feeling, and legs which cannot move;<sup>20</sup> like them are those that made them and that trust in them.

33. And when Abram saw all these things his anger was kindled against his father, and he hastened and took a hatchet in his hand, and came unto the chamber of the gods, and he broke all his father's gods.<sup>21</sup>

34. And when he had done breaking the images, he placed the hatchet in the hand of the great god which was there before them, and he went out; and Terah his father came home, for he had heard at the door the sound of the striking of the hatchet; so Terah came into the house to know what this was about.

35. And Terah, having heard the noise of the hatchet in the room of images, ran to the room to the images, and he met Abram going out.

36. And Terah entered the room and found all the idols fallen down and broken, and the hatchet in the hand of the largest, which was not broken, and the savory meat which Abram his son had made was still before them.

37. And *when* Terah saw this his anger was greatly kindled, and he hastened and went from the room to Abram.

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18. Ibid.

19. Cf. Abraham 1:11, 16–17, 27; 2:5.

20. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:28; Revelation 9:20.

21. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 20, 27; 2:5.



38. And he found Abram his son still sitting in the house; and he said to him, What is this work thou hast done to my gods?

39. And Abram answered Terah his father and he said, Not so my lord, for I brought savory meat before them, and when I came nigh to them with the meat that *they* might eat, they *all at once* stretched forth their hands to eat before the great one had put forth his hand to eat.

40. And the large one saw their works that they did before him, and his anger was violently kindled against them, and he went and took the hatchet that was in the house and came to them and broke them all, and behold the hatchet is yet in his hand as thou seest.

41. And Terah's anger was kindled against his son Abram, when he spoke this; and Terah said to Abram his son in his anger, What is this tale that thou hast told? Thou speakest lies to me.

42. Is there in these gods spirit, soul or power to do all thou hast told me? Are they not wood and stone,<sup>22</sup> and have I not *myself* made them, and canst thou speak such lies, saying that the large god that was with them smote them? It is thou that didst place the hatchet in his hands, and then sayest he smote them all.

43. And Abram answered his father and said to him, And how canst thou *then* serve these idols<sup>23</sup> in whom there is no power to do any thing? Can those idols in which thou trustest deliver thee? can they hear thy prayers when thou callest upon them? can they deliver thee from the hands of thy enemies, or will they fight thy battles for thee against thy enemies, that thou shouldst serve wood and stone<sup>24</sup> which can neither speak nor hear?

44. And now *surely* it is not good for thee nor for the sons of men that are connected with thee, to do these things; are you so silly, so foolish or so short of understanding that you will serve wood and stone, and do after this manner?

45. And forget the Lord God who made heaven and earth, and who created you in the earth, and *thereby* bring a great evil upon your souls in this matter by serving stone and wood?<sup>25</sup>

46. Did not our fathers in days of old sin in this manner,<sup>26</sup> and the Lord God of the universe brought the waters of the flood upon them and destroyed the whole earth?

47. And how can you continue to do this and serve gods of wood and stone, who cannot hear, or speak, or deliver you from oppression,<sup>27</sup> thereby bringing down the anger of the God of the universe upon you?

48. Now *therefore* my father refrain from this, and bring not evil upon thy soul and the souls of thy household.

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22. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

23. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.

24. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

25. Ibid.

26. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

27. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:28; Revelation 9:20.

49. And Abram hastened and sprang from before his father, and took the hatchet from his father's largest idol, with which Abram broke it and ran away.

50. And Terah, seeing all that Abram had done, hastened to go from his house, and he went to the king and he came before Nimrod and stood before him, and he bowed down to the king; and the king said, What dost thou want?

51. And he said, I beseech thee my lord, to hear me—Now fifty years back a child was born to me, and thus has he done to my gods and thus has he spoken; and now therefore, my lord *and* king, send *for him* that he may come before thee, and judge him according to the law, that we may be delivered from his evil.<sup>28</sup>

52. And the king sent three men of his servants, and they went and brought Abram before the king. And Nimrod and all his princes and servants were that day sitting before him, and Terah sat also before them.

53. And the king said to Abram, What is this that thou hast done to thy father and to his gods? And Abram answered the king in the words that he spoke to his father, and he said, The large god that was with them in the house did to them what thou hast heard.

54. And the king said to Abram, Had they power to speak and eat and do as thou hast said? And Abram answered the king, saying, And if there be no power in them why dost thou serve them and cause the sons of men to err through thy follies?

55. Dost thou imagine that they can deliver thee or do anything small or great, that thou shouldst serve them? And why wilt thou not serve the God of the whole universe, who created thee and in whose power it is to kill and keep alive?

56. O foolish, simple, and ignorant king, woe unto thee forever.

57. I thought thou wouldst teach thy servants the upright way, but thou hast not done this, but hast filled the whole earth with thy sins and the sins of thy people who have followed thy ways.

58. Dost thou not know, *or* hast thou not heard, that this evil which thou doest, our ancestors sinned therein in days of old, and the eternal God brought the waters of the flood upon them and destroyed them all, and also destroyed the whole earth on their account? And wilt thou and thy people rise up now and do like unto this work, in order to bring down the anger of the Lord God of the universe, and to bring evil upon thee and the whole earth?

59. Now *therefore* put away this evil deed which thou doest, and serve the God of the universe, as thy soul is in his hands, and *then* it will be well with thee.

60. And if thy wicked heart will not hearken to my words to cause thee to forsake thy evil ways, and to serve the eternal God, *then* wilt thou die in shame in the latter days, thou, thy people and all who are connected with thee, hearing thy words or walking in thy evil ways.

61. And when Abram had ceased speaking before the king and princes, Abram lifted up his eyes to the heavens, and he said, The Lord seeth all the wicked, and he will judge them.

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28. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 30.



**Chapter 12**

1. And when the king heard the words of Abram he ordered him to be put into prison; and Abram was ten days in prison.

2. And at the end of those days the king ordered that all the kings, princes and governors of different provinces and the sages should come before him, and they sat before him, and Abram was still in the house of confinement.

3. And the king said to the princes and sages, Have you heard what Abram, the son of Terah, has done to his father? Thus has he done to him, and I ordered him to be brought before me, *and* thus has he spoken; his heart did not misgive him, neither did he stir *in my presence*, and behold now he is confined in the prison.

4. And therefore decide what judgment is due to this man who reviled the king; who spoke and did all the things that you heard.

5. And they all answered the king saying, The man who revileth the king should be hanged upon a tree; but having done all the things that he said, and having despised our gods, he must therefore be burned to *death*, for this is the law in this matter.

6. If it pleaseth the king to do this, let him order his servants to kindle a fire *both* night and day in thy brick furnace, and then we will cast this man into it. And the king did so, and he commanded his servants that they should prepare a fire for three days and three nights in the king's furnace, that is in Casdim;<sup>29</sup> and the king ordered them to take Abram from prison and bring him *out* to be burned.<sup>30</sup>

7. And all the king's servants, princes, lords, governors, and judges, and all the inhabitants of the land, about nine hundred thousand men, stood opposite the furnace to see Abram.

8. And all the women and little ones crowded upon the roofs and towers to see *what was doing* with Abram, and they all stood together at a distance; and there was not a man left that did not come on that day to behold the scene.

9. And when Abram was come, the conjurors of the king and the sages saw Abram, and they cried out to the king, saying, Our sovereign lord, surely this is the man whom we know to have been the child at whose birth the great star swallowed the four stars,<sup>31</sup> which we declared to the king now fifty years since.

10. And behold now his father has also transgressed thy commands, and mocked thee by bringing thee another child, which thou didst kill.

11. And when the king heard their words, he was exceedingly wroth, and he ordered Terah to be brought before him.

12. And the king said, Hast thou heard what the conjurors have spoken? Now tell me truly, how didst thou; and if thou shalt speak truth thou shalt be acquitted.

13. And seeing that the king's anger was so much kindled, Terah said to the king, My lord *and* king, thou hast heard the truth, and what the sages have spoken is right. And

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29. This "Casdim" is the Hebrew word rendered "Chaldea" or "Chaldees" in the KJV.

30. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

31. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 2, figure 6.

the king said, How couldst thou do this thing, to transgress my orders and to give me a child that thou didst not beget, and to take value for him?

14. And Terah answered the king, Because my tender feelings were excited for my son, at that time, and I took a son of my handmaid, and I brought him to the king.

15. And the king said Who advised thee *to* this? Tell me, do not hide aught from me, and *then* thou shalt not die.

16. And Terah was greatly terrified in the king's presence, and he said to the king, It was Haran *my* eldest son who advised me to this; and Haran was in those days that Abram was born, two and thirty years old.

17. But Haran did not advise his father to anything, for Terah said this to the king in order *to* deliver his soul from the king, for he feared greatly; and the king said to Terah, Haran thy son who advised thee to this shall die through fire with Abram; for the sentence of death is upon him for having rebelled against the king's desire in doing this thing.

18. And Haran at that time felt inclined to *follow the ways* of Abram, but he kept it within himself.

19. And Haran said in his heart, Behold now the king has seized Abram on account of these things which Abram did, and it shall come to pass, that if Abram prevail over the king I will follow him, but if the king prevail I will go after the king.

20. And when Terah had spoken this to the king concerning Haran his son, the king ordered Haran to be seized with Abram.

21. And they brought them both, Abram and Haran his brother, to cast them into the fire;<sup>32</sup> and all the inhabitants of the land and the king's servants and princes and all the women and little ones were there, standing that day over them.

22. And the king's servants took Abram and his brother, and they stripped them of all their clothes excepting their lower garments which were upon them.

23. And they bound their hands and feet with linen cords,<sup>33</sup> and the servants of the king lifted them up and cast them both into the furnace.<sup>34</sup>

24. And the Lord loved Abram and he had compassion over him, and the Lord came down and delivered Abram from the fire and he was not burned.<sup>35</sup>

25. But all the cords with which they bound him were burned, while Abram remained and walked about in the fire.

26. And Haran died when they had cast him into the fire,<sup>36</sup> and he was burned to ashes, for his heart was not perfect with the Lord; and those men who cast him into the fire, the flame of the fire spread over them, and they were burned, and twelve men of them died.<sup>37</sup>

27. And Abram walked in the midst of the fire three days and three nights, and all the servants of the king saw him walking in the fire, and they came and told the king, saying,

32. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

33. Cf. Abraham 1:15; Facsimile 1, figure 2.

34. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

35. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

36. Cf. Abraham 2:1.

37. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.



Behold we have seen Abram walking about in the midst of the fire, and *even* the lower garments which are upon him are not burned, but the cord with which he was bound is burned.

28. And when the king heard their words his heart fainted and he would not believe them; so he sent other faithful princes to see this matter, and they went and saw *it* and told *it* to the king; and the king rose to go and see *it*, and he saw Abram walking to and fro in the midst of the fire, and he saw Haran's body burned, and the king wondered greatly.

29. And the king ordered Abram to be taken out from the fire; and his servants approached to take him out and they could not, for the fire was round about and the flame ascending toward them from the furnace.

30. And the king's servants fled from it, and the king rebuked them, saying, Make haste and bring Abram out of the fire that you shall not die.

31. And the servants of the king *again* approached to bring Abram out, and the flames came upon them and burned their faces so that eight of them died.

32. And when the king saw that his servants could not approach the fire lest they should be burned, the king called to Abram, O servant of the God who is in heaven, go forth from amidst the fire and come hither before me; and Abram hearkened to the voice of the king, and he went forth from the fire and came and stood before the king.

33. And when Abram came out the king and all his servants saw Abram coming before the king, with his lower garments upon him, for they were not burned, but the cord with which he was bound was burned.

