



Type: Book

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## Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham

Editor(s): John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee

Published: Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2001



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TRADITIONS  
ABOUT THE EARLY LIFE  
OF ABRAHAM

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

JOHN GEE, SERIES EDITOR

TRADITIONS  
ABOUT THE EARLY LIFE  
OF ABRAHAM

COMPILED AND EDITED BY  
JOHN A. TVEDTNES • BRIAN M. HAUGLID • JOHN GEE



FOUNDATION FOR ANCIENT RESEARCH AND MORMON STUDIES  
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY  
PROVO, UTAH

Cover design by Bjorn Pendleton

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS)  
Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts  
Brigham Young University  
P.O. Box 7113  
University Station  
Provo, Utah 84602

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Printed in the United States of America  
10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Traditions about the early life of Abraham / compiled and edited by John  
A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, John Gee.

p. cm. — (Studies in the book of Abraham ; no. 1)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-934893-59-4 (alk. paper)

1. Abraham (Biblical patriarch) 2. Book of Abraham. I. Tvedtnes,  
John A. II. Hauglid, Brian M., 1954- . III. Gee, John Laurence.

IV. Series.

BX8643.A25 T73 2001

289.3'2—dc21

2001003390

*To Hugh Nibley*



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In April 1996, Wayne Ballantyne, a FARMS subscriber from Fruit Heights, Utah, called to ask how he might locate two early stories about Abraham that Hugh Nibley had mentioned in one of his books. After checking the Nibley sources, John Tvedtnes located the texts and found that neither of them had been translated into English. In the process, he located two other untranslated Abraham stories, making four in all: three in Hebrew and one in Arabic but written in Hebrew script.

Thus began the project that has resulted in this book. Since that day in 1996, we have collected and translated other ancient and medieval Abraham stories that parallel some of the unique aspects of the Book of Abraham. A number of people have assisted us in the preparation of this volume and should be named here.

E. Douglas Clark, who has done much research on the patriarch Abraham, has been helpful both with suggestions and in providing copies of published material included in this work. Matthew Roper has given much feedback and some useful suggestions, pointing us to several early Abraham stories and providing copies of texts. Daniel C. Peterson and Kristian Heal also gave helpful suggestions. Edward Stratford prepared some of the translations of Latin texts included in this volume and assisted in checking sources, and Aaron Christensen translated an Italian text. Dimitri Williams also translated some of the material used herein, assisted by his mother, Catherine Stelianou Williams. Miles Lalle-mant contributed a translation as well. Finally, Glen Cooper translated a Persian document. We especially thank Hugh Nibley, whose pioneering work on the patriarch Abraham opened the door through which we have only begun to walk.

We thank Riham Hussein for her assistance with the Arabic materials included in this volume. Special thanks are due to members of the BYU Institute editorial staff: Angela Clyde, as the managing editor, was responsible for stylistic matters and for bringing the project to publication. Shirley Ricks, Tessa Hauglid, Sunny Larson, and Shannon Murdock helped with editing and proofreading, and Rebecca Call, Robyn Patterson, Jessica Taylor,

and Josh Madsen with source checking. Julie Dozier and David Pendleton obtained the permissions, Carmen Cole designed the page layout and typeset the book, and Alison Coutts, Paula Hicken, and Jacob Rawlins created the indexes.

To all of these and others who have shared the excitement of this project, we give thanks.

John A. Tvedtnes  
Brian M. Hauglid  
John Gee

## EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Latter-day Saint interest in Abraham was heightened in 1835, when members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints purchased several Egyptian mummies and, with them, ancient documents from which the Book of Abraham resulted. In March 1842 the church's newspaper, *Times and Seasons*, published the book in two installments. In 1851, while in Liverpool, England, Franklin D. Richards published a small collection of Joseph Smith's writings, including the translation of the Book of Abraham, which he entitled the Pearl of Great Price. The book was republished, with additional materials, in Salt Lake City in 1878. Two years later, at the October general conference of the church, it was officially canonized. Since that time, the Book of Abraham has been included among the standard works, or scriptures, of the Latter-day Saints.

Interest in the Book of Abraham increased when in 1968 some of the original papyri held by Joseph Smith were discovered and turned over to the Church of Jesus Christ. Much of the work on the papyri has been done by the incomparable Hugh Nibley, who has shown us that the Book of Abraham, which goes beyond the Abraham story in Genesis, finds support in various ancient traditions regarding the patriarch.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, many of the ancient texts have been unavailable to the general membership of the Church of Jesus Christ. This present book assembles various Abraham accounts for the first time, including English translations of Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, Latin, Persian, Coptic, and Egyptian texts.

Of these texts, only the *Book of Jasher* was known to early members of the church. The first English translation appeared in 1840, after Joseph Smith had already produced the

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1. In particular, see Hugh W. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975); *Abraham in Egypt*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2000). At this writing, Nibley is working on another volume dealing with the Book of Abraham, *One Eternal Round*.

text we have of the Book of Abraham but before its publication (in 1842).<sup>2</sup> After the Book of Abraham was published, it was noted in the *Times and Seasons* that “if we believe in present revelation, as published in the *Times and Seasons* last spring, Abraham, the prophet of the Lord, was laid upon the iron bedstead<sup>3</sup> for slaughter; and the book of Jasher, which has not been disproved as a bad author, says he was cast into the fire of the Chaldees.”<sup>4</sup>

## The Book of Abraham, the Parallel Genesis Account, and Nonbiblical Tradition

Interest in nonbiblical Abraham traditions likely began almost as soon as the Book of Abraham appeared in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842. In its published form the Book of Abraham can be readily compared with the Genesis account of the early life of Abraham. From this comparison one can see many significant variances between the two accounts, as the following comparison shows (differences are in bold).

### Comparison of the Abraham Accounts of Genesis and the Book of Abraham

#### Genesis 11:28–29, 12:1, 11:31

28. And **Haran died** before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.

29. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram’s wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor’s wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.

12:1. Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

#### Abraham 2:1–7

1. Now the Lord God **caused the famine to wax sore in the land of Ur, inso-much that Haran, my brother, died;** but Terah, my father, yet lived in the land of Ur, of the Chaldees.

2. And it came to pass that I, Abraham, took Sarai to wife, and Nahor, my brother, took Milcah to wife, who was the daughter of Haran.

3. Now the Lord had said unto me: Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee.

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2. “Joseph Smith began translating the papyri in early July 1835. The current text of the Book of Abraham was translated by the end of the month.” John Gee, *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 4. Cf. chart on p. 5.

3. Abraham 1:13 mentions a bedstead but does not suggest that it was made of iron. The author of the article was evidently influenced by the “iron bedstead” of Og, king of Bashan, mentioned in Deuteronomy 3:11.

4. *Times and Seasons* 3 (Sept. 1842): 902.

11:31. And **Terah took Abram** his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; **and they went** forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

#### Genesis 12:2–5

2. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

4. Therefore **I left** the land of Ur, of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and **I took** Lot, my brother's son, and his wife, and Sarai my wife; **and also my father followed after me**, unto the land which we denominated Haran.

5. And the famine abated; and my father tarried in Haran and dwelt there, as there were many flocks in Haran; and my father turned again unto his idolatry, therefore he continued in Haran.

6. But I, Abraham, and Lot, my brother's son, prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord appeared unto me, and said unto me: Arise, and take Lot with thee; for I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice.

7. For I am the Lord thy God; I dwell in heaven; the earth is my footstool; I stretch my hand over the sea, and it obeys my voice; I cause the wind and the fire to be my chariot; I say to the mountains—Depart hence—and behold, they are taken away by a whirlwind, in an instant, suddenly.

#### Abraham 2:8–17

8. My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee.

9. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee **above measure**, and make thy name great **among all nations**, and thou shalt be a blessing **unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands**

**they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;**

10. And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

11. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee **(that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal.**

12. Now, after the Lord had withdrawn from speaking to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee;

13. Thou didst send thine angel to deliver me from the gods of Elkenah, and I will do well to hearken unto thy voice, therefore let thy servant rise up and depart in peace.

14. So I, Abraham, departed as the Lord had said unto me, and Lot with me; and I, Abraham, was **sixty and two years old** when I departed out of Haran.

15. And I took Sarai, whom I took to wife when I was in Ur, in Chaldea, and Lot, my brother's son, and all our substance that we had gathered, and the **souls that**

3. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee **shall all families of the earth be blessed** (cf. Doctrine and Covenants 132:29–33).

4. So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was **seventy and five years old** when he departed out of Haran.

5. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the **souls that they had gotten** in Haran; and

they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

#### **Genesis 12:6–20**

6. And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

7. And the **Lord appeared unto Abram**, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.

8. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east: and there **he builded an altar** unto the Lord, and **called upon the name of the Lord**.

**we had won** in Haran, and came forth in the way to the land of Canaan, and dwelt in tents as we came on our way;

16. Therefore, eternity was our covering and our rock and our salvation, as we journeyed from Haran by the way of Jershon, to come to the land of Canaan.

17. Now I, Abraham, built an altar in the land of Jershon, and made an offering unto the Lord, and prayed that the famine might be turned away from my father's house, that they might not perish.

#### **Abraham 2:18–25**

18. And then we passed from Jershon through the land unto the place of Sechem; it was situated in the plains of Moreh, and we had already come into the borders of the land of the Canaanites, and **I offered sacrifice there in the plains of Moreh, and called on the Lord devoutly, because we had already come into the land of this idolatrous nation**.

19. And the **Lord appeared unto me in answer to my prayers**, and said unto me: Unto thy seed will I give this land.

20. And I, Abraham, arose from the place of the altar which I had built unto the Lord, and removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched my tent there, Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east; and there **I built another altar** unto the Lord, and **called again upon the name of the Lord**.

9. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

10. And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.

11. And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that **he said unto Sarai his wife**, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:

12. Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

13. **Say, I pray thee**, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

14. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair.

15. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

16. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.

21. And I, Abraham, journeyed, going on still towards the south; and there was a continuation of a famine in the land; and I, Abraham, concluded to go down into Egypt, to sojourn there, for the famine became very grievous.

22. And it came to pass when I was come near to enter into Egypt, **the Lord said unto me**: Behold, Sarai, thy wife, is a very fair woman to look upon;

23. Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see her, they will say—She is his wife; and they will kill you, but they will save her alive; therefore see that ye do on this wise:

24. **Let her say** unto the Egyptians, she is thy sister, and thy soul shall live.

25. And it came to pass that **I, Abraham, told Sarai, my wife, all that the Lord had said unto me**—Therefore say unto them, I pray thee, thou art my sister, that it may be well with me for thy sake, and my soul shall live because of thee.

17. And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.

18. And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?

19. Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.

20. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

As can be seen above, only Abraham 2 can be directly compared with Genesis 11 and 12. A number of elements or themes in Abraham 2 are not found in the biblical account. The following list provides twelve of these elements and themes from the Book of Abraham verses noted in the comparison:

1. A famine struck Abraham's homeland (Abraham 2:1, 5).
2. Haran died in the famine (Abraham 2:1).
3. Terah, after repenting, returned to his idols (Abraham 2:5).
4. Believers are the seed of Abraham and are blessed through him (Abraham 2:10–11).
5. Abraham held the priesthood (Abraham 2:9, 11).
6. Abraham sought God earnestly (Abraham 2:12).
7. An angel came to rescue Abraham (Abraham 2:13).
8. Abraham was familiar with Egyptian idols (Abraham 2:13; 3:20).
9. Abraham was sixty-two years old when he left Haran, not seventy-five as Genesis says (Abraham 2:14).
10. Abraham made converts in Haran (Abraham 2:15).
11. Abraham prayed that God would end the famine in Chaldea (Abraham 2:17).
12. The Lord instructed Abraham to say that Sarah was his sister (Abraham 2:22–25).

Taken as a whole, the Abraham traditions contained in this book show that all of the elements in this list are attested in nonbiblical traditions to one degree or another. Some elements attested only in Abraham 2 but not in Genesis 11 and 12 appear regularly in nonbiblical texts. For instance, the themes of Terah's idolatry, an angel rescuing Abraham, and Abraham making converts in Haran are so well attested by a large cross section of traditions that it appears odd the biblical account does not include them. Abraham 1 and 3 are not attested at all in the Bible, yet they also contain elements that are well evidenced in nonbiblical traditions. Abraham 1 contains the sacrifice of Abraham, Abraham as a

record keeper, and the destruction of the idols, and Abraham 3 contains an account of Abraham's knowledge and use of astronomy.

As mentioned, since the publication of the Book of Abraham in 1842, Latter-day Saints, particularly General Authorities, have not only been aware of the Book of Abraham's distinctiveness when compared with the biblical account, but have also provided commentary on various occasions.

### Early LDS Treatment of Nonbiblical Abraham Traditions

At the October 1892 general conference of the church, Franklin D. Richards, the original compiler of the Pearl of Great Price, alluded to the *Book of Jasher* and similar accounts when he noted the existence of stories about Abraham not known from the Bible:

It was so with father Abraham. The Bible tells us but very little about him. Other histories inform us that so severe was his persecution, while yet an infant, that his mother had to take him and hide away in a cave of the earth; and his parents were so anxious concerning him that they carried food and sustained him and his mother for a long time. The sorcerers and the astrologers were stirred up to anxiety and curiosity, because there had another star appeared in the heavens at the birth of that boy Abraham. They thought it meant something, that it was significant, and it was whispered to the king, who tried to get the boy out of the way. Abraham's father, Terah, brought forth a child, by the king's command, from one of his other women, that was born just about the same time, and the king caused it to be destroyed. After awhile [*sic*] the mother of Abraham, thinking the anger of the king was appeased, ventured out with the boy.

Another history tells us that he was placed to dwell awhile with Shem, the good old patriarch, and lived several years with him, hid up and secluded, studying the things of God. He loved righteousness, and, hungering for more righteousness, got away from the idolatry of his relations, and even of his father's house, and was for some time studying the things of God in the houses of those early patriarchs that had just come through the flood. When he ventured to come out again, and it was found out that he was that same Abraham, the wrath of the king was aroused with double fury, and this time he was seized upon and put into a fiery furnace. The Bible does not tell us of this, but other histories do. The Mohammedan's bible [*sic*] tells him of it. It is in the Koran. Abraham was so dealt with by this persecution that he wondered where he could find a place on the earth, wherein he could dwell in safety. The Lord told him to get him up out of that country, and He would show him a place, a little way off, that he should have for his own some time.<sup>5</sup>

Other early Latter-day Saint leaders also recounted nonbiblical stories about Abraham.<sup>6</sup> John Taylor, evidently drawing on the *Book of Jasher*, mentioned such stories on several occasions:

5. Brian H. Stuy, ed., *Collected Discourses* (Sandy, Utah: BHS Publishing, 1989), 3:140–41.

6. Brigham Young declared that "Abraham was faithful to the true God, he overthrew the idols of his father and obtained the Priesthood after the order of Melchisedek" (*Journal of Discourses*, 11:118). Abraham 1:20 notes that "the Lord broke down the altar of Elkenah, and of the gods of the land, and

About this time a singular kind of personage appeared on the stage of action, named Abraham. He had been taught by his father to worship idols; but the Lord had manifested himself to him on certain occasions and instructed him in the true religion. . . . There is something humorous in a history that we have in relation to this personage. The priests of those days offered sacrifices to their gods, and, like the priests of these days, they were generally opposed to new revelation from God. Abraham's father had instructed him in the doctrines of these idols, and had sought to induce him to have faith in them and in their power, authority, and dominion, telling him what great personages they were. But Abraham, inspired by the Lord, went on a certain occasion into the temple of these gods and smote them right and left, upsetting and breaking them in pieces. His father came in and asked what he had been doing, what great sin this was that he had committed, why he was so sacrilegious in his feelings and so wicked as to seek to destroy these gods? Said he, "Father, I did not do anything to them, they quarreled among themselves and went to work fighting and knocked one another down, broke one another's heads and knocked off one another's arms and legs." "Oh," said his father, "my son do not tell me anything of that kind, for they are made of wood and they could not move or stir from their place nor knock one another down; it has been some other agency that has done it." "Why, father," said he, "would you worship a being that could not stir or move, that had hands and could not handle, that had legs and could not walk, a mouth that could not speak, and a head and it was of no use? Would you worship a being like that?" But nevertheless our history informs us that the priests were angry and stirred up his father against him. But the Lord inspired Abraham to leave there.<sup>7</sup>

On another occasion, in a talk given in Provo, Utah, John Taylor again addressed the subject of Abraham:

It reminds me of a story told of Abraham. It is said Abraham's father was an idolater, and that he had a number of gods in his house. This grieved Abraham, whilst his father wanted his son to believe and worship as he himself did; but Abraham knew better than to do such a thing. Abraham at last thought he would teach his father a lesson by making a clean sweep of his gods. So he got a club, or some other weapon, and knocked off the heads of some, the arms and legs of others, and made a general wreck among the idols, but left the biggest untouched. When Abraham's father learned what had happened, he of course was greatly exercised; he inquired of Abraham who had done it. Abraham told him that the gods had had a quarrel among themselves, "and," said he, "here is the fellow, (pointing to the big one he had spared) that did it." Said the father: "My son, why do you tell me such a thing. My gods cannot fight; they have legs, but they cannot walk; they have arms, but they cannot use them; they have eyes and ears, but they cannot see nor hear." "Why, father," said Abraham, "is it possible that you worship a god that cannot hear or see, walk or use himself at all?"<sup>8</sup>

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utterly destroyed them," but it does not attribute this act of destruction to Abraham, as do some of the extracanonical sources.

7. *Journal of Discourses*, 14:358–59.

8. *Journal of Discourses*, 22:307.

In the appendix to his book *Mediation and Atonement*, John Taylor referred to “the days of Pharaoh and Nimrod” and spoke of the introduction of idolatry, noting that

[For] the nations who scattered at Babel, the easiest thing for them to do was to worship their dead ancestors and the heavenly orbs. In due course naturally followed the framing of idols, which at first only represented the being or thing worshiped, but which were afterwards regarded as gods themselves, and as such revered. The idea of God’s anger at men’s sins, associated with the law of sacrifice, led mankind to believe that the more precious and beloved was the offering to him who offered it, the more acceptable would it be to heaven. As a result, men soon began to offer up their sons and their daughters to appease the wrath of their gods.<sup>9</sup>

He then quoted Abraham 1:8–11.

In an 1865 discourse, Wilford Woodruff tied the story of the Book of Abraham to the noncanonical accounts of Abraham’s destruction of his father’s idols:

Look at the days of Abraham, whose faith was so great that he was called the father of the faithful. He was an heir to the royal priesthood, another noble spirit, the friend of God. He came upon this earth, not in a way of light, but through idolatrous parents. His father was an idolator. I do not know who his grandfather was; but his father had false gods that he worshipped and sacrificed to. God inspired Abraham, and his eyes were opened so that he saw and understood something of the dealings of the Lord with the children of men. He understood that there was a God in heaven, a living and true God, and that no man should worship any other God but Him. These were the feelings of Abraham, and he taught his father’s house, and all around him, as far as he had the privilege. The consequence was, his father and the idolatrous priests of that day sought to take his life. In the book of Abraham, translated in our day and generation, we are informed that Abraham was bound, and those priests sought to take his life, but the Lord delivered him from them. One reason why they did so was, that he had gone into those places which his father considered sacred, and among the wooden gods which were there, and, being filled with anger that his father should bow down and worship gods of wood and stone, he broke them. When his father saw that his son Abraham had broken his gods he was very angry with him. But Abraham, trying to reason with his father, said that probably the gods had got to fighting among themselves and had killed one another. He tried to bring him to reason, but his father did not believe they had life enough to kill one another. If he had possessed the spirit which his son had, he would have said there is no power with these gods; but he did not, and Abraham had to flee from his father’s house, confiding in the Lord, who gave many promises to him and concerning his posterity.<sup>10</sup>

In January 1898 a San Francisco newspaper carried an account of “A Remarkable New Version of the Apocalypse of Abraham,” by Professor G. Nathanael Bonwetsch of the University of Goettingen, Germany, with a partial translation of the text from its original Old Slavonic manuscript. When the matter came to the attention of E. H. Anderson, a member of the Church of Jesus Christ, he suggested that the church’s *Improvement Era*

9. John Taylor, appendix to *The Mediation and Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1882), 198.

10. *Journal of Discourses*, 11:244.

seek Professor Bonwetsch's permission to publish the text. Bonwetsch had translated the text into German and was planning, along with his colleague R. Seeberg, to publish it in a book then in preparation, but he agreed to allow Anderson to publish an English translation from the German in advance of the book. Consequently, the first Western publication of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, which is included in this current collection, appeared in the *Improvement Era* during 1898,<sup>11</sup> followed by a brief comparison of the text of the *Apocalypse* with that of the Book of Abraham.<sup>12</sup>

### Beginnings of Idolatry

A number of the extracanonical Abraham stories explain that idolatry began rather innocently when men erected images of dead ancestors and that it was Satan who inspired people to worship these images. A similar story was told by Brigham Young:

What is commonly termed idolatry has arisen from a few sincere men, full of faith and having a little knowledge, urging upon a backsliding people to preserve some customs—to cling to some fashions or figures, to put them in mind of that God with whom their fathers were acquainted, without designing or wishing the people to worship an idol—to worship stocks, stones, beasts, and birds. Idols have been introduced, which are now worshipped, and have been for centuries and thousands of years; but they were not introduced at once. They were introduced to preserve among the people the idea of the true God.<sup>13</sup>

Abraham 1:5 indicates that Abraham's father, Terah, was an idolator—a fact not noted in the Abraham story told in Genesis, though Joshua 24:2 alludes to it briefly: "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods."

### Selections from the Abraham Traditions

This volume does not include all the Abraham stories from the sources cited nor all the available stories about Abraham. Rather, it includes only those portions of the stories that relate to events in Abraham's early life through those events covered by the Book of Abraham. Thus we have stories beginning with Abraham's birth (or, rather, his conception) through his visit to Egypt, leaving out events that correspond to Abraham's later life, as recorded in Genesis 14–25, and omitting parallels to the creation materials in Abraham 4–5 (also known from Genesis 1–2).

At the same time, other tales about Abraham that do not parallel the chronological account of his life as found in Abraham 1–3 and Genesis 12–13 are included when they

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11. E. H. Anderson and R. T. Haag, trans., "The Book of the Revelation of Abraham," *Improvement Era* 1 (Aug.–Sept. 1898): 705–14, 793–806.

12. Joseph F. Smith and B. H. Roberts, "Comments on the Book of the Revelation of Abraham," *Improvement Era* 1 (Oct. 1898): 896–901.

13. *Journal of Discourses*, 6:194.

shed light on the account in the Book of Abraham. This includes accounts of Abraham's involvement with astronomy and later reflections on events that took place in Ur and Egypt, as well as stories about the idols of Egypt, ties between Ur of the Chaldees and Egypt, the idolatry of Abraham's fathers, and the discovery and founding of Egypt.

It should also be noted that the Muslim and Christian texts cited herein are highly dependent on Jewish sources, though they sometimes give information not found in any extant Jewish texts. The Muslim sources show a degree of interdependence, including some reliance on the Qur'an. Some early Christian books, such as the *Conflict of Adam and Eve*, the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, the *Book of the Rolls*, and, to a lesser extent, the *Book of the Bee*, clearly have a common source but have passed through different hands.

### Transmission of Abraham Traditions

Abraham traditions pervade the entire Mediterranean basin and the Near East.<sup>14</sup> They were transmitted and preserved across cultural, religious, and geographical boundaries over a period of more than two millennia. In addition to Jews, Christians, Muslims, and related groups (Samaritans, Falasha, and Mandaeans), the stories have also been recorded by early pagan writers.

Many of the Abraham stories began as oral traditions that were passed on from one generation to another. Jews and Muslims alike preserved the transmission lines along with the stories themselves, thus establishing their antiquity.

The later Jewish texts frequently cite early rabbis as sources for the information about Abraham and often give the names of other rabbis who passed the stories on to future generations. A typical entry would read, "Rabbi Z said on the authority of Rabbi Y, who had it from Rabbi X." This sort of authentication of early rabbinic declarations began as early as the second century A.D., when the Mishnah was compiled, and continued well into the Middle Ages. Most recitations of earlier authority were used to establish doctrinal issues, so there was always a dialectic purpose behind the lines of transmission.

While the Jewish traditions seem to be relatively unified, Eastern Christian writers seemed to preserve a much wider variety of Abraham stories. This stems in part from the fact that some of these writers were citing both Jewish and pagan traditions about Abraham. Another factor is the broader geographical expanse of Christianity, which covered most of Europe, portions of Africa from Egypt to Tunisia and as far south as Ethiopia, and much of the Middle East. With the widening gap between eastern (mostly Greek-speaking) and western (Latin) Christianity came greater diversity in the Abraham stories. Many of the traditions known in the East to Jews and Orthodox Christians were lost to the West. The Latin Fathers relied almost entirely on Jerome, who had but little to say about nonbiblical Abraham traditions.

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14. We know that Jewish and Muslim stories about Abraham have been preserved in Chinese, but we have been unable to locate specific examples or determine if they preserve the traditions of the sort encompassed in this volume.

Another significant factor in the more complete preservation of the Abraham traditions in the East is that the Jewish and Christian presence in the areas Muslims conquered made the stories available to the conquerors. While Jews and Muslims often cited a line of transmission authority for the traditions, Christians typically did not.

### **Jewish and Christian Influences on Islam**

Jewish and Christian presence in Arabia reaches back to a very early period. According to Arabian tradition, the Jewish presence in the Hijaz (western Arabia) may have begun when Jews fled Roman persecution in A.D. 70 and 135. After these events, Judaism probably began to flourish in Arabia. However, the beginnings of Jewish settlements in Arabia are too lost in misty tradition to allow exact dating. Whatever their origins in that land, by the fifth century the Jews had firmly “established themselves by their industry and enterprising spirit.”<sup>15</sup> By the time of Muḥammad’s birth (A.D. 570), Judaism in Arabia had become a thriving presence, with Jews in all areas of Arabian society. These Jews could be found as merchants, bedouin, farmers, poets, and warriors, and all spoke Arabic as well as Hebrew.<sup>16</sup> There was also a strong Jewish presence in Abyssinia (Ethiopia), a Christian ally of Rome, during the pre-Islamic period just prior to Muḥammad’s birth. From Abyssinia, Christian expeditions were launched against a ruler of the Yemen (who had embraced Judaism) in order to halt his persecutions of the Christians. Some of these anti-Jewish expeditions reached as far north as the Jewish settlements along the trade route near Medina.<sup>17</sup> In the north, in the eastern part of the Fertile Crescent (Iraq), Judaism had flourished at least since the time of the Babylonian captivity (587 B.C.). This region is noted for the important Jewish Gaonic schools that had produced the Babylonian Talmud in the sixth century A.D.

Christianity had also, since the time of Constantine, gained a firm foothold in the Arabian Peninsula. In bedouin Arabia, for instance, Christianity was a more widespread presence than either Zoroastrianism (the religion of Persia) or Judaism. Christians moved about with relative ease during the Byzantine period, and some worked as missionaries in the outlying towns of Arabia. Although Christian influence on the Arab tribes in Arabia was not deeply rooted, some amount of Christian biblical knowledge certainly spread throughout Arabia. Furthermore, the diffusion of biblical materials into Arabia also came from Christians in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Abyssinia, who exercised their influence by

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15. “Yathrib, an oasis on the caravan route running from north to south, rich in underground water supplies, springs and fountains, provided the Jews with a land where they could apply their farming experience.” Barakat Ahmad, *Muhammad and the Jews: A Re-examination* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing, 1979), 25–26.

16. Gordon D. Newby, *A History of the Jews of Arabia* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 49.

17. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1:156.

way of Yemen.<sup>18</sup> The Jewish and Christian presence in Arabia during these early periods made it likely that many biblical ideas penetrated into the world of Arabian paganism, whether or not any part of the Bible had been translated into Arabic at that time. Hence, knowledge of the Old and New Testaments was probably transmitted orally through the Jewish settlement in Medina and through Christian missionary efforts within the regions of the Byzantine and Sassanid (Persian) Empires, which had penetrated large areas of the Arabian Peninsula.

Stories related to biblical prophets such as Abraham circulated among the Arabs orally prior to the time of Muḥammad in the seventh century and during the early periods of Islam. Evidence indicates that material of this nature was already in circulation at the time of Muḥammad. However, a significant increase of this non-Islamic material seems to have taken place in the two generations following his death.<sup>19</sup> It is not known for certain how much written material of this nature was available during the lifetime of the prophet. But whether or not the material was available to him, it seems clear that he was familiar with some biblical material, having learned it from storytellers. One of several anecdotes from Ibn al-Jawzī illustrates that the Prophet Muḥammad was not only aware of these storytellers but seemed to approve of them:

The Messenger of God went out to a *qāṣṣ* [storyteller] who was narrating tales whereupon [the *qāṣṣ*] stopped. The Messenger of God said: "Continue narrating, for my sitting [in the meeting of a storyteller] from dawn until sunrise is more desirable to me than the releasing of four slaves; and [my sitting in such a meeting] from the afternoon until the sun sets is more pleasing to me than the freeing of four slaves."<sup>20</sup>

These storytellers (*quṣṣāṣ*) appeared on the scene at a very early period and may have been connected to the professional poets of pre-Islamic Arabia. They seem to have emerged somewhat "spontaneously and informally and were readily accepted by the community."<sup>21</sup> Up to the end of the Umayyad period (A.D. 750), some storytellers were attached to courts or camps, and they frequently visited fairs. Given the oral culture of pre-Islamic Arabia, storytellers played a significant role in society; for example, they popularized the "emotion-laden theme" of the day of judgment and the receiving of rewards or punishments here or in the hereafter.<sup>22</sup>

Following the Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries, Muslim contact with Judaism and Christianity increased. Jewish communities in the areas of Syria, North Africa, Palestine, and Egypt were able to join their coreligionists in Iran and Iraq. Muslims in some of these areas received biblical material directly from Jews, who read out of the

18. Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in Its Christian Environment* (1926; reprint, London: Cass, 1968), 17.

19. Newby, *A History of the Jews*, 66.

20. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa-ʿl-mudhakkirīn*, trans. Merlin L. Swartz (Beirut: n.p., 1986), 101.

21. Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 2:15.

22. *Ibid.*

Torah. For example, during the first century after Muḥammad, evidence indicates that the Jews would read the Torah in Hebrew and interpret it to the people of Islam in Arabic.<sup>23</sup> Even ʿUmar (d. 644), the second caliph, may have been affected by Judaism because he knew of the biblical and extrabiblical sacred literature of the Jews.<sup>24</sup>

### Muslim Transmitters

Among the Muslims we find an elaborate science of transmission developing in the two or three centuries after Muḥammad. The following section will identify the major Muslim transmitters and the careful attention Muslims give to authenticating transmission. We will see how significant the role of the Muslims was in accurately transmitting ancient extrabiblical traditions to the medieval and modern periods.

When Islam came on the scene in the early seventh century A.D., some of the early converts to Islam had originally been Jewish or Christian. Several of these new converts, such as Waraqa ibn Nawful, were contemporaries of Muḥammad and are credited with orally transmitting Jewish and Christian lore into Islam. Many of these oral stories were written down during the first and second Islamic centuries (seventh and eighth centuries A.D.).

These stories and legends were then collected and arranged into prototypical works that authors such as al-Ṭabarī and al-Thaʿlabī would later use as antecedent materials in producing their histories, which were embellished with legends and lore. Individuals credited with the task of collecting and arranging the earlier material include Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (d. ca. 652), a learned Jewish convert from Yemen; Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 730), a Yemenite of Persian descent; and ʿAbdullāh b. Salām (d. 663), a Jew from Medina. According to W. W. M. Thackston Jr., “the vast majority of legendary traditions on the pre-Islamic nations preserved in the learned literature of Islam goes back to these men.”<sup>25</sup>

Haim Schwarzbaum, a noted folklorist, has identified both Wahb ibn Munabbih and Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, in particular, as two of many traditionists who “served as ‘personality-pegs’ on which many Jewish and Christian legends were hung throughout the centuries of

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23. See Buhkārī 6:25, and al-Suyūṭī, in M. J. Kister, “Ḥaddithū ʿan banī isrāʾīla wa-lā ḥaraja,” *Israel Oriental Studies II* (1972): 238.

24. “For ʿUmar, it seems, was more familiar with local Jewish ritual and literature than has been hitherto recognized.” Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, 2:7.

25. W. W. M. Thackston Jr., trans., *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisaʿi* (Boston: Twayne, 1978), xiii. Ibn al-Jawzī includes Wahb b. Munabbih and Kaʿb al-Aḥbār in his list of the first narrators or storytellers (see Ibn al-Jawzī, 145, 161). Nabia Abbott designates ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās as the third individual in company with Wahb and Kaʿb, concluding that “one need only read through al-Kisāʾī’s *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* to realize the large extent of legendary and fictional materials attributed to these three men.” Nabia Abbott, “Wahb b. Munabbih: A Review Article,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 36/2 (1977): 112.

Islamic history."<sup>26</sup> Many other respected Muslims orally transmitted biblical materials. Individuals such as Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 687), Muḥāhid (d. 722), al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. ca. 720–25), al-Suddī (d. 745), Qatāda (d. 746), and Muḥammad ibn Ishāq (d. 768) are just a few transmitters one would become familiar with when reading Muslim tradition. Mūsā b. Hārūn, ʿAmr b. Ḥammād, Abū Hurayrah, and Abū Mālik, although not dated, are said to be contemporary with Muḥammad and also preface many Muslim biblical transmissions.

### Reliability of the Muslim Transmitters

Although much of the Muslim legendary material was transmitted orally and written down by about the end of the eighth century, a science developed to ascertain the trustworthiness of the recorded traditions and their transmitters. A “science of men” (*ʿilm al-rijāl*), as it was called, emerged about the same time that legendary materials contained in *ḥadīth* (i.e., sayings and acts of Muḥammad), Qurʾanic commentaries, and histories were written down. It developed as a safeguard against forgeries.

As most of the traditions handed down orally were accompanied by a chain of transmitters (*isnād*), learned Muslims developed a detailed way of investigating each transmitter. For instance, an *isnād* attached to a legend could look something like this: “Mūsā b. Hārūn heard it on the authority of ʿAmr b. Ḥammād—Asbāt—al-Suddī [d. 745]—Abū Ṣāliḥ [fl. 661–80]—and Abū Mālik—Ibn ʿAbbās [d. 687] and Murrah al-Hamdānī—Ibn Masʿūd and some of the companions of the Prophet: The first king who ruled over all the earth, east and west, was Nimrod.”<sup>27</sup>

Muslim scholars would carefully analyze this *isnād* to determine several things before accepting the report as credible. First, they would examine the trustworthiness (*thiqa*) of each of these individuals, whether they were good upstanding Muslims in faith and practice in the community. They then looked at issues of geography and chronology. If, for instance, al-Suddī was said to have heard this tradition from Abū Ṣāliḥ, but al-Suddī was never reported to have been in proximity to Abū Ṣāliḥ, then Muslim scholars doubted the tradition’s authenticity. Or if Abū Mālik was said to have heard the report from Ibn ʿAbbās, but Ibn ʿAbbās had already been dead for fifty years at the birth of Abū Mālik or was born a century after him, the tradition would be called into serious question.

In the following chart we can see that al-Ṭabarī mentions each of the transmitters by name before relating that Nimrod was the first of four kings. About a century later al-Thaʿlabī identifies the same transmitters as al-Ṭabarī and relates the same tradition. However, over two centuries later, the general tradition that Nimrod was the first king was firmly embedded in Muslim tradition. Baiḍāwī does not even mention the individual transmitters. This indicates how later Muslims relied upon the earlier science of transmission.

26. Haim Schwarzbaum, *Biblical and Extra-Biblical Legends in Islamic Folk-Literature* (Walldorf-Hessen: Verlage für Orientkunde, 1982), 57.

27. This is an actual *isnād* and tradition found in *Prophets and Patriarchs*, vol. 2 of *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, trans. William M. Brinner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 2:50.

Consistency of a Muslim Tradition in Cited vs. Noncited Transmission (10–13th Centuries)		
Al-Ṭabarī (d. 923)	Al-Thaʿlabī (d. 1036)	Al-Baiḍāwī (d. 1286)
Mūsā b. Hārūn ʿAmr b. Ḥammād Asbāt Al-Suddī Abū Ṣāliḥ Abū Mālik Ibn ʿAbbās Ibn Masʿūd/Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad	<i>Ḥadīth</i> reporters (i.e., the individuals in al-Ṭabarī’s list)	General transmitters No specific names
Nimrod, the first king. Four world kings (i.e., Nimrod, Solomon, Alexander, Nebuchadnezzar).	Nimrod first king to place the crown on his head. Same four kings mentioned.	Nimrod first to place crown on his head. No mention of four kings.

Concerning the Abrahamic narrative, two main Muslim traditions—particularly dealing with the events surrounding Abraham and Nimrod—emerge. One tradition comes from Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq (d. 768), and the other from al-Suddī (d. 745).<sup>28</sup> Although some details differ between the two, in general they complement each other by filling in gaps of information. Interestingly, one finds both traditions used extensively throughout the corpus of Muslim materials. Whether from historical books, Qurʾanic commentaries, or the tradition of the “stories of the prophets” (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*), a general unanimity on the major events that took place in the life of Abraham exists. This unity demonstrates not only that the early Muslims were careful in maintaining the integrity of their traditions by analyzing transmission but also that what is transmitted is in all likelihood rooted in antiquity.

For the most part biblical transmission appears to occur very early in Arabia, both prior to and after the rise of Islam. These materials were carefully checked and written down within a relatively short time after Muḥammad’s death in A.D. 632. The following chart shows the remarkable consistency of sources used by three different Muslims: al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), who wrote his famous *History*; al-Thaʿlabī (d. 1036), who wrote a *Stories of the Prophets*; and al-Baiḍāwī (d. 1286), who wrote a popular commentary on the Qurʾan. Our case study will use excerpts from the Abraham story found in each of the above three authors. Of course, this comparison is only a sample of what one would find in comparing many Muslim traditions.

28. For a careful analysis of the two traditions, see Heinrich Schutzinger, *Ursprung und Entwicklung der arabischen Abraham-Nimrod Legende* (Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1961), 20–42.