34. And the king said to Abram, How is it that thou wast not burned in the fire?

35. And Abram said to the king, The God of heaven and earth in whom I trust and who has all in his power, he delivered me from the fire into which thou didst cast me.

36. And Haran the brother of Abram was burned to ashes, and they sought for his body, and they found it consumed.

37. And Haran was eighty-two years old when he died in the fire of Casdim.<sup>38</sup> And the king, princes, and inhabitants of the land, seeing that Abram was delivered from the fire, they came and bowed down to Abram.

38. And Abram said to them, Do not bow down to me, but bow down to the God of the world who made you, and serve him, and go in his ways for it is he who delivered me from out of this fire,<sup>39</sup> and it is he who created the souls and spirits of all men,<sup>40</sup> and formed man in his mother's womb, and brought him forth into the world, and it is he who will deliver those who trust in him from all pain.

39. And this thing seemed very wonderful in the eyes of the king and princes, that Abram was saved from the fire and that Haran was burned; and the king gave Abram many presents and he gave him his two head servants from the king's house; the name of one was Oni and the name of the other was Eliezer.

38. The Hebrew *ʾur kašdīm*, rendered "Ur of the Chaldees" in the KJV, is generally understood in Jewish tradition to be the "fire of the Chaldeans."

39. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

40. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.

40. And all the kings, princes and servants gave Abram many gifts of silver and gold and pearl, and the king and his princes sent him away, and he went in peace.

41. And Abram went forth from the king in peace, and many of the king's servants followed him, and about three hundred men joined him.<sup>41</sup>

42. And Abram returned on that day and went to his father's house, he and the men that followed him, and Abram served the Lord his God all the days of his life, and he walked in his ways and *followed* his law.

43. And from that day forward Abram inclined the hearts of the sons of men to serve the Lord.<sup>42</sup>

44. And at that time Nahor and Abram took unto themselves wives, the daughters of their brother Haran; the wife of Nahor *was* Milca and the name of Abram's wife was Sarai. And Sarai, wife of Abram, was barren; she had no offspring in those days.

45. And at the expiration of two years from Abram's going out of the fire, that is in the fifty-second year of his life, *behold* king Nimrod sat in Babel upon the throne, and the king fell asleep and dreamed that he was standing with his troops and hosts in a valley opposite the king's furnace.

46. And he lifted up his eyes and saw a man in the likeness of Abram coming forth from the furnace, and that he came and stood before the king with his drawn sword, and then sprang to the king with his sword, when the king fled from the man, for he was afraid; and while he was running, the man threw an egg upon the king's head, and the egg became a great river.

47. And the king dreamed that all his troops sank in that river and died, and the king took flight with three men who were before him and he escaped.

48. And the king looked at these men and they were clothed in princely dresses as the garments of kings, and had the appearance and majesty of kings.

49. And while they were running, the river again turned to an egg before the king, and there came forth from the egg a young bird which came before the king, and flew at his head and plucked out the king's eye.

50. And the king was grieved at the sight, and he awoke out of his sleep and his spirit was agitated; and he felt a great terror.

51. And in the morning the king rose from his couch in fear, and he ordered all the wise men and magicians to come before him, when the king related his dream to them.

52. And a wise servant of the king, whose name was Anuki, answered the king, saying, This is nothing else but the evil of Abram and his seed which will spring up against my Lord and king in the latter days.

53. And behold the day will come when Abram and his seed and the children of his household will war with my king, and they will smite all the king's hosts and his troops.<sup>43</sup>

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41. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

42. Ibid.

43. In Jewish tradition, reflected in some of the texts in this collection, Nimrod was the Mesopotamian king Chedorlaomer with whom Abraham fought in Genesis 14.



54. And as to what thou hast said concerning three men which thou didst see like unto thyself, and which did escape, this *means* that only thou wilt escape with three kings from the kings of the earth who will be with thee in battle.

55. And that which thou sawest of the river which turned to an egg as at first, and the young bird plucking out thine eye, this *means* nothing else but the seed of Abram which will slay the king in latter days.

56. This is my king's dream, and this is its interpretation, and the dream is true, and the interpretation which thy servant has given thee is right.

57. Now therefore my king, surely thou knowest that it is now fifty-two years since thy sages saw this at the birth of Abram, and if my king will suffer Abram to live in the earth it will be to the injury of my lord *and* king, for all the days that Abram liveth neither thou nor thy kingdom will be established, for this was known formerly at his birth; and why will not my king slay him, that his evil may be kept from thee in latter days?

58. And Nimrod hearkened to the voice of Anuki, and he sent some of his servants in secret to go and seize Abram, and bring him before the king to suffer death.

59. And Eliezer, Abram's servant whom the king had given him, was at that time in the presence of the king, and he heard what Anuki had advised the king, and what the king had said to cause Abram's death.

60. And Eliezer said to Abram, Hasten, rise up and save thy soul, that thou mayest not die through the hands of the king, for thus did he see in a dream concerning thee, and thus did Anuki interpret it, and thus *also* did Anuki advise the king concerning thee.

61. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Eliezer, and Abram hastened and ran for safety to the house of Noah and his son Shem, and he concealed himself there and found a place of safety;<sup>44</sup> and the king's servants came to Abram's house to seek him, but they could not find him, and they searched through out the country and he was not to be found, and they went and searched in every direction, and he was not *to be met with*.

62. And when the king's servants could not find Abram they returned to the king, but the king's anger against Abram was stilled, as they did not find him, and the king drove from his mind this matter concerning Abram.

63. And Abram was concealed in Noah's house for one month, until the king had forgotten this matter, but Abram was still afraid of the king; and Terah came to see Abram his son secretly in the house of Noah, and Terah was very great in the eyes of the king.

64. And Abram said to his father, Dost thou not know that the king thinketh to slay me, and to annihilate my name from the earth by the advice of his wicked counsellors?

65. Now whom hast thou here and what hast thou in this land? Arise, let us go together to the land of Canaan, that we may be delivered from his hand, lest thou perish also through him in the latter days.

66. Dost thou not know *or* hast thou not heard, that it is not through love that Nimrod giveth thee all this honor, but it is *only* for his benefit that he bestoweth all this good upon thee?

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44. Cf. Abraham 1:19; Facsimile 2, figure 3.



67. And if he do unto thee greater good than this, surely these are only vanities of the world, for wealth and riches cannot avail in the day of wrath and anger.

68. Now *therefore* hearken to my voice, and let us arise and go to the land of Canaan, *out of the reach* of injury from Nimrod; and serve *thou* the Lord who created thee in the earth and it will be well with thee; and cast away all the vain *things* which thou pursuest.<sup>45</sup>

69. And Abram ceased to speak, when Noah and his son Shem answered Terah, saying, True is the word which Abram hath said unto thee.

70. And Terah hearkened to the voice of his son Abram, and Terah did all that Abram said, for this was from the Lord, that the king should not cause Abram's death.

### Chapter 13

1. And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, the wife of his son Abram, and all the souls of his household and went with them from Ur Casdim to go to the land of Canaan. And when they came as far as the land of Haran they remained there, for it was exceedingly good land for pasture,<sup>46</sup> and of *sufficient* extent for those who accompanied them.

2. And the people of the land of Haran saw that Abram was good and upright with God and men, and that the Lord his God was with him, and some of the people of the land of Haran came and joined Abram, and he taught them the instruction of the Lord and his ways; and these men remained with Abram in his house and they adhered to him.<sup>47</sup>

3. And Abram remained in the land three years, and at the expiration of three years the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him; I am the Lord who brought thee forth from Ur Casdim,<sup>48</sup> and delivered thee from the hands of all thine enemies.

4. And now *therefore* if thou wilt hearken to my voice and keep my commandments, my statutes and my laws,<sup>49</sup> *then* will I cause thy enemies to fall before thee, and I will multiply thy seed like the stars of heaven, and I will send my blessing upon all the works of thy hands, and thou shalt lack nothing.

5. Arise now, take thy wife and all belonging to thee and go to the land of Canaan and remain there, and I will there be unto thee for a God, and I will bless thee. And Abram rose and took his wife and all belonging to him, and he went to the land of Canaan as the Lord had told him; and Abram was fifty years old when he went from Haran.<sup>50</sup>

6. And Abram came to the land of Canaan and dwelt in the midst of the city, and he there pitched his tent amongst the children of Canaan, inhabitants of the land.

7. And the Lord appeared to Abram when he came to the land of Canaan, and said to him, This is the land which I gave unto thee and to thy seed after thee forever, and I

45. Cf. Abraham 2:4–5.

46. Cf. Abraham 2:5.

47. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

48. See the note to *Jasher* 12:37.

49. Commandments, statutes, and laws are the three divisions of the law of Moses.

50. According to Genesis 12:4, Abraham was seventy-five when he left Haran, though Abraham 2:14 makes him sixty-two. In *Conflict of Adam and Eve* IV, 1:4–6 (as numbered in this collection), he was seventy years of age at the time. The *Book of Jasher* has him leaving Haran more than once, the last



will make thy seed like the stars of heaven, and I will give unto thy seed for an inheritance all the lands which thou seest.

8. And Abram built an altar in the place where God had spoken to him, and Abram there called upon the name of the Lord.

9. At that time, at the end of three years of Abram's dwelling in the land of Canaan, in that year Noah died, which was the fifty-eighth year of the life of Abram; and all the days that Noah lived were nine hundred and fifty years and he died.

10. And Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, he, his wife, and all belonging to him, and all those that accompanied him, together with those that joined him from the people of the land;<sup>51</sup> but Nahor, Abram's brother, and Terah his father, and Lot the son of Haran and all belonging to them dwelt in Haran.

[Here follows, in verses 11–16, the war of the cities of the plain, described in Genesis 14.]

17. And it was in the fifteenth year of Abram's dwelling in the land of *Canaan*, which is the seventieth year of the life of Abram, and the Lord appeared to Abram in that year and he said to him, I am the Lord who brought thee out from Ur Casdim<sup>52</sup> to give thee this land for an inheritance.

18. Now *therefore* walk before me and be perfect and keep my commands, for to thee and to thy seed I will give this land for an inheritance, from the river Mitzraim<sup>53</sup> unto the great river Euphrates.

19. And thou shalt come to thy fathers in peace and in good age, and the fourth generation shall return here in this land and shall inherit it forever; and Abram built an altar, and he called upon the name of the Lord who appeared to him, and he brought up sacrifices upon the altar to the Lord.

20. At that time Abram returned and went to Haran to see his father and mother, and his father's household, and Abram and his wife and all belonging to him returned to Haran, and Abram dwelt in Haran five years.

21. And many of the people of Haran, about seventy two men, followed Abram and Abram taught them the instruction of the Lord and his ways, and he taught them to know the Lord.<sup>54</sup>

22. In those days the Lord appeared to Abram in Haran, and he said to him, Behold, I spoke unto thee these twenty years back saying,

23. Go forth from thy land, from thy birth-place and from thy father's house, to the land which I have shown thee to give it to thee and to thy children, for there in that land

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time at age seventy-five (*Jasher* 13:26). Al-Ṭayyib, whose account is included in this collection, also has him leaving twice to come to the land of Canaan.

51. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

52. See the note to *Jasher* 12:37.

53. This is the term rendered "river of Egypt" in Genesis 15:18. It cannot be the Nile because the Hebrew word rendered "river" refers to a seasonal stream. Scholars generally identify this "river of Egypt" with the Wadi Arish that runs through the Gaza strip.

54. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

will I bless thee, and make thee a great nation, and make thy name great, and in thee shall the families of the earth be blessed.

24. Now *therefore* arise, go forth from this place, thou, thy wife, and all belonging to thee, also every one born in thy house and all the souls thou hast made in Haran,<sup>55</sup> and bring *them* out with thee from here, and rise to return to the land of Canaan.

25. And Abram arose and took his wife Sarai and all belonging to him and all that were born to him in his house and the souls which they had made in Haran, and they came out to go to the land of Canaan.

26. And Abram went and returned to the land of Canaan, according to the word of the Lord. And Lot the son of his brother Haran went with him, and Abram was seventy-five years old when he went forth from Haran to return to the land of Canaan.<sup>56</sup>

27. And he came to the land of Canaan according to the word of the Lord to Abram, and he pitched his tent and he dwelt in the plain of Mamre, and with him was Lot his brother's son, and all belonging to him.

28. And the Lord again appeared to Abram and said, To thy seed will I give this land; and he there built an altar to the Lord who appeared to him, which is still to this day in the plains of Mamre.

## Chapter 14

[Describes the origin of the office of Pharaoh. This story differs from that told in Abraham 1:21–27 and, as far as we can determine, is original to the *Book of Jasher*.]

## Chapter 15

1. And in that year there was a heavy famine throughout the land of Canaan, and the inhabitants of the land could not remain on account of the famine for it was very grievous.

2. And Abram and all belonging to him rose and went down to Egypt on account of the famine, and when they were at the brook Mitzraim<sup>57</sup> they remained there some time to rest from *the fatigue* of the road.

3. And Abram and Sarai were walking at the border of the brook Mitzraim, and Abram beheld his wife Sarai that she was very beautiful.

4. And Abram said to his wife Sarai, Since God has created thee with such a beautiful countenance, I am afraid of the Egyptians lest they should slay me and take thee away, for the fear of God is not in *these* places.

5. Surely then thou shalt do this, Say thou art my sister to all that may ask thee, in order that it may be well with me, and that we may live and not be put to death.

6. And Abram commanded *the same* to all those that came with him to Egypt on account of the famine; also his nephew Lot he commanded, saying, If the Egyptians ask thee concerning Sarai say she is the sister of Abram.

55. Ibid.

56. See the note to *Jasher* 13:5.

57. See the note to *Jasher* 13:18.



7. And yet with all these orders Abram did not put confidence in them, but he took Sarai and placed her in a chest and concealed it amongst their vessels, for Abram was greatly concerned about Sarai on account of the wickedness of the Egyptians.

8. And Abram and all belonging to him rose up from the brook Mitzraim and came to Egypt; and they had *scarcely* entered the gates of the city when the guards stood up to them saying, Give tithe to the king from what you have, and then you may come into the town; and Abram and those that were with him did so.

9. And Abram with the people that were with him came to Egypt, and when they came they brought the chest in which Sarai was concealed and the Egyptians saw the chest.

10. And the king's servants approached Abram, saying, What hast thou here in this chest which we have not seen? Now open thou the chest and give tithe to the king of all that it contains.

11. And Abram said, This chest I will not open, *but* all you demand upon it I will give. And Pharaoh's officers answered Abram, saying, It is a chest of precious stones, give us the tenth *thereof*.

12. Abram said, All that you desire I will give, but you must not open the chest.

13. And the king's officers pressed Abram, and they reached the chest and opened it with force, and they saw, and behold a beautiful woman was in the chest.

14. And when the officers of the king beheld Sarai they were struck with admiration at her beauty, and all the princes and servants of Pharaoh assembled to see Sarai, for she was very beautiful. And the king's officers ran and told Pharaoh all that they had seen, and they praised Sarai to the king; and Pharaoh ordered her to be brought, and the woman came before the king.

15. And Pharaoh beheld Sarai and she pleased him exceedingly, and he was struck with her beauty, and the king rejoiced greatly on her account, and made presents to those who brought him the tidings concerning her.

16. And the woman was then brought to Pharaoh's house, and Abram grieved on account of his wife, and he prayed to the Lord to deliver her from the hands of Pharaoh.

17. And Sarai also prayed at that time and said, O Lord God thou didst tell my Lord Abram to go from his land and from his father's house to the land of Canaan, and thou didst promise to do well with him if he would perform thy commands; now behold we have done that which thou didst command us, and we left our land and our families, and we went to a strange land and to a people whom we have not known before.

18. And we came to this land to avoid the famine, and this evil accident has befallen me; now therefore, O Lord God, deliver us and save us from the hand of this oppressor, and do well with me for the sake of thy mercy.

19. And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Sarai, and the Lord sent an angel to deliver Sarai from the power of Pharaoh.

20. And the king came and sat before Sarai and behold an angel of the Lord was standing over them, and he appeared to Sarai and said to her, Do not fear, for the Lord has heard thy prayer.

21. And the king approached Sarai and said to her, What is that man to thee who brought thee hither? and she said, He is my brother.

22. And the king said, It is *incumbent* upon us to make him great, to elevate him and to do unto him all the good which thou shalt command us; and at that time the king sent to Abram silver and gold and precious stones in abundance, together with cattle, men servants and maid servants; and the king ordered Abram to be brought, and he sat in the court of the king's house, and the king greatly exalted Abram on that night.<sup>58</sup>

23. And the king approached to speak to Sarai, and he reached out his hand to touch her, when the angel smote him heavily, and he was terrified and he refrained from reaching to her.

24. And when the king came near to Sarai, the angel smote him to the ground, and acted thus to him the whole night, and the king was terrified.

25. And the angel on that night smote heavily all the servants of the king, and his whole household, on account of Sarai, and there was a great lamentation that night amongst the people of Pharaoh's house.

26. And Pharaoh, seeing the evil that befell him, said, Surely on account of this woman has this thing happened to me, and he removed himself at *some distance* from her and spoke pleasing words to her.

27. And the king said to Sarai, Tell me I pray thee concerning the man with whom thou camest here; and Sarai said, This man is my husband, and I said to thee that he was my brother for I was afraid, lest thou shouldst put him to death through wickedness.

28. And the king kept away from Sarai, and the plagues of the angel of the Lord ceased from him and his household; and Pharaoh knew that he was smitten on account of Sarai, and the king was greatly astonished at this.

29. And in the morning the king called for Abram and said *to him*, What is this thou hast done to me? Why didst thou say, She is my sister, *owing to which* I took her unto me for a wife, and this heavy plague has *therefore* come upon me and my household.

30. Now therefore here is thy wife, take *her* and go from our land lest we all die on her account. And Pharaoh took more cattle, men servants and maid servants, and silver and gold, to give to Abram, and he returned unto him Sarai his wife.

31. And the king took a maiden whom he begat by his concubines, and he gave her to Sarai for a handmaid.

32. And the king said to his daughter, It is better for thee my daughter to be a handmaid in this man's house than to be mistress in my house, after we have beheld the evil that befell us on account of this woman.

33. And Abram arose, and he and all belonging to him went away from Egypt; and Pharaoh ordered some of his men to accompany him and all that *went* with him.

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58. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3, figure 1.



## EXTRACTS FROM THE ZOHAR

A major kabbalistic work of midrashic commentary on the *Torah*, the Zohar is attributed to Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai, who lived in the second century A.D., but its final version was compiled, if not largely written, by the Spanish rabbi Moses de Leon in the thirteenth century. The Zohar is written mostly in Hebrew, but portions are written in Palestinian Aramaic, suggesting that parts of the text may date to an earlier time, although scholars generally consider the work to be medieval. Regardless of its age, the book contains many ideas found in other early Jewish texts. The Zohar was first published in Mantua in 1560. We have used the first English translation: Harry Sperling, Maurice Simon, and Paul P. Levertoff, trans., *The Zohar*, 5 vols. (New York: Bennet, 1958). The volume and page number follow each extract, and we have removed the diacritics from all names.

### Genesis (*Bereshit*) 55b

[Referring to the heavenly book given by God to Adam:]

Adam left it to his son Seth, who transmitted it in turn to his posterity, and so on until it came to Abraham,<sup>1</sup> who learnt from it how to discern the glory of his Master, as has been said. Similarly Enoch possessed a book through which he learnt to discern the divine glory. (1:177)

### Genesis (*Noah*) 73a

AND HAM WAS THE FATHER OF CANAAN.<sup>2</sup> Ham represents the refuse and dross of the gold, the stirring and rousing of the unclean spirit of the ancient serpent. It is for that reason that he is designated the "father of Canaan," namely, of Canaan who brought curses on the world,<sup>3</sup> of Canaan who was cursed, of Canaan who darkened the faces of mankind. For this reason, too, Ham is given a special mention in the words, "Ham, the father of Canaan," that is, the notorious world-darkener, whereas we are not told that Shem was the father of such-a-one, or that Japheth was the father of such-a-one. No sooner is Ham mentioned, than he is pointed to as the father of Canaan. Hence when Abraham came on the scene, it is written, "And Abraham passed through the land,"<sup>4</sup> for this was

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

2. Citing Genesis 9:18.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:21–24.

4. Citing Genesis 12:6.

before the establishment of the patriarchs and before the seed of Israel existed in the world, so that the land could not yet be designated by this honoured and holy name. Observe that when Israel were virtuous the land was called by their name, the Land of Israel; but when they were not worthy it was called by another name, to wit, the Land of Canaan. Hence it is written: AND HE SAID, CURSED BE CANAAN, A SERVANT OF SERVANTS SHALL HE BE UNTO HIS BRETHREN,<sup>5</sup> for the reason that he brought curses on the world, in the same way as the serpent, against whom was pronounced the doom, "Cursed art thou among all cattle."<sup>6</sup> (1:246–47)

### Genesis (*Noah*) 75a

[in reference to the tower of Babel, Genesis 11:4]

R. Abba said, "... Thus, the words 'Come, let us build a city and a tower' mean that when they reached that plain, which signifies the 'strange power,' and there was revealed to them the place of its dominion, which extends particularly over 'the fishes of the sea,' they said, 'Here is a place where the beings of the lower world can abide in comfort.' At once they said: 'Come, let us build a city, and a tower, and let us make us a name.' This place, they said, shall be to us a centre of worship, and no other; so 'let us build a city and a tower'; what need is there for us to go up to the regions on high where we cannot derive any enjoyment? Behold, here is a place all made ready for us. Further they said: AND LET US MAKE A NAME,<sup>7</sup> that is, an object of worship." (1:254)

### Genesis (*Noah*) 75b

R. Simeon replied: "... And furthermore, they said, we will ascend into heaven and make war against it so as to prevent it bringing a flood on the world as before." (1:256)

### Genesis (*Lech Lecha*) 76b–77a

See now, Abraham sought to draw near to God, and he succeeded.<sup>8</sup> So it is written, "Thou didst love righteousness and hate wickedness,"<sup>9</sup> and it is further written, "Abraham who loves me,"<sup>10</sup> i.e. Abram is said to have "loved God" because he loved righteousness; this was Abram's love of God, in which he excelled [77a] all his contemporaries, who were obstinate of heart and far from righteousness, as has been said. (1:260)

### Genesis (*Lech Lecha*) 77b–78a

AND THE LORD SAID TO ABRAM.<sup>11</sup> Just before this it is written, "And Haran died in the presence of Terah his father."<sup>12</sup> The connection is as follows. Up to that time no one had