<b>Consistency in Muslim Tradition and Transmission (10–13th Centuries)</b>			
Tradition	Al-Ṭabarī's Sources	Al-Thaʿlabī's Sources	Al-Baiḍāwī's Sources
Astrologers prophesy against Nimrod.	Ibn Ishāq	Al-Suddī	Al-Suddī
Nimrod imprisons all pregnant women.	Ibn Ishāq	Ibn Ishāq	Al-Suddī
Nimrod massacres male children under age two.	Ibn Ishāq	Al-Suddī	Al-Suddī
Abraham's mother hides/gives birth in a cave.	Ibn Ishāq	Ibn Ishāq	Ibn Ishāq
Abraham receives food by sucking his thumb.	Ibn Ishāq	Ibn Ishāq	Ibn Ishāq
Abraham grows at a miraculous rate.	Ibn Ishāq	Ibn Ishāq	Ibn Ishāq
Abraham sees sun, moon, and stars and receives his call.	Ibn Ishāq	unnamed	Ibn Ishāq
Abraham mocks idols, feigns sickness, smashes idols.	Ibn Ishāq	Ibn Ishāq Al-Suddī Qatāda	unnamed
People gather wood to burn Abraham.	Ibn Ishāq	Ibn Ishāq	unnamed
Abraham is cast into the fire.	Ibn Ishāq	Ibn Ishāq	Ibn Ishāq
Abraham, in the fire, converses with Gabriel for several days.	Ibn Ishāq	Ibn Ishāq	unnamed
Abraham is imprisoned in a house.	Ibn Ishāq	unnamed	unnamed
Fire is so hot, birds flying overhead are burned.	Al-Suddī	prob. al-Suddī	prob. al-Suddī
Abraham marries Sarah.	Al-Suddī	unnamed	unnamed
Abraham/Pharaoh—wife-sister motif.	Al-Suddī	unnamed	unnamed
Pharaoh is afflicted with paralysis when he tries to touch Sarah.	Al-Suddī	unnamed	unnamed

The Abraham narrative illustrated in these charts depends in large part on the accounts of Ibn Ishāq and al-Suddī. Although these men lived in the generation after transmitters such as Kaʿb al-Aḥbār and Wahb b. Munabbih, the biblical materials Kaʿb and Wahb transmitted were most likely passed on to others such as Ibn Ishāq and al-Suddī. Just because one does not see specific reference to the earlier transmitters in the Abraham narrative does not necessarily argue against its authenticity or antiquity. In fact, there is ample evidence of antiquity when one looks into the Jewish and Christian roots of traditions related to Abraham. For instance, regarding the star, it is recorded that Nimrod saw in a dream a star that outshone the sun and the moon. This is most likely a reinterpreted version of a Jewish story concerning the astrologers of Nimrod who, “when they left the house, they lifted up their eyes toward heaven to look at the stars,” and “one great star came from the east and ran athwart the heavens and swallowed up the four stars at the four corners.”<sup>29</sup> Christians, of course, also accept the appearance of a star at the birth of Christ.<sup>30</sup> Other Muslim commentators have also related that before the birth of Abraham, Nimrod saw a star in a dream.<sup>31</sup> This may indicate that the star motif was a widespread part of the belief structures of both the Jews and the Christians before and after the rise of Islam.

Like the Muslim account of Abraham in the cave, Jewish tradition also places Abraham in a cave at birth. In one tradition God opens two windows in the cave; through one, he puts forth oil and through the other, fine flour.<sup>32</sup> In another tradition, Abraham, “lying alone in the cave without food, began to weep; but God sent the archangel Gabriel to give him milk, which flowed from the little finger of his right hand—and so the child was suckled.”<sup>33</sup> The cave motif and miracle feedings can also be found in the Christian tradition in which angels bring sustenance to saints in need.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the Muslim tradition of Abraham growing up at a miraculous rate is found in Jewish haggadic literature as well.<sup>35</sup> The idolatry and Nimrod motifs are well attested in both Jewish literature<sup>36</sup> and Muslim tradition.

29. Louis Ginzburg, *The Legends of the Jews*, trans. Henrietta Szold (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1937), 1:207.

30. See Matthew 1.

31. According to al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 2:53, “A star arose over Nimrod so bright that it blotted out the light of the sun and the moon.”

32. Schutzing, *Ursprung und Entwicklung*, 143.

33. Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), 136.

34. Note the *Book of James*, or *Protoevangelium*, 8:1: “And Mary was in the temple of the Lord as a dove that is nurtured: and she received food from the hand of an angel.” *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 42. Perhaps the *Book of James* provided some of the material about the childhood of Mary in Qurʾan 3:37. See also Ginzburg, *Legends of the Jews*, 5:212 n. 29. Christian tradition has also placed the birth of Jesus in a cave. See *Book of James* 18:1; 19:2, in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 46. See also Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 323–25.

35. For the Jewish traditions see Ginzburg, *Legends of the Jews*, 1:190–91; Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths*, 136–37. Ginzburg also argues that Christian traditions have this motif. See *Legends of the Jews*, 5:210 n. 15.

36. For the idolatry and Nimrod motifs, see David Sidersky, *Les origines des légendes musulmanes* (Paris: Geuthner, 1933), 36–38; Schutzing, *Ursprung und Entwicklung*, 145–50, 152–54; Ginzburg, *Legends of*

These few examples emphasize the antiquity of the traditions found in the Muslim Abraham narratives and also confirm the care taken by the Muslims to preserve this material.

## Conclusions

The nonbiblical traditions about Abraham underscore the pervasive influence this great patriarch has had on ancient and modern peoples. Because the Book of Abraham parallels so many nonbiblical stories, it is clearly part of the same tradition.

One might dismiss a single element found in a nonbiblical tradition that parallels the Book of Abraham as mere coincidence. However, when a large number of such elements come together from diverse times and places, they overwhelmingly support the Book of Abraham as an ancient text. There are far too many references to Terah as an idolator, Abraham as a sacrificial victim, Abraham as an astronomer, and Abraham as a missionary to lightly dismiss their antiquity. In addition, many other distinctive elements found in these traditions, though not repeated as frequently, add to the overall strength of the unique elements found in the Book of Abraham.

Over the past several years, as we have analyzed the early Abraham traditions, we have been impressed that most of the distinctive nonbiblical elements of the Book of Abraham can be supported to one degree or another by these traditions. The majority of these nonbiblical traditions were not available to the Prophet Joseph Smith during his lifetime. Therefore, we have outlined in the introductory paragraph when each work was published or translated in a Western language. While we think these traditions provide substantial evidence that the Book of Abraham is an ancient text, we realize that others may not find the evidence convincing. The persistence and stability of the traditions over more than a thousand years suggest that they may date from much earlier than their first written appearance.

To the believer the worth of the Book of Abraham lies not in how well it agrees with ancient texts but in its spiritual value, which can be ascertained only by reading it prayerfully. We hope that this volume will not only encourage the reader to turn frequently to that sacred volume of scripture but also to consider more carefully the sources and transmission of tradition.

## Organization of This Book

The extracts included in this book follow, as nearly as possible, a chronological arrangement within the different traditions. The first section deals with the earliest traditions about Abraham and includes selections from both early Jewish and pagan sources. This is followed by sections on Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sources, then a section in which other traditions (e.g., Samaritan, Falasha, and Mandaean) are grouped. A series of appendixes includes materials related to the study of Abraham.

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*the Jews*, 1:197–203, 5:212 n. 33, 5:215 n. 40; Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths*, 140–42; *Book of Jasher* 11–12; *Apocalypse of Abraham* 1–3, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1:689–90.

To illustrate the ties between the Book of Abraham and the various traditions cited in this volume, we have included footnotes to the relevant selections. Also included are several indexes. The thematic index groups various distinctive themes that are found in the Book of Abraham but are missing from the Genesis account and lists the various non-canonical texts that relate to each theme. Some of these ties are stronger than others, and we leave it to the reader to judge the relative merits of each reference in the footnotes and the index. The other two indexes are by subject and citation.

## Editorial Comments

This book contains perhaps the broadest cross section of ancient and medieval texts that FARMS has ever produced in one volume. Linguistically, the extracts come not only from languages such as Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Syriac, and Arabic, but also from lesser-known ones such as Demotic, Old Coptic, Old Turkish, Persian, and Gē'ēz. Geographically and temporally, these collected stories about Abraham stretch across the entire ancient and medieval world: three different continents and thousands of years of human history. The breadth of this project has created some unique needs in the production of the book.

### Previously Published Material

Most of the selections in this volume are based on existing translations that are readily available to the readers. Of the translations prepared especially for this volume, most are based on original texts. However, in some instances our translations are based on versions of accounts found in languages other than the original. This is partly because we could not always locate the original version and partly because of the constraints of time. We intend this book to be a resource primarily for general readers—most of whom will be members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We followed *Chicago Manual of Style* 2.174 and 2.175 as a guideline in determining how to treat the previously published material:

Usually only certain alterations are permissible, without explanation, in editing material previously published. Notes may be renumbered consecutively throughout a selection or a chapter in a selection. Cross-references to parts of the original work not reprinted should be deleted. Obvious typographical errors, inadvertent grammatical slips, and unintentional inconsistencies in modern works may be corrected. Single quotation marks may be changed to double, . . . following American practice, and periods and commas may be put inside quotation marks. . . . Words set in full capitals in the text may be marked for small capitals. Other typographical oddities should not be reproduced unless they contribute to the sense of the original. An old title page, for example, should not be set in type imitating the original typeface. . . .

Unless the editor or compiler explains—in the preface or elsewhere—what kinds of changes have been made in the original text, all other matters of style should be retained: British or archaic spelling; excessive punctuation or lack of punctuation; capitalization in

the text and notes; and style of footnotes (in some instances this may need slight modification for clarity). Any internal deletion in a selection should be indicated by ellipsis points.<sup>37</sup>

In keeping with these guidelines, we have reproduced the extracts as they are found in the original publication, including small capitals and italics. However, at times the original documents contained diacritics on just a few names or, in other texts, the names were all in small capitals. In those instances we eliminated the diacritics and the capitals to make the text more readable. These and any other omissions or changes are noted in the introductory paragraph at the beginning of each extract.

The translators of these extracts have all used various ways to indicate their insertions or corrections to the text. Unless an explanation was necessary for the sense of the text, we have not explained their sigla (here, various kinds of brackets or other symbols used to indicate emendations or clarifications of texts) or use of other typographical markers such as italics (many of the older translations do not contain explanations of their sigla).

At times, however, we have added our own bracketed material for clarification, something that could cause confusion if the previously published material also uses brackets. To avoid confusion, we have footnoted all of our brackets that are run into the text of a previously published translations. At times we have added bracketed explanations above or below paragraphs to summarize omitted text or contextualize the text following. We have not footnoted those brackets.

We have followed the same principle, but reversed, with ellipsis points. Whenever the ellipsis points are part of the previously published material, we have used a footnote to indicate that fact. Our own ellipses points we have added without comment, to indicate omissions in the text.

We have also often used our own paragraphing for each extract and, in some cases, have turned verse into prose.

### **New Translations**

The individual translators have used a variety of styles and have not necessarily been consistent in their usage between texts. Nevertheless, we have tried to create a general consistency with all the translations we made. We established a few guidelines in our use of sigla: we indicate lacunae in the text using brackets with ellipsis points or phrases indicating lacunae. We also use brackets to indicate our clarifications and, if necessary, parentheses to indicate parenthetical material by the author. Any use of other sigla is footnoted where it occurs.

In the Jewish and Western Christian material, we have kept transliteration to a minimum, using English spellings for the names. Where nonstandard spellings have been used (e.g., in many of the Eastern Christian and Arabic authors), standard spellings are found

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37. *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 99.

in the notes. Diacritics have been largely minimized except for in the Arabic material, where we chose to follow the transliteration style of one of our longest extracts, William Brinner's translation of one part of al-Ṭabarī's history, *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Note that in some instances the same name will receive different diacritics; for example, the name Abraham may be rendered Ibrāhīm or Ibrahīm. In all these cases the diacritics reflect the original Arabic spelling of the name. Also, for most of our translations, we have omitted the ubiquitous epithets (may peace be upon him, etc.) that appear in Muslim writings, and we have used dashes between names to indicate the phrase "on the authority of."

### **Introductory Paragraphs and Footnotes**

Introductory paragraphs are limited to information that pertains to the author's background, the sources of the text, its general availability, and essential comments about the excerpt. Further information may be found in the usual biographical dictionaries and specialized encyclopedias, which we used in compiling the information.

While most of our readers will likely be members of the Church of Jesus Christ who are interested in learning more about Abraham, we hope this collection will prove to be of value to others who have an interest in and want to learn more about this venerable patriarch. To this end, in the footnotes we have spelled out the names of those books of scripture familiar primarily to members of the church. For instance, references to Abraham and to the facsimiles are found in the Book of Abraham (in the Pearl of Great Price). At times reference is made to the Doctrine and Covenants, another scripture that includes revelations received by the Prophet Joseph Smith and others and is presently available in the 1981 edition. All references to the Bible are to the King James Version (KJV).

Because of the nature of this book, consistency was almost impossible to achieve. One extract will use British spellings, and another, American. Some have paragraphs numbered by folio, some simply by numbers, and, with the shorter ones, by nothing at all. Different extracts have different levels of headings and subheadings. We have tried to be as consistent as possible with our own translations, but as noted above, each section has slightly different rules. Overall, we have striven to keep the footnotes consistent, and the introductory paragraphs of each piece follow the same general pattern. We hope that our editing has made the various texts informative, easy to follow, and enjoyable to read.

### **Editorial Responsibility**

Supervisory editorial responsibility for the various excerpts has generally rested with the general editor who first identified the excerpt as being relevant. Where the editor provided the translation, the supervisory editor will be obvious. In general John A. Tvedtnes is responsible for the Jewish material and the Christian and Earliest material not translated by John Gee. Brian M. Hauglid is responsible for the Muslim material, and Hauglid and Tvedtnes share responsibility for the introduction.





# EARLIEST TRADITIONS ABOUT THE EARLY LIFE OF ABRAHAM

SECTION 1





## AN EXTRACT FROM HECATAEUS

Hecataeus of Abdera lived in the time of the Egyptian king Ptolemy I, ca. 300 B.C. When Ptolemy I controlled Abdera, Hecataeus made a trip to Egypt, traveling as far south as Thebes and, as indicated in the text below, he apparently wrote a book on Abraham and Egypt. In *Antiquities of the Jews* 1.7.2, Josephus also indicates that Hecataeus wrote a book on Abraham. The selection here is taken from Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis*, who credits Hecataeus with recording these words of Sophocles. Though thought by most scholars to be inauthentic, the text is of sufficient antiquity to be included here. The following is a translation by R. Doran in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:912. Doran notes that these verses were cited by subsequent Christian writers: Athenagoras, *Supplicatio pro Christianis* 5; Pseudo-Justin, *Cohortatio ad Graecos* 18; *De Monarchia* 2; Theodoret, *Graecarum Affectionum Curatio*, sermo 7; and Cyril of Alexandria, *Adversus Julianum* 1.

### *Stromateis* 5.113

As Hecataeus the historian states in his "On Abraham and the Egyptians," Sophocles cried out openly on the stage: One, truly one is God who made both heaven and the wide earth, the blue-gray swell of the sea and the buffeting winds. We throngs of men go astray in our hearts when, to gain solace from misery, we set up as statues of gods figures worked from wood, or images of copper, gold or ivory.<sup>1</sup> We imagine we are religious when we enjoin in their honor sacrifices and evil festivals.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

2. Note that in the translation, Sophocles' statements are set in verse.

## EXTRACTS FROM JUDITH

The book of Judith is part of the Apocrypha, books that were included in the third- (or second-) century B.C. Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. Because these books were unknown in Hebrew or Aramaic, the church fathers of the fourth century separated them from the other Old Testament books, although they remained in the Bible. When Martin Luther and other sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers again raised doubts about the Apocrypha, the Catholic Church in the Council of Trent reaffirmed their canonicity. The first edition of the King James Bible (1611) included the Apocrypha; however, in 1816, the American Bible Society condemned the books and in 1826, the British and Foreign Bible Society also excluded them. The original objection to the apocryphal books (that they did not exist in Hebrew or Aramaic versions) became moot in 1947 when some Hebrew versions of the Apocrypha showed up among the scrolls found near the Dead Sea. The extant text of Judith contains historical elements from the sixth century B.C.; however, most scholars date the composition of the text to the Maccabean period in the second century B.C. Our selections are from the King James Version of the Apocrypha.

### Chapter 5

6. This people are descended of the Chaldeans:

7. and they sojourned heretofore in Mesopotamia, because they would not follow the gods of their fathers,<sup>1</sup> which were in the land of Chaldea.

8. For they left the way of their ancestors, and worshipped the God of heaven, the God whom they knew: so they cast them out from the face of their gods, and they fled into Mesopotamia, and sojourned there many days.

9. Then their God commanded them to depart from the place where they sojourned, and to go into the land of Canaan: where they dwelt, and were increased with gold and silver, and with very much cattle.

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6, 16–17, 27.

## Chapter 8

25. Moreover let us give thanks to the Lord our God, which trieth us, even as he did our fathers.

26. Remember what things he did to Abraham, and how he tried Isaac, and what happened to Jacob in Mesopotamia of Syria, when he kept the sheep of Laban his mother's brother.

27. For he hath not tried us in the fire,<sup>2</sup> as he did them, for the examination of their hearts, neither hath he taken vengeance on us: but the Lord doth scourge them that come near unto him, to admonish them.

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2. The passage may have reference to the attempted sacrifice of Abraham in the fire (as Jewish commentators read *Ur*) of the Chaldees. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

## AN EXTRACT FROM PHILO THE EPIC POET

The Jewish epic poet Philo lived in the third or second century B.C.; he probably lived in a Greek center of culture such as Alexandria. His work is preserved only by the Christian historian Eusebius (see Artapanus and Eupolemus, below), who cites extracts from Philo's *On Jerusalem* in *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.20.1, which was first published in Latin in 1470. The original Greek text of *Praeparatio* was first published in 1544, along with a French translation. This English translation from the Greek is by H. Attridge in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:783. Note that the next few extracts also come from quotations in Eusebius's *Praeparatio Evangelica*.

A thousand times have I heard in the ancient laws how once (when you achieved something) marvelous with the bonds' knot,<sup>1</sup> O far-famed Abraham, resplendently did your God-beloved prayers abound in wonderous counsels.<sup>2</sup> For when you left the beautiful garden of dread plants,<sup>3</sup> the praiseworthy thunderer quenched the pyre<sup>4</sup> and made his promise immortal.

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

2. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

3. The translator thought this garden might refer to the wood with which Abraham intended to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:3–6), but in view of other Jewish and Muslim traditions included in this collection, we suggest that it refers to the tradition that God changed the flames of the fire into blossoming trees so Abraham would not be burned: note the reference to the quenching of the pyre.

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

## AN EXTRACT FROM ARTAPANUS

There is some disagreement on when the Jewish writer Artapanus lived, but it must have been before the first century B.C. when the Greek historian Alexander Polyhistor, who quoted him, lived. None of Artapanus's original Greek work, written in Egypt, is extant, but other writers have preserved fragments of his work. For example, a fourth-century bishop of Caesarea, Eusebius, quotes Alexander Polyhistor, who is in turn quoting Artapanus. The fragment below comes from Eusebius's *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.18.1, which was first published in Latin in 1470. The bishop's original Greek text was first published in 1544, along with a French translation. The translation below is by J. J. Collins in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:897.

### Abraham in Egypt

Artapanus says in his *Judaica* that the Jews are named "Hermiouth," which, translated into Greek, is "Jews." They were called Hebrews after Abraham. He says that the latter *came to Egypt* with all his household to the Egyptian king Pharethothes, and *taught him astrology*,<sup>1</sup> that he remained there twenty years and then departed again for the regions of Syria, but that many of those who came with him remained in Egypt on account of the prosperity of the land.

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1. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3. There was no difference in the ancient world between astronomy and astrology; the same term referred to both.

## EXTRACTS FROM EUPOLEMUS

Several times in *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.17.2–9, Eusebius cites Eupolemus, who may have been a Jew or Samaritan who lived in the mid-second century B.C. in Palestine. *Praeparatio* was first published in Latin in 1470. The original Greek text was first published in 1544, along with a French translation. This English translation is by R. Doran in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:880–82.

3. Eupolemus holds that Abraham was born in the tenth generation in the Babylonian city Camarina, although others state that the city was named Ourie (which means “city of the Chaldeans”) and that Abraham was born in the thirteenth generation. Abraham excelled all in nobility and wisdom; he sought and obtained the knowledge of astrology and the Chaldean craft,<sup>1</sup> and pleased God because he eagerly sought to be reverent.

4. At God’s command, he traveled to Phoenicia [Canaan]<sup>2</sup> and dwelt there. He pleased the Phoenician king by teaching the Phoenicians the cycles of the sun and moon, and everything else as well.<sup>3</sup> . . .

[Here follows the story of Abraham’s rescue of Lot and his encounter with Melchizedek, recorded in Genesis 14.]

6. When famine came on the land, Abraham moved to Egypt with his whole household and dwelt there. The king of the Egyptians married Abraham’s wife, since Abraham had said that she was his sister.

7. Furthermore, Eupolemus relates that the king was not able to have intercourse with Abraham’s wife and that his people and household were wasting away. When he summoned his diviners, they said, “Let the woman not be parted from her husband.” In this way, the king of the Egyptians realized that she was the wife of Abraham, and he returned her to her husband.

8. Abraham lived in Heliopolis with the Egyptian priests and taught them much: He explained astrology and the other sciences to them,<sup>4</sup> saying that the Babylonians and he

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

2. Our insertion.

3. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3.

4. Ibid.

himself had obtained this knowledge. However, he attributed the discovery of them to Enoch.<sup>5</sup> Enoch first discovered astrology, not the Egyptians.

9. For the Babylonians hold that Belos, who is son of Kronos, lived first. Kronos begot sons named Belos and Canaan.<sup>6</sup> This Canaan fathered the ancestor of the Phoenicians, whose son was Chus, called by the Greeks Asbolus. Chus was the ancestor of the Ethiopians and the brother of Mitsraim, the ancestor of the Egyptians.<sup>7</sup>

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5. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

6. Belos is Bel or Marduk, the principal god of Babylon, whose name is paralleled by the Canaanite Baal. Kronos is the father of the Greek god Zeus. If Canaan is the son of Belos, then Belos would correspond to the biblical Ham.

7. Mitsraim corresponds with the biblical Mizraim, eponymous ancestor of the Egyptians who is, indeed, the brother of Cush (here given in the Greek as Chus). While the Bible makes both of them brothers to Canaan, here they are his sons. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

## AN EXTRACT FROM AN ANONYMOUS WORK

In *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.18.2, Eusebius cites the following item about Abraham from an anonymous work in conjunction with quotations from Artapanus and Eupolemus. From this we suppose that it is related, perhaps chronologically, to those works and thus include it here even though it may date as late as the third century A.D. The *Praeparatio* was first published in Latin in 1470; the original Greek text was published along with a French translation in 1544. This translation is that of R. Doran in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:882.

In anonymous works, we find that Abraham traced his ancestry to the giants. These dwelt in the land of Babylonia. Because of their impiety, they were destroyed by the gods. One of them, Belos, escaped death and settled in Babylon. He built a tower and lived in it; the tower was called Belos after its builder. After Abraham had learned astrology, he first went to Phoenicia and taught it to the Phoenicians; later he went to Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3.

## AN EXTRACT FROM THE SIBYLLINE ORACLES

The third book of the *Sibylline Oracles* is thought to have been written by someone from the Jewish community of Alexandria, Egypt, sometime between 163 and 145 B.C., though it purports to be an oracle uttered by the Sibyl (a legendary Greek prophetess) centuries before that. Jews and Christians alike saw events of the Bible and other important historical events foretold in this Greek text, and the church fathers quote the *Oracles* extensively. The work thus has been preserved in several complete manuscripts (although with some lacunae) dating from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The *Oracles* were first published in English in 1890; the translation used here is by J. J. Collins in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1:367.

### Book 3

218. There is a city . . .<sup>1</sup> in the land of Ur of the Chaldeans,  
219. whence comes a race of most righteous men.  
220. They are always concerned with good counsel and noble works  
221. for they do not worry about the cyclic course of the sun  
222. or the moon. . . .  
227. Neither do they practice the astrological predictions of the Chaldeans  
228. nor astronomy. For all these things are erroneous,<sup>2</sup>  
229. such as foolish men inquire into day by day,  
230. exercising themselves at a profitless task.

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1. The ellipsis is part of the translation; it apparently represents a lacuna.

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

## EXTRACTS FROM THE ORPHICA

The group of poetic texts known as the Orphica was probably written in Greek sometime between 150 B.C. and A.D. 50 and contains a discourse addressed by Orpheus to his pupil Musaeus.<sup>1</sup> Several versions are known from early Christian writers, including one of the longer versions cited by the Christian historian Eusebius (A.D. 263–340) in *Praeparatio Evangelica* 13.12.5, which he said he drew from Aristobulus, who wrote sometime between 155 and 145 B.C. *Praeparatio* was first published in Latin in 1470, and the original Greek was published with a French translation in 1544. Another long version of the Orphica is included in a fifth-century Theosophical text, published in Leipzig in 1899 and in Hamburg in 1941. The two long versions have been combined in the translation used here, by M. LaFargue in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:799–800. This text is also found in the section on Aristobulus, 2:840.

6. But look to the divine word, study it closely,
7. [So] guiding your heart, that knowing vessel. Set out firmly
8. On the path, and look only at the undying shaper of the universe.
9. There is an ancient saying about him:
10. "He is one"<sup>2</sup>—self-completing, and all things completed by him, . . .
16. "And there is no other."<sup>3</sup>
  
25. And no one has seen the ruler of mortal men,
26. Except a certain unique man [Abraham],<sup>4</sup> an offshoot from far back of the race
27. Of the Chaldeans. For he was knowledgeable about the path of the Star,<sup>5</sup>
28. And how the movement of the Sphere goes around the earth,

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1. Note that Firmicus Maternus, extracts of whose work are included in this collection, names Orpheus with Abraham as one who was skilled in astronomy (*Mathesis* 4, *Proem* 5).
2. Probably an allusion to Deuteronomy 6:4.
3. Perhaps an allusion to Exodus 20:3. We include lines 10 and 16 because they reflect sayings about God that are attributed to Abraham in the medieval Jewish literature included in this volume.
4. Our addition.
5. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

29. Both in circular fashion, but each on its own axis.
30. He rides in spirit through the air and through the water
31. Of the stream. A comet makes manifest these events—he had a mighty birth.<sup>6</sup>
32. Yes he after this is established in the great heaven
33. On a golden throne.<sup>7</sup>

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6. While some of the stories have Abraham's birth declared by the appearance of a star that swallows up four other stars, the Orphica has his birth heralded by the appearance of a comet.

7. Cf. Abraham 3:2 and Doctrine and Covenants 132:29.

## EXTRACTS FROM JUBILEES

The book of *Jubilees*, sometimes called *Little Genesis*, is an ancient Jewish text that parallels Genesis. *Jubilees* was known in Greek, Syriac, Latin, and Ethiopic translations, but not until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls did fragments of a Hebrew version come to light. The oldest fragments date to the late second or early first century B.C., but because some of the other Dead Sea Scrolls borrow from *Jubilees*, the book was likely written no later than the mid-second century B.C. The first publication of *Jubilees* was the Latin version, printed in 1861. The text used here is from O. S. Wintermute's English translation of the Ethiopic in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:78–84, 93–99, 129.

### Chapter 11

3. And Ur, the son of Kesed, built the city of Ur of the Chaldees and he named it after his name and his father's name.

4. And they made for themselves molten images, and everyone worshiped the icon which they made for themselves as a molten image. And they began making graven images and polluted likenesses.<sup>1</sup> And cruel spirits assisted them and led them astray so that they might commit sin and pollution.

5. And the prince, Mastema,<sup>2</sup> acted forcefully to do all of this. And he sent other spirits to those who were set under his hand to practice all error and sin and all transgression, to destroy, to cause to perish and to pour out blood upon the earth.

6. Therefore he called the name of Seroh, "Serug," because everyone had turned back to commit all sin and transgression.

7. And he grew up and dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees near the father of his wife's mother. And he used to worship idols.<sup>3</sup> And he took a wife in the thirty-sixth jubilee, in the fifth week, in the first year thereof.<sup>4</sup> And her name was Melka, daughter of Kaber, daughter of his father's brother.

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

2. Mastema is a title that the writers of *Jubilees* and the Dead Sea Scrolls use for the devil.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

4. In the law of Moses, the seventh year was a sabbatical year. After seven such "weeks" (i.e., forty-nine years) came the fiftieth year, termed a *jubilee*. *Jubilees* draws its name from the fact that it uses this counting method.

8. And she bore for him Nahor in the first year of that week. And he grew up and he dwelt in Ur among the Chaldeans, and his father taught him the researches of the Chaldeans in order to practice divination and astrology according to the signs of heaven.<sup>5</sup>

9. And in the thirty-seventh jubilee, in the sixth week, in the first year thereof, he took a wife. And her name was Iyaska, daughter of Nestag of the Chaldees.

10. And she bore for him Terah in the seventh year of that week.

11. And Prince Mastema sent crows and birds so that they might eat the seed which was being sown in the earth in order to spoil the earth so that they might rob mankind of their labors. Before they plowed in the seed, the crows picked it off the surface of the earth.

12. And therefore he called him Terah because the crows and birds were impoverishing them. And they ate their seed.

13. And the years began being barren because of the birds. And they ate all of the fruit of the trees from the groves. If ever they were able to save a little from all the fruit of the earth in their days, it was with great effort.<sup>6</sup>

14. And in this thirty-ninth jubilee, in the second week, in the first year, Terah took a wife and her name was ʾEdna, daughter of ʾAbram, daughter of his father's sister.

15. And in the seventh year of that week, she bore a son for him, and he called him Abram, after the name of his mother's father because he died before his daughter conceived a son.

16. And the lad began understanding the straying of the land, that everyone went astray after graven images and after pollution.<sup>7</sup> And his father taught him writing.<sup>8</sup> And he was two weeks of years old. And he separated from his father so that he might not worship the idols with him.<sup>9</sup>

17. And he began to pray to the Creator of all so that he might save him from the straying of the sons of men,<sup>10</sup> and so that his portion might not fall into straying after the pollution and scorn.

18. And the seed time arrived for sowing in the land. And they all went out together so that they might guard their seed from before the crows. And Abraham went out with those who went out. And the lad was fourteen years old.<sup>11</sup>

19. And a cloud of crows came so that they might eat the seed, and Abram used to run up to them before they settled upon the earth. And he would call out to them before they settled upon the earth to eat seed, and he said, "Don't come down. Return to the place whence you came." And they turned back.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:31. Some of the texts included in this collection indicate that God weaned Abraham from astrology by showing him the true order of the heavens. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17.

10. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

11. Various traditions make Abraham three, fourteen, or forty-eight years old when he came to know God.

20. And he caused the cloud of crows to turn back seventy times in that day. And none of the crows settled on any of the fields where Abram was, not one.

21. And all who were with him in all of the fields saw him as he was calling out. And all of the crows turned away.<sup>12</sup> And his reputation was great in all the land of Chaldea.

22. And all who would sow came to him during that year. And he used to go with them until the seed time passed. And they sowed their land and harvested in that year enough food, and they ate and were satisfied.

23. And in the first year of the fifth week, Abram taught those who were making the implements for oxen, the skilled carpenters. And they made implements above the ground facing the handle of the plow so that they might place seed upon it. And the seed would go down from within it onto the point of the plow, and it would be hidden in the earth.<sup>13</sup> And therefore they were not afraid of the crows.

24. And they did likewise upon all of the plow handles above the ground. And they sowed and tilled all of the earth just as Abram commanded them. And therefore they were not afraid of the birds.

## Chapter 12

1. And it came to pass in the sixth week, in its seventh year, that Abram spoke to Terah, his father, saying, "O father." And he said, "Behold, here I am, my son."

2. And he said: "What help or advantage do we have from these idols before which you worship and bow down?"<sup>14</sup>

3. Because there is not any spirit in them, for they are mute, and they are the misleading of the heart. Do not worship them.

4. Worship the God of heaven, who sends down rain and dew upon the earth, and who makes everything upon the earth, and created everything by his word, and all life is in his presence.

5. Why do you worship those who have no spirit in them? Because they are works of the hands, and you are carrying them upon your shoulders, and there is no help from them for you, except great shame for those who made them and the misleading of the heart for those who worship them. Do not worship them."

6. And his father said to him, "I also know (that), my son, but what shall I do to the people who have made me minister before them?"

7. And if I speak to them in righteousness, they will kill me because their souls cleave to them so that they might worship them and praise them. Be silent, my son, lest they kill you."

8. And he told this matter to two of his brothers, and they were angry with him, and he kept quiet.

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12. Cf. Abraham 2:17.

13. Seeder plows (Sumerian *apin*, Akkadian *apinnu*) were attested in Mesopotamia at least as early as the Ur III period, before Abraham.

14. The translator has used lines and stanzas here and in other verses. We have chosen to use paragraphs throughout.

9. And in the fortieth jubilee, in the second week, in its seventh year, Abram took a wife and her name was Sarai, daughter of his father, and she became a wife for him.

10. And Haran, his brother, took a wife in the third year of the third week, and she bore a son for him in the seventh year of that week. And he called him Lot.

11. And Nahor, his brother, took a wife.

12. In the sixtieth year of the life of Abram, i.e. the fourth week, in its fourth year, Abram arose in the night and burned the house of idols.<sup>15</sup> And he burned everything in the house. And there was no man who knew.

13. And they rose up in the night, and they wanted to save their gods from the midst of the fire.

14. And Haran rushed to save them, and the fire flared up over him. And he was burned in the fire and died in Ur of the Chaldees before Terah, his father.<sup>16</sup> And they buried him in Ur of the Chaldees.

15. And Terah went out of Ur of the Chaldees, he and his sons, so that they might come into the land of Lebanon and into the land of Canaan. And he dwelt in Haran. And Abram dwelt with Terah, his father, in Haran two weeks of years.

16. And in the sixth week, in its fifth year, Abram sat up during the night on the first of the seventh month, so that he might observe the stars<sup>17</sup> from evening until daybreak<sup>18</sup> so that he might see what the nature of the year would be with respect to rain. And he was sitting alone and making observations;

17. And a word came into his heart, saying, "All of the signs of the stars and the signs of the sun and the moon are all in the hand of the LORD.<sup>19</sup> Why am I seeking?"

18. If he desires, he will make it rain morning and evening, and if he desires he will not send (it) down; and everything is in his hand."

19. And he prayed on that night, saying: "My God, the Most High God, you alone are God to me. And you created everything, and everything which is was the work of your hands,<sup>20</sup> and you and your kingdom I have chosen.

20. Save me from the hands of evil spirits which rule over the thought of the heart of man, and do not let them lead me astray from following you, O my God; but establish me and my seed forever, and let us not go astray henceforth and forever."

21. And he said, "Shall I return unto Ur of the Chaldees who seek my face so that I should return to them? Or shall I dwell here in this place? Make the straight path prosper before you in the hand of your servant that he might serve. And do not let me walk in the error of my heart, O my God."

22. And he finished talking and praying and behold, the word of the LORD was sent to him by my hand, saying, "Come forth from your land and from your kin and from

15. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

16. Cf. Abraham 2:1.

17. Cf. Abraham 3:1–2.

18. Cf. Abraham 3:14.

19. Cf. Abraham 3:11–12.

20. Cf. Abraham 3:11.

your father's house into the land which I shall show you, and I shall establish you as a great and numerous people.

23. And I shall bless you and I shall make your name great, and you will be blessed in the land and all the nations of the earth will bless themselves by you. And whoever blesses you I shall bless and whoever curses you I shall curse.<sup>21</sup>

24. And I shall be God for you and your son and for the son of your son and for all of your seed. Do not fear henceforth and for all the generations of the earth. I am your God."

25. And the LORD God said to me, "Open his mouth and his ears so that he might hear and speak with his mouth in the language which is revealed because it ceased from the mouth of all of the sons of men from the day of the Fall."

26. And I opened his mouth and his ears and his lips and I began to speak with him in Hebrew, in the tongue of creation.

27. And he took his father's books—and they were written in Hebrew—and he copied them. And he began studying them thereafter.<sup>22</sup> And I caused him to know everything which he was unable (to understand). And he studied them (in) the six months of rain.

[Here follows Terah's blessing of Abraham and Abraham's migration to the land of Canaan, which is also found in Genesis 12.]

### Chapter 13

10. . . . And there was a famine in the land.

11. And Abram went into Egypt in the third year of the week and he stayed in Egypt five years before his wife was taken from him.

12. And Tanis of Egypt was built then, seven years after Hebron.

13. And it came to pass when Pharaoh took Sarai, the wife of Abraham, that the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues on account of Sarai, the wife of Abram.

14. And Abram was honored with many possessions: sheep and oxen and asses and horses and camels and male and female servants and silver and much gold. And Lot, his brother's son, also had possessions.

15. And Pharaoh returned Sarai, the wife of Abram. And he sent him out from the land of Egypt.

[Here follows the story of Abraham's return to Canaan, his rescue of Lot and his encounter with Melchizedek, followed by the covenant the Lord made with him, all found in Genesis 13–15. We include a brief extract that is relevant to the Book of Abraham account (the Lord is speaking in the next selection)].

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21. Citing Genesis 12:1–3; cf. Abraham 2:11.

22. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

## Chapter 14

4. And he took him outside and he said to him, “Look into heaven and count the stars if you are able to count them.”<sup>23</sup>

5. And he looked at the heaven and he saw the stars. And he said to him, “Thus shall your seed be.”

[The chapters that follow contain the rest of the story of Abraham, much as it is found in Genesis 15–25. But his farewell blessing and exhortation to his posterity are unique to *Jubilees*, and we extract therefrom the following items that are relevant to a study of the Book of Abraham.]

## Chapter 20

[Abraham speaking to his sons:]

7. I exhort you, my sons, love the God of heaven, and be joined to all of his commands. And do not go after their idols and after their defilement.

8. And do not make gods of molten or carved images for yourself, because it is vain and they have no spirit. Because they are the work of hands, and all those who trust in them trust in nothing. Do not worship them and do not bow down to them.