5. Citing Genesis 9:25.

6. Citing Genesis 3:14.

7. Citing Genesis 11:4.

8. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

9. Citing Psalm 45:8 (45:7 in the KJV).

10. Citing Isaiah 41:8.

11. Citing Genesis 12:1.

12. Citing Genesis 11:28.



ever died in the lifetime of his father. Haran, however, was killed at the time when Abram was cast into the furnace.<sup>13</sup> Then it says, "And Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, etc. . . ."<sup>14</sup> and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees."<sup>15</sup> We should expect "and they went forth with *him*," referring to Terah; why, then, does it say "with them"? The reason is that Terah and Lot went forth with Abram and Sara, who led the way in departing from that sinful district; for when Terah saw that Abram was rescued from the fire, he began to be guided by Abram,<sup>16</sup> and therefore we read, "and they went forth with them," i.e. Terah and Lot with Abram and Sara. Also it was "to go into the land of Canaan," where *they* wanted to go. We learn further from this text that whoever makes an effort to purify himself receives assistance from above. For no sooner is it written, "to go to the land of Canaan" than we read "and God said to Abram, Get thee forth";<sup>17</sup> this message was not given to him until he made the first move himself. For the upper world is not stirred to act until an impulse is given from the lower world. . . . So here, too, when once Abram and his family had left Ur of the Chaldees, then God said to him, "Get thee forth"; the word "thee" here, says R. Eleazar, means "for thine own advantage, to prepare thyself, to perfect thy degree." "Get thee forth": that is, it is not fitting for thee to remain here among these sinners. The real truth of the matter is this. [78a] God inspired Abram with a spirit of wisdom so that he was able to discover by means of certain tests the characters of all the inhabited countries of the world. He surveyed them and weighed them in the balance, and discovered the (heavenly) powers to which each is entrusted.<sup>18</sup> When he came to the central point of the inhabited world he tried to weigh it, but obtained no response. He tried to find the power to which it was entrusted, but could not grasp it, though he weighed again and again. He noted that from that point the whole world was planted out, and he once more tested and weighed and found that the upper power in charge of it was one which could not be gauged, that it was recondite and hidden, and not like the (powers in charge of) the outlying parts of the inhabited world. He once more reflected, and came to the conclusion that as the whole world had been planted out in all directions from that point in the centre, so the power in charge of it was the one from which issued all the powers in charge of the other quarters of the world and to which they were all attached: hence "they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees to go to the land of Canaan."<sup>19</sup> He then once more reflected and weighed in the balance and tested to find out the real truth about that place, but he could not get to the root of it. He felt himself baffled by the obscurity which surrounded it, and therefore "they came to Haran and abode there."<sup>20</sup> The reason, as we have seen, is that

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13. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; 2:1; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

14. The ellipsis points are part of the translation.

15. Citing Genesis 11:31.

16. Cf. Abraham 1:30; 2:5.

17. Citing Genesis 12:1.

18. Cf. Abraham 3:12–13.

19. Citing Genesis 11:31.

20. Ibid.

Abraham was able to test all the upper powers that rule the world in all the quarters of the inhabited section,<sup>21</sup> and did actually test them and find out which of the guiding powers among the stars and constellations had sway over which, and he weighed successfully all the inhabited parts of the globe.<sup>22</sup> But when he came to this place he was met with a baffling obscurity which he could not penetrate. When God, however, perceived his efforts and his desire, He straightway revealed Himself to him and said: GET THEE FORTH, so as to know thyself and prepare thyself, FROM THY LAND: from that side of the inhabited world to which thou wast hitherto attached, AND FROM THY KINDRED,<sup>23</sup> from that wisdom wherewith thou didst cast thy horoscope, noting the hour and second of thy birth and the star that was then, in the ascendant, AND FROM THY FATHER'S HOUSE, that thou shouldst not heed thy father's house, even if thou couldst hope in virtue of thy father's house for some prosperity in this world; therefore get thee gone from *this* wisdom and from *this* consideration. (1:262–64)

### Genesis (*Lech Lecha*) 78b

Said R. Eleazar to R. Simeon: In reference to this verse, GET THEE FORTH FROM THY LAND AND FROM THY KINDRED,<sup>24</sup> since they all went forth, why was not Abram told that they should go? For though Terah was an idolator,<sup>25</sup> yet since he had the good impulse to go forth with Abram,<sup>26</sup> and since, as we know, God delights in the repentance of sinners, and Terah actually began the journey, why is it not written "get *ye* forth"? Why was it said to Abram alone "get *thee* forth"? R. Simeon replied: If you think that Terah left Ur of the Chaldees in order to repent of his past life, you are mistaken.<sup>27</sup> The truth is that he was running away for his life, as his fellow-countrymen wanted to kill him. For when they saw that Abram was delivered (from the fiery furnace) they said to Terah, "It is you who misled us with those idols of yours," and it was through fear of them that Terah left. When he reached Haran he did not go any further, as it is written, "And Abram went as the Lord had said to him, and Lot went with him,"<sup>28</sup> but Terah is not mentioned. R. Simeon expounded in this connection the text, "And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm is broken."<sup>29</sup> The words "and from the wicked their light is withholden," he said, can be referred to Nimrod and his contemporaries, from whom Abram, who was their light, departed. Or we may refer them to Terah and his household, whose light was Abram. It does not say "light," but "*their* light," viz. the light that was with them. "The high arm is broken" refers to Nimrod, who led astray the whole of mankind. Therefore

21. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 2, figure 6.

22. Cf. Abraham 3:12–13.

23. Citing Genesis 12:1.

24. Ibid.

25. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

26. Cf. Abraham 1:30.

27. Cf. Abraham 1:30; 2:5.

28. Citing Genesis 12:4.

29. Citing Job 38:15.



it is written *lech lecha* (lit. go for thyself),<sup>30</sup> to give light to thyself and to all that shall follow thee from now onwards. R. Simeon further discoursed on the text, "Now they see not the light; it is bright in the skies, and a wind passeth and cleanseth them."<sup>31</sup> "Now they see not the light," i.e. Abram's family saw not the light when God said to Abram, "Get thee forth from thy land and from thy kindred and from thy father's house." "It is bright in the skies" means that God willed to make Abram cleave to that supernal light and to shine there. "A wind passeth and cleanseth them": because subsequently Terah and all his household repented, as it is said, "and the souls which they had saved (lit. made) in Haran,"<sup>32</sup> referring to Terah's household,<sup>33</sup> and further, "and thou shalt come to thy fathers in peace,"<sup>34</sup> which shows that Terah joined Abram. (1:265–66)

### Genesis (*Lech Lecha*) 79a–b

Said R. Eleazar " . . . AND THE SOULS THAT THEY HAD GOTTEN IN HARAN: these were the male and female proselytes whose souls they had saved. Abram converted the men and Sarai the women,<sup>35</sup> and therefore they are spoken of as if they had made them." Said R. Abba: "If so, they must have been a great crowd, if you say that they all went with him." Said R. Eleazar: "That is so; and therefore the whole company that went with him were called 'the people of the God of Abraham,' and he travelled through the land without fear, as it is written, 'And Abram passed through the land.'"<sup>36</sup> Said R. Abba to him: "I interpret differently, viz. that the particle *eth*<sup>37</sup> here signifies the augmentation of his merit by that of the souls that went with him, since one who puts another in the path of righteousness ever reaps benefit from his merit also. So it was the merit of those souls which were 'made' in Haran that accompanied Abram." (1:267–68)

### Genesis (*Lech Lecha*) 80a

[Regarding Genesis 12:8:]

He acquired the certainty that God rules over all,<sup>38</sup> and so he built an altar. There were, in fact, two altars, because here it was revealed to him that God is ruler over all, and he became acquainted with the higher wisdom, which he had not known previously.<sup>39</sup> He therefore built two altars, one for the grade (of the Godhead) which was already known to him, and one for the grade which was still concealed. (1:270)

30. This is the Hebrew reading in Genesis 12:1.

31. Citing Job 37:21. It was common for the rabbis to cite unrelated passages in order to illustrate points they were trying to make.

32. Citing Genesis 12:5.

33. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

34. Citing Genesis 15:15.

35. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

36. Citing Genesis 12:6.

37. The Hebrew particle indicates that the following noun (souls) is the direct object of the verb, but Rabbi Abba evidently reads it as the homophonous word meaning "with" and thereby tries to derive additional meaning from the passage.

38. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

39. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18.

**Genesis (Lech Lecha) 81b**

AND HE SAID TO SARAI HIS WIFE, BEHOLD NOW I KNOW THAT THOU ART A FAIR WOMAN TO LOOK UPON.<sup>40</sup> . . . Another explanation is that Abram said so because he saw with her the Shekinah.<sup>41</sup> (1:271)

**Genesis (Lech Lecha) 82a**

NOW IT CAME TO PASS THAT WHEN ABRAM WAS COME TO EGYPT THE EGYPTIANS BEHELD THE WOMAN THAT SHE WAS VERY FAIR.<sup>42</sup> R. Judah said: "He brought her in a box, and they opened it to levy duty. When it was opened a light like that of the sun shone forth, as it says 'that she was very fair.' The word 'very' indicates that they saw in the box another figure; for when they took her out, they saw a figure in the box as before." . . .

AND PHARAOH GAVE MEN CHARGE CONCERNING HIM, AND THEY SENT HIM ON HIS WAY.<sup>43</sup> Assuredly God is a shield to the righteous to save them from falling into the power of men, and so God shielded Abram that the Egyptians should not have power to harm him and his wife. For the Shekinah<sup>44</sup> did not leave Sarai all that night. When Pharaoh tried to approach her, the angel came and smote him. Whenever Sarai said "smite," he smote, and meanwhile Abram firmly trusted in God that He would allow no harm to come to Sarai, as it is written, "the righteous are bold as a lion."<sup>45</sup> This is one of the trials which Abram endured without complaining against God. R. Isaac said that God purposely refrained from telling Abram to go down to Egypt, and allowed him to go of his own accord, in order that people might not be able to say that after making him go there He brought trouble on him through his wife.<sup>46</sup> R. Isaac here expounded the text *The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon*.<sup>47</sup> "Why is the righteous man compared to a palm tree? Because just as, if a palm tree is cut down, it takes a long time for one to grow again, so if the world loses a righteous man, it is a long time before another arises in his place. Further, just as a palm tree does not grow unless the male be accompanied by the female, so the righteous cannot flourish save when they are male and female together, like Abram and Sarai.<sup>48</sup> Again, 'he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon': just as a cedar is pre-eminent and all can sit under it, so the righteous man is pre-eminent and all sit under him." (1:272–74)

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40. Citing Genesis 12:11.

41. I.e., the Spirit or "Presence" of God. Cf. Abraham 2:22–25.

42. Citing Genesis 12:14.

43. Citing Genesis 12:20.

44. The term denotes the Spirit or "Presence" of God.

45. Citing Proverbs 28:1.

46. Cf. Abraham 2:22–25.

47. Citing Psalm 92:13 (92:12 in the KJV).

48. The comparison of Abram and Sarai, upon going to Egypt, with the palm and cedar is also found in *Genesis Apocryphon* XIX, 14–17 and *Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 41:1–2, cited earlier. In Zohar Genesis 85b, Abraham is compared to an apple tree.



**Genesis (*Lech Lecha*) 82b**

"In the night when Sarai was with Pharaoh, the angels came to sing praises before God, but God said to them, 'Go all of you, and deal heavy blows on Egypt, in anticipation of what I intend to do subsequently.'<sup>49</sup> Then, PHARAOH CALLED ABRAM, ETC. What gave him this idea, seeing that God did not say anything to him . . . ?" Said R. Isaac, ". . . the angels as they smote him said 'this blow is because of Sarai Abram's wife' and no more, and then he knew that she was Abram's wife." (1:275)

**Genesis (*Lech Lecha*) 83a**

R. Abba said: ". . . For even in Egypt, a country of magicians from whom no man could escape, Abram distinguished himself, and he raised himself there to a higher eminence."<sup>50</sup> (1:276)

**Genesis (*Lech Lecha*) 85b**

[Rabbi Eleazar said:]

"It is also possible to understand the words 'Like an apple tree among the trees of the wood'<sup>51</sup> of Abraham, who smelt sweetly like an apple tree, who was distinguished in faith above all his contemporaries, and who was marked out as unique both above<sup>52</sup> and below, as it is written, 'Abraham was one.'<sup>53</sup> He was so called because no one else of his contemporaries attained to the virtue of faith in God."<sup>54</sup> Said R. Hizkiah to him: "What of the words 'And the souls which they made in Haran'?"<sup>55</sup> He replied: "These did not reach the higher grades which Abraham acquired." Later on he said to him: "Another thing I have been told is that Abraham was not called 'one' until he had associated himself with Isaac and Jacob.<sup>56</sup> When he had done this and when all three were patriarchs, then Abraham was called 'one,' and then he became the apple tree distinguished above all the rest of the world." (1:285)

**Genesis (*Lech Lecha*) 86a**

R. Judah says: "Who aroused from the East"<sup>57</sup> this refers to Abraham, who received his first impulse to seek God from the East. For when he saw the sun issuing in the morning from the East, he was first moved to think that that was God, and said "this is the

49. The passage has reference to the plagues that would fall on Egypt in the time of Moses. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

50. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3.

51. Citing Song of Solomon 2:3.

52. Cf. Doctrine and Covenants 132:37.

53. Citing Ezekiel 33:24.

54. Cf. Romans 4:9, 12–13, 16; Galatians 3:7–9, 14; Hebrews 11:8, 17.

55. Citing Genesis 12:5. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

56. Cf. Doctrine and Covenants 132:37.

57. Citing Isaiah 41:2.

King that created me," and worshipped it the whole day. In the evening when the sun went down and the moon commenced to shine, he said, "Verily this rules over the orb which I worshipped the whole day, since the latter is darkened before it and does not shine any more." So he served the moon all that night. In the morning when he saw the darkness depart and the East grow light, he said, "Of a surety there is a king who rules over all these orbs and orders them."<sup>58</sup> So when God saw Abram's longing to find Him,<sup>59</sup> He revealed Himself unto him and spoke with him, as it is written, "Righteousness called to him to follow him."<sup>60</sup> (1:287–88)

### Genesis (*Lech Lecha*) 86b

[Regarding the reason for the war in Genesis 14:]

Said R. Eleazar, ". . . The reason of their enmity to Abram was that Abram weaned men from idolatry and taught them to worship God."<sup>61</sup> (1:289)

### Genesis (*Lech Lecha*) 88b

AFTER THESE THINGS,<sup>62</sup> i.e. after Abram pursued the kings and God slew them, Abram felt some qualms lest he had perchance forfeited some of his reward for converting men to the service of God,<sup>63</sup> seeing that now some of his fellow creatures had been killed through him. (1:294–95)

### Genesis (*Lech Lecha*) 90b

[Regarding God showing Abraham the stars, Genesis 15:5]

Abram saw from his horoscope that he was fated not to have children; therefore HE BROUGHT HIM FORTH ABROAD;<sup>64</sup> that is, God said to him: "Take no notice of that, for through my name thou shalt have a son." (1:296)

### Genesis (*Vayera*) 111b

[Regarding Abraham telling Abimelech that Sarah was his sister, Genesis 20:2:]

Now, seeing that Abraham had already had once a miraculous deliverance when he journeyed into Egypt, why did he put himself now again into a similar difficulty by saying "she is my sister"? The answer is that Abraham did in no way rely on himself, but he saw the Shekinah constantly in the abode of Sarah, and that emboldened him to declare "she is my sister."<sup>65</sup> (1:352)

58. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18.

59. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

60. Citing Isaiah 41:2.

61. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

62. Citing Genesis 15:1. The word *things* refers to the war of Genesis 14 and Abraham's meeting with Melchizedek.

63. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

64. Citing Genesis 15:5.

65. Cf. Abraham 2:22–25.



**Exodus (Terumah) 129a**

[Speaking of the images of the righteous in heaven:]

Then the King blesses that image with all the blessings wherewith He blessed Abraham when he reclaimed the souls of sinners.<sup>66</sup> (3:367)

**Exodus (Terumah) 147b**

And so it indeed was, for they did bring forth fruit in the world, for Abraham and Sarah “made souls,”<sup>67</sup> and as they made souls under the sign of holiness, so they also did under the sign of the “other side”;<sup>68</sup> for, were it not for this impulse which Abraham implanted in the “other side,” there would be no proselytes in the world. (4:19)

**Leviticus (Ahare Moth) 57a**

“We might think,” [R. Hizkiah]<sup>69</sup> said, “that the words ‘to the house of Jacob’<sup>70</sup> are misplaced, but really the verse is to be taken as it stands. For when Abram was cast into the furnace of the Chaldeans<sup>71</sup> the angels said before God: How shall this one be delivered, seeing that he has no merit of his ancestors to rely upon? God replied: He shall be delivered for the sake of his sons. But, they said, Ishmael will issue from him? There is Isaac who will stretch forth his neck on the altar. But Esau will issue from him? There is Jacob who is the complete throne and all his sons who are perfect before me. They said: Assuredly through this merit Abraham shall be delivered. Hence it is written: ‘Jacob who redeemed Abraham.’<sup>72</sup> The verse continues: ‘Jacob shall not now be ashamed . . .’<sup>73</sup> but when he seeth his children the work of my hands,’ etc. The reference here in ‘his children’ is to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,<sup>74</sup> who cast themselves into the fiery furnace. We have learnt that when they were bound in order to be cast into the fire, each of them lifted up his voice and quoted a verse of Scripture in the presence of all the princes and rulers. Hananiah said: ‘The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do to me,’ etc.<sup>75</sup> Mishael said: ‘Therefore fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord,’ etc.<sup>76</sup>

66. Zohar Exodus 129a also has a heavenly herald crying, “Ye upper and lower beings! Bring witness of him who, by reclaiming sinners becomes a ‘maker of souls,’ that he deserves to be crowned and is worthy to enter now into the presence of the King and the Matrona . . . !” Sperling, et al., *Zohar*, 3:366.

67. Citing Genesis 12:5.

68. In the Zohar, the term *other side* refers to wickedness or the devil.

69. Our insertion.

70. Citing Isaiah 29:22.

71. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

72. Citing Isaiah 29:22, where the Hebrew reads, literally, “Therefore, thus said the Lord unto the house of Jacob who saved Abraham.”

73. The ellipsis points are part of the translation.

74. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, the three companions of Daniel who were cast into the fiery furnace in Daniel 3.

75. Citing Psalm 118:6.

76. Citing Jeremiah 30:10.

When those present heard the name of Jacob they all laughed in scorn. Azariah said: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is one.'<sup>77</sup> At that moment God assembled His court and said to them: For the sake of which of those verses shall I deliver them? They replied: 'They shall know that thou alone whose name is the Lord art most high over all the earth.'<sup>78</sup> God then turned to His Throne and said: With which of these verses shall I deliver them? The Throne replied: With the one at which they all laughed: as Jacob stood by Abraham in the furnace, so let him stand by these." (5:35–36)

### Numbers (*Naso*) 148a

[Regarding God showing Abraham the stars, Genesis 15:5:]

Said R. Abba: "... It is written: 'And he brought him forth abroad,'<sup>79</sup> to wit, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham in effect: Give up thy astrological speculations;<sup>80</sup> this is not the way to acquire a knowledge of My name. Thou seest, but I see also. Abram, it is true, is not to beget children, but Abraham will beget children." (5:200)

77. Citing Deuteronomy 6:4, which is the *Shema*, the most important of the Jewish prayers.

78. Citing Psalm 83:18.

79. Citing Genesis 15:5.

80. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3. Cf. TB *Shabbat* 156a.



## THE STORY OF ABRAHAM OUR FATHER FROM WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM WITH NIMROD

The Hebrew of this traditional Jewish account of Abraham's childhood and conflict with Nimrod was first published by Adolph Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* (1853; reprint, Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1967), 1:25–34. We do not have a date for the text itself, but the work was first published in Constantinople in 1718. Jellinek believes from internal evidence that this particular story may have come from Arabic into Hebrew. The text that follows is a previously unpublished translation by John A. Tvedtnes. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. It is said that before Abraham was born, Nimrod had denied the faith of God. And he became arrogant and said that he was a god, and the men of his time served and bowed themselves to him. This king was a schemer and sage, and he saw in the wisdom of the stars that a man would be born in the south who would stand up against him to wrestle him from his faith and to defeat him. So he was much frightened and feared him. What he did was he sent for his vassal princes and told them the thing and said to them, "What do you advise me to do with this child who shall come?" And they said to him, "The advice that we agree [on] concerning this is that you shall build a great house, and you shall place a guard in its entrance, and you shall announce to all your kingdom that all the women who are pregnant shall come there. And after they come, the midwives shall also come and they will be with them until the time of their delivery. And when the woman comes to bear, they shall see: if it is a son, they shall slay him on her belly, and if it is a daughter, she shall live and shall be given as a gift to her mother, and she [the midwife] shall clothe her in royal garments and shall call before her, "Thus it shall be done to the woman who bears a daughter."<sup>1</sup>

2. And when he heard their advice, he was extremely pleased, and he announced in all the cities of his kingdom that all the workmen should come to build a great house for the king, sixty cubits high and eighty cubits wide. And when the building of the house was finished, he announced that all the pregnant women should come to that house, to live there until they gave birth. And he appointed overseers to bring her [them] there;

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1. Cf. Esther 6:9, 11.

also he appointed over the house guards to guard the entrance so none would escape. He also appointed over them midwives to deliver them and commanded them that they should slay on his mother's breast any son born. But if it was a daughter, they should clothe her mother in garments of linen and silk and embroidery and should bring her out from thence and should do her great honor, for thus commanded the king, and they should bring her to her house in honor.

3. The storyteller said that they would slay in this thing more than seventy thousand males,<sup>2</sup> and when the angels above saw the slaying of these boys they said before the Lord, "Hast thou not seen what the wicked unbelieving Nimrod, son of Canaan, has done, that he slays so many boys though there is no violence in their hands?" He said to the holy angels, "I know and I see, for I do not slumber and I do not sleep, and I see and I know the secrets and the revelations, but you shall see what I shall do to this wicked unbeliever, for I shall place my hands upon him to punish him."

4. The storyteller said that at that time the mother of Abraham went and a man named Terah took her and she became pregnant from him. And when, in the third month, her belly became large, and her face thinned, Terah her husband said to her, "What have you, my wife? Your face is thin and your belly large." She said to him, "Every year this, my illness, happens to me that they call *qoltsani*."<sup>3</sup> Terah said to her, "Show me your belly that it may be shown me that you are pregnant, and if so, it is not right to transgress the commandment of our god Nimrod." He placed his hand upon her belly. The Lord made her a miracle, and the child moved up to under her breast, and he examined with his hands and couldn't find anything. He said to her, "You were right in what you said."

5. So the thing was not revealed and was not known until the months of the child were completed. And from the greatness of her fear she went out of the city and went to the nearby desert to a certain river and found there a large cave and entered therein. On the morrow, the pangs of childbirth seized her and she bore a son. And she saw all the cave glowing like the sun from the light of the child's face and she rejoiced greatly. And he was Abraham. And she opened her mouth and said, "I am she who bore you at the time that King Nimrod slew seventy thousand males because of you, and I was very afraid for you, for if he knew of you he would kill you, and for this reason it is better that you should die in this cave and my eyes should not see you sacrificed<sup>4</sup> on my breast." And she took the clothing that was on her, and she dressed him and left him in the cave and said, "May your God be with you that he not weaken you nor desert you." And she went on her way.