9. But worship the Most High God, and bow down to him continually.

## Chapter 21

[From Abraham’s blessing of his son Isaac:]

2. “Behold I am one hundred and seventy-five years old, and throughout all of the days of my life I have been remembering the LORD and sought with all my heart to do his will and walk uprightly in all his ways.

3. I hated idols, and those who serve them I have rejected. And I have offered my heart and spirit so that I might be careful to do the will of the one who created me

4. because he is the living God. And he is holy, and faithful, and he is more righteous than all (others). . . .

10. Because thus I have found written in the books of my forefathers<sup>24</sup> and in the words of Enoch and in the words of Noah.”<sup>25</sup>

## Chapter 22

[From Abraham’s blessing of his grandson Jacob:]

16. “And you also, my son, Jacob, remember my words, and keep the commandments of Abraham, your father. Separate yourself from the gentiles, and do not eat with them, and do not perform deeds like theirs. And do not become associates of theirs. Because their deeds are defiled, and all of their ways are contaminated, and despicable, and abominable.

23. Cf. Genesis 15:5; Abraham 3:1–2.

24. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

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

17. They slaughter their sacrifices to the dead, and to the demons they bow down. And they eat in tombs. And all their deeds are worthless and vain.

18. And they have no heart to perceive, and they have no eyes to see what their deeds are, and where they wander astray, saying to the tree 'you are my god,' and to a stone 'you are my lord, and you are my savior'; and they have no heart.<sup>26</sup>

19. But (as for) you, my son, Jacob, may God Most High help you, and the God of heaven bless you. And may he turn you from their defilement, and from all their errors.

20. Be careful, my son, Jacob, that you do not take a wife from any of the seed of the daughters of Canaan, because all of his seed is (destined) for uprooting from the earth;

21. because through the sin of Ham, Canaan sinned, and all of his seed will be blotted out from the earth, and all his remnant, and there is none of his who will be saved.<sup>27</sup>

22. And for all of those who worship idols and for the hated ones, there is no hope in the land of the living; because they will go down into Sheol. And in the place of judgment will they walk, and they will have no memory upon the earth. Just as the sons of Sodom were taken from the earth, so (too) all of those who worship idols shall be taken away."<sup>28</sup>

### Chapter 39

6. He [Joseph]<sup>29</sup> remembered the LORD and the words which Jacob, his father, used to read, which were from the words of Abraham.<sup>30</sup>

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26. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:28; 28:36, 64; 29:17; 2 Kings 19:18; Isaiah 37:19; Ezekiel 20:32; Daniel 5:4, 23; Habakkuk 2:18–19; Revelation 9:20; Abraham 1:11.

27. Contrast Abraham 1:21–22.

28. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

29. Our insertion.

30. Cf. Abraham 1:31.

## EXTRACTS FROM PSEUDO-PHILO

The *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo (*Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*) is a creative retelling of the biblical story from Adam to David. The text may have been composed as early as the late second century B.C. or as late as the latter part of the first century A.D.; around the time of Christ seems the most plausible date. Pseudo-Philo exists in several complete Latin manuscripts and three fragments, dating from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. Hebraisms in the text suggest that the original was composed in Hebrew, in the Palestine area, and the work is thought to have been translated into Greek and then into the Latin now extant. Although the text attributes itself to Philo, his authorship is doubtful because (1) Philo wrote in Greek, not Hebrew, and (2) he interpreted biblical texts allegorically, and this work does not. The text differs from standard midrashic commentary because it interweaves scripture and commentary, a practice that later became standard in the Christian tradition; it was the Christians who preserved this text. The Latin text was first published in 1898. In 1917, M. R. James made the first English translation of this work. Here we employ the translation of D. J. Harrington in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:309, 310–12, 332–33, 345.

### Chapter 4

16. Then those who inhabited the earth began to observe the stars and started to reckon by them and to make predictions and to have their sons and daughters pass through the fire.<sup>1</sup> But Serug and his sons did not act as these did.

### Chapter 6

1. Then all those who had been separated and were inhabiting the earth gathered and dwelt together. *And migrating from the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylon; and settling there, each one said to his neighbor;*<sup>2</sup> “Behold it will happen that we will be scattered every man from his brother and in the last days we will be fighting one another. Now come, let us build for ourselves a tower whose top will reach the heavens, and we will make a name for ourselves and a glory upon the earth.”<sup>3</sup>

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

2. Citing Genesis 11:2–3.

3. Citing Genesis 11:4.

2. *And they said, each to his neighbor, "Let us take bricks and let each of us write our names on the bricks and burn them with fire;<sup>4</sup> and whatever will be burned through and through will be used for mortar and brick."*

3. *And they took their bricks, all of them except twelve men who would not take them. And these are their names: Abram, Nahor, Lot, Ruge, Tenute, Zaba, Armodat, Jobab, Esar, Abimahel, Saba, Aulin.*

4. *And the people of that land laid hold of them and brought them to their chiefs and said, "These are the men who have gone against our plans and would not walk in our ways." And the leaders said to them, "Why were each of you not willing to cast in bricks along with the people of the land?" And those men answered saying, "We are not casting in bricks, nor are we joining in your scheme. We know the one LORD, and him we worship. Even if you throw us into the fire with your bricks, we will not join you."*

5. *And the leaders were angered and said, "As they have spoken, so do to them. And unless they take part with us in throwing in the bricks, you will have the fire devour them along with your bricks."*

6. *And Joktan, who was chief of the leaders, answered, "No, but let them be given a period of seven days, and if they repent of their evil plans and are willing to cast in bricks with you, they may live. If not, let it be done and let them be burned then in accord with your judgment." He, however, sought how he might save them from the hands of the people, because he was of their tribe and served God.*

7. *When this was said, he took them and locked them in the royal household. And when it was evening, the leader commanded that fifty men of might be summoned to him, and he said to them, "Go forth and tonight take those men who are locked in my house, and put supplies for them from my household on ten beasts of burden. And bring those men to me, and bring their supplies along with the beasts of burden to the mountains and take care of them there. And know that, if anyone learns what I have said to you, I will burn you in the fire."*

8. *And the men went forth and did everything that their chief commanded them. And they brought the men to his house by night, and they took their supplies and put them on the beasts of burden and led them into the mountains as he had commanded them.*

9. *And the chief summoned to himself those twelve men and said to them, "Be confident and do not fear, for you will not die. For the God in whom you trust is powerful, and therefore be steadfast in him because he will free you and save you.<sup>5</sup> And behold now I have commanded the fifty men who have brought you out here; supplies have already been taken from my household. And they have gone forth into the mountains and are waiting for you in the valley, and I will give you another fifty men who will escort you there. And go, hide yourselves there in the valley; you will have drinking water that flows from the rocks. And stay there for thirty days, until the hatred of the people of this*

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4. Citing Genesis 11:3.

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

land subsides and until God sends his wrath upon them and destroys them.<sup>6</sup> For I know that the evil plan that they have agreed to carry out will not stand, because their plot is foolish. And when seven days have passed and they seek you out, I will say to them, 'The door of the jail in which they were locked up was broken down. They went out and escaped by night. And I have sent a hundred men to search after them.' And I will distract them from the anger that is upon them."

10. And eleven of the men answered him and said, "Your servants have found favor in your eyes, because we are rescued from the hands of these arrogant men."

11. But Abram alone was silent. And the leader said to him, "Why do you not answer me, Abram servant of God?" Abram answered and said, "Behold, today I flee to the mountains. And if I escape the fire, wild beasts will come out of the mountains and devour us; or we will lack food and die of famine; and we will be found fleeing from the people of this land but falling in our sins. And now as he in whom I trust lives, I will not be moved from my place where they have put me. If there be any sin of mine so flagrant that I should be burned up, let the will of God be done." And the leader said to him, "May your blood be upon your own head if you are not willing to go forth with these men. Now if you are willing to do so, you will be freed; but if you wish to stay, stay as you wish." And Abram said, "I will not go forth, but I will stay here."<sup>7</sup>

12. And the leader took those eleven men and sent another fifty with them and commanded them, saying, "You also, wait in the mountains for fifteen days with those fifty who were sent on ahead; and afterward come back and say, 'We have not found them,' as I told the former group. And know that if anyone disregards any of these words that I have spoken to you, he will be burned in the fire." And the men went forth. And he took Abram by himself and locked him up again where he had been confined.

13. And after seven days had passed, the people gathered together and said to their leader, "Give us back the men who were unwilling to join in our plan, and we will burn them in the fire." And they sent the leaders to bring them out, and they found no one but Abram. And they gathered together with their leaders and said, "The men whom you locked up have fled; they have evaded our scheme."

14. And Fenech and Nimrod said to Joktan, "Where are the men whom you locked up?" But that man said, "They have broken out by night. But I have sent a hundred men to search for them and commanded them that, if they find them, not only should they burn them in the fire but also give their corpses to the birds of the heavens, and so let them destroy them."

15. And then those men said, "This fellow who alone has been found, we will burn him." And they took Abram and brought him to their leaders. And they said to him, "Where are those who were with you?" And he said, "I was sleeping during the night; when I awoke, I did not find them."

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6. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

7. A similar idea is found in other versions of the Abraham story: the patriarch refuses to be rescued by the angels but trusts that God himself will save him.

16. And they took him and built a furnace and lit it. And they threw bricks burned with fire into the furnace. And then the leader Joktan with great emotion took Abram and threw him along with the bricks into the fiery furnace.<sup>8</sup>

17. But God caused a great earthquake, and the fire gushing out of the furnace leaped forth in flames and sparks of flame. And it burned all those standing around in sight of the furnace.<sup>9</sup> And all those who were burned in that day were 83,500. But there was not the least injury to Abram from the burning of the fire.

18. And Abram came up out of the furnace, and the fiery furnace collapsed.<sup>10</sup> And Abram was saved and went away to the eleven men who were hidden in the mountains, and he reported to them everything that had happened to him. And they came down with him from the mountains, rejoicing in the name of the LORD. And no one who met them frightened them that day. And they named that place by the name of Abram and in the language of the Chaldeans "Deli," which means "God."

### Chapter 18

[God speaking to Balaam:]

5. And he [God]<sup>11</sup> said to him, "Is it not regarding this people [Israel] that I spoke to Abraham in a vision, saying, 'Your seed will be like the stars of heaven,' when I lifted him above the firmament and showed him the arrangements of all the stars?"<sup>12</sup>

### Chapter 23

4. And Joshua rose up in the morning and gathered all the people and said to them, "The LORD says this: "There was one rock from which I quarried out your father. And the cutting of that rock bore two men whose names are Abraham and Nahor, and out of the chiseling of that place were born two women whose names are Sarah and Melcha, *and they lived together across the river.*"<sup>13</sup> And Abraham took Sarah as a wife, and Nahor took Melcha.

5. And when all those inhabiting the land were being led astray after their own devices,<sup>14</sup> Abraham believed in me and was not led astray with them. And I rescued him from the flame<sup>15</sup> *and took him and brought him over all the land of Canaan* and said to him in a vision, "To your seed I will give this land."<sup>16</sup>

### Chapter 32

1. *Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abino and all the people together sang a hymn to the LORD on that day, saying,*<sup>17</sup> "Behold the LORD has shown us his glory from on high, as he

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

9. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

11. These brackets and the next are our insertions.

12. Citing Genesis 22:17. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

13. Citing Joshua 24:2.

14. The wording is evidently based on Joshua 24:2, which makes Abraham's fathers idolators.

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

16. Citing Genesis 12:7.

17. Citing Judges 5:1.

did in the height of the heavenly places when he sent forth his voice to confuse the languages of men. And he chose our nation and took Abraham our father out of the fire<sup>18</sup> and chose him over all his brothers and kept him from the fire and freed him from the bricks destined for building the tower.”

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

## EXTRACTS FROM THE GENESIS APOCRYPHON

The *Genesis Apocryphon* is one of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in caves above the western shore of the Dead Sea beginning in 1947. They vary in date from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D. The *Genesis Apocryphon* is essentially a midrashic version of the biblical book of Genesis in Aramaic. The first edition was published in 1956 and included both the Aramaic text and an English translation. The following English translation of columns XIX–XX appears in Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 232–34. The numbers refer to lines in the original text. As is evident below, the manuscript contains many lacunae. For an explanation of the sigla used below, see *ibid.*, xxvi.

### Column XIX

10. . . . However, a famine occurred in this whole country. I heard that there was grain in Egypt, and left

11. to [enter] the land of Egypt [ . . . ] I reached the river Carmon, one of the

12. branches of the river [Nile]<sup>1</sup> now we [ . . . ] our land. And I crossed the seven branches of this river which [ . . . ]

13. [ . . . ] Then we crossed our land and we entered the land of the sons of Ham in the land of Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

14. *Blank I*, Abram, dreamt a dream, on the night of my entry into Egypt. And in my dream I saw a cedar and a palm-tree.<sup>3</sup>

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1. We have supplied the name missing from the damaged portion of the manuscript, which the translator did not restore. It seems clear from the “seven branches” of the river mentioned in the text that we are dealing with the Nile, whose seven branches have been renowned throughout history. Other translators have restored the name as the “river [of Egypt],” but this restoration is to be rejected because the biblical river of that name (Genesis 15:18; Numbers 34:5; Joshua 15:4, 47; 1 Kings 8:65; 2 Kings 24:7; 2 Chronicles 7:8) is a seasonal stream, the Wadi Arish, that marked the ancient border with Egypt and is more accurately rendered “the stream of Egypt” in Isaiah 27:12.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

3. The imagery of the palm and cedar in connection with Abram and Sarai going into Egypt is also found in *Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 41:1 and *Zohar* Genesis 82a, as noted later in this collection. See also *Targum Neofiti* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, where we read in Numbers 21:34 that the giant Og had mocked Abraham and Sarah as “beautiful trees standing beside springs of water, but produc-

15. [ . . . ] Some men arrived intending to cut and uproot the cedar, leaving the palm-tree alone.

16. But the palm-tree shouted and said: Do not hew down the cedar, because both of us are of the same family. And the cedar was saved thanks to the palm-tree,

17. and was not hewn down. *Blank* I woke up from my slumber during the night and said to Sarai, my wife: I have had

18. a nightmare [ . . . and] I am alarmed by this dream. She said to me: Tell me your dream so that I may know it. And I began to tell her the dream.

19. [And I let her know the interpretation] of the dream. I said: [ . . . ] they want to kill me and leave you alone. This favour only

20. [must you do for me]: every time we [reach a place, say] about me: He is my brother. And I shall live under your protection and my life will be spared because of you.

21. [ . . . ] they will try to separate you from me and kill me. Sarai wept because of my words that night.<sup>4</sup>

22. [ . . . ] the Pharaoh [Zoan . . . so that] Sarai [did not wish] to go to Zoan

23. [with me, because she greatly feared] within herself that anybody could see her. After these five years

24. three men of the princes of Egypt [came . . . ] from Pharaoh Zoan on account of my [words] and of my wife. They gave me

25. [many presents expecting from me] goodness, wisdom and truth. I read in front of them the [book] of the words of Enoch<sup>5</sup>

26. [ . . . ] concerning the famine which [ . . . ] and not [ . . . ] and they arrived, urging until [ . . . ] to her [ . . . ] the words of [ . . . ]

27. [ . . . ] with much eating and drinking [ . . . ] wine [ . . . ]

## Column XX

1. [ . . . ] . . . [ . . . ]

2. [ . . . ] How dazzling and pretty is the shape of her face, and how [ . . . ]

3. [ . . . , ] how smooth the hair of her head! How lovely are her eyes; how pleasant her nose and all the animation

4. of her face [ . . . ] How graceful is her breast and how lovely all her whiteness! How beautiful are her arms! And her hands, how

5. perfect! How alluring is the whole appearance of her hands! How pretty are the palms of her hands and how long and supple all the fingers of her hands! Her feet,

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ing no fruit." Cited from Martin McNamara and Ernest G. Clarke, trans., *Targum Neofiti I: Numbers, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Numbers* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1995), 123; see also 250–51. Note also that Zohar Numbers 203a says that the three cedars of Lebanon are "the emblem of the Patriarchs." *The Zohar*, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York: Bennet, 1958), 5:299. The imagery evidently derives from Psalm 92:12, 14, where we read that "the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. . . . They shall still bring forth fruit in old age."

4. Cf. Abraham 2:22–25.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

6. how lovely! How perfect her legs! No virgin or wife who enters the bridal chamber is more beautiful than her. Above all

7. women her beauty stands out; her loveliness is far above them all. And with all this beauty there is in her great wisdom. And everything she does with her hands

8. is perfect. When the king heard the words of HRKNWS<sup>6</sup> and the words of his two companions, since the three of them spoke in unison, he desired her greatly and sent

9. with all speed for them to fetch her. He saw her and was amazed at all her beauty, and took her for himself as a wife. He tried to kill me, but Sarai said

10. to the king: He is my brother, so that I could profit at her expense. I, Abram, was forgiven on her account and I was not killed. But I wept

11. bitterly that night, I, Abram and my nephew Lot with me, because Sarai had been taken away from me by force. *Blank*

12. That night I prayed, pleaded and entreated and said in my distress, while my tears flowed: Blessed are you, O God Most High, my Lord, through all the

13. universe. For you are Lord and Master of everything and rule all the kings of the earth, to judge them all. Now

14. I lodge a complaint before you, my Lord, against Pharaoh Zoan, king of Egypt, because my wife has been taken away from me by force. Do justice for me against him and show your mighty arm

15. against him, and against all his house. During this night, may he not be able to sully my wife, separated from me; and so they shall know you, my Lord. For you are the Lord of all the kings

16. of the earth. And I wept and stayed silent. That night, the God Most High sent him a chastising spirit, to afflict him and all the members of his household, an evil spirit

17. that kept afflicting him and all the members of his household. And he was unable to approach her, much less have sexual intercourse with her, in spite of being with her

18. for two years. At the end of two years, the punishments and plagues, against him and against all the members of his household, increased and intensified. And he sent

19. for all [the wise men] of Egypt to be called, and all the wizards as well as all the healers of Egypt, (to see) whether they could heal him of that disease, [him] and the members

20. of his household. However, all the healers and wizards and all the wise men were unable to rise up and heal him. For the spirit attacked all of them and

21. they fled. *Blank* Then HRKNWS came to me and asked me to come and pray for

22. the king, and lay my hands upon him so that he would live. For [he had seen me] in a dream. But Lot said to him: Abram, my uncle, cannot pray for

23. the king while Sarai, his wife, is with him. Go, now, and tell the king to send back his wife to her own husband and he will pray for him and he will live.

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6. While there are possible Egyptian etymologies for this name, it closely resembles the Greek Hyrkanos, a name relatively common among the Jews beginning in the second century B.C.

24. *Blank* When HRKNWS heard Lot's words, he went and said to the king: All these plagues and punishments

25. with which the king my Lord is afflicted and punished are on account of Sarai, Abram's wife. They should return Sarai, then, I beg you to Abram, her husband,

26. and this plague and the spirit of purulent evils will cease to afflict you. (The Pharaoh) called me to him and said to me: What have you done to me with regard to Sarai? You told me:

27. She is my sister, when she is your wife; so that I took her for myself for a consort. Here is your wife; take her away! Go! Depart from

28. all the cities of Egypt! But now pray for me and for my household so that this evil spirit will be banished from us. I prayed for [ . . . ]

29. and laid my hands upon his head. The plague was removed from him; [the evil spirit] was banished [from him] and he lived.

30. The king got up and informed me [ . . . ] The king swore an oath to me that not [ . . . ] Then, they [brought to] me

31. Sarai. The king gave her much gold [and silver] and many clothes of fine linen and purple [ . . . ]

32. in front of her and also Hagar. He handed her to me, and appointed men to escort me out [of Egypt.]

33. I, Abram, walked with much cattle and also with silver and gold. I left [Egypt . . . Lot],

34. my brother's son, [was] with me. Lot, too, had acquired many flocks and had taken for himself a wife from among the daughters [of Egypt. I camped with him].

## AN EXTRACT FROM THE DAMASCUS DOCUMENT

The *Damascus Document* (CD) was first discovered in the 1890s in the Cairo Genizah. Other copies were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in caves above the western shore of the Dead Sea beginning in 1947. Because the Dead Sea Scrolls date from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D., the *Damascus Document* must date to no later than that period. The English translation of the Hebrew text is from Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 34.

### Column III

1. *Blank* Through it, the sons of Noah and their families strayed, through it, they were cut off.<sup>1</sup>
2. Abraham did not walk in it, and was counted as a friend for keeping God's precepts and not following
3. the desire of his spirit. And he passed (them) on to Isaac and to Jacob.

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

AN EXTRACT FROM A  
GENESIS COMMENTARY: 4QCOMMGEN A  
(4QPGEN<sup>a</sup> OR 4Q252)

The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in caves above the western shore of the Dead Sea beginning in 1947. The scrolls date from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D. The extract below is from a Genesis commentary called 4Q252 or 4QpGen<sup>a</sup>, which was first published in 1956 along with an English translation. The scroll is fragmentary with several lacunae. This translation of the Hebrew text is from Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 214.

**Column II**

8. He gave the land to Abraham, his beloved. *Blank* Terah was one hundred and [for]ty years old when he left

9. Ur of the Chaldees and came to Haran, and Ab[ram was se]venty years old. Abram lived five years

10. in Haran, and afterwards [Abram] went [to] the land of Canaan. Six[ty five years (?).]<sup>1</sup>

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1. While Genesis 12:4 makes Abraham seventy-five years of age when he went to the land of Canaan, Abraham 2:14 makes him sixty-two. The present document may support the Book of Abraham's figure as the word *five* is García Martínez's conjecture. *Jasher* has Abraham leaving Haran several times, at different ages. See the note to *Jasher* 13:5.



# 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.]

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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 Hyrqnos, 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

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>

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.

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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 *Pirqe 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 *Pirqe 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,

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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.

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 *ʿûr 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 *ʔur 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!"

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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., *Sefer 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 Raziʿel*) 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

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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, Mishael, 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—ḥūzoth.*<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 עָקֵב.<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, *ḳuf* 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)

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 (*dibur*) 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 (wehadarta) 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.

error 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)

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* (עֶקֶב) *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 "עֶקֶב"; 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

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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* (עִקֵּב) *that Abraham hearkened to My voice*<sup>179</sup>—that is, he hearkened to the number [of years] signified by "עִקֵּב." R. Levi said: It means, from the time that he was able to lift his foot (עִקֵּב)<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

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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>

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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: Wahrman, 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 *ûr kašdîm*, 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 *raʿatan*<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 gonorrhoea.
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 Migraim,<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 worshippes 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.

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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 *ʿur 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 worshippeth 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 Iscah.

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).]

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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,

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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

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)

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

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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)

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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: Wahrman, 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

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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."

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>

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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 *ʔor* (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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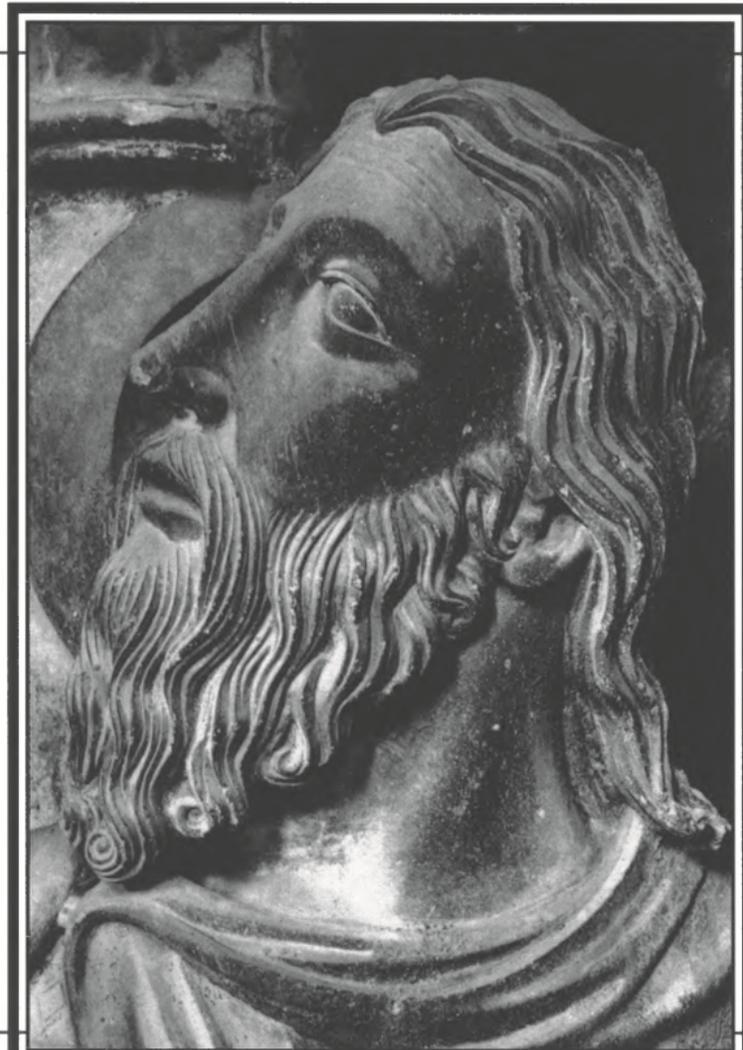
1. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.





# CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS ABOUT THE EARLY LIFE OF ABRAHAM

SECTION 3





## AN EXTRACT FROM THE CLEMENTINE RECOGNITIONS

Traditionally, the *Clementine Recognitions* was attributed to Clement of Rome (late first century), although he probably didn't author it. The date of the text is uncertain, but must predate Origen's quotation of a passage in A.D. 231. Originally written in Greek, the entire work has come down to us only in a Latin translation by Rufinus of Aquileia (d. 410), who was notorious for adding, deleting, and altering passages that disagreed with his dogmatic views. Large portions of the text also exist in Syriac, a drastically revised version exists in Greek, and some Arabic fragments have also come to light. The first English translation, by Thomas Smith, was published in Edinburgh in 1886; we use it here: *Recognitions of Clement*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (1886; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 8:86.

### Chapter 32—Abraham

In the twenty-first generation there was a certain wise man of the race of those who were expelled, of the family of Noah's eldest son, by name Abraham, from whom our Hebrew nation is derived. When the whole world was again overspread with errors, and when for the hideousness of its crimes destruction was ready for it, this time not by water, but fire, and when already the scourge was hanging over the whole earth, beginning with Sodom, this man, by reason of his friendship with God, who was well pleased with him, obtained from God that the whole world should not equally perish. From the first this same man, being an astrologer,<sup>1</sup> was able, from the account and order of the stars, to recognise the Creator,<sup>2</sup> while all others were in error, and understood that all things are regulated by His providence. Whence also an angel, standing by him in a vision, instructed him more fully concerning those things which he was beginning to perceive. He

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1. In the ancient world, astrology was not distinguished from astronomy.

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

showed him also what belonged to his race and posterity, and promised him that those districts should be restored rather than given to them.

### **Chapter 33—Abraham: His Posterity**

Therefore Abraham, when he was desirous to learn the causes of things, and was intently pondering upon what had been told him, the true Prophet<sup>3</sup> appeared to him, who alone knows the hearts and purpose of men, and disclosed to him all things which he desired. He taught him the knowledge of the Divinity;<sup>4</sup> intimated the origin of the world,<sup>5</sup> and likewise its end; showed him the immortality of the soul,<sup>6</sup> and the manner of life which was pleasing to God; declared also the resurrection of the dead, the future judgment, the reward of the good, the punishment of the evil,—all to be regulated by righteous judgment: and having given him all this information plainly and sufficiently, He departed again to the invisible abodes. But while Abraham was still in ignorance, as we said to you before, two sons were born to him, of whom the one was called Ismael, and the other Heliesdros.<sup>7</sup> From the one are descended the barbarous nations, from the other the people of the Persians, some of whom have adopted the manner of living and the institutions of their neighbours, the Brachmans. Others settled in Arabia, of whose posterity some also have spread into Egypt. From them some of the Indians and of the Egyptians have learned to be circumcised, and to be of purer observance than others, although in process of time most of them have turned to impiety what was the proof and sign of purity.

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3. In Christian tradition, this refers to Jesus Christ; cf. Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22–23; see also 1 Nephi 22:21; 3 Nephi 20:23; Joseph Smith—History 1:40.

4. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

5. Cf. Abraham 3:11–12; 4–5.

6. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.

7. Biblical Eliezer, normally considered a servant of Abraham.

AN EXTRACT FROM  
GREGORY OF NYSSA

Brother to Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa was born A.D. 335 or 336 in Cappadocia (in modern Turkey). He authored more than thirty works that have been preserved through the centuries. The extract that follows is from his *Answer to Eunomius' Second Book*. Written in Greek, the work's intent is to refute Eunomius's view of God the Father. Eunomius was an Arian who had attacked Basil in his writings. Translated by William Moore and Henry A. Wilson, the extract below is from the first English version, published in 1893: Gregory of Nyssa, *Answer to Eunomius' Second Book*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd ser., ed. Philip Schaf and Henry Wace (1893; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 5:259.

Therefore also the Lord of all creation, as though He were a discovery of Abraham, is called specially the God of Abraham. Yet what saith the Scripture respecting him? That he went out not knowing whither he went, no, nor even being capable of learning the name of Him whom he loved, yet in no wise impatient or ashamed on account of such ignorance.

This, then, was the meaning of his safe guidance on the way to what he sought<sup>1</sup>—that he was not blindly led by any of the means ready to hand for his instruction in the things of God, and that his mind, unimpeded by any object of sense, was never hindered from its journeying in quest of what lies beyond all that is known, but having gone by reasoning far beyond the wisdom of his countrymen, (I mean the philosophy of the Chaldees, limited as it was to the things which do appear,) and soaring above the things which are cognizable by sense, from the beauty of the objects of contemplation, and the harmony of the heavenly wonders, he desired to behold the archetype of all beauty.<sup>2</sup> And so, too, all the other things which in the course of his reasoning he was led to apprehend as he advanced, whether the power of God, or His goodness, or His being without beginning, or His infinity, or whatever else is conceivable in respect to the divine nature, using them all as supplies and appliances for his onward journey, ever making one discovery a stepping-stone to another, ever reaching forth unto those things which were before, and setting in his heart, as saith the Prophet, each fair stage of his advance, and passing by all knowledge acquired by his own ability as falling short of that which he was in quest, when he

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1. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

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

had gone beyond every conjecture respecting the divine nature which is suggested by any name amongst all our conceptions of God, having purged his reason of all such fancies, and arrived at a faith unalloyed and free from all prejudice, he made this a sure and manifest token of the knowledge of God, viz. the belief that He is greater and more sublime than any token by which He may be known.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK OF THE CAVE OF TREASURES

The *Book of the Cave of Treasures* is an anonymous Syriac work, the oldest form of which is thought to have been composed in the fourth century A.D. In its present form, however, it can be no older than the sixth century. It shares a common source with other traditions included in this collection: the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* and the *Book of the Rolls* and, to a lesser extent, the *Book of the Bee*. It was first translated into German in 1883. Here, we employ the English text from E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1927), 135–44, 148–49, 153. The text retains the folio (page) and column numbering of the original manuscript; we have broken the text into paragraphs by folio and column. Further, most of Budge’s bracketed notes have been deleted, and we have removed the diacritics.

*Folio 22b.1.* And Reu lived thirty-two years, and begot Serug. And in the days of Reu, in his one hundred

*Folio 22b.2.* and thirtieth year, Nimrod, the mighty man, the first king on the earth, reigned, and he reigned sixty-nine years; and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel. This Nimrod saw the figure of a crown in the heavens, and he called Sisan, the weaver, who wore [*sic*] a crown like unto it, and he set it on his head. And because of this men used to say that the crown came down to him from heaven. . . .

And in the days of Reu the Mesraye,<sup>1</sup> who are the Egyptians, appointed their first king; his name was Puntos,<sup>2</sup> and he reigned over them sixty-eight years.

*Folio 23a.1.* And Reu died, being two hundred and thirty-nine years old, and Serug his son, and Nahor and Tarah (Terah) buried him in Aor’in,<sup>3</sup> the city which he built after his own name.

And Serug lived thirty years and begot Nahor, and all the days of his life were two hundred and thirty years. And in the days of Serug the worship of idols entered the world. And in his days the children of men began to make themselves graven images,

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1. Cf. the Hebrew name for Egypt, Miṣraim, spelled Mizraim in the KJV (Genesis 10:6, 13; 1 Chronicles 1:8, 11).
  2. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27. The name Puntos seems to be taken from the country *Pwnt*, an occasional trading partner with Egypt that seems to have been located in Somalia or Eritrea. It may also reflect the name Phut in Genesis 10:6.
  3. Biblical Ur.

and it was at this time that the introduction of idols into the world took place.<sup>4</sup> For the children of men were scattered all over the earth, and they had neither teachers nor law-givers, and no one to show them

*Folio 23a.2.* the way of truth wherein they should walk, and for this reason they became confused and fell into error. Some of them through their error adored the heavens, and some of them worshipped the sun, and moon and stars, and some of them the earth, and wild beasts, and birds, and creeping things, and trees, and stones,<sup>5</sup> and the creatures of the sea, and the waters, and the winds. Now Satan had blinded their eyes so that they might walk in the darkness of error, because they had no hope of a resurrection. For when one of them died they used to make an image of him, and set it up upon his grave, so that the remembrance [of his appearance] might not pass from before their eyes. And error having been sown broadcast in all the earth, the land became filled with idols in the form of men and women. And then Serug died, being two hundred and thirty years old, and Nahor, and Tarah,

*Folio 23b.1.* and Abraham his sons, buried him in Sarghin, the city which he built after his own name.

And Nahor was twenty-nine years old when he begot Terah. And in the days of Nahor, in the seventieth year of his life, when God looked upon the children of men, and saw that they were worshipping idols, a great earthquake took place, and all their houses were overturned and fell down;<sup>6</sup> but the people did not understand within themselves, and they added to their wickedness. And Nahor died when he was one hundred and forty-seven years old, and Terah his son and Abraham buried him. . . .

And Terah was seventy-five years old when he begat Abraham. And in the days of Terah, in his ninetieth year, sorcery appeared on the earth in the city of Aor [Ur], which Horon, the son of 'Abhar, built. Now, there was in the city a certain man who was very rich, and he died at that time. And his son made an image of him in gold,

*Folio 23b.2.* and set it up upon his grave, and he appointed there a young man to keep guard over it. And Satan went and took up his abode in that image, and he spake to that youth (*i.e.* the son of the rich man) after the manner of his father. And thieves went into [his house], and took everything that the youth possessed, and he went out to the tomb of his father weeping. And Satan spake unto him, saying, "Weep not in my presence, but go and fetch thy little son, and slay him here as a sacrifice to me, and forthwith everything which thou hast lost shall be returned to me here." And straightway the youth did as Satan told him, and he slew his son, and bathed in his blood. And Satan went forth immediately from that image [of gold], and entered into the youth, and taught him sorcery, and enchantments, and divination, and the lore of the Chaldeans, and [how to tell] fortunes, and [how to forecast] events, and [how to foretell] destinies. And behold, from that time the children of men began to sacrifice their sons to devils and to worship idols, for the devils entered into the images, and took up their abodes therein.<sup>7</sup>

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4. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

And in the one hundredth year of the life of Nahor, when God saw that the children of men were sacrificing their sons to devils,

*Folio 24a.1.* and worshipping idols, He opened the storehouses of the wind, and the gate of the whirlwind, and a blast of wind went forth in all the earth. And it uprooted the images, and the places where offerings were made to devils, and it swept together the idols, and the images, and the pillared buildings in a heap, and piled up great mounds [of earth] over them; [and they are there] to this day.<sup>8</sup> Now to this blast of wind learned men have given the name of "Wind-Flood"; but certain who have erred have said, "These mounds existed [already] in the days of the Flood [of waters]." Now those who have said these things have erred greatly from the truth; for before the Flood [of waters] there were no idols in the earth, and it was not because of idols that the Flood came, but because of the fornication of the daughters of Cain. And, moreover, at that time there were no men on this earth, which was a waste and a desert. And our fathers were cast forth in days of old, as it were, into exile, because they were not worthy to be

*Folio 24a.2.* neighbours of Paradise. And through the Ark they were driven forth to the mountains of Kardo, and from there they were scattered about throughout all the earth. For these mounds came into being because of idols, and in them are buried all the idols of that time, and all the devils also who dwell in them are in these mounds, and there is no mound which hath not devils in it.

And in the days of Nimrod, the mighty man (or giant), a fire appeared which ascended from the earth, and Nimrod went down, and looked at it, and worshipped it, and he established priests to minister there, and to cast incense into it. From that day the Persians began to worship fire, [and they do so] to this day.<sup>9</sup>

And Sisan, the king, found a spring of water in Droghin, and he made a white horse and set it over it, and those who bathed in the water used to worship the horse.

*Folio 24b.1.* And from that time the Persians began to worship that (*sic*) horse.

And Nimrod went to Yokdora of Nodh, and when he arrived at the Lake (or Sea) of Atlas, he found there Yonton, the son of Noah. [A marginal note in the Syriac MS. adds, "Noah begot this Yonton after the Flood, and he honoured him in many things, and sent him to the east to dwell there."] And Nimrod went down and bathed in the Lake, and he came to Yonton and did homage unto him. And Yonton said, "Thou art a king; doest thou homage unto me?" And Nimrod said unto him, "It is because of thee that I have come down here"; and he remained with him for three years. And Yonton taught Nimrod wisdom, and the art of revelation (divining?), and he said unto him, "Come not back again to me."<sup>10</sup>

And when Nimrod went up from the east, and began to practise the art of divining, very many men marvelled at him. And when Idhashir (Ardeshir?), the priest who ministered to the fire that ascended from the earth, saw that Nimrod was practising these exalted courses, he entreated the devil, who appeared in connection with that fire, to teach him

8. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

9. The ancient Persians, followers of Zoroaster, maintained a sacred fire. The practice continues today among those who still follow Zoroaster, the Parsis (meaning "Persians") of India.