6. The storyteller said while Abraham was still in the cave he had no wet nurse to nurse him. He cried, and the Lord heard his weeping and sent for the angel Gabriel to save him and to give him milk, for he brought forth milk for him from his right finger, and he nursed from it until Abraham was ten days old; then he began to walk in the

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2. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

3. I have not found evidence that anyone has identified this disease.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.



land, and he went out of the cave and went on the shore of the river. And when the sun set and the stars came out, he said, "Perhaps they are the gods." Afterward, when the pillar of dawn arose, he didn't see the stars. He said, "I shall not serve these, for they are not gods." Then he saw the sun. He said, "This is my God, and I shall follow him." And when the sun set, he said, "This is not God." He saw the moon. He said, "This is my God, and I will worship him." When it got dark, he said, "This is not God. They have a [higher] cause." He was still in the desert and behold, the angel Gabriel came and said to him, "Peace be unto you, Abraham." Abraham said to him, "Unto you be peace." He said to him, "Who are you?" He said to him, "I am the angel Gabriel, sent by the Lord at this time." He walked to a certain spring that he found there and washed his face, his hands, and his feet, and he prayed to the Lord with kneeling and prostration.

7. The storyteller said the mother of Abraham remembered him and wept greatly. And she went out from the city to find her son in the cave in which she had left him, but she did not find him, and she wept even more over him and said, "Wo to me, for I have born thee as prey for wild animals, for bears and for lions and for wolves." And she was walking on the shore of the river, and she found her son and she didn't know him, for he had grown much in stature. She said to him, "Peace be unto you," and he responded to her, "And upon you be peace. Why are you walking in these deserts?" She said to him, "I came out of the city to seek my son." He said to her, "And your son, who brought him here?" She said to him, "I was pregnant by Terah, my husband, and at the time of childbirth, I feared for my son who was in my belly that our king Nimrod, son of Canaan,<sup>5</sup> not slay him like he has slain seventy thousand boys. So I came to a certain cave by this river, and the pangs of childbirth came upon me and I bore a son, and I left him in the cave and I went to my house. And now I have come to find him and I have not found him." Abraham said to her, "These words that you have spoken, that you left the boy, how many days was it?" She said to him, "About twenty days." He said to her, "Is there in the world a woman who leaves her small son alone in the desert, then comes to search for him after twenty days?" She said, "Perhaps she trusted in God." He said to her, "I am your son for whose sake you came to this river." She said to him, "My son, you have grown up so much and you walk on your feet and you speak with your mouth, and all this in twenty days." He said to her, "Thus that I may make known to you, my mother, that there is in the world a great and terrible God, living and existing, seeing and he is unseen, and he is in the heavens, and his glory fills all the earth." She said to him, "My son, is there another God beside Nimrod?" He said to her, "Yes, my mother, the God of heaven and the God of the earth and the God of Nimrod the son of Canaan. Therefore, go to Nimrod and inform him of this thing." So she went to the city and told her husband Terah how she found her son.

8. Now Terah was a prince and great in the house of King Nimrod, so he went to the palace, the place where the king was, and bowed down to the king, with his face to the

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5. Cf. Abraham 1:21–22. In the Bible, Nimrod is son of Cush, not Canaan (Genesis 10:8), but some traditions make him a descendant of Canaan.



ground. And at that time, any who bowed to the king didn't raise his head until he said to him, "Raise your head."<sup>6</sup> The king told him, "Raise your head and ask your wish." He said to him, "May my lord the king live. I have come to apprise you of what I have seen in the wisdom of the stars, that a child has been born in your kingdom who shall destroy your faith, and because of him you have slain seventy thousand males. I inform you that he is my son, and his mother was pregnant and I did not know of her pregnancy because she said, 'I am ill of my *qoltsani* sickness.' So I examined her belly and I didn't find anything. Then when the months of her pregnancy were completed, she went from the city to the river and found there a cave, and she there bore a son and left him to the wild animals. And after twenty days, she went to him and found him walking on the shore of the river, and he spoke like an adult man and said that there is a God in the heavens who sees and is unseen, unique and unchanging."

9. Now when Nimrod heard these words he greatly feared Terah and said to his advisers and his princes, "What is to be done with this child?" They said, "Our king and our god, why are you afraid of a small child, while there are in all your kingdom a thousand thousands of thousands of princes, princes of thousands, and princes of hundreds, and princes of fifties, and princes of tens, and officers without small number, who announce, 'Go and bring him and place him in the prison'?" He said to them, "Have you seen in your days a child of twenty days walking on his feet and speaking with his mouth and with his tongue announcing and saying that he has a God in the heavens, unique and unchanging, and he sees and is not seen?"

10. The storyteller said that all the princes who were there were very astonished at these words, and meanwhile Satan came in the form of a man clothed in black silk and went and bowed before King Nimrod until the king said to him, "Raise your head and ask your desire." He said to him, "Why do you worry and all of you wonder about one small child. I shall indeed advise you what to do." The king said to him, "What is your advice?" He said to him, "Open the storehouse of weapons of war and give to all the princes and the officers and lesser officials and to all the men of war and send them to him that he come before you and he shall be in your hands."

11. The storyteller said that the king commanded all the princes and all the men of war that they bring him, and they took weapons from the king's storehouse and went to bring Abraham. And when Abraham our father saw that they came to him with great strength, he trembled and feared greatly before them, and he cried to the God of heaven that he would rescue him from their hands,<sup>7</sup> for he is the rescuer of the poor. "You are stronger than he [the king?] and you shall rescue me from them." And God heard his cry and he saw his tears, and he sent to him the angel Gabriel to rescue him from their hand. The angel said to him, "What have you, Abraham, and why are you crying?" He said to him, "I am afraid of these men who are coming against me to kill me." He said to him, "Do not fear and do not be afraid, for God is with you and he shall save you from the hand of all your enemies."

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6. Cf. Esther 4:11.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.



12. The storyteller said that the Holy One commanded Gabriel that he should place a cloud and a mist between him and them. When they saw the cloud and the darkness and the mist, they were very frightened and they returned to their king, Nimrod, and said to him, "Let us depart and go from this kingdom." And when the king heard this, he gave money to all his princes and servants, and they traveled thence to the city of Babylon.

13. And it came to pass after they departed that God said to the angel Gabriel, "Go, say to Abraham that he should go after the enemy Nimrod to Babylon." Abraham said to him, "I have no provisions for the road and no horse to ride and no warriors to wage war." The angel Gabriel said to him, "You need none of these things, neither provisions for the road nor horse to ride nor warriors to wage war nor chariots nor even horsemen, for upon my shoulder you shall ride and I shall carry you and bring you to Babylon." So Abraham arose and rode on Gabriel's shoulder. Immediately, within the same hour, he found himself at the gates of the city of Babylon, and the angel said to him, "Enter into the city and call in a loud voice, 'The Lord, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. There is no other. One and without change, he has no bodily form and he has no body and he is the God of gods and the God of Nimrod and I, Abraham, am his servant, faithful [in] his house.'"

14. Abraham our father went and entered in the midst of the city, and he announced in a loud voice to all the people of the city, "The Lord, he is God, unique and unchanging, and he is the God of the heavens and he is the God of gods and the God of Nimrod. Acknowledge all, men and women and children, this, that he is true, and also acknowledge that I, Abraham, am his servant, faithful [in] his house." And he walked in the markets and in the streets and proclaimed. He found his father and his mother, and he also found the angel Gabriel. The angel said to him, "Abraham, speak to your father and to your mother that they might also believe and testify of that which you have proclaimed, that the Lord he is God, there is none besides him." And when Abraham heard the word of the angel, he told his father and his mother, "You are servants of a man like yourselves and you bow down to him, to the statue of the form of Nimrod.<sup>8</sup> Don't you know that it has a mouth and doesn't speak, eyes and doesn't see, ears and doesn't hear, and doesn't walk on its feet and it has no usefulness, neither for itself nor for others?"<sup>9</sup> And when Terah heard his words, he accepted him in his words and brought him to his house, and he [Abraham] told him all the happenings, that in a single day he walked, walking forty days.

15. And when he heard this, he [Terah] went to Nimrod and he said to him, "Know, our lord the king, that the lad, my son, from whom you fled, has come. And I asked him how long he had traveled, and he said to me, 'Last night I traveled from there and today I came here.'" And when he heard this, he feared greatly, and he said before all the princes and the counselors and the wise men to bring to him counsel about this child, what to do with him. And they responded to him with one accord, "May King Nimrod live forever, and may he command and proclaim in all the city a feast and a celebration

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8. Cf. Abraham 1:6; Facsimile 1, figure 9.

9. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:28; Revelation 9:20.



of seven days, and let each person celebrate in his house and dress up and come out in all sorts of clothing and adornments, and let all the city rejoice and be glad and so do in the outer and inner courtyard of the king's house and in all the cities of your kingdom and the strength of your great power. Each man will come and will serve you." So the king said to do so, and a decree was issued in Babylon in the markets and in the streets, and they all dressed in fine apparel and they arrayed themselves with all [types of] clothing of linen and scarlet and embroidery and all kinds of silver jewelry, each one according to his means, and they did so.

16. Afterward, as King Nimrod sat on the throne of his kingdom, he sent for Abraham, and he came to him and his father Terah with him. And Abraham crossed before the lesser [officials] and the officers until he came to the king's throne on which he sat, and he seized the throne and shook it and called in a loud voice in these words, "Alas, Nimrod, the most loathsome unbeliever, who does not believe in the living and existing God and in Abraham, a faithful servant of his house. Testify and say like me that the Lord is God, unique and unchanging, and he has no body and he lives and does not die; he does not slumber or sleep. Then testify of yourself and believe that I am Abraham, and he created the whole universe in order that they believe in him."

17. And he raised his voice with these words and behold, the idols that were standing there fell on their faces. And when the king and the princes saw their fall and also the cry of Abraham, they all fell on their faces to the earth with their king Nimrod and his heart melted, and he remained about two and a half hours on the ground and his heart melted within him; also his soul flew away from him. And after two hours his spirit and his soul returned to his body and he awoke from his sleep, and the king said, "Is this your voice, Abraham, or the voice of your God?" And he said to him, "This voice is the voice of the smallest creation of the creations that the Lord created." In that hour, King Nimrod said, "Truly your God, Abraham, is a great and strong God, king of kings." Then he said to his father Terah that he should raise up his son. Then he turned away from him and he went to his city and the two of them went together with him.

18. And it came to pass afterward that Abraham grew until he was twenty years old and Terah his father was ill and said to his sons Haran and Abraham, "As you live, my son(s), sell for me these two idols because I have not money to spend." Haran went and sold the idols and brought expense money for his father. And Abraham went and took two other idols to sell them and placed a rope on their necks and their faces were to the ground. And he was dragging them and shouting and saying, "Who would buy an idol in which is no benefit, not for itself nor for whoever buys it to worship it, and even has a mouth but doesn't speak, an eye but doesn't see, feet but doesn't walk, ears but doesn't hear?" And when the people of the city heard the words of Abraham, they were very astonished. And he went and came and encountered an old woman, and she said to him, "By your life, Abraham, choose for me one very good and great idol to worship and to love." Abraham said to her, "Old woman, old woman, I don't know any benefit in them, neither great nor small, neither for themselves nor for others." He said to her, "And the big idol that you got from my brother Haran to worship, where did it go?" She said to



him, "Thieves came in this night and they stole it while I was still in the washing-house." He said to her, "If so, how can you worship an idol that cannot deliver even itself from the thieves, much less deliver others from their ills and you, silly woman? And how can you say that the idol that you worship is a god? If it is a god why doesn't it deliver itself from the hands of the thieves, unless it is an idol without benefit, neither for itself nor for whoever worships it?" The old woman said to him, "If so, Abraham, according to your words, whom shall I worship?" He said to her, "Worship the God of gods and Lord of lords, creator of heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in it. And he is the God of Nimrod and the god of Terah and the God of the east and the west, the south and the north. And who is Nimrod the dog that he should make himself a god to worship him?" The old woman said, "Henceforth and hereafter, I shall worship only your God, the God of Abraham, and if I worship him what benefit will there be for me?" He said to her, "All that they stole shall return to you and also you shall deliver your soul from Gehinnom." The old woman said, "What shall I say in order to save my soul from destruction?" He said to her, "Say the Lord is God in the heavens above and on the earth below, unique and unchangeable. He makes dead and makes alive. He is living; he does not see death. And also I, Abraham, am a faithful servant [in] his house." The old woman said, "Henceforth I speak according to your words, and I myself testify that the Lord is God in the heavens above and on the earth below and you, Abraham, are his prophet, and I believe in the Lord and in you."

19. The storyteller said that she repented greatly and regretted that she had worshiped the idols, and they said that also she found the thieves and they returned to her that which was stolen and also the idol. What did this old woman do? She took a stone in her hand and struck the idol's head and she said, "Wo to you and to whoever still worships you, for there is in you no utility, neither for those who worship you." So she went out of her house in the markets and in the streets, and she cried and said, "Whoever wants to save his soul from destruction and succeed in all his doings, let him worship the God of Abraham."

20. The storyteller said that the old woman each day was calling to repentance many men and women. The king indeed heard of this. He sent for her and had her brought before him. He said to her, "What have you done, that you have mocked my worship? Why do you not worship me, since I am your god and I created you; I have even supported you in my days?" She responded saying, "You are a liar, and you are the greatest unbeliever in the one unchangeable God. You partake of his goodness, but you worship another god and do not believe in him and in his law and in his servant Abraham." When the king heard her words, he commanded to slay her and they slew her. But he feared and his heart wondered at her words, and he marveled and didn't know what he should do with Abraham, who had damaged his faith, for a great multitude of the people believed in the God of Abraham.

21. Now when the princes saw that he was distressed, and when they heard his words, they said to him, "Arise quickly and go to the place where you went at other times and



decree that all the people of the city should make seven days of feasting and merrymaking, and let them place on them all the delightful things and garments of scarlet and embroidery and goodly stones and precious stones, onyx and jasper, and every article of gold and silver and of food and drink and all sorts of sweets. And when Abraham sees the greatness of the wealth and the strength of the people of the city and the abundance of their wealth, he shall come to enter your faith." And when Nimrod indeed heard it, he rejoiced greatly, and he commanded that they decree to all the people of the city to go to the place where they were accustomed to come each year in the garden and that they should bring there the idols and that they should make there the days of drinking and rejoicing, merrymaking, more than what they were accustomed hitherto [to doing].

22. In the midst of the days of feasting, the king said to Terah, Abraham's father, to bring his son to see his greatness and the great wealth of his kingdom and the multitude of his princes and his servants. And Terah said to his son, "My son Abraham, come with me to the assembly of King Nimrod, our god." Abraham said, "I cannot go out thither." Terah said to him, "Then sit with the idols until we come from thence," and he did so. So Terah went, and Abraham sat with the idols, even the idols of the king, who were there. And when Abraham saw that the king went to his meetinghouse, he took in his hand an ax. And when he saw the statues of the king sitting, he said, "The Lord is God, the Lord is God," and he threw them from off their throne to the earth and struck them a great blow. With the biggest he began and with the smallest he finished. Of one he cut off his feet, of another he chopped off his head, of another he broke his eyes, and of another he smashed his feet. When all of them were broken, Abraham left.

23. When the days of the feasting were completed, the king came to his house. Now before this, when he [Abraham] smashed them, he placed the ax in the hand of the biggest of the idols.<sup>10</sup> So when the king saw the idols broken, he said, "Who was here and who is the one who thought to do this?" Then answered all the people, weeping and saying, "Our lord the king, you know that Abraham was sitting beside them and we have heard that he broke them." And the king commanded to bring Abraham before him and they brought him, and the king and the princes said to him, "Why did you break our gods?" He said, "It was not I. I did not break them, but the big one broke them. Don't you see the ax in his hand? And if you don't believe me, ask him and he will tell [you]." And when he [Nimrod] heard his words, he was angry with him unto death, and he said to take him to the prison, and he commanded the warden of the prison not to give him bread to eat or water to drink.

24. The storyteller said that Abraham while still in the prison looked to heaven and said, "O Lord my God, thou knowest the mysteries, and thou knowest that I have not come thus far except on thy service." And the Lord heard his prayer and sent to him the angel Gabriel to save him from the hand of this dog. And he said to him, "Peace upon you, Abraham. Do not fear and don't be afraid, for the Lord your God is with you."

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10. Cf. Abraham 1:20.



When he heard this, there appeared to him a spring of living water and he drank from it. And the angel brought him all sorts of food to eat, and he dwelt with him there in order to keep him company a full year.

25. After that year, the princes of the king and his counselors came to eat and to drink with the king. And they said to the king to build for himself a large enclosure and to decree in all his city that whoever wanted to do the work of the king should bring to this house many trees until the whole place should be completely full of trees, and after this they would burn the trees with fire until the flame rose to the heavens. "And you shall cast Abraham in the midst, and by this they will believe in you forever and not damage your religion." Now the king was pleased with this advice. It was very pleasant advice. So he commanded all the people, saying, "Every man and woman, young and old, who is in all the city of the king, bring trees to this house." (He gave them up to forty days, and during all this Abraham remained in the prison.) And the king commanded to make a great furnace in the middle of the house that he built, and they kindled the trees inside it and behold, the flame went up to the heavens, so much that all the people were afraid because of the greatness of the fire. And he sent to the warden of the prison, saying to him, "Bring out to me my enemy Abraham and cast him in the midst of this furnace of fire."

26. So the warden of the prison came before the king to bow down before him, and he said to him, "How can you ask of me a man that has for a full year now remained in the prison and no one has brought him bread or water or any food ever?" He said to him, "Now go in the prison and call out to him. If he answers you, bring him and I shall cast him in the fire. And if he is dead, this is better; you will bury him and his name will no longer be remembered." So the warden of the prison went to the opening of the pit and called in a loud and strong voice, "Abraham, are you alive or dead?" And he answered him, "I am alive." He said to him, "Who gave you food and drink up till now?" He said to him, "He who fed me and gave me drink is the one who is all-powerful, who is the God of gods and Lord of lords, the sole performer of wonders. And he is also the God of Nimrod and the God of Terah, the God of the whole universe. He is nourisher and maintainer of all, seeing and unseen, and he is in the heavens above, and he is found in every place, and he watches over all details." Now, when the warden of the prison heard his words, he also believed in the God of Abraham and he said, "Your God, Abraham, is the God, and I testify of this and also you are his servant and his prophet in truth and Nimrod is a liar."

27. When he said this, they came to the king, saying, "Behold, the warden of the prison testifies of the God of Abraham, that he is true and Abraham is his true servant." So the king was greatly astonished, and he sent for him and he said to him, "What is wrong with you, warden of the prison? How can you disbelieve me and say that the God of Abraham is true and also Abraham is his true servant?" He said to him, "Because he is indeed true and you, King Nimrod, are a disbeliever in the truth." Now, when the king saw the things of the warden of the prison, he was very pained and filled with anger, and he commanded to strike him to death. And the warden of the prison cried out in his pain and said, "The Lord is God; he is the God of the entire universe and the God of Nimrod the apostate."



28. The storyteller said that the saber didn't cut his neck and, moreover, that when he [the executioner] struck with the saber, it broke the saber.<sup>11</sup> The king was astonished, and the king commanded to bring Abraham and to cast him into the midst of the furnace of fire. One of the princes went and brought him before him, and the king said to him, "Cast him into the midst of the great fire." So he arose to cast him, and the fire came out from the furnace and burned him. So another prince arose from before Nimrod to cast him into the fire, and he also was burned. And each one who took him to cast him into the fire was burned until many died, an undetermined number.

29. Then Satan came in the form of a man and bowed himself to the king. And the king said to him, "What have you? Ask what you want." He said to him, "I advise you to cast Abraham into the midst of the furnace of fire. Bring me many trees and nails and ropes, and I shall make for you a catapult from which, by its movement, you will cast him into the midst of the fire from afar, and the fire will not burn that man [the executioner]." Now the king was very pleased with this counsel. So he commanded to do thus, and they made the catapult. And after they finished making it, they tested it before the king three times until from afar they cast in it stones into the midst of the fire. And it was called a catapult. Then they took Abraham and bound<sup>12</sup> his arms, his hands, and his feet with strong cords<sup>13</sup> and placed him in the midst of the catapult to cast him. And when Abraham saw how they bound him, he lifted his eyes to heaven and said, "O Lord, my God, thou seest what this wicked one is doing to me."<sup>14</sup> Also the angels above said before the Lord, "O Great One<sup>15</sup> of the Universe, thy glory fills all the earth. Hast thou not seen what Nimrod the unbeliever is doing to thy servant and prophet Abraham?" The Lord said to them, "How can I not know? For I know all mysteries, but for you I will see vengeance on Nimrod the apostate, and I shall rescue Abraham my servant."

30. The storyteller said that Satan came to Abraham in the form of a man and said to him, "Abraham, if you wish to be saved from the fire of Nimrod, bow down to me and believe in me." When Abraham heard the words of Satan, he said to him, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan,<sup>16</sup> you shameful, cursed unbeliever." So he left him.

31. Then Abraham's mother came to kiss him before they cast him into the furnace of fire, and she said to him, "My son, bow down to Nimrod and join his faith, and you shall be saved from the furnace of fire." Abraham said to her, "My mother, go away from me," and he pushed her from him and he said to her, "My mother, water can extinguish the fire of Nimrod, but the fire of God is for ever and ever; it is not extinguished and water

11. In Jewish lore, similar stories are told of the knife with which Abraham attempted to cut Isaac's throat on the altar.

12. The printed Hebrew text has קשרי, but I have assumed that the original manuscript read קשרו.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:15; Facsimile 1, figure 2.

14. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

15. The term used here is *Rabunu*, "our master/great one," which corresponds to *Rabonni* in John 20:16 and *Rabbanah* in Alma 18:13.

16. Cf. Zechariah 3:2; Jude 1:9.



cannot extinguish it." And when his mother heard his righteous words, she said to him, "The God whom you serve, may he deliver you from the fire of Nimrod."

32. After this, they placed him in the midst of the catapult to cast him into the midst of the furnace,<sup>17</sup> and the ministering angels requested mercy before the Lord to descend to rescue him from the fire of Nimrod. Then came to him the angel Gabriel and said to him, "What, Abraham, shall free you from this fire?"<sup>18</sup> And Abraham said to him, "The God in whom I trust, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, he shall rescue me."<sup>19</sup> And when the Lord saw his integrity, he turned to him in mercy and said to the fire, "Be cold and be calm on my servant Abraham."