10. This story seems to be based on the Gilgamesh Epic, tablets X–XI.

*Folio 24b.2.* the wisdom of Nimrod. And as the devils were in the habit of destroying those who came nigh unto them by sin, the devil said unto the priest, "A man cannot become a priest and a Magian until he hath known carnally his mother, and his daughter, and his sister." And Idhashir the priest did this, and from that time the priests, and the Magians, and the Persians take their mothers, and their sisters, and their daughters [to wife]. And this Idhashir, the Magian, was the first to begin to study the Signs of the Zodiac, and [omens concerning] luck, and fate, and happenings, and motions of the eyes and eyelids, as well as all the other arts of the learning of the Chaldees. Now, all this learning is the error of devils, and those who practise it shall receive, together with the devils, the doom of the Judgment. And because this art of divination, which was employed by Nimrod, was taught to him

*Folio 25a.1.* by Yonton, none of the orthodox doctors have suppressed it; nay, they have even practised it. Now the Persians call it "Gelyana" (*i.e.* "Revelation") and the Romans "Estromion" (*i.e.* "Astronomy"). But that [knowledge] which the Magians have, viz. astrology, is sorcery and the teaching of devils. . . .

And Terah, the father of Abraham, lived two hundred and fifty years, and he died, and Abraham and Lot buried him in Harran. And there God spoke unto Abraham, and said unto him, "Get thee forth from thy land, and from among thy people, and come to the land which I will show thee." And Abraham took his household, Sara his wife,

*Folio 25a.2.* and Lot, his brother's son, and he went up to the land of the Amoraye (Amorites); and he was seventy-five years old when he crossed the desert from the Euphrates. . . .

*Folio 25b.1.* And when Abraham was eighty-six years old Ishmael was born to him by Hagar, the Egyptian woman, whom Pharaoh had given to Sara as a handmaiden. Now Sara was the sister of Abraham on the father's side, because Terah took two women to wife. When Yawnu, the mother of Abraham died, Terah took to wife a woman whose name was "Naharyath" (or Shalmath, or Tona, or Tahdif), and of her Sara was born. It was because of this [fact] that Abraham said, "She is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother."<sup>11</sup>

*Folio 27a.1.* And in the fiftieth year of [the life of] Reu, Nimrod went up and built Nisibis, and Edessa, and Harran, which is Edessa. And Harranith, the wife of Dasan, the priest of the mountain, surrounded it with a wall, and the people of Harran made a statue of her and worshipped her. And Baltin, who was given to Tamuza (Tammuz)<sup>12</sup>—now because B'elshemin loved her, Tammuz fled before him—set fire to Harran and burned it.

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11. Citing Genesis 20:12.

12. Sumerian Dumuzi.

AN EXTRACT FROM  
JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

John Chrysostom (A.D. 347–407) was one of the most prolific writers among the early church fathers. The extract that follows is from his *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*. This, the first English translation, by J. Walker, J. Sheppard, and H. Browne, was published in 1851. The version we use here was revised by George B. Stevens and republished in John Chrysostom, *The Acts of the Apostles*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st ser., ed. Philip Schaf (1889; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 11:97.

**Homily 15**

Also, that these were figures, and (so was) both the leaving his country at God's command—not against the law (for home and country is where God shall lead): "Then came he out," it says, "of the land of the Chaldeans":<sup>1</sup> —and that if one look closely into the matter, the Jews are of Persian origin:<sup>2</sup> and that, without miracles, one must do as God bids, whatever hardships be the consequence; since the Patriarch left both the grave of his father and all that he had, in obedience to God's command. But if Abraham's father was not allowed to take part with him in the privilege of migrating to Palestine, because he was unworthy:<sup>3</sup> much more shall the children (be excluded at last), for all that they may have gone a good distance on the way.

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1. Cf. Genesis 12:4.

2. This, of course, is untrue, though it is to be noted that the Persians controlled Abraham's homeland from the sixth to the fourth centuries B.C. and again during much of the Roman era. In Chrysostom's day, Persia was one of the main enemies of the Roman Empire.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:4–5; 2:5.

## EXTRACTS FROM JEROME

Jerome (A.D. 345?–420) has left a substantial corpus of writings, including several commentaries on the Bible, although he is best known as the scholar who translated the Bible into the Latin version known as the Vulgate. His works have been extremely influential in Latin Christianity, and later Latin writers usually quoted verbatim his extracanonical Abraham traditions, which he explicitly identifies as coming from Jewish sources. The first selection comes from the Vulgate, in which the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah are a single book, and corresponds to Nehemiah 9:7–8 in our Bible. These translations were prepared by John Gee from the texts in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols. (Paris, 1844–1864). The parenthetical references after the passages are to the page numbers in the *Patrologia*.

### 2 **Ezras 9:7–8 (=KJV Neh. 9:7–8)**

Thou thyself, O Lord God, who chose Abraham, and led him from the fire of the Chaldeans,<sup>1</sup> and made his name Abraham, and found his heart faithful before thee, who drove out every evil by him, so that thou mightest give him the land of the Canaanite, Hittite, and Amorite, and Pherezite, and Jebusite, and Gergesite, so that thou mightest give to his seed, and accomplish thy word, which is just. (*PL*, 28:1496)

### *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim*

[Commenting on Genesis 11:28:]

“And Aran<sup>2</sup> died before his father, in the land in which he was born, in the region of the Chaldeans.”<sup>3</sup> Instead of that which we say, “in the region of the Chaldeans,” in Hebrew it has “in Ur Chesdim” (בְּאִוּר כְּשָׁדִים), that is, “in the fire of the Chaldeans.” For the Hebrews pass on the tradition<sup>4</sup> from this incident, this sort of story wherein Abraham

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

2. Biblical Haran.

3. Following the Vulgate of Genesis 11:29.

4. The editor of the Latin text includes this note here: “This story is told in *Pirke R. Eliezer* chapter 26, which is said to be the second of the ten trials of Abraham, which follows ten years in prison; which are in another order in *Pirke R. Nathan*, and *R. Eliezer the German* in *Mahase Aboth* chapter 2, and many others from Hebrew, a nation born composing stories. Less true is that related by R. Maimonides, who on the authority of R. Abrabanel, who is said to have related the trial of Abraham to Maimonides one at a time, observed this: . . . Behold, the Rabbi does not mention this deliverance

was sent to the fire because he did not want to worship the fire that the Chaldeans worshiped,<sup>5</sup> and being rescued by the help of God, escaped the fire of idolatry.<sup>6</sup> Thus it is afterwards written that Thara departed with his progeny from the land of the Chaldeans, for which in Hebrew is “from the conflagration of the Chaldeans.” And this is what it now says: “Aram died in the presence of his father in the land of his nativity, in the fire of the Chaldeans”; because he apparently<sup>7</sup> did not want to worship the fire, he was devoured by the fire.<sup>8</sup> But later the Lord said to Abraham: “I am he who led thee from the fire of the Chaldeans.”<sup>9</sup> (*PL*, 23:1005)

[Commenting on Genesis 12:4:]

“And Abraham was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.”<sup>10</sup> The question inevitably arises: If, therefore, Thara,<sup>11</sup> the father of Abraham, when he had heretofore been in the region of Chaldea, begat Abram at the age of 70 years old, and afterwards died in Charra<sup>12</sup> at the age of 205, how, now, after the death of Thara, when Abraham departed from Charra, is he said to be 75 years old, when from the birth of Abraham until the death of his father is thought to have been 135 years? Therefore, that tradition of the Hebrews is true, of which we spoke above, that Thara and his son came out of the fire of the Chaldeans and that Abraham, surrounded by the conflagration in Babylon because he did not want to worship it,<sup>13</sup> was freed by the help of God;<sup>14</sup> and from that moment when he confessed the Lord, rejecting the idols of the Chaldeans, the days of his life and the time of his life is reckoned. It could, however, be because the scripture remains

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from the fiery furnace of the Chaldeans, among the other trials related because it is never mentioned in scripture. Furthermore Abraham plotted a revolt among the Chaldeans and Mesopotamians, that he preached there is one true God of all conditions, Josephus, a most trustworthy author, mentions in *Antiquities* 1.7. From which Eustathius of Antioch and Georgius Syncellus, and others of the Greeks exaggerate, that Abraham himself burned down the idols of his father in the house, and Aram his brother burned trying to put out the fire. See the following note.” Most of these other texts are included in this collection.

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

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

7. The editor of the Latin text includes the following note here: “Furthermore, R. Solomon Jarki refers to a commentary on this place in Genesis from an ancient Midrash: Thara set fire to Abraham, his son, in the presence of Nemrod, because he smashed his idols, and the punishment for this act was to be thrown into a furnace of fire. Therefore, Aram, the brother of Abraham, said to him, if Abraham survives, I will be his; if Nemrod is right, I will adhere to him. God, therefore having saved Abraham from danger, when Aram was asked on which side he stood, he answered ‘Abraham’s,’ for which reason he was thrown in the furnace and consumed in the fire.”

8. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

9. Citing Genesis 15:7.

10. Citing Genesis 12:4.

11. Biblical Terah.

12. Biblical Haran.

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

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

ambiguous: before many years Thara leaving Chaldea came to Charran,<sup>15</sup> where he died; but certainly he came to Charran immediately after persecution, and there later he died. If, therefore, someone opposes this explanation, he desires another solution, and he justly rejects that which we have spoken. (*PL*, 23:1006)

*Commentarium in Isaiam*

[Commenting on Isaiah 65:8:]

Enoch also alone among many multitudes of sinners was taken to God.<sup>16</sup> And the flood could not obliterate Noah and his children just because all flesh declined to serve the Lord.<sup>17</sup> But also Abraham was rescued from the fire of the Chaldeans by the integrity of his faith.<sup>18</sup> (*PL*, 24:636)

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15. The change of spelling from Charra to Charran occurs in the Latin text.

16. See Genesis 5.

17. See Genesis 7.

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

## EXTRACTS FROM EPIPHANIUS

After a long career as a monk in Palestine, Epiphanius (d. A.D. 403) became bishop of Salamis on the isle of Cyprus. Epiphanius studied (Greek) classics in Egypt and knew Coptic and Hebrew as well as Greek and his native Syriac. He was friends with both Jerome and Basil the Great. (Some of the writings of Jerome and of Basil's brother, Gregory of Nyssa, are included in this collection.) The text that follows is taken from his *Panarion*, book 1, chapter 1, written during 374–76. This work is a heresiology, attacking the heresies of his and previous days. Ecclesiastical scholars took notice of the work in the sixteenth century, resulting in Latin translations. Karl Holl published a critical edition of the Greek text beginning in 1915. All eleven extant manuscripts come from one poor copy; none of the manuscripts is complete. The English translation is from Frank Williams, trans., *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis: Book I (Sects 1–46)* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 8, 17. The angle brackets (<>) denote restorations by Karl Holl to the Greek text. The numbering of Epiphanius starts over with each new heresy discussed.

### *Anacephalaeosis 1*

3.1. <3.> A third [sect]<sup>1</sup> is Hellenism. This began in Serug's time with idolatry and the submission to it by the people of the era<sup>2</sup>—each in accordance with some superstition—for the sake of a higher civilization and fixed customs and laws.

3.2. However, when idols were first instituted the various peoples made gods for <the leaders> whose rule they <were> then accepting, originally by painting pictures and portraying the autocrats or sorcerers they had always honored, or persons who had done something that appeared memorable in their lifetimes, <and stood out> for their courage and physical strength.

3.3. But then, from the time of Terah the father of Abraham, they also introduced the imposture of idolatry by way of the statuary.<sup>3</sup> They honored their forefathers, and those who had died before them, with images, at first with the potter's art, then by depicting them with every technique—builders by carving stone, silversmiths and goldsmiths by making them with their media, and so with the woodcarvers and the rest.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Our addition.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

**Proem 2**

<3. *Hellenism*>

3.3. Every transgression in the world was disseminated at this time, for Nimrod was an originator of wrong teaching, astrology and magic. . . .

3.4. Peleg was the father of Reu, and Reu was the father of Serug, which means “provocation”; and, as I was taught, idolatry and Hellenism began among men with him. . . .<sup>5</sup>

3.5. Nahor was born as a son to Serug and was the father of Terah. Image-making with clay and pottery began at this point,<sup>6</sup> with the craft of this person, Terah. . . .<sup>7</sup>

3.6. And no one of the previous generations ever died before his father; fathers died before their children and left their sons to succeed them. (Never mind Abel—he did not die a natural death.)

3.7. But since Terah had set up a rival to God by making one with his own sculpture he was rightly repaid with the equivalent and provoked to jealousy himself, through his own son.

3.8. Hence sacred scripture remarked with astonishment, “And Haran died before his father, Terah, in the land of his nativity.”<sup>8</sup>

<4. *Judaism*>

4.1.1. And God made choice of Abraham, . . .

4.1.2. For he had lived at home honoring his father.

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5. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

8. Cf. Abraham 2:1.

AN EXTRACT FROM  
PHILASTER OF BRESCIA

Philaster (d. A.D. 397), bishop of Brescia (in modern Italy), wrote a work against heretics. Largely based on the work of Irenaeus and his contemporary Epiphanius (whose work is previously quoted in this volume), Philaster's book, *De haeresibus*, was a major source for Augustine's work of the same name. In chapter 147 of his work, he cites Abraham as one of a number of examples of dealing with idolatry, which, for Philaster, is the same as dealing with heresy. The Latin text first appeared in print as early as 1528 in Hamburg. John Gee translated the text found in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 12:1281, for this publication.

[Commenting on how Exodus 22:28, "Thou shalt not revile the gods," does not apply to persecuting idolatry or heretics:]

For as Moses said: "Ye shall destroy their temples; ye shall break the idols,"<sup>1</sup> and most blessed Abraham who smashed the idols<sup>2</sup> was justified; and Gideon, who burned the idols at night and smashed them,<sup>3</sup> deserved to obtain such virtue from God, so that with a few he conquered uncountable foes, and all were righteous, and Elijah,<sup>4</sup> and others likewise.

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1. Citing Exodus 34:13, Vulgate.
  2. Cf. Abraham 1:20.
  3. See Judges 6:25–29.
  4. See 1 Kings 18:40.

## EXTRACTS FROM AUGUSTINE

Following his conversion from Manichaeism to Christianity, Augustine (A.D. 354–430) became bishop of Hippo, in North Africa (Tunisia). The following extracts are from *The City of God*, which he wrote to defend Christianity to the heathens after the sack of Rome (written 413–26). The first English translation of this work was published in 1620. The translation below is from Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st ser., ed. Philip Schaf (1887; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 2:203, 318–320. The selection at the end of this extract, from Augustine’s *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* 7, was translated by John Gee from *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 34:553.

### Book 10

32. The faithful Abraham received the divine assurance, “In thy seed shall all nations be blessed.”<sup>1</sup> He, indeed, was by birth a Chaldæan; but, that he might receive these great promises, and that there might be propagated from him a seed “disposed by angels in the hand of a Mediator,”<sup>2</sup> in whom this universal way, thrown open to all nations for the deliverance of the soul, might be found, he was ordered to leave his country, and kindred, and father’s house. Then was he himself, first of all, delivered from the Chaldæan superstitions, and by his obedience worshipped the one true God, whose promises he faithfully trusted.<sup>3</sup>

### Book 16

12. Let us now survey the progress of the city of God from the era of the patriarch Abraham,<sup>4</sup> from whose time it begins to be more conspicuous, and the divine promises which are now fulfilled in Christ are more fully revealed.

We learn, then, from the intimations of holy Scripture, that Abraham was born in the country of the Chaldeans, a land belonging to the Assyrian empire.<sup>5</sup> Now, even at that

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1. Citing Genesis 22:18.

2. Citing Galatians 3:19.

3. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

4. Cf. Hebrews 11:8–10.

5. This statement is anachronistic, since the Assyrian empire didn’t exist until a millennium after Abraham’s time. But it does suggest that Abraham was born in the territory that later became Assyria.

time impious superstitions were rife with the Chaldeans, as with other nations. The family of Terah, to which Abraham belonged, was the only one in which the worship of the true God survived, and the only one, we may suppose, in which the Hebrew language was preserved; although Joshua the son of Nun tells us that even this family served other gods in Mesopotamia.<sup>6</sup>

The other descendants of Heber gradually became absorbed in other races and other languages. And thus, as the single family of Noah was preserved through the deluge of water to renew the human race, so, in the deluge of superstition that flooded the whole world, there remained but one family of Terah in which the seed of God's city was preserved.<sup>7</sup> And as, when Scripture has enumerated the generations prior to Noah, with their ages, and explained the cause of the flood before God began to speak to Noah about the building of the ark, it is said, "These are the generations of Noah;"<sup>8</sup> so also now, after enumerating the generations from Shem, Noah's son, down to Abraham,<sup>9</sup> it then signals an era by saying, "These are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. 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."<sup>10</sup> This Iscah is supposed to be the same as Sarah, Abraham's wife.

13. Next it is related how Terah with his family left the region of the Chaldeans and came into Mesopotamia, and dwelt in Haran. But nothing is said about one of his sons called Nahor, as if he had not taken him along with him. For the narrative runs thus: "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarah his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and led them forth out of the region of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan; and he came into Haran, and dwelt there."<sup>11</sup>

Nahor and Milcah his wife are nowhere named here. But afterwards, when Abraham sent his servant to take a wife for his son Isaac, we find it thus written: "And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his lord, and of all the goods of his lord, with him; and arose, and went into Mesopotamia, into the city of Nahor."<sup>12</sup> This and other testimonies of this sacred history show that Nahor, Abraham's brother, had also left the region of the Chaldeans, and fixed his abode in Mesopotamia, where Abraham dwelt with his father. Why, then, did the Scripture not mention him, when Terah with his family went forth out of the Chaldean nation and dwelt in Haran, since it mentions that he took with him not only Abraham his son, but also Sarah his daughter-in-law, and Lot his grandson? The only reason we can think of is, that perhaps he had lapsed from the piety of his father and

6. Referring to Joshua 24:2. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:19.

8. Citing Genesis 6:9.

9. Referring to Genesis 11:10–26.

10. Citing Genesis 11:27–29.

11. Citing Genesis 11:31.

12. Citing Genesis 24:10.

brother, and adhered to the superstition of the Chaldeans, and had afterwards emigrated thence, either through penitence, or because he was persecuted as a suspected person.

For in the book called *Judith*,<sup>13</sup> when Holofernes, the enemy of the Israelites, inquired what kind of nation that might be, and whether war should be made against them, Achior, the leader of the Ammonites, answered him thus: "Let our lord now hear a word from the mouth of thy servant, and I will declare unto thee the truth concerning the people which dwelleth near thee in this hill country, and there shall no lie come out of the mouth of thy servant. For this people is descended from the Chaldeans, and they dwelt heretofore in Mesopotamia, because they would not follow the gods of their fathers, which were glorious in the land of the Chaldeans, but went out of the way of their ancestors, and adored the God of heaven, whom they knew; and they cast them out from the face of their gods, and they fled into Mesopotamia, and dwelt there many days. And their God said to them, that they should depart from their habitation, and go into the land of Canaan; and they dwelt,"<sup>14</sup> etc., as Achior the Ammonite narrates.

Whence it is manifest that the house of Terah had suffered persecution from the Chaldeans for the true piety with which they worshipped the one and true God.<sup>15</sup>

14. On Terah's death in Mesopotamia, where he is said to have lived 205 years, the promises of God made to Abraham now begin to be pointed out; for thus it is written: "And the days of Terah in Haran were two hundred and five years, and he died in Haran."<sup>16</sup>

[Here, Augustine discusses the ages assigned to the patriarchs in Genesis.]

15. When, after the record of the death of Terah, the father of Abraham, we next read, "And the Lord said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house,"<sup>17</sup> etc., it is not to be supposed, because this follows in the order of the narrative, that it also followed in the chronological order of events. For if it were so, there would be an insoluble difficulty. For after these words of God which were spoken to Abraham, the Scripture says: "And Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him. Now Abraham was seventy-five years old when he departed out of Haran."<sup>18</sup>

How can this be true if he departed from Haran after his father's death? For when Terah was seventy years old, as is intimated above, he begat Abraham; and if to this number we add the seventy-five years which Abraham reckoned when he went out of Haran, we get 145 years. Therefore that was the number of the years of Terah, when

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13. *Judith* is one of the twelve books of the Apocrypha. Early editions of the KJV included these books. An extract is included in this collection.

14. Citing *Judith* 5:5–9.

15. Cf. *Abraham* 2:12.

16. Citing *Genesis* 11:32.

17. Citing *Genesis* 12:1.

18. Citing *Genesis* 12:4.

Abraham departed out of that city of Mesopotamia; for he had reached the seventy-fifth year of his life, and thus his father, who begat him in the seventieth year of his life, had reached, as was said, his 145th. Therefore he did not depart thence after his father's death, that is, after the 205 years his father lived; but the year of his departure from that place, seeing it was his seventy-fifth, is inferred beyond a doubt to have been the 145th of his father, who begat him in his seventieth year.

And thus it is to be understood that the Scripture, according to its custom, has gone back to the time which had already been passed by the narrative; just as above, when it had mentioned the grandsons of Noah, it said that they were in their nations and tongues;<sup>19</sup> and yet afterwards, as if this also had followed in order of time, it says, "And the whole earth was of one lip, and one speech for all."<sup>20</sup> How, then, could they be said to be in their own nations and according to their own tongues, if there was one for all; except because the narrative goes back to gather up what it had passed over?

Here, too, in the same way, after saying, "And the days of Terah in Haran were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran," the Scripture, going back to what had been passed over in order to complete what had been begun about Terah, says, "And the Lord said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country,"<sup>21</sup> etc. After which words of God it is added, "And Abram departed, as the Lord spake unto him; and Lot went with him. But Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed out of Haran."<sup>22</sup> Therefore it was done when his father was in the 145th year of his age; for it was then the seventy-fifth of his own.

But this question is also solved in another way, that the seventy-five years of Abraham when he departed out of Haran are reckoned from the year in which he was delivered from the fire of the Chaldeans,<sup>23</sup> not from that of his birth, as if he was rather to be held as having been born then.

Now the blessed Stephen, in narrating these things in the Acts of the Apostles, says: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, and come into the land which I will show thee."<sup>24</sup> According to these words of Stephen, God spoke to Abraham, not after the death of his father, who certainly died in Haran, where his son also dwelt with him, but before he dwelt in that city, although he was already in Mesopotamia. Therefore he had already departed from the Chaldeans. So that when Stephen adds, "Then Abraham went out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran,"<sup>25</sup> this does not point out what took place after God spoke to him (for it was not after these words of God that he went out

19. Referring to Genesis 10:5, 20, 31–32.

20. Citing Genesis 11:1.

21. Citing Genesis 12:1.

22. Citing Genesis 12:4.

23. The Hebrew *ʾur kasdîm*, rendered "Ur of the Chaldees" in the KJV, is generally understood in Jewish tradition to be the "fire of the Chaldeans." For Abraham's delivery from death, cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

24. Citing Acts 7:2–3.

25. Citing Acts 7:4.

of the land of the Chaldeans, since he says that God spoke to him in Mesopotamia), but the word “*then*” which he uses refers to that whole period from his going out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelling in Haran. Likewise in what follows, “And thenceforth, when his father was dead, he settled him in this land, wherein ye now dwell, and your fathers,”<sup>26</sup> he does not say, after his father was dead he went out from Haran; but thenceforth he settled him here, after his father was dead. It is to be understood, therefore, that God had spoken to Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran; but that he came to Haran with his father, keeping in mind the precept of God, and that he went out thence in his own seventy-fifth year, which was his father’s 145th. But he says that his settlement in the land of Canaan, not his going forth from Haran, took place after his father’s death; because his father was already dead when he purchased the land,<sup>27</sup> and personally entered on possession of it.

But when, on his having already settled in Mesopotamia, that is, already gone out of the land of the Chaldeans, God says, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house,”<sup>28</sup> this means, not that he should cast out his body from thence, for he had already done that, but that he should tear away his soul. For he had not gone out from thence in mind, if he was held by the hope and desire of returning,—a hope and desire which was to be cut off by God’s command and help, and by his own obedience. It would indeed be no incredible supposition that afterwards, when Nahor followed his father, Abraham then fulfilled the precept of the Lord, that he should depart out of Haran with Sarah his wife and Lot his brother’s son.

[In chapter 16, Augustine continues his discussion of the supposed chronological problems, including the opinions of Eusebius on the matter.]

### *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum 7*

[Commenting on Genesis 11:26:]

Although this question has been somewhat resolved in another way, by computing the year of the life of Abraham from the time when he was delivered from the fire of the Chaldeans, in which he was cast to be burned<sup>29</sup> because he did not want to worship fire according to the superstition of the Chaldeans, whence he was rescued, although it is not recounted in the scriptures, but is passed down in a Jewish story, it is possible to solve it thus, from the scripture which said, “When Thara<sup>30</sup> lived seventy years, and begat Abraham,<sup>31</sup> Nachor, and Arran,”<sup>32</sup> it should not be understood that in the seventieth year of his life he begat all three, but from which year he began to beget, and that year is commemorated in scripture.

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26. Ibid.

27. Abraham, of course, did not purchase the land of Canaan, but only a plot and a cave for the burial of his family (Genesis 23).

28. Citing Genesis 12:1.

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

30. Biblical Terah.

31. The Hebrew has Abram for this passage.

32. Biblical Nahor and Haran. Citing Genesis 11:26, Vulgate.

AN EXTRACT FROM A  
COMMENTARIUM IN GENESIM

This commentary on Genesis has been attributed (probably wrongly) to Eucherius, bishop of Lyons, who died in A.D. 450. This passage is a slightly revised quotation of some of Jerome's *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* cited elsewhere in this volume. The translation of the Latin from *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 50:944, by John Gee, is published here for the first time.

[Commenting on Genesis 11:27–28:]

“These are the generations of Thare:<sup>1</sup> Thare begat Abram, and Nachor, and Aran.”<sup>2</sup> It is followed by “Then Aran begat Loth.<sup>3</sup> And Aran died before Thare, his father, in the land of his nativity in Hur<sup>4</sup> of the Chaldees.”<sup>5</sup> Instead of that which we say, “in the land of his nativity,” in Hebrew [the passage] is “in Hur Chesdim,” that is, “in the fire of the Chaldeans.” For the Hebrews pass on the tradition from this incident, this sort of story: That Abraham was sent to the fire because he did not want to worship the fire<sup>6</sup> and that he was surrounded by the conflagration by the Babylonians and, being rescued by the help of God, escaped the fire of idolatry.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, it is written: “And Thara with his progeny went out of the region of the Chaldeans,” instead of what it has in Hebrew: “from Hur,” that is, “from the fire of the Chaldeans.” And this is what it now says: “Aran died in the presence of Thare his father, in the land of his nativity, in the fire of the Chaldeans” because he apparently did not want to worship the fire, he was devoured by the fire.<sup>8</sup>

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1. Biblical Terah.
  2. Biblical Nahor and Haran. Citing Genesis 11:27, Vulgate.
  3. Biblical Lot.
  4. Biblical Ur.
  5. Genesis 11:27–28, Vulgate.
  6. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.
  7. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.
  8. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

AN EXTRACT FROM  
JOHN MALALAS

John Malalas (ca. A.D. 491–ca. 578) was an early Byzantine chronographer from Antioch. His *Chronographia* covers the history of the world from the creation to 563, emphasizing the importance of Antioch. The Greek text of his *Chronographia* was published in the second volume of J. A. Cramer, *Anecdota graeca* (Oxford, 1839). The extract used here, from 92.18 to 94.21, is taken from the English translation in William Adler, “Abraham and the Burning of the Temple of Idols: Jubilees’ Traditions in Christian Chronography,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 77/2–3 (October 1986–January 1987): 101.

And Abraham attained knowledge of God, and determined that the statues which his father Terah was making<sup>1</sup> were of mortal humans, and that it was not necessary to worship them as gods in heaven, since they were of earth and dust. And he criticized his own father Terah, saying, “Why do you lead astray men because of greed? There is no other God, except for the One who is in heaven, who created all things visible.” *And he took all the statues and broke them,<sup>2</sup> and he departed from him and went out to Mesopotamia, as Eusebius “son” of Pamphilus, the wise chronographer, has recounted.<sup>3</sup>*

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

3. The account of Eusebius is also included in this collection.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK OF THE ROLLS

The *Book of the Rolls* (*Kitāb al-Magall*) is an Arabic text that claims to have been “one of the hidden books of Saint Clement the Apostle, disciple of Simon Cepha” (fol. 89b), or Clement of Rome. It was probably written in Greek somewhere between the sixth and twelfth centuries by a Christian seeking to defend Mary the mother of Jesus from Jewish criticisms, although only the Arabic version is known. Margaret D. Gibson discovered the only known manuscript in 1893 in St. Catherine’s monastery at the base of Mount Sinai. It seems to share a common source with other texts included in this collection, notably the *Book of the Cave of Treasures* and the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* and, to a lesser extent, the *Book of the Bee*. We use the English translation by Margaret D. Gibson, trans., *Kitab al-Magall, or the Book of the Rolls*, in *Apocrypha Arabica* (London: Clay, 1901), 34–39. We have removed the diacritics from the text.

*Folio 118a.* At the end of 163 years of the life of Reu, Nimrod the giant reigned over the whole earth. The beginning of his kingdom was from Babel. It was he who saw in the sky a piece of black cloth and a crown; he called Sasan the weaver to his presence, and commanded him to make him a crown like it; and he set jewels in it and wore it. He was the first king who wore a crown.

*Folio 118b.* For this reason people who knew nothing about it, said that a crown came down to him from heaven. The length of his reign was sixty-nine years. He died in the days of Reu, and the third thousand since Adam was completed. In his days the people of Egypt set up a king over them called Firnifs.<sup>1</sup> He reigned over them for sixty-eight years. In his days also a king reigned over the town of Saba and annexed to his kingdom the cities of Ophir and Havilah, his name was Pharaoh.<sup>2</sup> He built Ophir with stones of gold, for the stones of its mountains are pure gold. After him there reigned over Havilah a king called Hayul. He built it and cemented it, and after the death of Pharaoh women reigned over Saba until the time of Solomon son of David.<sup>3</sup> When he (Reu) was 239 years

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1. No such pharaoh is attested in Egyptian inscriptions.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

3. Saba, located in southern Arabia (today Yemen) is the country over which the biblical queen of Sheba ruled (1 Kings 10:1–13). Josephus, however, makes Solomon’s visitor queen of Egypt and Ethiopia (*Antiquities of the Jews* 8.6.5).

old, he died. Serug his son and Nahor buried him in the town called Oaʿnan, which Reu had built for himself. When Serug was thirty years old, his son Nahor was born to him. In the days of Serug idols were worshipped, and they were adored instead of God,<sup>4</sup> and the people in that day were scattered in the earth;

*Folio 119a.* there was not among them a teacher nor a lawgiver, nor a guide to the way of truth, nor even a right way. They wandered and were rebellious and became a sect. Some of them worshipped the Sun and the Moon, some of them worshipped the sky, some of them worshipped images, some of them worshipped the stars, some of them worshipped the earth, some of them worshipped beasts, some of them worshipped trees, and some of them worshipped waters and winds and such like,<sup>5</sup> for the Devil blinded their hearts and left them in darkness without light. No one among them believed in the Last Day and the Resurrection. When one of them died, his people made an image in his likeness, and put it upon his tomb, lest his memory should be cut off. The earth was filled with sins, and idols were multiplied in it, made in the likenesses of males and females.

*Folio 119b.* When Serug was 230 years old he died. His son Nahor, and Terah and Abraham buried him in the town which Serug had built and called it Serug. Terah was born to Nahor when he was twenty-nine years old. In the third year of the life of Nahor, God looked up through His remembrance at His creatures, and they were worshipping idols. He sent upon them earthquakes which destroyed all the idols.<sup>6</sup> Their worshippers did not turn from their error, but persevered in their godlessness. In the twenty-sixth year of the rule of Terah appeared witchcraft. The beginning of it was that a rich man died; his son made a golden image of him and placed it upon his tomb as a mark [to] the people of his age, and appointed a young man to guard it. The Devil entered into the image, and spoke to its guardian from the tongue of the deceased and [with] his voice. The guardian told the son of the deceased about it. After some days robbers entered the dwelling of the deceased, and took all that belonged to his son, and his grief was greater at this, and they bewailed him beside the grave of his father.

*Folio 120a.* The Devil called to him from the image with a voice like his father, and said, "O my son, weep not. Bring me thy little son, to sacrifice him to me, and I will restore to thee all that has been taken from thee." He brought his son to the tomb and sacrificed him to the Devil. When he had done this, the Devil entered him and taught him witchcraft, unveiled his mysteries, and taught him omens and auguries. Since that time people offer their children to Devils.<sup>7</sup> At the completion of a hundred years of the life of Nahor, God, may His name be exalted! looked on the godlessness of men, and their sacrificing of their children to the Devils, and their adoration of images. God, may His names be sanctified, sent them raging winds which tore away the images and their worship-

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4. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

pers, and buried them in the earth and strewed over them great mounds and towering hills, and they are below these unto this day.<sup>8</sup> Some assert on this account that in the time of Terah there was a Deluge of wind.

[Here follows a comparison with the destruction at the time of the flood.]

*Folios 120b–121a.* In the days of Nimrod the giant, he looked at fire from heaven, and fire came up from the earth. When Nimrod saw it he adored it, and appointed in the place where he saw it people to worship it, and to throw incense into it. . . . Nimrod travelled till he arrived at the land of Mariun. When he entered the city of Alturas he found there Bouniter the fourth son of Noah. Nimrod's army was on a lake, and he went down there one day to bathe in it. When Nimrod saw Bouniter the son of Noah, he did obeisance to him. Bouniter said to him, "O giant king, why do you adore me?" Nimrod said to him, "I did thee homage because thou didst meet me." Nimrod stayed with him three years that he might teach him wisdom and strategy, then he wandered away from him. He said to Nimrod, "Thou shalt not return a second time."<sup>9</sup>

*Folio 121b.* When Nimrod was passing through the East, he deposited books making known what Bouniter the son of Noah had taught him. The people were astonished at his wisdom. There was among the people entrusted with the worship of fire a man called Ardashir. When Ardashir saw the wisdom of Nimrod and the excellency of his star-gazing (Nimrod had a perfect genius), he envied him for this, and implored a Devil who had appeared to him beside the fire to teach him the wisdom of Nimrod. The Devil said to him, "Thou canst not do this until thou have fulfilled the magic rite, and its perfection is the marriage of mothers, daughters and sisters." Ardashir answered him concerning this, and did what he commanded him about it. Since that time the Magi allow the wedlock of mothers, sisters and daughters. The Devil also taught Ardashir the knowledge of omens and auguries, and physiognomy, and fortune-telling, and divining and witchcraft, which were doctrines of the Devil, and the Chaldaeans gave one another this doctrine;

*Folio 122a.* these were the Syrians, and some people say that it is the tongue of the Nabataeans. Every one who uses aught of these doctrines, his guilt before God is great. But the knowledge which Nimrod learned from Bounitar, verily Bounitar the son of Noah learned it from God, the great and glorious, for it is the counting of the stars, and the years and the months; the Greeks call this science Astronomy, and the Persians call it Astrology.<sup>10</sup> Nimrod built great towns in the East, namely, Hadaniun, Ellasar, Seleucia, Ctesiphon, Ruhin, and the towns of Atrapatene, and Telalon, and others that he chose for himself.

When Terah, father of Abraham, reached two hundred and three years he died. Abraham and Lot buried him in the city of Haran. [God] commanded him that he should

8. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

9. This story seems to be based on the Gilgamesh Epic, tablets X–XI.

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

travel to the Holy Land. Abraham took with him Sarah his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and journeyed to the land of the Amorites. Abraham the Just was then seventy-five years old. . . .

[Here follows the story of Abraham's rescue of Lot and his encounter with Melchizedek, known from Genesis 14.]

*Folio 123a.* . . . Hagar the Egyptian bond-maid. Pharaoh of Egypt had given her to Sarah, the wife of Abraham, who was his sister by his father but not by his mother, for Terah married two wives; the name of the one was Yuta, she was the mother of Abraham, and she died when she gave birth to him; the name of the other was Nahdeef,<sup>11</sup> and she was the mother of Sarah. Therefore Abraham answered as he said to the king of Egypt when he wished to do violence to Sarah, that "she is my sister."

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11. Nahdeef نهديف is possibly a pointing mistake for the Tahdif تهديف of the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, or from Naharyath نارهوث to Nahdeef نهوٲ.

## EXTRACTS FROM JACOB OF EDESSA

Jacob of Edessa (d. A.D. 708) was a Christian scholar who lived in the Syrian city of Edessa. In a letter written to John of Litarba, he recounted a story about Abraham that is a variant of the one found in the book of *Jubilees*, which is also included in this collection. That Jacob's source for the story was Greek is suggested by the fact that he spells the name of Abraham's brother Haran as *hʿrʿn* rather than in the normal Syriac fashion, *hrn*, thus representing the vowel *a* of the Greek. The Syriac letter, from a manuscript in the British Library (Add. 12172), was published in W. Wright, "Two Epistles of Mar Jacob, Bishop of Edessa," *Journal of Sacred Literature*, n.s. 10 (1867), 4\*–5\*. A French translation was published by F. Nau in *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 10 (1905): 197–208, 258–82. The English translation used here is from Sebastian P. Brock, "Abraham and the Ravens: A Syriac Counterpart to Jubilees 11–12 and Its Implications," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 9/2 (1978): 137–39. We have numbered the paragraphs for reference purposes.

1. "From Ur of the Chaldeans":<sup>1</sup> because it was here that the sons of the great Eber were living—those who had been left over from the people that had been scattered by the division of tongues, and who alone spoke that original language of Adam. This is the reason (he left) Ur of the Chaldeans.

2. God's summons to Abraham happened as follows: there was a great famine over the earth in the time of Terah,<sup>2</sup> and the people then were barely able to save any of the seed that was sown in the ground because of the multitude of ravens and birds that God sent upon the land, and which used to gather (the seed) up. When he was fifteen his father Terah sent him to drive away the ravens from the field, as the Jewish histories indicate.<sup>3</sup> Being exhausted by the work he was defeated by the large number of the ravens—though he had chased them away in front and behind and in every direction, yet he was still defeated.

3. Not knowing what to do he stretched out his hands to heaven with urgency and agitation, and said in a loud voice: "O God, who made heaven and earth through his word, drive off and kill these ravens." God speedily and without delay drove the ravens off

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1. Citing Genesis 11:31.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5.