33. The storyteller said that the fire was quenched without water and the trees blossomed and they all produced fruit; each tree gave its fruit, and the furnace became like a garden of a king's palace, and the angels sat with Abraham in the midst. Then the king turned and saw the garden and the angel sitting with Abraham in the midst of the garden. And the king said to Abraham, "You are a great magician. You know that the fire does not have power over you and there is nothing more except that you are a wonder to the people that you sit in the midst of a palace garden." And all the princes of Nimrod responded together to the king, "No, our lord, this is an enchantment only of a great God, the God of Abraham. And there is no other god besides him. And we testify of this and also Abraham is truly his servant." And in that hour, all the princes of Nimrod and all his people believed in the Lord, the God of Abraham.<sup>20</sup> And they all said, "The Lord, he is the God in the heavens above and on the earth below; there is no other."<sup>21</sup>

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17. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

18. Cf. Abraham 1:15; 2:13; Facsimile 1, figure 1.

19. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

20. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

21. Cf. 1 Kings 18:39.

## THE STORY OF ABRAHAM

The Hebrew of this Jewish account of Abraham's conflict with Nimrod was published by Adolph Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* (1853; reprint, Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1967), 2:118–19. Jellinek claims the text comes from the *Bereshit Rabbati* of Rabbi Moshe ha-Darsahan. The text that follows is a previously unpublished translation by John A. Tvedtnes. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. In the hour that Abraham our father was born, one star arose from the east and swallowed four stars of the four directions of the heavens.<sup>1</sup> Nimrod's sages said, "A son is born to Terah in this hour, from whom hereafter will come a nation that will inherit this world and the world to come. If it is your will, let it be offered to his father to fill his house with silver and gold, and let us kill him [the son]."

2. At once Nimrod sent for his father. He said to him, "A son was born to you last night. Now give him to me and let us kill him, and I shall offer to fill your house with silver and gold." Terah said to him, "Let me tell you a parable in which the thing is like a horse to whom they said, 'Let us cut off your head and let there be given to you a house full of barley.' The horse said to them, 'Idiots! If you cut off my head, who shall eat my barley?' And if you kill my son, who shall inherit my silver and gold?" The king responded to him, "From your words, I understand that a son was born to you." Terah said to him, "A son was born to me and he died." He [Nimrod] said to him, "About life I speak to you and not about death."

3. What Terah did was he brought his son to a cave for three years. The Lord prepared for him two windows. From one came forth oil, and from the other, flour. When he was three years old, he came out of the cave. He reflected in his heart, "Who created the heavens and the earth and me?" He prayed all day to the sun, and in the evening the sun set in the west and the moon<sup>2</sup> rose in the east. When he saw the moon and the stars surrounding the moon, he said, "This is the one who created the heavens and the earth and me, and these stars are his princes and his servants." He stood all night in praise to the

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1. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 2, figure 6.

2. The word used here is *lābānāh*, "white one," corresponding to the name of the false god Libnah in Abraham 1:6, 13, 17. Written without vowels, as in all early Hebrew texts, the two names would be spelled the same. All subsequent occurrences of "moon" in the text are from a different Hebrew word, *yārēah*, which may be related to the "Olea" in Abraham 3:13 (*l* and *r* being identical in ancient Egyptian).



moon. In the morning, the moon set in the west, and the sun rose in the east. He said, "These have no power. There is a lord over them; to him I shall pray and to him I shall bow down."

4. He went to his father. He said to him, "My father, who created the heavens and the earth and me?" His father told him, "My gods created the heavens and the earth and all these." Abraham said to him, "Show me your gods there; they have power to create all these." Immediately he brought his idols and showed him his gods.

5. Abraham returned to his mother and said to her, "My mother, make me pleasant and tasty *habshilin*,<sup>3</sup> and I shall bring them to the gods of my father. He [the god] shall receive from me my offering." Immediately his mother made for him pleasant and tasty *habshilin*, and he brought them to the gods of his father and presented them before the biggest among them. But there was no voice and no response. He returned to his mother. He said to her, "Make me nicer and better *habshilin* than the former ones." She made [them] for him and he brought them before the idols of his father. There was no voice and no response.<sup>4</sup> Immediately he was inspired<sup>5</sup> and called regarding them, "They have a mouth but don't speak; they have eyes but don't see." Immediately he set a fire and burned them,<sup>6</sup> and he brought the larger of them outside and placed the fire in his hand.

6. When his father came to his house, he found his gods burned. He said to Abraham, "My son, why did you burn my gods?" He said, "I didn't burn them. But the largest of them was angry with them and burned them." He said, "My foolish son, have they power or have they a living spirit, that they can do all this, and have not [we] made them of wood?" He [Abraham] said to him, "May your ears hear what your mouth is saying. And if they have no power, why did you say to me, 'My gods created the heavens and the earth'?"

7. What Terah did was he went to Nimrod and said to him, "My son has burned my gods and your gods with fire." Nimrod sent for Abraham and said to him, "Why did you thus?" He said to him, "I didn't do it, but the big one." Nimrod said to him, "And is there in them a living spirit that they were able to do this?" He [Abraham] said to him, "May your ears hear what you speak with your mouth. And if there is no power in them, why do you not rely on him who created the heavens and the earth instead of bowing down to wood?" He [Nimrod] said to him, "I created the heavens and the earth by my power." Abraham said to him, "You can create? When I went out of the cave, I saw the sun rise in the east and set in the west. You make it rise in the west and set in the east, and I shall bow down to you. And if not, he who strengthened my hand to burn the gods, he shall strengthen me, and I shall slay thee."

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3. I have not been able to find this word in any dictionary. The *-in* is an Aramaic plural, and the root indicates some kind of foodstuff.

4. Cf. 1 Kings 18:26, 29.

5. Literally, "the Shekhinah rendered service on him." In Judaism, the Shekhinah (meaning "presence" or "dwelling") generally refers to the Spirit of God; hence, I have translated "inspired."

6. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

8. Nimrod said to his sages, "What should be my judgment of this?" They said to him, "This is he of whom they said [that] hereafter a nation shall come forth from him that will inherit this world and the world to come. And now, according to this judgment that he has made, so shall it be done to him." Immediately they cast him in the midst of the furnace of fire.<sup>7</sup> In the same hour that they rallied against him, the blessed Holy One, who is compassionate, rescued him,<sup>8</sup> as it is said, "I am the Lord who rescued you from Ur Kasdim."<sup>9</sup>

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7. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

9. In Jewish tradition, this expression (found in Genesis 15:7 and Nehemiah 9:7, where the KJV renders it "out of Ur of the Chaldees") is understood to mean "out of the fire of the Chaldaeans," referring to the furnace of fire into which Abraham was cast. The Vulgate of Nehemiah 9:7 reads "fire."



## A STUDY (MIDRASH) OF ABRAHAM OUR FATHER

We know little about this tale of Abraham. The Hebrew of this traditional Jewish account of Abraham's conflict with Nimrod was first published by Adolph Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* (1853; reprint, Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1967), 5:40–41. The text that follows is a previously unpublished translation by John A. Tvedtnes. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. The sages say that 365 kings were sitting before Nimrod the great hunter. He was the great hunter at the time Abraham our father replied harshly, when Nimrod said to him, "Why did you rebel against me, that you have broken the statues?"<sup>1</sup> He said to him, "This ax, which is in my hand[s] broke them." He [Nimrod] said to him, "As if it has power and knowledge to do this!" He [Abraham] said to him, "And why isn't there knowledge in your statues that you call gods to destroy, so that it did not break them?" Nimrod answered him, "I am a god and I created the universe, and [I am the] lord of mysteries whose statues you have destroyed, and I am about to stop you." He said to him, "If you are a god, change the seasons and cause the sun to shine at dawn; let it stand still, going from west to east, and I will know that you are a god. Tell me what I alone am thinking." When he [Nimrod] put his hand on his beard and wondered greatly at him, Abraham said to him, "You are not a god. You are the son of Cush.<sup>2</sup> Why haven't you rescued your father from death, and you also are going to die?"

2. Immediately he [Nimrod] said to all the kings, "Bring me counsel what I should do to the lad who responds to me as you have heard and has lost fear of me that he has broken them [the idols] and has burned them." They said to him,<sup>3</sup> "In what is your respect lost?" He said to them, "In the fire." They said to him, "Bring the fire and take revenge on him." Immediately Nimrod commanded, and they imprisoned him twelve years in the prison, seven years in Kardi and three years in Kuthi,<sup>4</sup> and all the while the kings were bringing trees for Abraham's pyre.

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

2. Cf. Genesis 10:8.

3. The Hebrew text actually has "to me."

4. This error in mathematics occurs in the text.

3. After twelve years, they brought him out from the prison house and bound him<sup>5</sup> and tied him to the ground and surrounded him with trees, forty-four [cubits?] wide, of six cubits [in] height, and they kindled a fire on the trees, and all the kings saw that no fire or flame came near Abraham.<sup>6</sup> The kings said, "Abraham's brother is a great sorcerer, and he has gathered the fire<sup>7</sup> and has turned it upwards and because of him Abraham is saved." Immediately, a flame flew off Abraham's pyre and burned Haran, as it is said, "And Haran died."<sup>8</sup>

4. In the same hour, Michael said, "Great One<sup>9</sup> of the universe, I shall go down to the furnace to rescue Abraham."<sup>10</sup> The Lord said, "In my name go down to the fire, and I by my glory shall rescue him and hereafter, from the sons of his sons, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah will descend to the furnace of fire; them I shall rescue [also]."<sup>11</sup>

5. And when he [God] brought him [Abraham] out of Ur Kasdim,<sup>12</sup> all these same kings bowed themselves at the feet of Abraham our father. And they cut down cedars and made for him a great platform and made him sit atop it, and they brought their sons and they placed them on his lap and said, "Teach us your ways for permanent eternal security. For you had no master to teach you except your loins,"<sup>13</sup> to which he responded, "I will bless the Lord who counseled me, even nights he chastised me [by] my loins." So all of these kings stood and converted themselves<sup>14</sup> and came under the wings of the Shekhinah,<sup>15</sup> and about them it is said, "The nobles of the nations are added to the God of Abraham."<sup>16</sup>

5. Cf. Abraham 1:15; Facsimile 1, figure 2.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

7. The Hebrew term is *ôr* (literally, "light"), which is spelled the same as the name of Ur of the Chaldees, understood in Jewish tradition to refer to the fire of the furnace.

8. Citing Genesis 11:28. Cf. Abraham 2:1.

9. The term used here is *Rabunu*, "our master/great one," which corresponds to *Rabonni* in John 20:16 and *Rabbanah* in Alma 18:13.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:15; 2:13; Facsimile 1, figure 1.

11. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who were cast into the furnace by the Babylonian king (Daniel 3).

12. In Jewish tradition, this expression (found in Genesis 15:7 and Nehemiah 9:7, where the KJV renders it "out of Ur of the Chaldees") is understood to mean "out of the fire of the Chaldaeans," referring to the furnace of fire into which Abraham was cast.

13. In Jewish tradition, God caused the Torah (law), which had not yet been given in written form to Moses, to gush forth out of Abraham's loins. See *Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 95:3.

14. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

15. The Shekhinah, meaning "presence" or "dwelling," refers in Judaism to the Spirit of God. For a fuller explanation, see in this collection Rashi, n. 10.

16. Quoting Psalm 47:10 (47:9 in the KJV).



## AN EXTRACT FROM THE REVELATION OF MOSES

The *Revelation of Moses* is a medieval Hebrew document published in Adolph Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* (1853; reprint, Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1967). Here we employ the English translation by Moses Gaster in his *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Mediaeval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archaeology* (1928; reprint, New York: Ktav, 1971), 1:140 (paragraph 63), regarding Moses' visit to paradise.

Moses then said to the angel: "For whom is that throne of copper?" He answered: "For the wicked man, whose son is pious; because through the merits of his son he obtains a portion of heavenly bliss; as thou seest in the case of Terah, who had worshipped all the idols in the world,<sup>1</sup> but who through the merits of his son Abraham obtained that throne of copper."

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.