3. Jacob evidently has in mind *Jubilees* 11, a text that is included in this collection.

Abraham's field, saying to Abraham gently and kindly: "Abraham, Abraham, I am he whom you called; see, I have heard you and driven off the ravens from your field. For just as you said, I am the God who has made heaven and earth, and to me belongs everything in them: the wild animals are mine, and so are the birds of the sky, and it is I who brought these ravens upon you, and because you called on me and knew my name, I heard you and drove the ravens off your field."<sup>4</sup>

4. This was Abraham's first calling from God. Having gone in to Terah his father and told him what had been said to him by God, he counselled him to remove himself from Qainan,<sup>5</sup> the deity of the Chaldeans, and (instead) reverence and worship the God who alone is true.

5. Thus Abraham, at the age of fifteen, was called by God, and was thus truly confirmed in the fear of God, so that he endeavoured to teach and warn Terah his father and Nahor his brother to remove themselves from false (worship) and recognize the true God.

6. In the sixtieth year of his life, burning with zeal, he secretly took fire by night and burnt the temple where the idol of the god Qainan stood.

7. Now when the Chaldeans collected to put out the fire, Haran, Abraham's eldest brother rushed up to put it out, but he fell into the fire and died.<sup>6</sup> This is the reason that the sacred book says that "Haran died before of [sic]<sup>7</sup> Terah his father in the land in which he had been born, in Ur of the Chaldeans."<sup>8</sup>

8. When the Chaldeans learnt that what had happened had been done by Abraham, they were compelling Terah, saying: "Either hand over your son Abraham that we may kill him, seeing that he has burnt the house of our god, or we will kill you and burn your house." Terah, being thus compelled, fled by night from Ur, secretly taking his son Abraham with him,<sup>9</sup> as well as Lot, Haran's son and his grandson, and Sarah his daughter-in-law. And he came to Harran, to the land of Mesopotamia, and lived there. And afterwards Nahor, Abraham's brother, also came to them.

9. And after fourteen years Terah died. This is the reason why Terah and Abraham left Ur of the Chaldeans.

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4. Cf. Abraham 2:17.

5. This name corresponds to biblical Cainan, a name borne by two men, though it is not known from the Bible as the name of a false god. For Terah's worship of idols, cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

6. This portion of Jacob's account seems to derive from the story in *Jubilees* 12. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

7. Our insertion.

8. Citing Genesis 11:28.

9. This account differs from most stories, which have Terah turning Abraham over to be killed and Abraham being rescued by God or an angel. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE VENERABLE BEDE

The Venerable Bede (A.D. 672–735) was an English monk most noted for his ecclesiastical history of England. He wrote a number of works in Latin, mostly Bible commentaries that were highly valued throughout the Middle Ages. His complete works were published in London, 1843–44. The English versions here were translated for the first time by John Gee from the Latin texts published in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols. (Paris, 1844–64). The author of *Quaestiones super Genesim* is uncertain, but it may have been Bede; therefore, an extract from the work is included here. Each passage cited includes a verbatim quotation of Jerome. The parenthetical references after each passage are to the pages in the *Patrologia*.

### *Hexaemeron* 3

“Then Aran begat Loth, and Aran died before Thare<sup>1</sup> his father in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldeans.”<sup>2</sup> When it says “before Thare” it [the phrase] can designate both “in the presence of” and time; it [the phrase] appears temporal, because he died before his father did, but it is really “in the presence” because it is in his presence, that is, in his [Thare’s] presence his [Aran’s] life departed. Furthermore, certain codices have [the reading] “because he died in the sight of Thara his father.” When it [the text] really says “in Ur of the Chaldeans,” it appears to be the name of a place, in which the tomb is, which today, as Josephus refers to, a mound<sup>3</sup> is shown which appears to belong to a certain great and excellent dignitary, being the same Aran is to be found. Because among the Hebrews, truly, Ur means fire. They tell that he would have been consumed in the fire of the Chaldeans because it seemed that when Abraham, knowing the true God more than his brother, he refused to worship the fire, which they worshiped; and therefore both were cast into the fire by the Chaldeans,<sup>4</sup> who [Aran] was consumed by the fire; Abraham truly by virtue of his exalted faith was rescued by the Lord.<sup>5</sup> Whence afterwards was said to him: “I, the Lord, who led thee out of the fire of the Chaldeans,”<sup>6</sup> and thanks

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1. These three names are biblical Haran, Lot, and Terah.
  2. Genesis 11:27–28, Vulgate.
  3. The edition has *tumultus*, “insurrection,” for *tumulus*, “mound.”
  4. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.
  5. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.
  6. Citing Genesis 15:7.

to this dissension Abraham escaped the fire; therefore, he was unable to live among the Chaldeans, but when he learned that his father was moving elsewhere in the land . . . (PL, 91:133–34)

#### *Hexaemeron 4*

“And he said to him: I am the Lord, who led thee from Ur of the Chaldeans, that I might give thee this land, and that thou mayest possess it.”<sup>7</sup> They assert that Ur is the name of a place, but because Ur is interpreted “fire,” it is better to understand the tradition of the Hebrews, of which we have spoken above: that he was rescued from the fire of the Chaldeans. Because at the time they [the Chaldeans] worshiped fire itself instead of God, and he [Abraham] refused to worship and adore, they desired that he be consumed by fire,<sup>8</sup> but God protected him and they could not kill him.<sup>9</sup> (PL, 91:155)

#### *Commentarium in Pentateuchem*

[Genesis 11]

“And Aram died before Thara,<sup>10</sup> his father, in the land of his nativity in Ur of the Chaldeans.”<sup>11</sup> The Hebrews pass on the tradition that Aram was sent to the fire because he did not want to worship the fire that the Chaldeans worshiped, and being rescued by the help of God, escaped the fire of idolatry. And this is what it now says: he died in the presence of Thara his father in Ur of the Chaldeans, that is, in the fire of the Chaldeans. Ur, therefore, means fire; whoever apparently did not want to worship the fire was consumed by the fire.<sup>12</sup> (PL, 91:229)

#### *Quaestiones super Genesim*

“Phaleg, the son of Heber, begat Reu. Reu begat Sarug. Sarug begat Nachor. Nachor begat Thare.<sup>13</sup> These are the generations of Thare. Thare begat Abram, and Nachor and Aran. And Aran begat Loth,<sup>14</sup> and Aran died before Thare his father, in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldeans.” About this we import the following: according to the chapter which Jerome observed in the book *Quaestiones Hebraicae*, “And Aran died before his father, in the land in which he was born, in the region of the Chaldeans.”<sup>15</sup> Instead of that which we say, “in the region of the Chaldeans,” in Hebrew is “in Ur Chesdim,” that is, “in the fire of the Chaldeans.” For the Hebrews pass on the tradition from this incident, this sort of story: That Abraham was sent to the fire because he did not want to

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7. Ibid.

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

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

10. Biblical Haran and Terah.

11. Genesis 11:27–28, Vulgate. The following passage quotes Jerome, but the quotation garbles the story, leaving out a couple of lines and substituting Aram for Abraham.

12. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

13. From Phaleg, these are biblical Peleg, Eber, Serug, Nahor, and Terah.

14. From Nachor, these are biblical Nahor, Haran, and Lot.

15. Following the Vulgate version.

worship the fire that the Chaldeans worshiped,<sup>16</sup> and being rescued by the help of God, escaped the fire of idolatry.<sup>17</sup> Thus it is written afterwards, that Thara departed with his progeny from the land of the Chaldeans, for which in the Hebrew is “from the conflagration of the Chaldeans.” And this is what it now says: “Aran died in the presence of his father in the land of his nativity, in the fire of the Chaldeans”; because he apparently did not want to worship the fire, he was devoured by the fire.<sup>18</sup> But later the Lord said to Abraham: “I am he who led thee from the fire of the Chaldeans.”<sup>19</sup> . . .

Student (Jerome):

“And Abraham was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.” The question inevitably arises: If, therefore, Thara,<sup>20</sup> the father of Abraham, when he had heretofore been in the region of Chaldea, begat Abram at the age of 70, and afterwards dies in Charra<sup>21</sup> at the age of 205, how, now, after the death of Thara, when Abraham departs from Charra, is he said to be 75 years old, when from the birth of Abraham until the death of his father is thought to have been 135 years?

Teacher:

Therefore, that tradition of the Hebrews is true, which we spoke of above, that Thara and his son came out of the fire of the Chaldeans and that Abraham, surrounded by the conflagration in Babylon; because he did not want to worship it,<sup>22</sup> he was freed by the help of God.<sup>23</sup> And from that moment from which he confessed the Lord, rejecting the idols of the Chaldeans, the days of his life and the time of this life is reckoned. It could, however, be because the scripture remains ambiguous: before many years Thara leaving Chaldea came to Charran, where he died; but certainly he came to Charran immediately after persecution, and there later he died. If, therefore, someone opposes this explanation, or desires another solution, then he justly rejects that which we have spoken. (*PL*, 93:301–2)

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

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

18. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

19. Citing Genesis 15:7.

20. Biblical Terah.

21. Biblical Haran.

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

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

EXTRACTS FROM  
ALCUIN

A deacon from Northumbria, Alcuin was a major influence in the Carolingian Renaissance, which was caused in part by contact with invading Muslims. He lived from ca. A.D. 740 to 804, spending much of his adult life in France. Much of his writing is still extant and includes correspondence, biblical exegesis, heresiology, hagiography, and manuals of grammar, rhetoric, and mathematics. His Latin works were first published in 1617 in Paris; the little translated into English has come in the twentieth century. Below, we draw our selections from a letter and his *Interrogationes et responsiones in Genesim*. The English text of these extracts, published here for the first time, is a translation prepared by John Gee from the Latin text in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols. (Paris, 1844–64). The parenthetical references after each passage are to the pages in the *Patrologia*.

**Epistola 83**

For philosophers were not the authors of these arts, but the discoverers. For the Creator of all things authored them in nature as he wished. True, they who were wise in the world were the discoverers of these arts in the things of nature, as you can easily understand from the sun and the moon and the stars. How else should we ponder and wonder at the sun and moon and constellations, if not the wisdom of the Creator and their natural courses? So consider the patriarch Abraham, [who], from the reasoning of astrology,<sup>1</sup> understood and worshiped God the creator and from that was called “the friend of God” and endured in the faith [and] was found strong. For the Hebrews say that he went out of Ur of the Chaldeans, that is, from the fire of the Chaldeans, which Chaldeans worshiped fire instead of God. My wise master used to say: “The wisest of men were those who discovered the arts in the things of nature. It is a great disgrace for us to say they died in our days. But now the small-mindedness of the masses does not care to know the reason of things which the Creator left in nature.” You know best how sweet arithmetic is in reason, how necessary for understanding the holy scriptures, how delightful is the knowledge of the stars of heaven and their courses. But it is rare that such [the masses] care to know, and what is worse, students find fault with knowing this; and whosoever does not know these things of nature hold them to be guiltless, if they themselves desire to pass on the holy scriptures, and the work among those by whom is considered the knowledge of eternal life. (*PL*, 100:271–72)

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

*Interrogationes et responsiones in Genesim*

Question 152: What is that which is said about Aran, the brother of Abraham: “And Aran<sup>2</sup> died before his father, in the land in which he was born, in Ur of the Chaldeans.”<sup>3</sup> Answer: Ur [truly] is called fire, and the Chaldeans worshiped fire as God; Thare<sup>4</sup> truly, as the Hebrews pass down, was cast with his sons into the fire of the Chaldeans because he did not want to worship the fire, and in that fire Aran was consumed.<sup>5</sup> And this is what it now says, “He died in the presence of his father,”<sup>6</sup> just as Jerome in *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* refers saying thus:<sup>7</sup> “that tradition of the Hebrews is true that Thare and his sons came out of the fire of the Chaldeans and that Abraham, surrounded by the conflagration in Babylon because he did not want to worship it,<sup>8</sup> was freed by the help of God.<sup>9</sup> And from that moment when he confessed the Lord, rejecting the idols of the Chaldeans, the days of his life and the time of his life is reckoned.” And thus is solved the most obscure question about Abraham. For it is said that when Thare was seventy<sup>10</sup> years old he begat Abraham and lived after he begat Abraham 130 years, and all the years of Thare were 205.<sup>11</sup> For it says in Genesis: “And Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran,”<sup>12</sup> which is apparently the death of his father Thare. Therefore from the year of the birth of Abraham until the year in which he departed from Charra<sup>13</sup> are 135 years: but the years are not calculated that he lived before he went out of the fire of the Chaldeans, freed by the protection of God. Thus Jerome. (*PL*, 100:534)

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2. Biblical Haran.

3. Citing Genesis 11:28.

4. Biblical Terah.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

6. Citing Genesis 11:28.

7. It is ironic that Alcuin, one of the only Latin authors to acknowledge Jerome as his source and to give the work of Jerome that he is quoting, quotes the text more freely than most other Latin authors.

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

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

10. The editor in the *PL* notes that the manuscript has seventy-five.

11. Citing Genesis 11:26, 32.

12. Citing Genesis 12:2.

13. Biblical Haran.

EXTRACTS FROM THE  
EXPOSITIO SUPER SEPTEM VISIONES  
LIBRI APOCALYPSIS

The author of the *Explanation of the Seven Visions in the Book of Revelation* is unknown, although the manuscript attributes the writing to Ambrose, bishop of Milan (A.D. 340–97). The manuscript was found in a monastery in Durham, England; references within the work to certain Carolingian writings date the text to after 774, although no sure date can be ascertained. The earliest mentioned edition of the text was in 1548. We have used the Latin text found in the *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 17:851, 904–5. This previously unpublished translation was prepared by John Gee.

[Commenting on Revelation 1:13:]

But by the girde<sup>1</sup> are designated the patriarchs and other just men who lived before the law, who are called gold because of many tribulations, so as gold is known to be tried in the furnace: so Abraham, who was brought out of the fire of the Chaldees;<sup>2</sup> so Lot, whom the Sodomites distressed; so Isaac, who endured blindness; so Jacob, who was distressed by the persecution of a brother and father-in-law; so Joseph, who suffered captivity and prison; so Job, who endured the loss of goods, and the curse.

[Commenting on Revelation 6:4:]<sup>3</sup>

“And that they should kill one another.”<sup>4</sup> From such has peace been taken away, so that one is killed by another, for often the just kill the unjust and the unjust kill the just; so Aram,<sup>5</sup> the brother of Abraham, according to a tradition of the Jews, was killed in the fire of the Chaldees because he did not want to worship fire.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Referring to the “golden girde” in Revelation 1:13.

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

3. This extract apparently relies on Jerome, extracts of whose writings are included in this volume.

4. Citing Revelation 6:4.

5. Biblical Haran.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE CONFLICT OF ADAM AND EVE WITH SATAN

The *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* is thought to have been composed in Egypt in the fifth or sixth century, but it is known only in a later Arabic translation and a still later Ethiopic translation. It cannot be any later than the ninth century because Saʿīd ibn Batrīq (whose work appears elsewhere in this collection) quotes it extensively. The book first came to the attention of Western scholarship in 1625, at the same time that Ethiopic manuscripts first came to the attention of Western scholarship, although it was not translated into English until the late nineteenth century. A French translation appeared in 1856. It seems to share a common source with other texts included in this collection, notably the *Book of the Cave of Treasures* and the *Book of the Rolls* and, to a lesser extent, the *Book of the Bee*. Here, we draw on the only English translation of the Ethiopic (with reference to the Arabic): S. C. Malan, trans., *The Book of Adam and Eve, Also Called the Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1882), 173–76, 179–82. Malan divided the text into four books; we extract portions of 3 and 4 Adam and Eve and have numbered Malan’s paragraphs for easier reference.

### 3 Adam and Eve

#### Chapter 23

1. Then Ragu, Phalek’s son, lived two hundred and thirty-two years, and died. But when Ragu, Phalek’s first-born son, was one hundred and thirty years old, there reigned one of the first kings that ever reigned on the earth, whose name was Nimrud,<sup>1</sup> a giant.

2. That Nimrud saw a cloud of light under heaven; a mere apparition of Satan. And he inclined his heart to it, and coveted its beauty; and then called to one whose name was Santal, a carver, and said to him, “Carve me a crown of gold, after the pattern of that cloud.”

3. Then Santal made him a crown [of gold] which Nimrud took and placed upon his own head. Wherefore was it said that a cloud had come [down] from heaven, and overshadowed him. And he became so wicked, as to think within himself that he was God.

4. And in those days Ragu was one hundred and eighty years old, and in his one hundred and fortieth year, Yanuf reigned over the land of Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

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1. These are, from Ragu, biblical Reu, Peleg, and Nimrod.

2. No pharaoh named Yanuf is known from Egyptian inscriptions.

5. He is the first king that reigned over it;<sup>3</sup> and he built the city of Memphis, and named it after his own name. That is Misr; whose name is rendered Masrin.<sup>4</sup>

6. This Yanuf died; and in his stead, in the days of Ragu, one from the land of India reigned, whose name was Sasen; and who built the city of Saba.<sup>5</sup> And all the kings who reigned over that country were called Sabæans, after the name of the city.

7. And it was so, until the days of Solomon, son of David.

8. Then again Phar'an<sup>6</sup> reigned over the children of Saphir, and built the city of Saphir with stones of gold; and that is the land of Sar'ania, and because of these stones of gold, they say that the mountains of that country and the stones thereof are all of gold.

## Chapter 24

1. After [him] came Serok<sup>7</sup> his son, in whose days idol-gods of stone, were openly worshipped in the world. The children of men began to make idols of stone,<sup>8</sup> the first of which were Kalithon and Helodon.

2. And the children of men multiplied upon the earth, and their wickedness increased also; for they had neither law nor order; and no teachers to guide them in the way of righteousness; nor any one to be judge among them.

3. Wherefore they grew worse and worse, and wandered farther from the way of God; every one of them did what he himself listed; and they made for themselves idol-gods, which they worshipped.<sup>9</sup>

4. They had no hope in the resurrection of the dead. But whenever one of them died, they buried him, and set up an idol over his grave; and said, that was his god, that would show him mercy in his grave. They said also, as regards the dead, that when his god was set up over his grave, the remembrance of him, would not be cut off from the face of the earth.

5. This was a common saying brought out by Satan; and the earth was thus filled with idols; and those idols were of divers kinds, men and women.

6. After this Serok died two hundred and thirty years old; and they embalmed him in Sar'ania his city, that was built in his name.

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3. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

4. The Arabic name for Egypt is Miṣr, while the Hebrew is Miṣra'īm, a dual form ("two Misrs"), denoting the ancient Egyptian name for itself, *t3.wy* "the two lands." The name is spelled Mizraim in the KJV (Genesis 10:6, 13; 1 Chronicles 1:8, 11).

5. This is the country over which the biblical queen of Sheba ruled (1 Kings 10:1–13), which explains why Solomon is mentioned in the next verse. Saba was located in southern Arabia, in the area known today as Yemen. But Josephus makes Solomon's visitor queen of Egypt and Ethiopia (*Antiquities of the Jews* 8.6.5).

6. I.e., Pharaoh, taken from the Arabic rendering.

7. Biblical Serug.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

7. After that Nahor, when twenty-nine years old begat Terah. And when Nahor was eighty-six years of age, God looked down upon the children of men, [and saw] that they were ruined and worshipped idols.

8. Then God sent forth winds, and the whirlwind, and earthquakes on the earth, until the idols were broken one against another.<sup>10</sup> Yet the children of men did not repent of their sins, neither did they turn to God from their iniquities that He might save them; but rather increased in wickedness.

9. And in the twentieth year of Terah's life, the worship of idols spread over the earth<sup>11</sup> in the city of Aarat,<sup>12</sup> which Barwin, the son of Eber, had built.

10. And at that time there was a rich man living in it, who died; and his son made an idol of gold in the likeness of his father, and set it up on his [father's] grave.

11. He then ordered one of his servants, to stand by the idol, and to minister unto it; to sweep the ground around it, to pour water to it and to burn incense.

12. But when Satan saw this he entered into the idol of gold, and talked to the servant, like his master's father that was dead; and said to him, "Thou doest well thus."

13. After this a thief took by surprise the house of the youth, son of the man who was dead; who then came to his father's grave, weeping.

14. And he said, "O my father, they have carried away all my goods."

15. Then Satan answered him from within the idol, and said, "Do not stay here, but go and bring thy son, and offer him up in oblation to me, and then I will return to thee all thy goods."

16. Then that youth went, and did with his son, as Satan had commanded him. And at that time Satan entered into him, and taught him to practise enchantments, and magic, the mixture of drugs, and divination.

17. That was the first evil example [of the kind] set to men, to take their children and to offer them up in oblation to idols and to devils.<sup>13</sup>

## Chapter 25

1. Then in the hundredth year of Nahor, God looked down upon the children of men [and saw] that they sacrificed their children to idols.

2. Then God commanded the stores of winds to open, and to send forth the whirlwind, and gales, and darkness upon the whole face of the earth, until all the idols and images, and figures were brought together [by the winds] in mountains upon mountains high. And the idols remained buried under them until this day.<sup>14</sup> . . .

[Here follows a comparison with the destruction at the time of the flood.]

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10. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

12. Evidently Ararat, the name of the ancient kingdom of Urartu.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

14. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

7. Then in those days, king Nimrud saw a flaming fire in the east, which arose from the earth.

8. Then said Nimrud, "What is that fire?" He then went towards it; and when he saw it, he bowed to it in worship, and appointed a priest to minister before it, to burn incense to it, and to sacrifice victims to it.<sup>15</sup> From that day the men of Fars<sup>16</sup> began to fill the earth.

9. Then Satan the worker of idols saw a fountain of water near the fire-pit, and he came to it, and looked at it, and made a horse of gold, and set it up on the edge of the fountain of water; and it so happened that all those who came to wash in that fountain of water, bowed in worship to that golden horse; and from that time, the people of Fars began to worship horses.

10. But the priest whom Nimrud appointed to minister to the fire and to burn incense to it, wished to be a teacher, and wise of the same wisdom as Nimrud, whom Barwin, Noah's fourth son had taught.

11. The priest, therefore, kept on asking Satan, while standing before the fire, to teach him this evil ministry and abominable wisdom. So, when Satan saw him doing his best in the service [of the fire], he talked to him, and said, "No man can become a teacher, or wise, or great before me, unless he hearkens to me, and goes and weds his mother, his sister and his daughter."

12. Then that priest hearkened to Satan in all that he commanded him, and taught him all manner of wisdom and of wickednesses. And from that time, the people of Fars have committed like sins unto this day.

13. And Nimrud built great cities in the east; and wrought all manner of iniquities in them.

## 4 Adam and Eve

### Chapter 1

1. Then when Terah was two hundred and thirty years old, he fell sick, and called Abraham his son, and said unto him, "O my son, I wish to die."

2. But Abraham stood up and comforted him, paid him all due honour, and did not aggrive him about his being a maker of idols.<sup>17</sup>

3. For Abraham his son, was a righteous man, and could not bear idols; but he paid him all due respect, as being his father.

4. Then Terah died; and Abraham and Nahor buried him in a mountain.

5. But when Abraham was grown up, God said unto him, "O Abraham, come out of thy land, of thy kindred and of thy father's house, and go to the land that I will show thee."

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15. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

16. The Arabic name for Persia. In connection with the information given here, it should be noted that the ancient Persians, followers of Zoroaster, maintained a sacred fire. The practice continues today among those who still follow Zoroaster, the Parsis (meaning "Persians") of India.

17. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.

6. Then Abraham arose, and took Sarah his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and they came to the land of the Amorites. And Abraham was seventy years old when he saw this vision;<sup>18</sup> and this was his first wandering from the land of the east, to the western side of the river Euphrates.

[Here follows the story of Abraham's rescue of Lot and his encounter with Melchizedek, known from Genesis 14.]

## Chapter 2

1. After this there was a famine in the land of Palestine; and Abraham went down into the land of Egypt.

2. And Sarah his wife was with him, and she was good-looking.

3. So Abraham said to her, "Say not, I am Abraham's wife, lest they kill me, and take thee from me. But say, I am his sister."

4. Then when they came into the land of Egypt, men spake to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and said to him, "Behold a man has come hither; and with him is his beautiful sister."

5. Then Pharaoh sent and took her from Abraham, who remained weeping.

6. But God in His mercy sent an angel who smote Pharaoh, and said to him, "Send back to Abraham his wife, lest God kill thee."

7. Then in the morning, Pharaoh called Abraham, and said unto him, "Forgive me." He then gave him his wife Sarah; and gave to Sarah, Hagar the Egyptian, and gave her many presents.

8. After this Abraham took Sarah his wife, with Hagar her maid-servant, and returned to Palestine.

9. And after that, Abraham took to himself Hagar to wife, who bare him Ishmael, when Abraham was eighty-seven years old.

10. But in that Abraham said, "Sarah is my sister," he did not lie; inasmuch as Terah, his father, married two wives; one of which was called Tona, the mother of Abraham, who died shortly after he was born.

11. Then Terah married again another wife whose name was Tahdif, who bare him Sarah, whom Abraham married, and who, for that reason, said, "She is my sister"—on my father's side, but not on my mother's.

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18. According to Genesis 12:4, Abraham was seventy-five when he left Haran, though Abraham 2:14 makes him sixty-two. The book of *Jasher* has him leaving Haran more than once, the last time at age seventy-five (*Jasher* 13:5, 26).

## EXTRACTS FROM GEORGE SYNCELLUS

George Syncellus was a Byzantine scholar who lived for some time in Palestine. About A.D. 800 he wrote a history, the *Chronographia*, compiled from a number of earlier sources, including Eusebius (whose work is also cited in this collection). Two versions of his *Chronographia* (a chronological history of the world) exist, differing somewhat in wording. The Greek text of his *Chronographia* was published in Bonn in 1829. The translation from the Greek used here is by James E. (Dimitri) Williams and Catherine S. Williams and was prepared especially for this compilation from Georgius Syncellus, *Chronographia*, 2 vols., ed. Wilhelm Dindorf (Bonn: Weber, 1829). Numbers in parentheses following each extract denote the page(s) on which the material is found in the published Greek text. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. Thus, for those who have a desire, it is possible to search the scriptural knowledge at hand and to understand that the spiritual death happens before the physical. For which if you accept idol worship, you swallow up also greediness. Terah being an idol worshiper<sup>1</sup> and probably not going with Abraham and therefore not leaving out of the land, but as it is written Terah received Abraham, Nahor, Lot, and Sarah and led them out of the land of the Chaldeans. And they came to the land of Canaan and resided there. (1:176)

2. Henceforth, to us it appears that before the death of Terah, God told Abraham to exit out of the land of Terah. But from that which was written by the first witness,<sup>2</sup> before Abraham lived in Haran, God saw Abraham in Mesopotamia, which is found in the land of the Chaldeans. (1:177)

3. Therefore, it is easily understood that Abraham could be instructed correctly only after the death of Terah. But in his own homeland he yet had to truly offer a sacrifice to God and turn away from his father's idols, which he burned during the night.<sup>3</sup> Haran, Abraham's brother, also was burned up with the idols while trying to put out the fire before his father Terah, as has been told, just as hinted in the scriptures, that Haran died

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.

2. I.e., Moses, to whom the first books of the Bible are attributed.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

before his father Terah,<sup>4</sup> in the land in which he was born. This was the land of the Chaldeans, in the city of Sur.<sup>5</sup> (1:178)

4. And Abraham was one hundred years old in the year of the world 3313. The Chaldean Abraham from birth had his upbringing among the Chaldeans, and from them he was taught in their astrology and in all the rest of their wisdom.<sup>6</sup> He became a friend to God by them with the founding of his own ideas, and he did not permit his environment to change him. He had been changed by the Creator and from the beauty of the creation (world). Thus, he became worthy to receive upon himself divine light. Still, he lived in his homeland, as has been written in the words of the first witness and as has been heard by way of tradition. Seeing that the Chaldeans descend from Shem and from them descends Abraham, it is said that Abraham was called “little birth”<sup>7</sup> by his mother’s grandfather. And Sarah was the sister of Abraham by the same father. (1:183)

5. Abraham was the first to encompass the altar with branches of palm and olive trees.<sup>8</sup> The first time a holy messenger (angel) is named in the scriptures is in the time of Abraham. From him, the Egyptians learned the place of the stars and their movements and the mathematical science.<sup>9</sup> When Abraham was fourteen years of age, he learned about the God of all, and he worshiped him. The idols of his father he destroyed and burned in the house.<sup>10</sup> Haran was burned with them, trying to put out the fire.<sup>11</sup> Josephus<sup>12</sup> says that Abraham tried to educate his father to abandon idol worship and abandon his building of idols.<sup>13</sup> At that time, Melchizedek flourished as first high priest and first king in Salem.<sup>14</sup> Thus it is proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures. He was a virgin and of unrecorded descent. And among the wisest men he always won with words. With bread and wine, and without the shedding of blood, he made sacrifices to the Christ of the true God, the same who (Christ) is saved, to this same Christ, who had not a mother above nor a father here on earth, who was the prototype of us all. In this way he (Melchizedek) blessed Abraham, and Abraham learned the most important worship service, by the law, for us, in the spirit and in truth. He was one of the most important of the people and the only one who manifested himself to the patriarch Abraham. (1:184)

4. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29; 2:1.

5. Biblical Ur. Sur is the usual form for the city Tyre.

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

7. The Greek term, *little Genesis*, is a strange one, used elsewhere to denote the book of *Jubilees*, in which Abraham plays an important role.

8. Abraham’s circumambulation of the altar is also noted in *Kebra Nagast* 105, included in this collection. See the note there.

9. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29; 2:1.

12. The account of Josephus is included in this collection.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.

14. Cf. Alma 13:14–19; Doctrine and Covenants 107:2–4. According to Doctrine and Covenants 84:14, Abraham was ordained by Melchizedek.

## AN EXTRACT FROM DE COMPUTO

The author of this astrological text, from a codex found in the Ambrosian library in Milan, is unknown. Quotations of Alcuin, who died in A.D. 804, indicate that the text could not be older than that date. The previously unpublished translation used here was provided by Edward Stratford from the Latin text published in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 129:1344. The section quoted follows immediately after a discussion of the progression of the sun through the zodiac; compare Vettius Valens, who is also included in this book.

What indeed else in the sun and the moon and the stars do we consider, and wonder, if not the wisdom of the Creator? And the running course of them is born by nature. Thus Abraham the patriarch had known from the calculation of astrology,<sup>1</sup> the Creator God, and worshiped [him], and thereupon was called a friend to God and tested in faith now he came to strength. For instance, the Hebrews say that he left from Ur of Chaldees, which is the fire of Chaldees, which fire the Chaldeans worshiped as God.<sup>2</sup> My master was often accustomed to say to me, "The wisest men were those who discovered arts in things of nature. Because of great prosperity, as we have dismissed these things on our days to perish, but now the timidity of men does not pay attention to matters of calculation, which the Creator set up in nature."

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

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

## EXTRACTS FROM AN ANONYMOUS CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

The account that follows is from an anonymous Christian chronicle, written in Syriac and dated to the middle of the ninth century and running through the year 819. The text has affinities with the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, the *Book of the Rolls*, and the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*. The chronicle was discovered in 1911. Miles Lallemand prepared the translation from the Latin version of this work included in *Anonymi Auctoris Chronicon*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Chabot (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1965), 34–39. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

### The Building of the Tower and the Confusion of Tongues

1. At the beginning of the life of Ragavus,<sup>1</sup> Noah's descendants began to build a tower in the land of Sennaar,<sup>2</sup> explaining their reason thus: Let us build for ourselves a city and a tower; and let us make a name for ourselves before we are scattered and let us go away into our inheritance.<sup>3</sup> And Nemrod<sup>4</sup> sustained the builders with his hunting. Now the construction time dragged on to forty years. And this tower was raised so that when a beast of burden weighed down with rocks and limestone was climbing up skillfully with renewed steps on the place [tower], it took the same time to get there [the top] as it did to lay the materials. Behold, how high and firm was that tower!

2. In the fortieth year of Ragavus, the Lord confused the tongues in Babel. And ten years after the confusion of tongues, Nemrod girded himself with a regal crown and was the first king in the land after the flood. And twenty years after the confusion of tongues, all the people went out from Babel and went away each into the land of his inheritance. And the sons of Canaan saw the land of Palestine, right up to the borders of Egypt, to be very good and delightful. The land of Palestine, however, belonged to the sons of Iectanus,<sup>5</sup> the descendants of Chamus (Ham). And it was pleasing to them, and in it they made their abode; and they did not want to go away into their inheritance, and they broke the commandment of Noah and brought upon themselves the curse that he had pronounced upon them by prophecy.

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1. Biblical Reu.

2. Biblical Shinar, ancient Sumer.

3. Citing Genesis 11:4.

4. Biblical Nimrod.

5. This seems to be the biblical Joktan, who was a descendant of Shem, not Ham. Joktan's descendants settled in southern Arabia.

3. Phalegus (Peleg) died and in the utmost grief and in tears because in his days the land was divided. And Ragavus, his son, buried him in his city, Phalegis.

4. There were, in the land, seventy-two languages.

5. In the days of Ragavus, the third millennium unfolded, according to the chronicle.

6. There was from the flood up until the confusion of tongues 642 years according to the Hebrews; however, it was 340 years. The book of the Hebrews states that Abraham was born 40 years after the time of the confusion of tongues. And Nemrod threw Abraham into a fiery furnace<sup>6</sup> because he did not approve the worship of idols,<sup>7</sup> but the flame of the furnace was changed into pleasant dew. The chronicles, however, say that Abraham was born in the years following the confusion of tongues, in the days of king Ninus. In the days of Nemrod, however, a fire arose out of the earth and they worshiped and these people appointed priests and from this time the Persians began to worship the fire. And so Nimrod built the city of Edessa and other cities.<sup>8</sup>

7. There was, however, in this time, in the orient, a lonely man among the descendants of Noah, who was called Ioniton. He, by dying, made peace for himself and retired from work, worry, and trouble for which men were changed. And he firmly persevered in the works of excellent virtue and lived in self-abnegation. And he was the first man in the world to point out the folly of the way of asceticism. On that account, wisdom, favor, and knowledge of all things were given him; and he handed down to posterity other teachings and the knowledge of the circuits of the spheres, of the motions of stars, and of the whole plan of the virtues which are in the firmament,<sup>9</sup> and also a study of the goodness of roots out of the earth and the uses of these along with many other things worthy of mention. By men of this generation, he was considered a great prophet and a most famous priest.

8. And in the 109th year of Ragavus, the Lord sent a strong wind which threw down the tower; and in it Nimrod died<sup>10</sup> along with many others.

9. Ragavus begat Sarugus<sup>11</sup> when he was a 130 years old; according to the Hebrews, however, he was 32.

10. In the days of Sarugus, idolatry arose in the land,<sup>12</sup> and the name of the one God vanished from the hearts of men because they did not have teachers and lawmakers, and on account of their deviation they worshiped the sun and the moon and sculptures<sup>13</sup> and whatever figure in heaven or in earth pleased them. And since they had no hope of the resurrection, they made statues for their dead and worshiped them, lest they forget about them. Now when a certain rich man died, his son made a statue for him, and into

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

7. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

8. Edessa, the former Urfa, is identified by tradition with the city Ur, Abraham's birthplace.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1-18; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

11. Biblical Serug.

12. Cf. Abraham 1:5-6.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

this statue entered Satan, and he spoke with the young man. On a certain day, brigands came along and stole whatever the young man owned. Now he went forth to the tomb of his father and wept. And Satan said to the young man, "Do not weep in my presence, but take your little son and offer him to me as a sacrifice,<sup>14</sup> and I will restore to you whatever you have lost." And he led forth his son and sacrificed him and was himself in his blood. And Satan taught him magic and prophecy and augury and all kinds of demonic things. And then men began to sacrifice their sons to demons and to worship statues.

11. In this time, when the descendants of Shem saw that their part of the inheritance did not fall to them, they appointed for themselves three kings from their brothers: Saba, Ophir, and Havilah. These three most brave kings of the household of Iectanus began to make weapons, and they advanced in war against the people who inhabited their land. And they prevailed against all because they fought with arms, and none up until then had learned to prepare instruments of war. Therefore, they fled before those men and built citadels for themselves. And when the people saw that they had been defeated by these men, they handed to them the region of their inheritance. And then the people began to prepare instruments of war for themselves and to rise, people against people, tribe against tribe, and to capture one another and to buy and sell slaves and maidservants.

12. At this time, women themselves became illustrious in war, and they even ruled.<sup>15</sup> And accordingly, they observed a law not to march out male troops, but women. In the same year, they lay with their husbands and sent back their male sons to their husbands. And up to the time of King Solomon, women ruled.

13. At this time, they made standard measures and weights and silk garments and all kinds of textures.

14. And Ragavus died and Sarugus his son buried him in his city Aru'un.<sup>16</sup>

15. Saragus begat Nachorus<sup>17</sup> when he was 130 years old; according to the Hebrews, he was 30. The book of the Hebrews from Adam to Nachorus removes a hundred years from each patriarch, except Jared, Methuselah, and Lamech.

16. In the twelfth year of Nachorus, Pharaoh ruled in Egypt, the fourth king, and from this Pharaoh all the Egyptians began to be called Pharaohs.<sup>18</sup>

17. At this time was the struggle of Job with Satan for seven years, and he lived and triumphed. Some say that his struggle was serious after sixty years.

18. At this time books of astrology were brought to Egypt.<sup>19</sup>

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14. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

15. This may refer to the fact that, in the early first millennium B.C., women ruled in the southern Arabian peninsula, where Joktan (here Iectan) had settled. This is the region whence came the queen of Sheba to Solomon (1 Kings 10:1–13; 2 Chronicles 9:1–12). Note that our text says that women ruled until Solomon's time.

16. Evidently Ur.

17. Biblical Nahor.

18. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

19. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31; 3:1–18; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

19. Armonius the Canaanite had sons: Sodom and Gomorrah, who built cities and called them by their own names.<sup>20</sup>

20. And Sarugus died and his son Nachorus buried him.

21. Nachorus was twenty-nine, according to the chronicles, when he begat Thara.<sup>21</sup>

22. At that time, the city of Damascus was built.

23. In the hundredth year of Nachorus, God sent a great storm that knocked over all the images and obliterated them from the earth.<sup>22</sup> The ancient scriptures call it a typhonic whirlwind. And hills were made and God thrust down into them the demons who lived in the images and in the idols. For those hills were made for the idols, and in them they were destroyed,<sup>23</sup> and there is not a hill in which there is not a demon. And this was the reason for the onset of the wind at this time. Some say the hills were made at the time of the flood, but in this they have erred, for before the flood there was no idolatry in the land, but because of the extravagance of the house of Cain, God caused the flood.

24. Thara begat Abraham when he was seventy years old.

25. According to the opinion of the chroniclers, there were 3,329 years from Adam to Abraham; according to the Hebrews, however, there were 2,002 years.

26. Abraham, when he was twelve years old, began to understand the aberrations of the world, for all men were occupied exclusively in being led astray by carvings and the use of molten images. And in the time of sowing, the whole people went out, each to protect his seed from the ravens. Now, Abraham went out with the rest. And he shouted to the ravens, saying, "Turn back, turn back to the place from whence you have come." And they turned back. And on that day he drove away seventy ravens. And he called upon the God of heaven, and he heard him and freed him from the ravens.<sup>24</sup> And then Abraham knew God and promised to worship him. And he separated himself from his father. And the name of Abraham increased in fame throughout the whole region of the Chaldees. And he taught the craftsmen to make shore-beams to deepen the ploughs they used for planting seed, and the seed went down and was covered by the earth. And they were no longer bothered by ravens.

27. At one point, Abraham said to his father Thara, "What use of help is there in those idols which you worship? They are such a great service of senselessness and deception to the heart. They are the work of hands, and there is no spirit in them. Worship the God of heaven, who makes the rain fall and the dew and does whatever he wills in heaven and in earth." And he replied to him, "I know that too, my son. But what am I to do, for all the people have appointed me to minister for them in their presence. And if I speak to them, they will kill me, because their souls are pledged to idolatry.<sup>25</sup> But be silent, my

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20. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed in the days of Abraham (see Genesis 19).

21. Biblical Terah.

22. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

23. *Ibid.*

24. This version of the famine in Ur of the Chaldees is known from other traditions included in this collection. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5, 17.

25. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

son, lest they murder you." And when Abraham was fifty-six years old, he set the temple of Cainan<sup>26</sup> aflame. And Haran, the brother of Abraham, went in to save the temple from fire, but he was consumed by fire and died.<sup>27</sup>

28. And when Abraham was sixty years old, he went with his father Thara, his brother Nachorus, and Lot the son of Haran, out of Ur of the Chaldees, and they came to live in Harran for fourteen years.<sup>28</sup>

29. And in the fifth year, on the first day of the seventh month, when Abraham was in Harran, he sat by night to study the stars from sunset to sunrise<sup>29</sup> in order to see how they organized the rain throughout the year.<sup>30</sup> And while he was contemplating, speech came into his mouth and he said, "All the signs of the stars and of the moon and of the sun are in the hand of God. What am I looking for? For if the Lord wished, he could send down rain prematurely or after the time, and if he did not wish, the rains would not come down." And Abraham prayed that night and said, "God, my God, thou only art the most high God.<sup>31</sup> Deliver me from the error of this people and direct me to the life which pleases thee."<sup>32</sup> And when he finished praying, a voice came to him, saying, "Go away from your land, and from your people, and from the house of your father, into the land which I will show to you. And I will make you a great people and in you shall all the people of the earth be blessed."<sup>33</sup> And after two years Abraham asked his father that he might go to the land of Canaan. And he said to him, "Go in peace; the God of ages will make your way sure, and nothing wicked shall prevail against you."<sup>34</sup> And Abraham went from Harran to the land of Canaan when he was seventy-five years old,<sup>35</sup> with his wife Sarah and Lot the son of his brother. And after they had been there for twenty years, Ishmael was born to him by Hagar, his Egyptian handmaid, who was given him by Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

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26. Other texts make clear that this Cainan is an idol.

27. Cf. Abraham 2:1.

28. Cf. Abraham 2:14.

29. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

30. This activity may reflect Abraham's concern about the famine. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5.

31. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

32. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

33. Citing Genesis 12:1–2.

34. This suggests that Terah had come to believe in Abraham's God. Cf. Abraham 2:5, which implies the same.

35. Cf. Abraham 2:14.

EXTRACTS FROM  
RABANUS MAURUS

Rabanus Maurus (ca. A.D. 780–856) studied with Alcuin while at Tours, and later he was made abbot of Fulda (in modern Germany) from 824 to 842. Rabanus wrote commentaries on nearly every book in the Bible. He also had great success as a poet. He trained Walafrius Strabo and corresponded with Freculphus Lexoviensis, both of whose works appear in this collection. His works began to be published in Latin as early as 1626 but are still not all published. This previously unpublished translation, from book 2 of Maurus's *Commentaria in Genesim*, was made by John Gee from the Latin text in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 107:531–32, 534.

[Commenting on Genesis 11:27–28, 32; 12:1:]

“Now these are the generations of Thare:<sup>1</sup> Thare begat Abram, Nachor,<sup>2</sup> and Aran,<sup>3</sup> and Aran begat Loth.<sup>4</sup> And Aran died before his father Thare in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore that which we read in the Septuagint “in the region of the Chaldeans,” in Hebrew it has in “Ur Casdim,” אור-כשדים, that is, “in the fire of the Chaldeans.” For the Hebrews pass on the tradition from this incident, this sort of story wherein Abraham was sent to the fire because he did not want to worship the fire that the Chaldeans worshiped,<sup>6</sup> and being rescued by the help of God, escaped the fire of idolatry.<sup>7</sup> Thus it is afterwards written that Thara departed with his progeny from the land of the Chaldeans, for which in Hebrew is “from the conflagration of the Chaldeans.” But later the Lord said to Abram: “I am he who led thee from the fire of the Chaldeans.”<sup>8</sup> . . .

“And the days of Thara were two hundred and five years in Haran,”<sup>9</sup> because there he finished all the days of his life. The question is therefore solved by recapitulation, that

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1. Biblical Terah.
  2. Biblical Nahor.
  3. Biblical Haran.
  4. Biblical Lot.
  5. Citing Genesis 11:27–28.
  6. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.
  7. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.
  8. Citing Genesis 15:7.
  9. Citing Genesis 11:32.

inevitably remains, if we accept that after the death of Thare, God spoke to Abram, so that he would depart from Haran, because it is not possible for there to be 75 years until his father died, since he was born in his 70th year, so that Abram, after the death of his father, would be 135 if all the years of his father were 205. Therefore that recapitulation that is noticed in the scripture answers many difficulties that could be seen as insoluble. According to the explication of the above inquiry, by the same recapitulation of events, although otherwise that question is solved to some extent, from that computation of the years of Abraham's life, from when he was rescued from the fire of the Chaldeans into which he was cast to burn because he did not want to worship the fire according to the superstition of the Chaldeans;<sup>10</sup> therefore, he was rescued,<sup>11</sup> which is not read in the scriptures, but the Jews pass down the story. It can therefore be solved thus: since the scripture which says "and Thara lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nachor, and Aran,"<sup>12</sup> it does not, in any case, mean to be understood that the same 70th year he begat all three, but at which year he began to beget; this is the year the scripture commemorates. . . .

"So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran."<sup>13</sup> Therefore that tradition of the Hebrews of which we spoke above is not to be esteemed lightly, that Thara and his sons came out of the fire of the Chaldeans,<sup>14</sup> and that Abram, surrounded by the conflagration in Babylon because he did not want to worship it,<sup>15</sup> was freed by the help of God;<sup>16</sup> and from that moment when he confessed the Lord, rejecting the idols of the Chaldeans, the days of his life and the time of his life is reckoned. It could, however, be because the scripture remains ambiguous: before many years Thara leaving Chaldea came to Haran, where he died; but certainly he came to Haran, and there later he died.

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

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

12. Citing Genesis 11:26.

13. Citing Genesis 12:4.

14. Citing Genesis 11:31.

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

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

EXTRACTS FROM  
FRECVLPVUS LEXOVIENSIS

Freculphus was a Benedictine monk at the Abbey of Fulda (in modern Germany) in the early ninth century; he later became bishop of Lisieux in Normandy, holding that position from A.D. 823 to 851. He wrote two series of his *Chronicon*, one from the beginning of the world to the birth of Christ and the second from the birth of Christ to the reign of Bonifacium III (ca. 607). His works were first published in 1539. Freculphus used the works of Josephus and Jerome in his writings. He also corresponded with Rabanus Maurus, whose work is included in this volume. The previously unpublished translation below, from *Chronicon* 1.1.36, was made by John Gee from the Latin text published in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 106:941.

How Thara<sup>1</sup> and Abraham and Loth<sup>2</sup> and Aran<sup>3</sup> went out of Chaldea, and came in the land of Chanaan.<sup>4</sup>

“And Thara took Abram, his son, and Loth the son of Aran, his son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife, and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Chanaan; and they came unto Aran, and dwelt there.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Josephus said that Ur was the city of the Chaldeans, out of which Thara departed with his family and his house and came to Aran, which other translations usually call Charra. Jerome, however, explained this place in the history as follows, concerning the death of Aran before the death of his father and in Ur of the Chaldeans: “And Aran died before his father, in the land in which he was born, in Ur of the Chaldeans.”<sup>6</sup> Instead of that which we say, “in the land in which he was born, in Ur of the Chaldeans,” in Hebrew it has “in Ur Cestim,” that is, “in the fire of the Chaldeans.” For the Hebrews pass on the tradition from this incident, this sort of story wherein Abraham was sent to the fire because he did not want to worship the fire, and because the Babylonians wor-

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1. Biblical Terah.
  2. Biblical Lot.
  3. Biblical Haran.
  4. Biblical Canaan.
  5. Citing Genesis 11:31.
  6. Citing Genesis 11:28.

shipped fire,<sup>7</sup> and being rescued by the help of God, escaped the fire of idolatry.<sup>8</sup> Thus it is afterwards written that Thara departed with his progeny from the land of the Chaldeans, for which in Hebrew it has from Ur, that is, “from the conflagration of the Chaldeans.” And this is what it now says: “Aran died in the presence of his father in the land of his nativity, in the fire of the Chaldeans”; because he apparently did not want to worship the fire, he was devoured by the fire.<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. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

a heart that loved God sought out the God who really exists.<sup>6</sup> And in this way, seeing the heaven at one time shining, at another time darkened, he said to himself: This is not a god. Similarly seeing the sun and the moon, the one often being hidden and becoming dark, the other waning and falling, he said: Nor are these gods. But inquiring closely into the course and movement of the stars (for he was an astronomer extremely well trained by his father)<sup>7</sup> and not finding the Creator either through these or through some other phenomena, he became extremely downcast and despairing. Having seen his desire and enthusiasm, the Creator . . . appeared to him and urged him to make the journey to the land of promise, saying: "Go forth from your land and your kin and from the house of your father, and go forth to the land which I will show to you."<sup>8</sup> And immediately taking the idols of his father, and having broken some and burning others,<sup>9</sup> went out from the land of the Chaldeans with his father. And when he had gone forth to Haran his father died.

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6. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

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

8. Citing Genesis 12:1.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

EXTRACTS FROM  
ANGELOMUS LUXOVIENSIS

Angelomus Luxoviensis was a Benedictine who wrote his works around A.D. 855. He resided at Lexueil in Burgundy. He wrote three exegetical treatises, relying heavily on previous church fathers, and although his commentary was known to exist, it did not actually come to light until 1721. The text is complete, although only later copies of the manuscript exist. The previously unpublished translation used here is from Angelomus's *Commentarium in Genesim* made by John Gee from the Latin text published in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 115:169–70.

[Commenting on Genesis 11:14–28:]

“And Sale<sup>1</sup> begat Heber,”<sup>2</sup> and the rest until it says, “And Aran<sup>3</sup> died before his father Thare<sup>4</sup> in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.”<sup>5</sup> Heber means “one who passes over,” which signifies the future church, which passes over from faithlessness to faithfulness, from vice to virtue. But it is necessary to ask what is that which is written about Aran, the brother of Abraham: “And Aran died before his father Thare in Ur of the Chaldees;”<sup>6</sup> for Ur means fire. Thus in Hebrew it is said “in Ur of the Chesdi,”<sup>7</sup> that is, in the fire of the Chaldeans. And the Chaldeans worshiped the fire as a god. Thare truly, according to Chaldean tradition<sup>8</sup> was sent into the fire with his sons, because he did not want to worship the fire,<sup>9</sup> in which fire Aran was devoured. And this is what it says that he died in the view of Thare, his father, of which we will speak more later.

[Commenting on Genesis 12:4:]

“And Abraham was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Charran.”<sup>10</sup> This question inevitably arises: If, therefore, Thara, the father of Abraham, when he had

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1. Biblical Salah.
  2. Biblical Eber. Citing Genesis 11:14.
  3. Biblical Haran.
  4. Biblical Terah.
  5. Citing Genesis 11:25.
  6. Ibid.
  7. Variant manuscripts spell this last word *casdim* or *cesi*.
  8. One manuscript reads “according to the Hebrew tradition.”
  9. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.
  10. Biblical Haran. Citing Genesis 12:4.

heretofore been in the region of Chaldea, begat Abram at the age of 70 years old, and afterwards died in Charan at the age of 205, how, now, after the death of Thara, when Abraham departed from Chara, is he said to be 75 years old, when from the birth of Abraham until the death of his father is thought to have been 135 years? Therefore, that tradition of the Hebrews is true, of which we spoke above, that Thara and his son came out of the fire of the Chaldeans and that Abraham, surrounded by the conflagration in Babylon because he did not want to worship it,<sup>11</sup> was freed by the help of God.<sup>12</sup> And later the Lord said to Abraham: "I am he who led thee from Ur of the Chaldeans";<sup>13</sup> and from that moment when he confessed the Lord, rejecting the idols of the Chaldeans, the days of his life and the time of his life is reckoned. It could, however, be because the scripture remains ambiguous: before many years Thara leaving Chaldea came to Charran, where he died; but certainly he came to Charran immediately after persecution, and there later he died. If, therefore, someone opposes this solution, he desires another solution and he justly rejects that which we have spoken.<sup>14</sup>

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

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

13. Citing Genesis 15:7.

14. This passage is an almost verbatim quotation of Jerome.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE CATENA SEVERI

In A.D. 861, a Syrian monk named Severus compiled a biblical commentary known today as the *Catena Severi*. One of his major sources was Jacob of Edessa, whose parallel account of Abraham's early life is included in this collection. The Syriac text, known from a ninth- or tenth-century document in the Vatican Library (Vat. Syr. 103), was first published alongside St. Ephrem Syrus's *Commentary on Genesis* in P. Benedictus (Mubarrak), *Ephraimi Syri Opera Omnia* (Rome: n.p., 1737), 1:156–57, with a rather free Latin translation that rendered the ravens in the story as locusts. The English translation used here is from Sebastian P. Brock, "Abraham and the Ravens: A Syriac Counterpart to Jubilees 11–12 and Its Implications," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 9/2 (1978): 137–39. We have numbered the paragraphs for reference purposes.

1. It is written then that Terah had three children, Abraham, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot and Melka and Iska, who is Sarah; Abraham and Nahor married their brother's daughters, Melka and Sarah. And when they were in the land of the Chaldeans there was a famous and large temple belonging to the Chaldeans, in which was placed the sculpted deity Qainan, whom they worshipped, while the true God they did not know.<sup>1</sup>

2. And while they were there God sent against them, as though in chastisement, birds called ravens, which ate their seed.<sup>2</sup>

3. Terah sent Abraham while he was a young child to drive the ravens from their fields. Abraham, being greatly worn out and unable to drive away the birds, cried out in a loud voice: "O God who made heaven and earth, help me and drive off these ravens." And immediately God answered him saying:

4. "Abraham, behold I, whom you called on, have heard you and driven off the ravens from your field."<sup>3</sup>

5. When Abraham heard this and saw what had happened, he immediately went in to Terah his father and related to him what had happened. And he counselled him to despise Qainan, the deity of vanity of the Chaldeans and to worship the God of heaven and earth.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Qainan corresponds to biblical Cainan, a name borne by two men, though it is not known from the Bible as the name of a false god. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

2. Jacob of Edessa, Severus's source, evidently drew the story from *Jubilees* 11, which is also included in this collection. For the famine in Abraham's birthplace, cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5.

3. Cf. Abraham 2:17.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

6. Seeing that Terah for the moment neglected to do this, Abraham took fire in his zeal and burnt that famous temple of Qainan, the graven image of the Chaldeans.

7. But Abraham's brother Haran entered to put out (the fire) and save the carved (idol) from burning, but he fell down there and died.<sup>5</sup> For this reason it was necessary to indicate his death before Terah his father.

8. When the Chaldeans realized what Abraham had done, they were compelling Terah to hand over his son Abraham to them to [put to] death.<sup>6</sup>

9. Then he began his flight thence with all his household, and they left Ur of the Chaldeans, for that was the name of the place where they were residing. And they came to Harran, where Terah died.

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5. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

6. We supply the words "put to," not included in Brock's translation. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

## EXTRACTS FROM A SYRIAC COMMENTARY ON GENESIS

The following account is from a Syriac commentary on the book of Genesis. The commentary quotes Syriac fathers from the fourth to the seventh century A.D., while the script of the manuscript indicates that it was prepared before the twelfth century. It is thought to have been written by a Nestorian Christian in the ninth century, somewhere in Eastern Mesopotamia. Three manuscripts are known, though one was destroyed in World War I. The first publication, in 1951, is of a manuscript (Mingana 553) brought from Asia Minor after World War I and now housed at the Woodbroke Settlement, Selly Oak, Birmingham, England. The English translation used here, Abraham Levene, trans., *The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis* (London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1951), 86–87, accompanied the original publication of the Syriac text. We have removed the diacritics from the names.

### Chapter 7

According to the tradition of all the teachers, we report that from Serug, idolatry was spread throughout the world<sup>1</sup> and therefore vanity explains his name. "Haran died in the life-time of Terah."<sup>2</sup> This Haran was not the father of Milcah and Sarah, but the father of Lot. The name Ur is the same as Uruk. Ur according to Rabban is the name given to Beth Aramaye which is Mahoze.

Michael applies the name Iscah to Sarah because of her beauty; and Iscah means "silver." Milcah and Iscah were the daughters of Haran the elder, the brother of Terah, i.e. the uncle of Abraham. Babai the Persian, on the other hand, says that this Haran was the brother of Abraham and that he was older than the latter and Nahor. But Holy Writ, on account of his importance, places Abraham before Haran and Nahor; and this is just as the commentary of Matthew the Interpreter elucidates it: that Abraham was the uncle of Sarah, whilst he shews that Sarah was the daughter of Haran the father of Lot.

### Chapter 8

Rabban said that, when Pharaoh was about to draw nigh unto her, that he and his household were immediately seized with a fever. And in a dream was it shown to him by God—"that this illness which is in thy house, is on account of this woman whom thou

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.  
2. Citing Genesis 11:28.

hast taken.”<sup>3</sup> Now that same day he restored her to Abraham and said to him—“Behold thy wife which was guarded for thee is without hurt; for I did not come nigh unto her, because of an illness into which I fell.” It is probable that at this time Hagar the Egyptian was given to him as a handmaiden. With regard to “He called upon the name of the Lord,”<sup>4</sup>—i.e. he regarded God as the cause of all goodness, and he recompensed Him, as it were, with thanks, because of His saving acts towards him. Now all these things, which happened to Abraham, his descent into Egypt because of the famine, or the trial which came upon him there because of his wife, or his departure thence with great possessions, are a likeness and a type of the things which happened to the children of Israel. For they also went down to Egypt on account of famine, and there, there came upon them the trial of slavery and they departed thence with great possessions.

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3. Unless this is from an independent source, it must be seen as a paraphrase of Genesis 20:3, in which God speaks not to Pharaoh but to Abimelech, who had taken Sarah from Abraham. No such dream is recounted in the story of Pharaoh and Sarah in Genesis 12.
  4. Citing Genesis 13:4, which takes place when Abraham had returned from Egypt to the land of Canaan.

## EXTRACTS FROM SAʿID IBN BATRIQ (EUTYCHIUS)

The Arab Christian writer Saʿid ibn Batriq (son of Patrick), known by the Greek name Eutychius (A.D. 877–940), was the patriarch of Alexandria. He wrote an annalistic history of the world (*Nazm al-Jawhar*), which was continued to the year 938 by his relative, Yaḥyā ibn Saʿid the Antiochian. Although written in Arabic, this history became a popular source for other historians. It was translated into Latin in 1658, but no English edition is available. The English translation of this extract, prepared by Brian M. Hauglid for this collection, is taken from the Arabic text found in L. Cheikho, B. Carra de Vaux, and H. Zayyat, *Eutychii Patriarchae Alexandrini Annales* (Paris: E. Typographeo Catholico, 1949), 20–21. To facilitate referencing, we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. When Tārah<sup>1</sup> was seventy years old, Ibrahīm [Abraham] was born to him. And in [Ibrahīm's] time, Nimrūd<sup>2</sup> the tyrant ruled Bābal.<sup>3</sup> It is said he was the first king who ruled Bābal. [Nimrūd] saw the likeness of a crown in the clouds of heaven. He summoned a jeweler, who fashioned a crown for him and placed it upon his head, and because of this the people say a crown came down to him from heaven. It is said that he was the first one to worship fire because he saw fire far away in the east rise from the earth. Nimrūd went down and saw the fire. He bowed down to it and appointed a man there to serve the fire by throwing wood into it. From that time the Majūs began to worship the fire and kneel before it.<sup>4</sup> The name of the man whom Nimrūd appointed to serve the fire was Andashān. Shaiṭān<sup>5</sup> talked to [Andashān] from inside the fire and said to him, "There is not anyone able to serve the fire nor study my religion until he has intercourse with his mother, sister, and daughter." So Andashān did as Shaiṭān had said to him. Since that time, the priests of the Majūs began to have intercourse with their mothers, their sisters, and their daughters. This Andashān was the first to begin with this notion. Nimrūd built Adrabijān, Bābal, Nīnwā,<sup>6</sup> Rāsin, and many cities.

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1. Biblical Terah.

2. Biblical Nimrod.

3. Biblical Babel or Babylon.

4. The Majūs or Magi were priests in the Zoroastrian religion of ancient Persia, in which fire was considered to be sacred.

5. This is translated from the Arabic as Satan.

6. Biblical Nineveh.

2. The entire life of Tārah was 265 years, and he died. From Fālliḳ<sup>7</sup> to Ibrahīm was 541 years. From the flood to Ibrahīm was 1,270 years. From Ādam to Ibrahīm was 3,328 years.

3. When Ibrahīm was 75 years old, God commanded him to leave Ḥarrān, the land of his father,<sup>8</sup> and to dwell in the land of Kanʿān<sup>9</sup> called al-Shām.<sup>10</sup> Ibrahīm took Sāra to wife, and she is his sister from his father. For Tārah, the father of Ibrahīm, when Yūnā, the mother of Ibrahīm died, had married another woman called Tahwīth. She gave birth to Sāra for [Tārah], and Ibrahīm married her [Sāra]. Prior to the marriage, Ibrahīm had said, “She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother.”

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7. Biblical Peleg, when the earth divided.

8. Cf. Abraham 2:14.

9. Biblical Canaan.

10. Or Syria.

## EXTRACTS FROM MAHBUB OF MENBIDJ (AGAPIUS)

Maḥbūb ibn Qustantin of Menbidj (in Syria), called by the Greek name Agapius, was bishop of the Egyptian city of Hierapolis in the tenth century. He was a contemporary of Ibn Batriq (Eutychius) of Alexandria, whom he outlived. His work is independent of Eutychius's *Annals*, but he did occasionally use Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*. He relies heavily on popular legend and apocryphal materials for the first part of his history, *Kitāb al-ʿUnwān* (Book of the Title). Manuscripts of his writings have been known in the West as early as 1742. The original Arabic of his *Kitāb al-ʿUnwān*, along with a French translation by Alexandre Vasiliev, was published in 1910. The English translation used here is by John A. Tvedtnes, who used both the French and Arabic, with a preference to the Arabic, in A. Vasiliev, *Kitab al-ʿUnwan, Histoire Universelle écrite par Agapius (Mahboub) de Menbidj*, in *Patrologia Orientalis* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1909), 5:592, 628, 631, 636. We have numbered each selection for reference purposes.

1. All the Harranians . . . worship idols and the stars.

2. It is written that when the languages of the tribes of the children of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, sons of Noah, were divided into all climes on the face of the earth, when they had occupied their regions and when each language, each people, and tribe had journeyed into whatever country of the earth, as we have described it, the people began to wage war against each other. Each tribe and each people selected for itself an army leader who led their troops and brought them into battle, marching at their head. It is said that at the end of some time, when some of the leaders of the warriors and the commanders of the troops returned victorious and triumphant to their country, their people, and their tribe, the people took them for lords because of their victory and erected to their renowned and celebrated leaders, for their exploits, their wars, and their success, idols bearing their names and their image, in order that these idols commemorate he who made these conquests for them and who returned to them victorious. Long afterward, they began to venerate them [the idols] and to offer them sacrifices, first as a witness of veneration for them and as a memorial of the victories that they had brought. Then, when bad things happened, when their enemies, wanting to avenge themselves, inflicted all sorts of evil and wounds, they came to these idols to plead for their help. It is

for this reason that, after a time, the veneration of idols was introduced even in the lifetime of the heroes.<sup>1</sup> Devils, according to what is written, spoke to men from inside these idols.

3. It is written that in the year 84 after the birth of Ar<sup>c</sup>u,<sup>2</sup> ten years after the third thousand years, the first king who reigned over all the earth appeared at Babel, Nimrod, son of Canaan, son of Ham,<sup>3</sup> the giant king, who reigned sixty-nine years. His crown was sewn and was not of gold. Nimrod built three cities, Arakh, Adja, and Kila,<sup>4</sup> which is Edessa (ar-Roha), Nisibe, and Seleucia.<sup>5</sup> In the hundredth year and one of Ar<sup>c</sup>u, the Egyptians, following the Babylonians, gave themselves a king whose name was Manouphis,<sup>6</sup> who reigned over them for sixty-eight years. He was called Mesraim after the name of Mesraim,<sup>7</sup> their father. It is certain that it is from the name Mesraim that (Egypt) was called Misr.<sup>8</sup>

[Writing of the time of Abraham:]

4. At this time in Egypt reigned a king named Antoutis (Aphintos)<sup>9</sup> for thirty-two years. He was the first who invented books, science, astronomy, [and] arithmetic from the books of the Chaldeans and the eastern sages and introduced them into Egypt.<sup>10</sup> He learned the science of sorcery and magic.

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.
  2. Biblical Reu.
  3. According to Genesis 10:8, Nimrod was the son of Canaan's brother Cush. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.
  4. Biblical Erech, Accad, and Calah.
  5. The city could not have been named Seleucia until the time of the Greek-Syrian king Seleucus.
  6. Evidently derived from Egyptian *mn-nfr*, which in Greek is Memphis.
  7. Biblical Mizraim, from the Hebrew word for "Egypt," which is also the name of the Egyptians' eponymous ancestor, the son of Ham.
  8. Misr is the Arabic form; the Hebrew has the dual ending *-aim* because Egypt was considered to be two parts—upper and lower—joined together. For all of this, cf. Abraham 1:21–27.
  9. Several First Intermediate Period (Eleventh Dynasty) kings are named Intf, which might be the source of Antoutis. Aphintos seems to be a corruption of Phuntos from the *Book of the Bee*.
  10. Other traditions included in this collection say that it was Abraham who introduced astronomy into Egypt. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3.

## EXTRACTS FROM SYMEON LOGOTHETES

The chronicle of Symeon Logothetes (mid-tenth century) has been published under various names, including Theodosios of Melitene (or Melissenos) and Leo the Grammarian. Symeon relies heavily on George Hamartolos (extracts of whose work are included in this collection) in his chronicle. Three versions of the chronicle have been preserved. Immanuel Bekker published a Greek edition in 1842. The selections below were translated by John Gee from *Leonis Grammatici Chronographia*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn: Weber, 1842), 18–20. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. When Ragau<sup>1</sup> became 132 years old, he begat Serouch.<sup>2</sup> At this time men, growing blind toward each other, appointed themselves generals and kings, and then, creating the first war machine, began to wage war on each other. And straightway those from Canaan were worsted and first fell under the yoke of slavery according to the curse of Noah.<sup>3</sup> When Serouch became 130 years old, he begat Nechor.<sup>4</sup> Serouch dwelt in the land of the Chaldeans and in the city Or.<sup>5</sup> When Nachor grew, his father taught him all the interpretation of the omens and the distinguishing of all the signs in heaven and of all things on the earth,<sup>6</sup> and all the Chaldean divination. And when Nachor was 89 years old, he begat Tharra.<sup>7</sup> When Ninus, the first king of the Assyrians, was in the forty-sixth year of his reign, Abraham was born. He, marrying his own mother Semiramis,<sup>8</sup> who is also

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1. Biblical Reu.

2. Biblical Serug.

3. See Genesis 9:24–26.

4. Biblical Nahor.

5. Biblical Ur.

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

7. Biblical Terah.

8. The name Semiramis is thought by many scholars to derive from the name of the Babylonian Sammu-  
amat, consort of an Assyrian king of the ninth century B.C.; see Bruce W. Warren and John A. Tvedt-  
nes, "In Search of Historic Nimrod," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the SEHA* 155 (November 1983).

Rhea,<sup>9</sup> built the city Nineveh, which is also called Ninus;<sup>10</sup> whence comes a Persian<sup>11</sup> law to marry their own mothers and sisters, as Zeus did his own sister Hera. After him, his wife Semiramis ruled the Assyrians, who created the dikes because of flooding. According to their own records, it was the Sixteenth Dynasty among the Egyptians, during which time the Thebans ruled.<sup>12</sup>

2. When Tharra became seventy years old, he begat—from his wife, Edna, the daughter of Abraham, his uncle—Abraham, whom his mother called after the name of her own father; for it is said that he died before his birth. And Tharra yet begat Arran and Nachor.<sup>13</sup> Abraham received from his father a wife, Sarra.<sup>14</sup> He alone, of those everywhere suffering from the error of idols,<sup>15</sup> recognized the true God. And Arran, taking a wife, begat a son, Lot, and a daughter, Melcham.<sup>16</sup> This one Nachor took to wife for himself. Already when he was in his sixtieth year, Abraham, since he did not think his father to be persuaded and the others of the house being superstitiously aloof because of idols,<sup>17</sup> secretly burned the shrine of the idols at night.<sup>18</sup> When they were already utterly destroyed, realizing this, his brothers jumped up desiring to rescue the idols from the midst of the fire. Arran, the most vainglorious in offering up what was required, perished in the fire,<sup>19</sup> and his father, burying him, being near the city of the Chaldeans, moved, uprooting all his household, to Harran of Mesopotamia. There, after living with his father fifteen years, one night Abraham pondered the movement of the stars, considering the quality of the affixed time, for he was thoroughly instructed in all such learning by his father.<sup>20</sup> And with the mastery of each thing sought after, he understands such needless questioning to be greater than the universe; for God could again, if he wished, change the fate prognosticated for the household. Therefore by means of all this, and all other such things, from all appointed souls<sup>21</sup> and the perfections of reverence toward divine things giving proof, he heard from God: “Come forth out of thy land and from thy fa-

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9. Rhea is a Greek goddess, wife of Chronos and mother of Zeus, who became head of the divine council on Mount Olympus.

10. Byzantine writers often identified Ninus with the biblical Nimrod; cf. Genesis 10:9–12, noting that Assur is Assyria and that Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. The name Ninus evidently derives from Ninua, the Assyrian name for Nineveh.

11. By the time this account was written, the Persians had conquered Babylon, which is the Babel founded by Nimrod or Ninus.

12. Currently, historians working with the Sixteenth Dynasty do not consider this information accurate.

13. Biblical Haran and Nahor.

14. Biblical Sarah.

15. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

16. Biblical Milcah.

17. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

18. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

19. *Ibid.*, 29.

20. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

21. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.

ther's house."<sup>22</sup> And after he came forth with his wife, Sarra, and Lot, his nephew, he moved to the portion of his father Arphaxad, which the Canaanites who possessed it called the land of the Canaanites, being seventy-five years old.

3. All together the years until the sojourn of Abraham are as follows: The division of the earth happened at the beginning of the days of Phalek,<sup>23</sup> from the division of the earth 1,006 years, from the flood 1,015 years, and from Adam 3,277 years.

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22. Citing Genesis 12:1.

23. Biblical Peleg.

## EXTRACTS FROM IBN AL-TAYYIB

Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Ṭayyib al-‘Irāqī (d. A.D. 1043), an Arabic Nestorian Christian theologian, lived and worked in Baghdad during the first half of the eleventh century. He was a doctor and philosopher as well as a priest and so wrote on medicine and philosophy as well as religion. He produced the largest collection of exegetical work on the scriptures in Christian Arabic literature, including a commentary on the book of Genesis in Arabic. The English translation used here is from the French and the Arabic (with a preference to the Arabic) and was prepared specially for this collection by John A. Tvedtnes from J. C. J. Sanders, *Ibn al-Ṭayyib: Commentaire sur la Genèse*, CSCO 274–75, *Scriptores Arabici* (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1967), 24\* and 25:54–59. For indexing purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

### Section 6

1. *The sons of Ham* (comprised) thirty families. Their lot is in the southwest. The valiant Nimrod was one of them; he was blessed by God<sup>1</sup> and he fought those who built the Tower (of Babel)<sup>2</sup> in order that each of them go to the land that God had designated for him. The total (number) of the families of Noah is seventy-two; it is also said that they comprised the seventy-two languages that were separated at Babel. Nimrod was the first who reigned at Babel. The crown of his head was of woven material; thus it was not of gold. He built the cities of Orrhoa (Edessa), Nisibe, and the cities (Seleucia-Ctesiphon). Ninos, one of the sons of Nimrod, built Nineveh for himself. After Nimrod, Qoumberos reigned at Babylon for eighty-five years; he built cities in Babylonia. After him reigned Semarius;<sup>3</sup> it is he who began to issue measures and weights. The brother of Terah, Hesron, slew him; this Hesron was a son of Nahor. Royalty disappeared from Babylon.

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:26.

2. Usually, Nimrod is depicted as the one who ordered the construction of the Tower of Babel.

3. Though here a male, the name evidently corresponds to that of queen Semiramis, who is often associated with Nimrod in early Christian traditions. For some of these traditions, see Bruce W. Warren and John A. Tvedtnes, "In Search of Historic Nimrod," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the SEHA* 155 (November 1983).

2. Over Assyria reigned first Belos<sup>4</sup> for sixty-two years; he constructed numerous cities. After him came Ninus who built Nineveh. The curse<sup>5</sup> took effect on the posterity of Ham, and not on himself, for he had been previously blessed by God,<sup>6</sup> by the blessing come upon him in the ark.

### Section 7

[Regarding the building of the Tower of Babel:]

1. It is said that Eber, the father of Peleg, did not agree with them; also he kept his original language, that is, Hebrew.<sup>7</sup> It is said that it was from the time of Sarug that idolatry began by the worship of idols.<sup>8</sup> This is why his name is a name of nothing.<sup>9</sup> Others say that the devils were held in the abyss from the time of Adam's sin until the days of Serug. We have an indication of that in the words that the devil addressed to the Lord from between the sepulchers: "*Don't send me to the abyss!*" God allowed the devils to leave the abyss to see if their opinion might not change, but on condition that they not introduce men to error.

2. Saint Ephrem says, "When the languages were divided and men were scattered on the earth, wars broke out between them, and those who fought in the first wars brought victory by making statues (of their leaders) in the guise of a memorial, but ultimately they even bowed down (before them). Thus the idols were made."<sup>10</sup>

3. Noah saw Abraham again<sup>11</sup> and told him the history of the tribes back to Adam<sup>12</sup> as he had heard it from his father Lamech. Noah died in the land of the Chaldeans at the age of 950 years, when Abraham was in his 58th year.<sup>13</sup> Noah had seen eighteen generations.

4. God chose Abraham because of his faith and his righteousness; through him the people of Israel would be formed, from which would come the Messiah. *Ur* means the land of the Nabateans, that is, the cities (Seleucia-Ctesiphon), but in truth it is Kashkar.<sup>14</sup> *Milcah*, the wife of Nahor, and *Iscah*, who is Sarah, are two sisters.<sup>15</sup> According to the Expositor, they were the daughters of Haran, brother of Abraham's brother. According to Henana, they were the sisters of Lot. It was because of her beauty that Sarah is called Iscah. (But) the truth is that Sarah was the daughter of Haran, Abraham's uncle. Babai

4. The name corresponds to that of the god Baal (Bel).

5. Cf. Genesis 9:25; Abraham 1:21–27.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:26.

7. Cf. Ether 1:33–37.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

9. I.e., the name Serug has no etymology in Arabic.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

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

12. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

13. Sanders notes that he corrected the text's 250 years to 58.

14. The text replaces the Chaldeans of Genesis 11:28 with the later Nabateans.

15. Referring to Genesis 11:29.

the Persian says that Haran was the brother of Abraham and that he was older than him and than Nahor.

5. That Abraham supercedes these two is because of his virtue, as (in the case of) Judas who superseded his brothers, and (of) Jacob. In that case, Sarah is the daughter of Haran, the father of Lot, and Abraham is her paternal uncle. But the Scripture does not tell us of a brother of Terah named Haran. There was another Haran of whom Sarah was the daughter: Haran the younger; this is again evidenced by the word the servant addressed to Rebecca: *I am here to take the daughter of my master's brother for his son.*<sup>16</sup>

6. After he had taken Abraham up from Babel and from the land of the Nabateans, God did not ask him to remain in this place to accomplish his plan of salvation in this land,<sup>17</sup> for Jerusalem is the center of the world and functions like the body's head; it is therefore in such a place that the true plan (of salvation) should be accomplished; it is there that the Lord would be crucified, for it is there that he should ascend to heaven to return thence. God made Abraham emigrate to distance him from his fathers and to end his contact with the beliefs of yore. Henana says that Abraham was a high priest and son of a high priest;<sup>18</sup> he detested the beliefs of the Nabateans;<sup>19</sup> the people of his region rose against him to chase him away after having inflicted on him all sorts of troubles.<sup>20</sup> With his father Terah he left for Mesopotamia. It is said, according to the scripture, that Terah begat Abraham in his 75th year<sup>21</sup> and he died in his 205th year at Haran.<sup>22</sup> (At that time) Abraham was thus 135 years old,<sup>23</sup> but how can the scripture maintain that *Abraham was seventy-five years old when he left Haran?*<sup>24</sup> One can say (to that) that God already appeared to Abraham during his sojourn at Kashkar, thus before he left for the land of the Canaanites; for he and his father did not leave their land without being commanded by God; again: that he left for Canaan before the death of his father, when he was the age mentioned, but that he returned (to Kashkar) at the death of his father to emigrate another time at the age of 135 years.<sup>25</sup> Terah had already started for the promised land, and yet he remained at Haran, because his intention was not pure<sup>26</sup> like that of Abraham, who

16. Based on Genesis 24:48.

17. Meaning Syria.

18. Cf. Abraham 1:2–3, 18.

19. Sanders notes that these beliefs included the practice of astrology.

20. These troubles may have included an attempted sacrifice, but the text does not say so. The account is unusual in that Abraham is expelled by the people rather than commanded by God to depart, as in the Bible and other accounts (including what Ibn al-Ṭayyib has just said).

21. According to Genesis 11:26, he was seventy years of age. The author has evidently erred by taking Abraham's age (seventy-five years) at the time he left Haran from Genesis 12:4.

22. From Genesis 11:32.

23. Since Abraham died at the age of 175 (see Genesis 25:7), this statement would make Terah 40 years old when Abraham was born, which is contradicted by Genesis 11:26.

24. Citing Genesis 12:4.

25. The *Book of Jasher*, in this collection, also has Abraham emigrating to Canaan, then returning to Haran and leaving again for Canaan. See the note to *Jasher* 13:5.

26. Cf. Abraham 2:5.

was the first to turn away from the cultic objects, that is, the idols. Neither Nahor nor Bethuel nor Laban converted perfectly, even after having learned that God had helped Abraham so magnificently. But Lot had similar intentions to Abraham, so he left with him.<sup>27</sup> God appeared to Abraham (when he arrived) at Shechem because it was the center of the promised land. *Abraham called on the name of the Lord*<sup>28</sup> means he gave himself to God. *Bethel*<sup>29</sup> means “house of God.” *He left toward the south*:<sup>30</sup> he went toward a desolate land for fear of being deceived by the people of the land (where he was).

### Section 8

1. The time when Pharaoh was seized—he and his people—with fever because he had taken Sarah (into his house) was when he tried to approach her; this was manifest to him in a dream; the illness (was of) the sciatic nerve. When Sarah was returned, Hagar, the Egyptian maidservant, was given to her.

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27. Referring to Genesis 12:4.

28. Citing Genesis 12:8.

29. Also mentioned in Genesis 12:8.

30. Citing Genesis 12:9.

EXTRACTS FROM  
RUPERTUS TUITENSIS

Rupertus Tuitensis (ca. A.D. 1075–1129/30), also known as Rupert of Deutz, was a monastic theologian and a prolific author. These extracts are from two of his works and were written in Liege between 1111 and 1116. His Latin works were first published in the sixteenth century. The first part of the previously unpublished translation used here was made by John Gee from the Latin text published in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64). Edward Stratford translated the last paragraph of this selection from the same text.

*De Trinitate et operibus ejus* 42.5.2

Concerning Abraham, who (as the majority assert) by the help of God was rescued from Ur of the Chaldeans, that is, from the fire.

“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, ‘Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’”<sup>1</sup>

Abram, which means “exalted father,” was a Hebrew from Heber<sup>2</sup>—in whose house or rather family the primitive language was preserved, which was called Hebrew from then until now—born in the beginning of the 190th year from the birth of Phaleg,<sup>3</sup> in whose days the earth was divided, therefore 292 years from the flood, the tenth generation from Sem,<sup>4</sup> son of Noah. For Sem begat Arphaxad; Arphaxad begat Sale; Sale begat Heber; Heber begat Phaleg; Phaleg begat Reu; Reu begat Sarug; Sarug begat Nachor; Nachor begat Thare;<sup>5</sup> and Thare begat Abram. Cainan, who, of course, is placed between Arphaxad and Sale by the evangelist Luke,<sup>6</sup> is not in the Hebrew. This is, moreover, the reason the Hebrews pass down (and many distinguished men of the church assert it to be true) why such a man was not honored in his land, that is, in the land of the Chal-

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1. Citing Genesis 12:1–3, Vulgate.

2. Biblical Eber.

3. Biblical Peleg.

4. Biblical Shem.

5. Biblical Terah.

6. Luke 3:36. The Hebrew text of Genesis 10:24 does not have this individual.

deans, is that Abram was sent to the fire because he did not want to worship the fire that the Chaldeans worshiped,<sup>7</sup> and being rescued by the help of God, escaped the fire of idolatry,<sup>8</sup> and this is what it says: “And Abram<sup>9</sup> died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees”;<sup>10</sup> because he apparently did not want to worship the fire, he was devoured.<sup>11</sup> For Abraham, they say, being surrounded by the same flames<sup>12</sup> was rescued by the help of God.<sup>13</sup> Wherefore, later the Lord said to him: “I,” said the Lord, “am he who led thee from Ur of the Chaldeans.”<sup>14</sup>

Inevitably, they say, there is a question in that which is said thus “Abraham was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.”<sup>15</sup> If, therefore, Thara,<sup>16</sup> the father of Abram, when he had heretofore been in the region of the Chaldeans, begat Abram at the age of 70 years old, and afterwards died in Haran at the the age of 205, how, now, after his death, when Abram departed from Haran, is he said to be 75 years old, when from the birth of Abram until the death of his father is thought to have been 135 years? Therefore, that tradition of the Hebrews is true, of which we spoke above, that Thare and his sons came out of the fire of the Chaldeans and that Abram was freed by the help of God, and from that moment the days of his life and the time of his life is reckoned. It could, however, be correctly understood, that Thare with all his possessions came to Haran immediately after persecution, and when he began for Chanaan<sup>17</sup> he remained there. Abram, however, got out praising God that he was led out of his country and his kindred. Thus is the order of the story. (*PL*, 167:367–68)

#### *Commentarium in Joannem 4*

Did indeed Abraham never believe because of signs and omens? Did [Abraham] never, when God said to him, “Go out from your land and family, and I will bless you and multiply you, and in your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed,”<sup>18</sup> did, I say, Abraham never say, “What sign do you show me whereby you teach this, or promise this to me that I may believe you?” What if you object to certain writings, which are not authentic, in accordance with which [Abraham] was carried out of the fire of the Chaldeans to be led out by divine providence,<sup>19</sup> and you say that this was able to suffice

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

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

9. *Sic*. This is clearly a mistake by Rupertus or the editor for Aran or Haran.

10. Genesis 11:28 with a scribal error.

11. Cf. Abaham 1:11.

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

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

14. Genesis 15:7.

15. Genesis 12:4.

16. Spelling change is in the original text.

17. Biblical Canaan.

18. Paraphrase of Genesis 12:1–3.

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

for him as a sign, say what signs and omens God showed to him, that having faith the brave [Abraham] permitted himself to be thrown into the fire?<sup>20</sup> What sign or omen did he accept? That God often promised seed, in which all the clans of the earth were blessed; was he not fixed by faith, did he neither take thought for his mortal body, and the sterility of Sarah? (*PL*, 169:384)

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

AN EXTRACT FROM  
HUGH OF ST. VICTOR

Hugh of St. Victor (d. A.D. 1142) was a theologian who lived in the monastery of St. Victor in Paris, where he stayed from 1115 to his death. His writings cover subjects from geometry to grammar. His biblical commentaries emphasized historical study and a literal approach to the scriptures. His collected works were first published in 1518 in Latin. This previously unpublished translation from Hugh's *In ecclesiastem homiliae*, chapter 19, was made by John Gee from the Latin text published in *Patrologia Latina*, J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 175:176.

And how many were there from the beginning, who desired to so turn to the contemplation of wisdom? First Abraham, that great patriarch, went out from the fire of the Chaldeans,<sup>1</sup> and turned to the contemplation of wisdom, and came into the land of visions, which God showed him,<sup>2</sup> and he saw the clarity of wisdom and was dignified.

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

2. Cf. Abraham 2:15–19; 3–5.

AN EXTRACT FROM  
HERVEUS BURGIDOLENSIS

Herveus Burgidolensis (fl. A.D. 1134), a monk revered for his theological prowess, lived in what is now France. Among other things, he wrote a commentary on Isaiah. This previously unpublished English translation was made by John Gee from the Latin text *Commentarium in Isaiam*, book 4, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 181:281, which, in turn, is based on a twelfth-century codex from an Austrian Cistercian monastery.

[Commenting on Isaiah 29:24:]

Because the poor were rejoicing in the Holy One of Israel,<sup>1</sup> and guarded against iniquity, he continued: “therefore thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham.”<sup>2</sup> An old tradition, however, holds that the Chaldeans catapulted Abraham and Aram<sup>3</sup> into the fire, which in their language is called Ur, and which they themselves did not want to worship.<sup>4</sup> The Chaldeans, of course, worshiped fire. Therefore, Aram died there in Ur of the Chaldeans, and Abraham went out unharmed. Wherefore God also is said to have said: “I am he who brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees,”<sup>5</sup> that is, from the fire of the Chaldeans. Thus in the book of Ezra it is clearly said that the Lord freed Abraham “from the fire of the Chaldeans.”<sup>6</sup> That was therefore said to commemorate this, so it is said: “thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham concerning the house of Jacob.”<sup>7</sup>

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1. This is an allusion to Isaiah 29:19.

2. Isaiah 29:22.

3. Biblical Haran.

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

5. Genesis 15:7.

6. Nehemiah 9:7–8. In the Vulgate, which is what Herveus is citing, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are a single book.

7. Isaiah 29:22.

AN EXTRACT FROM  
IOANNES ZONARAS

Ioannes Zonaras (d. after 1159), a twelfth-century Byzantine historian, theologian, high-ranking official, and canonist, became a monk in 1118. He had lost his position in the court of Alexios I after criticizing the emperor's taxation, spending, and military policies. Zonaras wrote commentaries on church fathers, hagiographies, and homilies. His chronicle is mostly based on written sources and was eventually translated into Church Slavonic. Jerome W. Basila edited the Greek text in 1557. The previously unpublished English translation used here was made by John Gee from the Greek text published in *Ioannis Zonarae Annales*, ed. Maurice Pinder (Bonn: Weber, 1841), 1:33–34.

The forefather and patriarch of the family of the Hebrews, Abraham, became the greatest of his own nation, which was the tribe of the Chaldeans, being the tenth from Noah, years having passed since God flooded the entire earth with rain. He, being of impious ancestors, first recognized one God the creator of the universe, comprehending the creator from the creations,<sup>1</sup> and said upon him only must the honor be bestowed. Since there were therefore attacks against him among the Chaldeans,<sup>2</sup> he moved thence, knowing that God had commanded him, and possessed the land of Canaan. When a famine distressed, he moved on to Egypt. And since they marveled over his understanding, he taught the Egyptians arithmetic and about astronomy,<sup>3</sup> for they were unlearned in these. For it is said that these things were imported from the Chaldeans to Egypt and from thence to Greece.

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 4–5.

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

3. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3.

## EXTRACTS FROM MICHAEL THE SYRIAN

Michael the Syrian (A.D. 1126–99) was the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch from 1166 to 1199. The Syriac text of his *Chronicle* was first published in 1899, along with a French translation, by Jean-Baptist Chabot. John A. Tvedtnes made the English translation used here from the French in Jean-Baptiste Chabot, trans., *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199)* (1899; reprint, Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1963), 1:21, 25–27, 33–34. We have numbered the paragraphs for reference purposes.

### **Book 2, Chapter 3**

1. Ragau<sup>1</sup> begat Saroug<sup>2</sup> at the age of 132 years, according to the Syriac at the age of 52 years; he lived 339 years, and according to the Syriac, 239.

2. According to the Septuagint, the third millennium came to an end in Ragau's 74th year.

3. The Tower [of Babel] was constructed in the 70th year of Ragau; it was completed 40 years afterward, and men were dispersed across the surface of the earth. They increased in wars and struggles. The conquerers erected monuments of victory, and afterwards they worshiped these statues. Thus the worship of idols multiplied.<sup>3</sup> The tower fell in Ragau's 110th year.

4. Nimrod, the first to reign at Babylon, was made prince in the 40th year of Ragau. When God sent the wind that overturned the tower and made it fall, Nimrod died in the tower.<sup>4</sup>

### **Book 2, Chapter 5**

Caharon, brother of Terah, one day killed by stratagem Kisonos, king of Babylon, who was Parthian, and wanted to expel the Parthians from their own country. In another history, we find that he killed him because of a gold statue that he had removed from the house of Nahor, for Nahor was priest of the idol Cainan.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Biblical Reu.

2. Biblical Serug.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

**Book 2, Chapter 6**

1. Thus died Nahor, and Abraham was born of Malkatoum. Twenty-two years later, Sara, daughter of Terah, was born of Zamrot.<sup>6</sup> . . .

2. Abraham, at age fifteen, began on his own to pray and to worship God.<sup>7</sup> He chased away the crows that had been sent by God upon the land of the Chaldeans to destroy and devour their seeds.<sup>8</sup>

3. At this time died Belos, the first king of the Assyrians. His son Ninus reigned fifty-two years.

4. This Ninus, second king of the Assyrians, built in the land a city that he called Ninus and that the Hebrews call Nineveh. He made a statue of his father Belos in molten gold and wrote upon it "Great God" and had it proclaimed throughout Assyria, and many worshiped it. After the construction of Nineveh were built Rahabot, Rasan, and Calneh.

5. Then Jerusalem was built by Melchizedek the Canaanite, who called it Oreb.

6. Abraham set fire to the temple of the idols that was at Ur of the Chaldeans. His brother Haron<sup>9</sup> went in to extinguish it and to save the idols so they would not burn, and he was consumed.<sup>10</sup>

7. Abraham, at the age of sixty, brought his father Terah, his brother Nahor, and Lot, son of Haron, and they came to live in Harran for fourteen years; then he left his father at Harran and came into the land of Canaan.<sup>11</sup>

**Book 3, Chapter 1**

1. Abraham went into Egypt at the age of 81 years. He begat Ishmael of Hagar. Ishmael lived 130 years, until the 62nd year of Jacob. At this period Samiram<sup>12</sup> began to reign over the Assyrians for 46 years, and she built mounds against the flood.<sup>13</sup> In another place, we have found, regarding these mounds, that after the flood, men having multiplied on the earth, allowed themselves to go worship devils who gave oracles in the idols, the stars of the firmament, the birds, the animals, and even springs. They made statues to the dead, placing them atop their tombs, and worshiped them. Seeing such iniquity, God ordered a great tempest that destroyed the images of the demonic and perverse cults and buried them under the dust. There had been many mounds, and many villages

6. The Bible makes Abraham only ten years older than Sarah.

7. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5.

9. Biblical Haran.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

11. Cf. Abraham 2:14, which indicates that Abraham left Haran at the age of sixty-two.

12. The name Samiram is thought by many scholars to derive from the name of the Babylonian Sammu-ramat, consort of an Assyrian king of the ninth century B.C.; see Bruce W. Warren and John A. Tvedtnes, "In Search of Historic Nimrod," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the SEHA* 155 (November 1983).

13. I.e., if another flood should ever come, these mounds would serve to rescue the people. The same story is found in various early Jewish accounts.

with their inhabitants were thus buried beneath the mounds with the devils they adored. They are now enclosed therein and sometimes they appear atop these mounds to those who, in their errant ways, resort to them.<sup>14</sup>

2. Nevertheless, Samiram became the wife of Ninus, king of the Assyrians; she built mounds, in order to provide for humans refuges against the waters of the flood.

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14. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

## EXTRACTS FROM MICHAEL GLYCAS

Michael Glycas (fl. A.D. 1159–64) was a Byzantine historian deeply involved in the political intrigues of his day. His *Annals* condemned astrology, historical determinism, and all ancient philosophers except Aristotle. Parts of his chronicle borrow heavily from the *Physiologos*, a bestiary. His work has been well preserved. The previously unpublished English translation used here was made by John Gee from the Greek text in *Michaelis Glycae Annales*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn: Weber, 1836), 244. For reference purposes we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. After the building of the tower, as is told, having spread out thence, and from there men plunged headlong into unnatural acts, and at last were led away to idolatry, the wretches being deceived this way by their demons. For the eighth from Noah, Serouch<sup>1</sup> found those of the images from the beginning; for he is said to honor those who showed whatever brilliant work in statues and stelae. After that, since they were ignorant of the opinions of the ancestors and because they set up statues for a memorial, little by little they were led astray by the conspiracy of the chief of evil, so that they made offerings to the immortal gods who had similar passions, and to corruptible men (and invented offerings to them), and to animals possessed by demons. Hence the human race worshiped various other gods.<sup>2</sup> The Egyptians more than others were driven headlong into atheism; for they revered cats and apes, and goats, likewise, and bulls, and crocodiles.<sup>3</sup> Most of all, they revered the Apis,<sup>4</sup> which was a variegated bull himself. For when such a bull was born with these, and bearing a seal in the tongue and in the tail, with the moon in the forehead as if a divided copy, they danced joyously and celebrated, since a god dwelt anew among them. And it was thus with them.

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1. Biblical Serug.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

3. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 1, figure 9.

4. The Apis (the Greek form of Egyptian Hapi) was a bull who was worshiped in the area of Memphis. His movements were used for oracular purposes. After the burial of the Apis bull, at the Serapeum at Memphis, a new bull with the same markings was sought out and, when found, was installed amid great celebration.

2. The eighth from Noah is said to be Serouch, for Cainan begat Sala; Sala, Eber; Eber, Phalek; Phalek, Ragau; and Ragau, Serouch. This Serouch begat Nachor; Nachor, Thara;<sup>5</sup> and Thara the divine Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; Isaac, Jacob; and Jacob, the twelve patriarchs: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, and the rest, from whom descended the twelve tribes of Israel. And Josephus said the following about Abraham, that when he went down into Egypt, he began to give them mathematics and taught them about astronomy.<sup>6</sup> For before Abraham went there, the Egyptians were ignorant about such things. Therefore these things were transplanted from the Chaldeans to Egypt, and from there to Greece. Georgios<sup>7</sup> passed that story down and this: When Abraham was fourteen years old, he began to know God, and first preached God the creator. For when he saw the heavens, first the lights, then the zodiac, he said to himself: "Even if others worship that, it is not God." He said the same thing about the sun, the moon, and the rest of the stars. For he was a consummate astronomer.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, seeing such things, God called him. But also he says that at the time of Abimelech he went down into Egypt because of the famine, and he shamed the wise and those who believed in fate. For after knowing God, he no longer desired to heed the stars, and thereby fulfilling the word which was spoken by the apostle: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen."<sup>9</sup> For the most godly Abraham comprehended the God who created from the things created. Therefore Plutarch also said: "He received the understanding of God; for the sun and moon and the rest of the stars retained under the earth likewise rise with their same colors and magnitudes, and in their own places."

3. Abraham was a great man, for hearing God saying, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, and come into a land that I will show thee,"<sup>10</sup> he obeyed immediately, ignoring all the difficulties in the meantime, and not knowing where he was going. But we, when we each call, and hearing the Lord, we want neither to divest ourselves of earthly things, nor to come to that land of promise.

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5. For this genealogy in the Bible, see Genesis 11:10–15. Note that Cainan is not included in Genesis. Sala is biblical Salah; Phalek, Peleg; Ragau, Reu; Serouch, Serug; Nachor, Nahor; and Thara, Terah.

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

7. I.e., George Hamartolos.

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

9. Citing Romans 1:20.

10. Citing Genesis 12:1.

## EXTRACTS FROM PETRUS COMESTOR

A native of Troyes, Petrus (Peter) Comestor (d. A.D. 1178) was a biblical scholar and chancellor of Notre Dame of Paris. The *Historia scholastica* was his best-known work, an unbroken history from the creation to the ascension. He relied heavily on the scriptures, making literal and allegorical interpretations in accordance with contemporary scientific thinking. His work was first printed around 1473 in Strasbourg. The previously unpublished translation used here, from *Historia scholastica, in actus apostolorum*, chapter 32, was made by John Gee from the Latin text published in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 198:1663–64.

[Discussing the speech of Stephen in Acts 6–7:]

“Men,” he said, “brethren, and fathers, hearken; the God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,<sup>1</sup> and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred.”<sup>2</sup> A third item is added in Genesis, “and from thy father’s house,”<sup>3</sup> but it is omitted by Stephen because he was speaking to those who knew [the scripture]; therefore, he touched on the history briefly or went on as though it were noted. But it is clear that it is accompanied by the book of Genesis, where it is seen to continue how after the death of his father, that is, Thare,<sup>4</sup> it was said that he, that is, Abraham, after which he continued because he [Thare] died in Charan,<sup>5</sup> where also his son lived with him, and therefore it is said in Charan. Which is therefore what this says, before he died in Charan, it could be said of him in both cases. For example, where it says “and said unto him,”<sup>6</sup> supply “after that he was in Charan.” But whether it was in Mesopotamia, or in Charan, or wherever it was said to him, the question is just how it was said to him, “Get thee out of thy country.”<sup>7</sup> Did he not therefore go out of Chaldea? Certainly, but hitherto he had faith, and was restored by the desire.

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1. Biblical Haran.
  2. Citing Acts 7:2–3, which in turn cites Genesis 12:1.
  3. Citing Genesis 12:1.
  4. Biblical Terah.
  5. The change in spelling is in the original.
  6. Citing Acts 7:3, which cites Genesis 12:1.
  7. Ibid.

The injunction to him was therefore to go out in mind, and then he went out in body. Or it could be said that both Mesopotamia and Charan are in Chaldea, and therefore, he went out of Chaldea, that is, from that part of Chaldea, and he came into Mesopotamia, in another part of Chaldea, and thence he came in Charan which previously was Mesopotamia. "Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans,"<sup>8</sup> and from Mesopotamia so far as it says "and from thence,"<sup>9</sup> because it apparently is said twice, "and came afterwards in Charan."<sup>10</sup> And then similarly from Charan, "when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell."<sup>11</sup> Or rather, he went from the land of the Chaldeans in mind, and then, that is, eventually, that is to say after the resignation of his will, after the death of his father, he moved into this land. Or if it is read to say he came in Charan, as this writing plainly reads. And see because in Hebrew it is said "from Ur of the Chaldees," that is, "from the fire of the Chaldeans."<sup>12</sup> And the Hebrews pass on the tradition that because Thare, and his sons, when they were in Chaldea, did not want to worship the fire,<sup>13</sup> they were thrown into the fire by the Chaldeans, and Aram,<sup>14</sup> the brother of Abraham was burned. Abraham was truly rescued by the Lord.<sup>15</sup> Therefore he was told by the Lord, "I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees."<sup>16</sup>

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8. Citing Acts 7:4.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Citing Genesis 11:28.

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

14. Biblical Haran.

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

16. Citing Genesis 15:7.

## EXTRACTS FROM GEORGIUS CEDRENUS

Georgius Cedrenus was a twelfth-century Byzantine historian. His *Historiarum Compendium* is based on earlier chronographers such as George Hamartolos, Theophanes, and Pseudo-Symeon Magistros; he also cites Josephus and *Jubilees* as well as the Bible. His passages about Abraham are often direct quotations of Symeon Logothetes' treatment of the same subject, which is included earlier in this volume. This previously unpublished translation from his *Compendium* used here is by John Gee from the original Greek text edited by Immanuel Bekker, *Georgius Cedrenus Ioannis Scylitzae Ope* (Bonn: Weber, 1838), 1:47–50. The reference numbers in parentheses are from the Greek edition. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. (26B) When Seruch was one hundred thirty years old, he begat Nachor.<sup>1</sup> Seruch lived in the land of the Chaldeans, in the city of Or. (26C) When Nachor grew, his father taught him all the interpretation of all omens, and the distinguishing of all the signs in heaven and of all things on the earth, and all the Chaldean divination. When Nachor was eighty-nine years old, he begat Tharra. When Ninus, the first king of the Assyrians, was in his forty-third year, Abraham was born. During those years, it was the Sixteenth Dynasty to the Egyptians, during which the Thebans ruled. When Tharra was eighty years old, he begat from his wife Edna (the daughter of Abraham, his uncle) Abraham, whom his mother called with the name of her own father; for she said that he died before his birth. Tharra also begat Aram<sup>2</sup> and Nachor. Abraham received a wife, Sarra, from his father.<sup>3</sup> (26D) He alone, of those everywhere suffering from the error of idols, recognized the true God and preached the Creator of all things. And he first encircled the altar with palm and olive branches,<sup>4</sup> and by him first is the angel in holy scripture named.

1. Biblical Serug and Nahor.

2. This seems to be a corruption of Arran, the form of Haran found in the Septuagint.

3. Cf. Abraham 2:2.

4. The same information is given in the account of Syncellus, which is included earlier in this collection. Abraham's actions suggest the Jewish circumambulation of the altar with palm fronds at the Feast of Tabernacles. In the Bodleian Aramaic Fragment (col. c) and 4QTL<sup>v</sup> ar (MS B, Frag. 1) of *Testament of Levi* 9:11, as part of Levi's initiation into the priesthood, Abraham taught him the use of sacred woods at the altar, including the palm and the cedar. See also Abraham's instructions to Isaac in *Jubilees* 21:12–14 and cf. Ezekiel 47:12 and Revelation 22:2. For Abraham and the priesthood, see Abraham 1:3, 2:9, 11; Facsimile 2, figure 3; Facsimile 3, figure 1; Doctrine and Covenants 84:14.

And from him, the Egyptians learned the position and creation of the stars, and the arithmetical science.

2. For in the twenty-fourth year of his life, Abraham discovered and worshiped the God of the universe. The angel of the Lord taught him the Hebrew language, as that same angel told Moses, and as is written in the book of *Jubilees*. (27A) And Aram, taking a wife, begot Lot, and a daughter Melcha. This one Nachor took to wife.<sup>5</sup>

3. Already when he was in his sixtieth year,<sup>6</sup> Abraham, since he did not think his father to be persuaded and the others of his house being superstitiously aloof because of idols, secretly burned the shrine of the idols at night. When they were utterly destroyed, realizing [this], his brothers jumped up, desiring to rescue the idols from the midst of the fire. The most ambitious one in offering to the things, Aram, perished in the fire.<sup>7</sup> After his idol-making father buried him in Or, (27B) the city of the Chaldeans, he moved, and came to Harran of Mesopotamia. Thence, after living with his father fifteen years, one night Abraham was pondering the quality of the affixed time of the movement of the stars, for he was thoroughly instructed in all such learning by his father. And with the mastery of each thing sought after, he understands such needless questioning to be greater than the universe, for God could again, if he wished, change the fate prognosticated for the household. Therefore, by means of this and all other such things, from all appointed souls and study, and the perfection of reverence toward divine things giving the proof, he heard from God: (27C) "Come forth out of thy land and from thy kindred and from thy father's house."<sup>8</sup> And after he came forth with his wife, Sarra, and Lot, his nephew, he moved to Arphaxad, the portion of his father, which the Canaanites, possessing, called the land of the Canaanites, being seventy-five years old and in the 3,387th year of the world. When Abraham came to Sechem,<sup>9</sup> according to the oracle of God, he established an altar between Bethel and Hai.<sup>10</sup> Having crossed the Euphrates, he received his surname, for those who cross are called Hebrews, but those who are descendants of Hebir say that they themselves are called Hebrews. And in his eighty-first year, which was the seventh year of his sojourn, (27D) he went down to Egypt with Sarra.

4. At this time Melchizedek, a virgin priest without genealogy, flourished, foreshadowing by bread and wine the bloodless sacrifice of Christ, our God. Melchizedek was the son of the king of Sidon, the son of Egypt, who also built the city of Sidon. Fatherless and motherless and without genealogy means that he does not descend from the Jewish genealogy, and because his parents, being wicked, are not counted among the pious. And because being a leader of the Canaanites, he ruled Jerusalem, for *melchi* means king, and *zedek*, righteous. And Jerusalem is also the name of the town, (28A) originally being

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5. Cf. Abraham 2:2.

6. Cf. Abraham 2:14. Note that Cedrenus places Abraham's age as sixty when he went to Haran, while the Book of Abraham places his age as sixty-two when he left Haran.

7. Contrast Abraham 2:1.

8. Cf. Abraham 2:3, 6.

9. Cf. Abraham 2:18.

10. Cf. Abraham 2:20.

called Jebus, because the Jebusites lived in it. For Jebus, by change of the *b* into an *r*, becomes Jeru; and the Salem being added, completes the name Jerusalem. For *salem* means peace. And it was called this because Melchizedek worshiped God in it, or because the temple will be in the place of God. And this is also upon the Jordan; for two rivers, both the Jor and the Dan, are mixed, and the one resultant river also carries the combined name. Because Melchizedek derives from a gentile nation and not from Abraham, it is not written that he was ever born and from what father and mother, or that he ever died; it may be justly said that he had neither beginning of days or end of years; for he is not able to be genealogized, having descended from nations left out.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK OF THE BEE

The *Book of the Bee*, written in Syriac by the Armenian-born bishop Shelemon (Solomon) of Basra (fl. A.D. 1222), uses the Bible and early commentaries on the Bible. It is closely related to other texts included in this collection, the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, the *Book of the Rolls*, and the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*. The English translation used here is taken from E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Bee* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1886); Budge used manuscripts in London, Munich, and Oxford (the Oxford manuscript is an Arabic version). The numbers following each entry are the pages from which the information was taken. We have removed the diacritics from the text.

### Chapter 23

Serug was a hundred and thirty years old, and begat Nahor; the sum of his years was a hundred and thirty years. In the days of Serug, men worshipped idols and graven images.<sup>1</sup> Nahor was seventy and nine years old, and begat Terah; the sum of his years was one hundred and forty-eight. In the days of Nahor magic began in the world. And God opened the storehouse of the winds and whirlwinds, and they uprooted the idols and graven images, and they collected them together and buried them under the earth, and they reared over them these mounds that are in the world.<sup>2</sup> This was called “the Wind Flood.” Terah was seventy years old, and begat Abraham; the sum of his years was one hundred and five years. (39–41)

### Chapter 25

Terah the father of Abraham took two wives; the one called Yona, by whom he begat Abraham; the other called Shelmath, by whom he begat Sarah. Mar Theodore says that Sarah was the daughter of Abraham’s uncle, and puts the uncle in the place of the father. When Abraham was seventy-five years old, God commanded him to cross the river Euphrates and to dwell in Harran. And he took Sarah his wife and Lot his nephew, and crossed the river Euphrates and dwelt in Harran. (42)

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.  
2. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

### Chapter 30

When Adam and Eve went forth from Paradise, Adam, as if knowing that he was never to return to his place, cut off a branch from the tree of good and evil—which is the fig-tree—and took it with him and went forth; and it served him as a staff all the days of his life. After the death of Adam, his son Seth took it, for there were no weapons as yet at that time. This rod was passed on from hand to hand unto Noah, and from Noah to Shem; and it was handed down from Shem to Abraham as a blessed thing from the Paradise of God.<sup>3</sup> With this rod Abraham broke the images and graven idols which his father made,<sup>4</sup> and therefore God said to him, “Get thee out of thy father’s house,” etc. It was in his hand in every country as far as Egypt, and from Egypt to Palestine. (50)

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3. In Jewish tradition, the rod is seen as a symbol of authority, passed down by the patriarchs. Thus, one could suggest that the transmission of the rod represents the transmission of priesthood authority. Cf. Abraham 1:2–3, 9, 18; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

## EXTRACTS FROM BAR HEBRAEUS

Gregory Yuhanna Abū al-Faraj (A.D. 1226–86), better known as Bar Hebraeus (meaning “son of a Hebrew”), was said to be the son of a Jewish convert to Christianity. Like Simeon Logothetes, he was born in Melitene in modern Turkey. Traveling widely, he studied other faiths and religions as well as all the sciences and wrote extensively. When the Tartars attacked Melitene in 1243, he left Melitene, settling in Antioch in 1244. In 1252, he became archbishop of Aleppo, and after the Tartars sacked that city, he became Maphryono (or Catholicos) of the East in 1264. Among his many works is a chronology of the world in Syriac, *Makhtbānuth Zavneʿ*, which he was translating into Arabic at the time of his death. A critical text of this work was produced in 1890 and first translated into English in 1932. Here, we extract portions of that work from the English translation by E. A. Wallis Budge, trans., *The Chronography of Gregory Abūʿl Faraj the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 8–10. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs. We have removed the diacritics and small capitals in the selections.

1. And in the seventieth year of Reu the building of the Great Tower in the land of Seʿnar (Shinar) began, and Nemrodh (Nimrod), the son of Kush fed the builders on the beasts which he hunted. And forty years after the Tower was finished God sent a wind and the Tower was overturned, and Nemrodh died in it.<sup>1</sup> It was he who after the Flood reigned in Babil. . . .

2. After Reu [came] Serugh his son. When he was one hundred and thirty years old he begot Nahor, and all [the days of] his life were three hundred and thirty years. Now in his days money and [women’s] chains (i.e. jewellery) appeared from Ophir. And men made idols for the devils, and they relied for help upon demons.<sup>2</sup> . . .

3. After Serugh [came] Nahor his son. . . .

4. And there rose up also a sixth king in Egypt, Pharaoh ʿApintos; [he reigned] thirty and two years. This king sent to Kasaronos, the Parthian king, and he brought the writings and the doctrine (religion?) of the Chaldees to Egypt.<sup>3</sup> And ʿApintos<sup>4</sup> also built a city

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:8, 20.

4. The name is the same as that used by Michael the Syrian. This name may be related to the ruler Pontipos mentioned in the Armenian *Question*.

on the river Nile, and he named it “Babhulon,”<sup>5</sup> that is to say Babel. And Asaph also saith that in the days of Tarh the Egyptians learned Chaldeeism, and they made an image of gold in honour of Kinos, the idol.<sup>6</sup>

5. After Nahor [came] Tarh<sup>7</sup> his son. When he was seventy years old he begot Abraham; and all [the days of] his life was [*sic were*]<sup>8</sup> two hundred and seventy-five years. And in the fifth year of Tarh a fifth king rose up in Babhil,<sup>9</sup> ‘Arpazadh;<sup>10</sup> [he reigned] eighteen years, and then the kingdom of Babhil came to an end for seven years, until Bilos (Belus), the Assyrian, rebelled against the Chaldeans. And he made war upon them and upon the Medes and conquered them, and he reigned over Assyria and Babhil, and over the whole of Asia, with the exception of India, for sixty and two years. . . .

6. After Tarh (Terah) [came] Abraham his son. He was one hundred years old when he begot Isaac; all [the days of] his life were one hundred and seventy-five years. And when Abraham was fifteen years of age he entreated God and drove away the ‘*karqasê*’ (ravens? locusts?) which were destroying the country of the Chaldeans and eating up their crops.<sup>11</sup> At this time Bilos (Belus) died, and a second king rose up in Assyria, viz. his son Ninos (Ninus). . . .

7. And Abraham burned the temple of idols which was in Ur of the Chaldees, and Haran his brother went to quench the fire, and he was burned to death therein.<sup>12</sup> And for this reason Abraham, when he was sixty years old, fled to Harran with Tarh his father, and Nahor his brother, and Lot the brother of Haran, who was burnt to death; and he dwelt therein for fourteen years. And then he departed from his father from Harran and came to the land of Canaan. And in his seventy-first year the war of Kardl‘mar (Chedarlaomer) took place.<sup>13</sup> And when he was eighty and five years old, that is to say in the first year of the promise concerning Egypt, he begot Ishmael by Haghar. . . .

8. And a tenth king rose up in Egypt, Parandos, the Theban; he reigned forty and three years. And after him rose up in Egypt the eleventh king, Pharaoh Panos.<sup>14</sup> This king snatched from Abraham his wife Sara, and he returned her to him afterwards with gold, and silver, and stuffs, and sent him away from Egypt.

5. Biblical Babylon. However, the Babylon in Egypt (Old Cairo) is distinct from the one in Mesopotamia.

6. In other Christian texts, this idol is called Cainan. Nibley suggested comparing this name with that of the god Elkenah in Abraham 1:6–7, 13, 17, 20, 29; 2:13; 3:20. See Hugh Nibley, “A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price,” *Improvement Era* 72/8 (1969): 85.

7. Biblical Terah.

8. Our insertion.

9. Biblical Babel.

10. Biblical Arphaxad.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5, 17.

12. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29; 2:1.

13. This war, recorded in Genesis 14, took place after Abraham had already left Haran and had been to Egypt and returned to the land of Canaan. Bar Hebraeus makes Abraham seventy-one years of age at the time of this war and sixty when he went to Haran. This suggests indirect support for Abraham 2:14, which makes him sixty-two when he left Haran, as opposed to the seventy-five years of Genesis 12:4. In *Conflict of Adam and Eve* IV, 1:6 (included 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 time at age seventy-five (*Jasher* 13:26).

14. Neither Parandos nor Panos is attested in Egyptian inscriptions.

AN EXTRACT FROM  
NICOPHORUS GREGORAS

The Byzantine historian Nicophorus Gregoras (A.D. 1290?–1360?) was one of the most versatile scholars of the fourteenth century, writing history, hagiography, mathematics, astronomy, and other scientific works. His calendar reforms presaged the Gregorian reform of 1582 but were not adopted. Gregoras also rejected historical determinism. Jerome W. Basila first brought the Greek text of Gregoras's *Historiae Byzantinae* to light in 1562, but publication of the work did not begin until 1829 and was not completed until 1855. A German translation was produced from 1973 to 1988. The previously unpublished English translation used here was made by John Gee from the Greek text in *Nicophori Gregorae Historiae Byzantinae*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn: Weber, 1829–55), 3:125–26.

For Abraham the patriarch was crowned not for being executed,<sup>1</sup> but because he became faithful to God. And the other holy fathers and those with them, concerning all of whom Paul said that time would fail him to tell of,<sup>2</sup> were perfected without the shedding of blood, but by faith, and until now they are wondered at, because they were prepared to endure even death because of their piety toward God.

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

2. Referring to Hebrews 11:32.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE KEBRA NAGAST

The *Kebra Nagast*, or the “Glory of the Kings [of Ethiopia],” is a fourteenth-century Ethiopic document that claims to be based on an earlier Coptic text supposedly translated into Ethiopic by a man named Isaac. The colophons of manuscripts of the text held in the British Museum, Oxford, and Paris claim that an Arabic version was translated from Coptic in the 409th “year of mercy,” when Gabra Maskal (also called Lalibala) was king of Ethiopia (1314–44). The work was known in Western Europe by the sixteenth century, but the first reference to the text in a European language was published by James Bruce in 1813 and consisted only of a summary of the book’s contents. The translation used here is the first in English; E. A. Wallis Budge, trans., *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek* (London: Medici Society, 1922). The page numbers are indicated following each entry, and we have removed all diacritics.

### Chapter 12

And after the death of Shem Arphaxad reigned, and after the death of Arphaxad Kaynan (Cainan) reigned, and after the death of Kaynan Sala (Salah) reigned, and after him Eber reigned, and after him Palek (Peleg) reigned, and after him Ragaw (Reu) reigned, and after him Seroh (Serug) reigned, and after him Nakhor (Nahor) reigned, and after him Tara (Terah) reigned. And these are they who made magical images, and they went to the tombs of their fathers and made an image (or, picture) of gold, and silver, and brass,<sup>1</sup> and a devil used to hold converse with them out of each of the images of their fathers, and say unto them, “O my son So-and-so, offer up unto me as a sacrifice the son whom thou lovest.” And they slaughtered their sons and their daughters to the devils, and they poured out innocent blood to filthy devils.<sup>2</sup> (9)

### Chapter 13

And Tara (Terah) begot a son and called him “Abraham” (or, Abram). And when Abraham was twelve years old his father Terah sent him to sell idols.<sup>3</sup> And Abraham said, “These are not gods that can make deliverance”; and he took away the idols to sell even

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6, 11.  
2. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.  
3. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

as his father had commanded him. And he said unto those unto whom he would sell them, "Do ye wish to buy gods that cannot make deliverance, [things] made of wood, and stone, and iron, and brass, which the hand of an artificer hath made?"<sup>4</sup> And they refused to buy the idols from Abraham because he himself had defamed the images of his father. And as he was returning he stepped aside from the road, and he set the images down, and looked at them, and said unto them, "I wonder now if ye are able to do what I ask you at this moment, and whether ye are able to give me bread to eat or water to drink?" And none of them answered him, for they were pieces of stone and wood; and he abused them and heaped revilings upon them, and they spake never a word. And he buffeted the face of one, and kicked another with his feet, and a third he knocked over and broke to pieces with stones,<sup>5</sup> and he said unto them, "If ye are unable to deliver yourselves from him that buffeted you, and ye cannot requite with injury him that injureth you, how can ye be called 'gods'? Those who worship you do so in vain, and as for myself I utterly despise you, and ye shall not be my gods." Then he turned his face to the East, and he stretched out his hands and said, "Be Thou my God, O Lord, Creator of the heavens and the earth, Creator of the sun and the moon, Creator of the sea and the dry land, Maker of the majesty of the heavens and the earth, and of that which is visible and that which is invisible; O Maker of the universe, be Thou my God. I place my trust in Thee, and from this day forth I will place my trust in no other save Thyself." And then there appeared unto him a chariot of fire which blazed,<sup>6</sup> and Abraham was afraid and fell on his face on the ground; and [God] said unto him, "Fear thou not, stand upright." And He removed fear from him. (9–10)

#### **Chapter 14**

And God held converse with Abram, and He said unto him, "Fear thou not. From this day thou art My servant, and I will establish My Covenant with thee and with thy seed after thee, and I will multiply thy seed, and I will magnify thy name exceedingly. And I will bring down the Tabernacle of My Covenant upon the earth seven generations after thee, and it shall go round about with thy seed, and shall be salvation unto thy race; and afterwards I will send My Word for the salvation of Adam and his sons for ever. And at this moment these who are of thy kinsmen are evil men (or, rebels), and My divinity, which is true, they have rejected. And as for thee, that day by day they may not seduce thee, come, get thee forth out of this land, the land of thy fathers, into the land which I will show thee, and I will give it unto thy seed after thee." And Abram made obeisance to God, and was subject to his God.<sup>7</sup> And [God] said unto him, "Thy name shall be Abraham"; and He gave him the salutation of peace and went up into heaven. And Abraham returned to his abode, and he took Sara (Sarah) his wife, and went forth and did not go back to his father, and his mother, and his house, and his kinsfolk; and he for-

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4. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

6. Cf. Abraham 2:7.

7. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

sook them all for God's sake. And he arrived in the city of Salem, and dwelt there and reigned in righteousness, and did not transgress the commandment of God. (10–11)

## Chapter 82

And we could also inform you that when God had given unto Abraham glory and riches, he lacked a son. And Sarah and Abraham talked together on their bed, and he said unto her, "Thou art barren," and she said unto him, "It is not I who am barren but thyself"; and they continued to discuss the matter and to dispute together about it. And there came a famine in the land of Canaan, and Abraham heard that there was some food in the land of Egypt, the country of Pharaoh. And when he had spent all his possessions in charity to the poor during the days of the famine,<sup>8</sup> without providing for the morrow, the famine waxed strong in the land of Canaan, and he lacked food to eat. And he said, "I give thanks unto God that what He hath given unto me I have expended on my servants. But as for thee, my sister Sarah, come, let us go into the land of Egypt in order to save ourselves from death by famine." And she said unto him, "Thy will be done, O my lord, and if thou die I will die with thee, and if thou live I will live with thee; it is not for me to gainsay thy word for ever." And then they rose up and set out on their journey.

And when they drew nigh [to Egypt] Abraham said unto Sarah, "One thing I must ask of thee, and do thou what I ask of thee"; and Sarah said, "Speak, my lord." And he said unto her, "I have heard that the habits of the Egyptians are lawless, and that they live in idolatry<sup>9</sup> and fornication. And when they have seen thee they will plot evil against me, and slay me because of the goodliness of thy beautiful form; for there is among them no one that can be compared unto thee. And now, in order that thou mayest save my life, do thou say, if they happen to ask thee questions about me, 'I am his sister,' so that thou mayest save my soul from death by the hand of the strangers." And Sarah said, "Thy will shall be done. The word which thou tellest me I will speak, and what thou tellest me to do I will do." And they wept and worshipped God, and they came into the great city of the King of Egypt.

And when the Egyptians saw Abraham and Sarah they marvelled at the beauty of their appearance, for they imagined that they had been brought forth by the same mother. And they said unto Abraham, "What is this woman to thee?" And Abraham said unto them, "She is my sister." And they also asked Sarah "What is this man to thee?" And she said unto them, "He is my brother." Therefore did the people make a report to Pharaoh that a pair of goodly form had arrived, one a woman and the other a young man, and that there was no one like unto them in all the land. And Pharaoh rejoiced, and he sent a message to Abraham, saying, "Give me thy sister that I may betroth her to myself." And Abraham pondered in his mind, saying, "If I keep her back he will kill me and take her"; and he said, "Do so, provided that thou dost make me well content." And Pharaoh gave him one thousand silver *aflâhet*, and took Sarah to make her his wife. And he brought

8. Cf. Abraham 2:17.

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

her into his house, and set her upon his bed and Pharaoh the King of Egypt would have companied with her. But the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him by night carrying a sword of fire, and he drew nigh unto him, and he lighted up the whole chamber with his fiery flame, and he wished to slay Pharaoh. And Pharaoh fled from one wall of the chamber to the other, and from one corner of the chamber to the other; wheresoever he went the Angel followed him; and there was no place left whereto he could flee and hide himself. Then Pharaoh stretched out his hands and said unto the Angel, "O lord, forgive me this my sin." And the Angel said unto him, "Why dost thou attack the wife of [another] man?" And Pharaoh said unto him, "O lord, slay thou not innocent blood. For he said unto me 'She is my sister,' and therefore I took her to myself innocently. What shall I do to deliver myself from thy hands?" And the Angel said unto him, "Give Abraham's wife back to him, and give him a gift, and send him away to his own country." And straightway Pharaoh called Abraham, and gave unto him his wife Sarah, together with a handmaiden whose name was 'Agar (Hagar), and he gave unto him gold, and silver, and costly apparel, and sent him away in peace.

And Abraham and his wife returned to their country in peace. And Sarah said unto Abraham, "I know that I am barren. Go thou in to this my handmaiden whom Pharaoh gave unto me; peradventure God will give thee seed in her." (141–43)

### Chapter 105

And thou dost not understand that they were justified by faith—Abraham, and David and all the Prophets, one after the other, who prophesied concerning the coming of the Son of God. And Abraham said, "Wilt Thou in my days, O Lord, cast Thy word upon the ground?" And God said unto him, "By no means. His time hath not yet come, but I will shew thee a similitude of His coming. Get thee over the Jordan, and dip thyself in the water as thou goest over, and arrive at the city of Salem, where thou shalt meet Melchizedek, and I will command him to show thee the sign and similitude of Him." And Abraham did this and he found Melchizedek, and he gave him the mystery of the bread and wine, that same which is celebrated in our Passover for our salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the desire and the joy of Abraham as he went round the altar which Melchizedek had made, carrying branch and palm on the day of the Sabbath.<sup>10</sup> See how he rejoiced in his belief, and see how he was justified by his belief." (200)

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10. The same information is given in the account of Syncellus, which is included earlier in this collection. Abraham's actions suggest the Jewish circumambulation of the altar with palm fronds at the Feast of Tabernacles. In the Bodleian Aramaic Fragment (col. c) and 4QTL<sup>v</sup> ar (MS B, Frag. 1) of *Testament of Levi* 9:11, as part of Levi's initiation into the priesthood, Abraham taught him the use of sacred woods at the altar, including the palm and the cedar. See also Abraham's instructions to Isaac in *Jubilees* 21:12–14 and cf. Ezekiel 47:12 and Revelation 22:2. For Abraham and the priesthood, see Abraham 2:9, 11; Facsimile 2, figure 1; Doctrine and Covenants 84:14.

## AN EXTRACT FROM THE ETHIOPIC STORY OF JOSEPH

The Ethiopic document known as *Zênâhu La-Yosêf* (Story of Joseph) was discovered in a manuscript at the Dabra Bizon monastery near the Red Sea. The manuscript dates to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, but the translator of the text postulates a late Second Temple period Jewish provenance for the work. The manuscript came to the attention of Western scholarship in 1973, although a translation was not actually published until 1990. The work gives a more theatrical version of the biblical story of Joseph. The brief passage cited here is from the English translation by E. Isaac, "The Ethiopic *History of Joseph*: Translation with Introduction and Notes," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 6 (April 1990): 50. Although we have written this selection out as prose, the translator has it in verse.

[From the prayer Joseph offered when cast by his brothers into the pit:]  
You are the Lord who saved your servant Abraham, from Nimrod's fire and judgment.<sup>1</sup>

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

EXTRACTS FROM  
BAKHAYLA MIKA'EL (ZOSIMAS)

The *Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth* was authored by Bakhayla Mîkâ'êl, also known as Zôsîmâs. Two Ethiopic clerics of that name are known, one from the thirteenth century and one from the fifteenth century. Though this unique manuscript (now housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris) first came to light between 1633 and 1637, it was not given much attention. The manuscript has many lacunae and unintelligible words, partly because of later damage, but, fortunately, a copy of it was made in 1670. This and the original served as the basis for the first English translation, used here: E. A. Wallis Budge, trans., *The Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth and Other Works of Bakhayla Mîkâ'êl (Zôsîmâs)* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 33–34. The number following the folio number denotes the column; in Budge's edition, these numbers are run into the text. We have removed Budge's diacritics and small capitals.

*Folio 16b.1.* And at a subsequent period Abraham the believer was famous. On the day of his birth the house shone with a bright light. Very many things (*or*, persons) fell down,

*Folio 16b.2.* and there was an outcry in a mighty voice, which said, "Woe is me! Woe is me! There hath just been born him that shall crush my Kingdom to dust." And [he who uttered] the voice wept, and described events which would take place, and said, "This is he who shall overturn my habitation."

And among [those present] there were some who said, "Kill this child forthwith"; and those who said this knew full well that [divine] grace would be given to Abraham. And God poured compassion into the heart [of the father of] Abraham, and he said unto the Satans<sup>1</sup> [who advised him thus]: "Whence come ye, ye who say unto me that I must kill my child, an act pleasing to God?"<sup>2</sup> And he reared the child.

And at the beginning of the seventh month Abraham went forth by night and he saw the moon and the stars, and he said, "[Who art] Thou God who

*Folio 17a.1.* hast created these?" And straightway God said unto him, "I am the God

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1. The term means "adversary" or "opponent."

2. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

of thy Fathers. I will make thee to be justified and I will magnify thee." And he gave him the covenant of the Law and an ordinance (*or*, rules for social life).

And Abraham was circumcised by the hand of Gabriel, and Michael who assisted him. [Here follows a brief discussion of God's covenant with Abraham.]

*Folio 17a.2.* But God told

*Folio 17b.1.* Abraham when he made an offering to Him [and] He informed him that [he] should go down into Egypt,<sup>3</sup> a stranger, [and] that he should be in a foreign land and that he should serve them (i.e. the Egyptians) for twelve years. And this took place because Sara laughed and did not believe the word of God.

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3. Both the Bible (Genesis 12:10) and the Book of Abraham (Abraham 2:21) suggest that it was Abraham's idea to go to Egypt. Once he had so decided, God gave him instructions to teach the people there (Abraham 3:15).

EXTRACTS FROM AN  
ARMENIAN PARAPHRASE OF GENESIS

This text comprises the Armenian version of the book of Genesis interspersed with additional text not found in the Bible. It is known from two fifteenth-century manuscripts that are housed in Erevan, Armenia, and which vary from each other. They are designated below as A and B. These selections are from the first English translation, Michael E. Stone, *Armenian Apocrypha: Relating to the Patriarchs and Prophets* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982), 93–94 (version A), and 93, 95–96 (version B).

A

B

**After Genesis 11:21**

[not in text]

In his day men fall into sin.<sup>1</sup>**After Genesis 11:25**

And in his day all the earth was worshipping idols.

[not in text]

**After Genesis 11:30**

And at that time men did not know God, for they were worshippers of idols<sup>2</sup>—some of the air and others of the water. And Abraham looked at the stars and thought that they are God. When the moon came, he said, “This it is which is great.” When the sun came, he said, “This is God, which is greater than the other and more light-giving.” When he saw that all these came and went, they seemed to him like servants, and he said this, “They are

And at that time, men did not know God, for they were idol-worshippers.

And Abraham said, “The sun is God, and the moon.”

And he saw that they came and went, and he said, “They are servants of God.” And

1. This sentence and the first sentence in version A are both found in the commentary for paragraph 10 on p. 93 of *Armenian Apocrypha*.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

not God but servants.”<sup>3</sup> Then he held his hands on high and said, “O God! who are hidden and not seen, and all these are your servants, show me yourself.”<sup>4</sup> And God appeared immediately unto him and said, “I have given this land to your seed.” And Abraham built an altar where the Lord had appeared to him. Behold! He was an idol worshipper and unlearned, but he recognized God. He found God and he became like God<sup>5</sup> and the father of all believers,<sup>6</sup> in whose bosom all the worthy rest.<sup>7</sup>

then he held his hands on high and said, “God, who are hidden and not seen, and all these are your servants, show yourself to me.” And immediately God appeared to him and said, “I will give this land to your seed.” And Abraham built an altar where the Lord appeared to him.

And when he recognized God by means of wisdom, he became a father of faith for all the Christians. Those who are worthy rest in his bosom.

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

4. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

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

6. Cf. Abraham 2:10–11.

7. Cf. Luke 16:22.

EXTRACTS FROM  
**ARMENIAN QUESTION**

The Armenian document known simply as *Question* has a story that, while not mentioning Abraham, parallels information found in some of the other Abraham tales. The document comes from a miscellany that was copied or compiled by one Markos in 1686. The text is a narrative of primordial Christian history, and some stories have ideas that connect to Alexander the Great. This selection is drawn from the first English translation, in Michael E. Stone, *Armenian Apocrypha Relating to Adam and Eve* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 124–26.

15. And after the death of Noah in the year 690 in the third millennium, Noah's sons went forth and built a tower in the land of Senayar.<sup>1</sup> And there the tongues were confused.

16. But Maniton<sup>2</sup> <held><sup>3</sup> Oveayn up to the sea, which is called the region of the Sun. In this place, {Canan}<sup>4</sup> went forth and dwelt there. This Maniton received God's gift of wisdom, such as the skill of astrology.

17. Nebrovťa<sup>5</sup> went to him. He received a secret from him. This Nebrovť first ruled over the earth. But in the ninth year of the fourth millennium great Babylon was built and Nebrovť ruled in it.

18. And after this, the sons of Ham made a king for themselves, whose name was Pontipos.<sup>6</sup>

19. In the 99th year of the fourth millennium, in the third year of the rule of Nebrovť, he sent wise men from the sons of Japheth, architects, to go to Maniton, according to his appellation.

20a. And there was peace between Maniton and Nebrovť.

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1. Biblical Shinar.

2. Maniton seems to be the individual called Bounitar in other traditions, being the man from whom Nimrod gained his knowledge.

3. The braces ({} ) indicate evident corruptions in the text, and the angle brackets (<>) indicate corrections of evident corruptions.

4. Biblical Canaan.

5. Biblical Nimrod. The spelling change in the following mentions of the name is in the text.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27. This name may perhaps be related to the Pharaoh Apintos mentioned in Bar Hebraeus.

AN EXTRACT FROM  
**ABEL AND OTHER PIECES**

Although the author of this Armenian text is unknown, the scribes of the miscellany from which it is taken were Sargis and Amiras of Erznka, who copied the manuscript in 1624, 1634, and 1666. This selection from *Abel and Other Pieces* draws upon book 1, chapter 32 of the *Clementine Recognitions*, also cited in this collection. The excerpt is part of a section entitled "From Adam to the Flood," taken from the first English translation, in Michael E. Stone, *Armenian Apocrypha Relating to Adam and Eve* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 156–57.

7.5. Moses records Abraham as the 20th from Adam, and Luke (records him) as the 21st. Peter the apostle says, according to Clement, according to his own successor, that in the 15th generation men worshipped fire and set up idols.<sup>1</sup> This was the time of Eber.

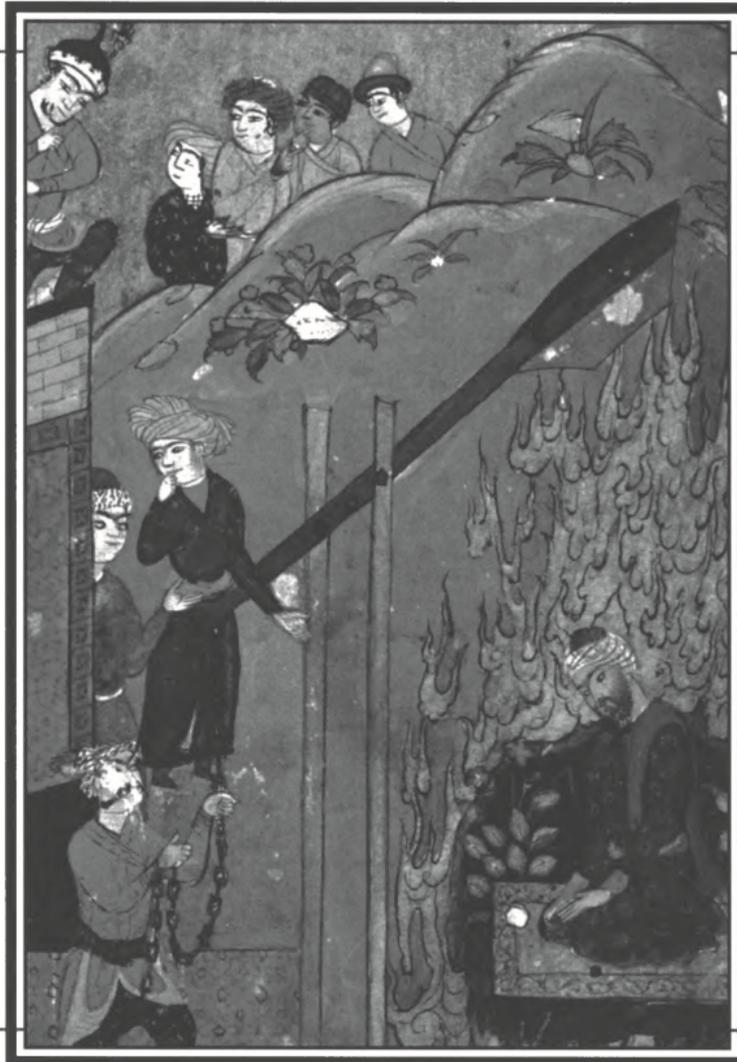
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1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.



# MUSLIM TRADITIONS ABOUT THE EARLY LIFE OF ABRAHAM

SECTION 4





## EXTRACTS FROM THE QUR'AN

The Noble Qur'an (al-Qur'ān al-Karīm), as it is called by the Muslims, is the sacred book of Islam. It is called the Qur'an (recitation) because it contains 114 revelations that were recited (*ʿiqrā*) to the Prophet Muḥammad (ca. A.D. 570–632) in Arabic by the angel Gabriel. For the Muslim, the Qur'an goes beyond other books of scripture in significance. It is a faithful reproduction of the original scripture in heaven, in the heavenly language of Arabic. Therefore, the Qur'an is considered by Muslims to be untranslatable. The Arabic Qur'an most likely reached its present form under the auspices of the third caliph, ʿUthmān, as early as the middle of the seventh century A.D., within two decades of the death of Muḥammad. In 1143 Robertus Retenensis introduced the Qur'an, in Latin, to the Western world. Andre du Ryer published a French version of the Latin in 1647. Two years later an English version of this appeared. Unfortunately, these earlier versions and those based on them were replete with errors and misunderstandings inspired by hostility. The first reliable English rendition from the original Arabic was made by George Sale in 1734. Sale's rendition was not a literal translation: in relevant sections, he included lore that an educated Arab might know even though this information is not contained in the Arabic text. Sale's rendition dominated the West till the end of the nineteenth century. Since then, numerous English renditions have appeared. John A. Tvedtnes produced the rendition of the Arabic text in the passages below. Selected passages and notes from Sale's rendition have been included in our notes.

**Surah 2**

258. Hast thou not noted he who disputed with Abraham about his Lord, because God gave him kingship? Then said Abraham, "My Lord is He who makes alive and causes death."<sup>1</sup> He said, "I give life and death." Abraham said, "But God brings the sun from the east, so thou bring it from the west." Then he who was an unbeliever was confounded.<sup>2</sup>

**Surah 6**

74. Then Abraham said to his father Āzar,<sup>3</sup> "Takest thou idols for gods?<sup>4</sup> For I see that thee and thy kinsfolk are in clear error."

75. And thus We<sup>5</sup> showed Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth<sup>6</sup> so he might be among those having certitude.

76. When the night covered him, he saw a star. He said, "This is my Lord." When it set, he said, "I love not those that set."

77. Then he saw the moon rising in splendor. He said, "This is my Lord." When it set, he said, "Except my Lord guide me, I shall be among the errant people."

78. When he saw the sun rising in splendor, he said, "This is my Lord. This is the greatest." When it set, he said, "O my people, I am guiltless of idolatrous worship.<sup>7</sup>

79. I have directed my face as a true believer to him who created the heavens and the earth, and I shall not be of the idolators."

80. Then his people disputed with him. He said, "Do ye dispute with me about God Who has guided me? I do not fear what ye associate with Him, only what my Lord indeed wills. My Lord comprehends everything by His knowledge. Will ye not be reminded?

81. How should I fear what ye associate [with Him], and ye do not fear what ye associate with God, although He has not sent down authority upon you? Which of the two parties has more right to safety? If ye know [tell me].

82. Those who believe and do not mix their beliefs with wrong have safety, and they are guided."

83. And this was Our argument We gave Abraham against his people.

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1. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:7.

2. Most Muslim traditions identify this unbeliever as Nimrod.

3. Biblical Terah.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

5. The Qurʾan uses the royal plural (we, our, us) when God speaks.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3. Sale notes: "That is, we gave him a right apprehension of the government of the world, and of the heavenly bodies, that he might know them all to be ruled by GOD," George Sale, trans., *The Koran* (London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1836), 1:140 n. 76.

7. Literally, "guiltless of the ones who associate," referring to those who place anything on an equal level with God. This is the expression used in Arabic to denote idolators and idolatry or any kind of polytheism, which is the most grievous sin in Islam.

## Surah 9

114. Abraham prayed for forgiveness for his father only because he had made him a promise. But when it became clear to him that he was an enemy to God, he dissociated himself from him, for Abraham was empathetic and patient.

## Surah 14

35. And Abraham said, "My Lord, make this city<sup>8</sup> [one of] safety and keep me and my children from serving idols.

36. My Lord, they have surely led astray many of the people. And whoever follows me is truly of me,<sup>9</sup> and whoever disobeys me, yet Thou art forgiving [and] merciful."

## Surah 19

41. Remember Abraham in the book,<sup>10</sup> for he was a righteous one [and] a prophet.

42. He said to his father, "O father, why worshipest thou that which does not hear and does not see and does not do anything for thee?"<sup>11</sup>

43. O father, truly there has come to me knowledge that thou hast not received, so follow me. I shall guide thee [in] a straight path.

44. O father, do not worship Satan, for Satan was a rebel to the Most Gracious One.

45. O father, truly I fear that punishment shall befall thee from the Gracious One so that thou shalt become a friend to Satan."<sup>12</sup>

46. He said, "Dost thou detest my gods, Abraham? If thou ceasest not, I shall stone thee.<sup>13</sup> Keep away from me for a long while."

47. He said, "Peace be on thee. I shall seek pardon for thee, for He is kind to me.

48. And I shall turn away from all of you and from those ye invoke besides God. And I shall call on my Lord, if I shall not be unblessed in praying to my Lord."

49. When he had turned from them and from those they worshiped besides God, We gave him Isaac and Jacob, and each of them We made a prophet.

## Surah 21

51. And We had already given Abraham his rectitude and We were acquainted with him.<sup>14</sup>

52. He said to his father and his people, "What are these images to which ye are devoted?"

53. They said, "We found our fathers worshiping them."<sup>15</sup>

54. He said, "Then ye and your fathers have been in manifest error."

55. They said, "Hast thou brought us the truth, or art thou among the jokers?"

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8. Referring to Mecca.

9. Cf. Abraham 2:10, 15.

10. I.e., the Qur'an.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:16-17, 27.

12. I.e., that he will go to Satan's abode in hell.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 30.

14. This line does not mean that God learned about Abraham; rather, it refers to a personal relationship with the patriarch.

15. Cf. Abraham 1:5-6.

56. He said, "No, your Lord is Lord of the heavens and the earth, Who created them, and I am among the witnesses thereof.
57. And, by God, I shall plot against your idols after ye turn [your] backs."
58. So he broke them to pieces,<sup>16</sup> except the largest of them, that they might turn to it [to address it].<sup>17</sup>
59. They said, "Who did this to our gods? Surely he is among the evildoers."
60. They said, "We heard a youth speak of them, one called Abraham."
61. They said, "Then bring him before the people that they may testify."
62. They said, "Art thou the one who did this to our gods, O Abraham?"
63. He said, "No, the biggest of them did this. So ask them if they can speak."
64. They turned to themselves and they said, "Surely ye are the evildoers."
65. Then they turned their heads to say, "Thou knowest that these [idols] do not speak."
66. He said, "Then do ye worship besides God what does not do anything for you and does not harm?"
67. Fie on you and what ye worship instead of God. Can ye not reason?—Have ye no sense?"
68. They said, "Burn him and help your gods if ye do [anything]."
69. We said, "O fire, be cold and [a means of] safety for Abraham."<sup>18</sup>

16. Cf. Abraham 1:20. Sale adds a tradition to his translation here that is not found in the Arabic of the Qur'an. Sale's translation of this verse reads: "And in the people's absence he went into the temple where the idols stood, and he brake them all in pieces, except the biggest of them," *The Koran*, 2:135. Commenting on this verse, Sale notes, "Abraham took his opportunity to do this while the Chaldeans were abroad in the fields, celebrating a great festival: and some say he hid himself in the temple: and when he had accomplished his design, that he might the more evidently convince them of their folly in worshipping them, he hung the axe with which he had hewn and broken down the images on the neck of the chief idol, named by some writers, Baal; as if he had been the author of all the mischief. For this story, which, though it be false, is not ill invented, Mohammed stands indebted to the Jews, who tell it with a little variation: for they say Abraham performed this exploit in his father's shop, during his absence; that Terah, on his return, demanding the occasion of the disorder, his son told him that the idols had quarrelled, and fallen together by the ears, about an offering of fine flour, which had been brought them by an old woman; and that the father, finding he could not insist on the impossibility of what Abraham pretended, without confessing the impotence of his gods, fell into a violent passion, and carried him to Nimrod, that he might be exemplarily punished for his insolence," *ibid.*, 2:135 n. 59.

17. The people would have to ask the largest idol how the destruction had happened.

18. Sale adds traditional material not found in the Arabic text of this verse: "And when Abraham was cast into the burning pile, we said, O fire, be thou cold, and a preservation unto Abraham," *The Koran*, 2:136. Sale notes: "The commentators relate that, by Nimrod's order, a large space was enclosed at Cutha, and filled with a vast quantity of wood, which, being set on fire, burned so fiercely, that none dared to venture near it: then they bound Abraham, and putting him into an engine (which some suppose to have been of the devil's invention), shot him into the midst of the fire, from which he was preserved by the angel Gabriel, who was sent to his assistance; the fire burning only the cords with which he was bound," *ibid.*, 2:136 n. 69.

70. So they sought a plot against him, but We made them the greater losers.  
71. And We delivered him and Lot to the land that We blessed for the nations.

### Surah 26

69. And recite to them the story of Abraham.  
70. When he said to his father and his people, "What do ye worship?"  
71. They said, "We worship idols and persevere in devotion thereto."  
72. He said, "Do they hear you when ye call,  
73. Or do you good or harm?"  
74. They said, "No, we found our fathers did so."  
75. He said, "Do ye then see what ye have been worshipping,  
76. Ye and your earliest fathers?<sup>19</sup>  
77. For they are hostile to me except the Lord of the universe  
78. Who created me, for it is He Who guides me,  
79. And it is He Who feeds me and gives me drink,  
80. And when I am ill, it is He Who heals me  
81. And Who shall cause me to die then resurrect me,<sup>20</sup>  
82. And Who I hope will forgive me my sins [in] the Day of Judgment.  
83. My Lord, give me wisdom and unite me with the righteous,  
84. And give me a good mention<sup>21</sup> among the latest.  
85. Place me among the heirs of the garden of comfort,  
86. And forgive my father for being among those who stray.<sup>22</sup>  
87. And do not shame me on the day they will resurrect,  
88. The day property and sons will not be useful,  
89. Only one approaching God with a perfect heart.  
90. And the garden will be brought near to the righteous,  
91. And hellfire will appear to the errant.  
92. And it shall be said to them, 'Where are the ones ye used to worship  
93. Instead of God? Can they help you or help themselves?'  
94. Then shall they be toppled into it [the fire], they and the errant,  
95. And the assembled hosts of Iblis<sup>23</sup> [Lucifer].  
96. While they are in it, they will dispute,  
97. 'By God, surely we were in clear error  
98. When we made you equal to the Lord of the universe.  
99. And those who misled us were alone the guilty ones,

19. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

20. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:7.

21. I.e., a good declaration.

22. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27, 30; 2:7.

23. Iblis, or Lucifer, is one of the most common Arabic names for the devil. This Arabic word is probably ultimately derived from Greek *diabolos*, "accuser," from which come our words *devil* and *diabolical*.

100. So that we have none to plead for us
101. Nor a best friend as a defender.
102. If only we had a second chance, we would be among the believers.'
103. Surely in this is a sign, but most of them are not believers,
104. And truly thy Lord is the powerful, the merciful."

### Surah 37

83. And surely among his [Noah's] followers was Abraham,<sup>24</sup>
84. For he came to his Lord with a perfect heart.
85. Then he said to his father and his kindred, "What is it ye worship?
86. Is it falsehood, gods inferior to God you want?
87. So what is your opinion of the Lord of the universe?"
88. Then he looked upon the stars
89. And he said, "I am really ill."
90. So they turned from him, leaving.
91. Then he turned to their gods and said, "Will ye not eat?
92. What is wrong with you [that] ye do not speak?"
93. So he turned on them, hitting [the idols] with the right hand.
94. Then they came to him; they hurried.
95. He said, "Do ye worship what ye have hewn,
96. While it is God who has created you and what ye have made?"
97. They said, "Build for him a building,<sup>25</sup> then throw him into the inferno."<sup>26</sup>
98. Thus they sought an artifice against him, but We made them the most humiliated.<sup>27</sup>

### Surah 60

4. There was a fine example for you in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their kindred, "We are free of you and from what you worship other than God. We have renounced you and enmity has appeared between us and you and a perpetual rift, until you believe in God as unique." But Abraham said to his father, "I shall seek pardon for you, but I have not the least authority for you from God.<sup>28</sup> Our Lord, in Thee we trust and to Thee we turn [repentantly] and destiny is Thine.

5. Our Lord, do not make us a trial for those who disbelieve, and forgive us, our Lord, for it is thou who art the powerful, the wise."

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24. Noah was the topic just before this verse. Cf. Abraham 1:19; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

25. Sale's translation reads: "They said, Build a pile for him, and cast him into the glowing fire," *The Koran*, 2:267. The Arabic reads "building."

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

27. Cf. Abraham 1:15–20, 29.

28. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 30; 2:5.

6. There was for you in them a fine example for those who have been awaiting God and the last day, but for those who turn away, surely God is wealthy, praiseworthy.<sup>29</sup>

**Surah 87**

19. This is found on the first leaves [i.e., earlier books],

20. The leaves of Abraham and Moses.<sup>30</sup>

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29. Yusuf Ali's translation reads, "But if any turn away, / Truly Allah is Free of all / Wants, Worthy of all Praise." Ali notes that "if any one rejects Allah's Message or Law, the loss is his own. It is not Allah Who needs him or his worship." Yusuf Ali, trans., *The Meaning of the Holy Qur-ān: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary* (Saudi Arabia: King Fahd Complex, 1992), 1731 n. 5419.

30. Cf. Abraham 1:31. Sale's translation reads: "Verily this is written in the ancient books, the books of Abraham and Moses," *The Koran*, 2:427.

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM OUR FATHER  
ATTRIBUTED TO  
KA'ĀB AL-AĤBĀR

Ka'āb al-Aĥbār (d. ca. A.H. 32/A.D. 652) was an early Yemenite Jewish convert to Islam. He came to Medina during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and was a confidant of the caliph 'Uthmān. He is considered the oldest authority on Judeo-Islamic traditions. Although no writings by him exist, many traditions were attributed to him, and later writers, some of whose writings are included in this volume, frequently cite him. This text derives from an Arabic manuscript written in Hebrew script and published in Constantinople in 1718; Bernard Chapira published his French translation of this Arabic text in Bernard Chapira, "Légendes bibliques attribuées à Ka'āb el-Aĥbar," *Revue des Études Juives* 69 (1919): 86–107 and 70 (1920): 37–43. Unfortunately, the Arabic text is incomplete, with several lacunae (as noted by the bracketed ellipsis points). This previously unpublished English translation of the French is by John A. Tvedtnes, who compared the French with the Arabic. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

[The manuscript begins in the middle of Abraham's and an old woman's discussion of the sale of an idol.]

1. [Abraham said, "I see no use] either in the large or the small [idol], nor how they can help either themselves or others. And the large idol that you bought yesterday from my brother," asked Abraham, "what has happened to it?" "Thieves came during the night and stole it from me while I was in the bath." "If so," Abraham told her, "why do you serve an idol that doesn't know how to save itself from the hand of thieves and that would know less how to save others from their evil? Go away, old fool! How can you maintain that the idol that you serve is a god? If so, why was it unable to save itself from the hand of the thieves? The truth is that it is an idol that can hardly be useful, neither for itself nor for others."

2. "If what you say is true, Abraham," the old woman asked, "what then must we serve?" Abraham answered her, "Serve the God of gods and Lord of lords, the God of Nimrod and of Terah, the God of the east and of the west, blessed be He, and blessed be His name. As for this dog, Nimrod, who is he that he passes himself for a god and that men worship him?" At this, the old woman declared, "From henceforth, I shall no longer worship a god other than yours, Abraham, but what shall doing so benefit me?" Abraham

replied, "Everything that the thieves have taken from you will be given you and, in addition, you will have saved your soul from hell." The old woman asked, "What must one say to escape hell?" Abraham responded, "Say, 'God the One Who is in the heavens above and on the earth below; He is unique and without equal.'"<sup>1</sup> The old woman said, "Henceforth, I shall repeat your words, and I shall testify that God is true, that His name is true, and that you, Abraham, are His true and faithful servant."

3. The storyteller said that the old woman repented of having served idols and that the thieves returned to her all that they had taken from her. He added that the old woman took the idol and broke it against a stone, saying, "Curse you and he who worships you, for you are of no use, neither for yourself nor for others." And the old woman went out of her house and walked about in the streets and places, proclaiming with a loud voice and saying, "Whoever wants to be saved from hell has only to worship the God of Abraham."

4. The storyteller said that she continued thus each day and that many people converted. But the king, learning of it, sent for the old woman and told her, "What is wrong with you, old woman? You have become mad." [. . .]

5. [. . .] at the moment when he worships the idols.

6. Ka'b al-Aḥbār said, Nimrod followed his advice and ordered his troops to place themselves ready. He distributed arms and munitions to them and commanded them to stand ready. Then he sent them after Abraham. When Abraham saw them coming toward him, he began to weep and to call upon the Eternal, saying, "O You Who deliver the oppressed from the hands of the oppressor and Who defend the weak against the strong, save me from this impious people." And the all-powerful and great God heard his cries and looked upon him with a compassionate eye. He sent to him Gabriel, and Gabriel told him, "What mean these cries and this fear, Abraham? Don't you know that to God belongs this world and the future world, the heavens and all they encompass, the earth and all it contains? Therefore, fear not, for God is with you, in whatever place you find yourself. It is He who sustains you and will make you triumph over all your enemies."

7. Ka'b al-Aḥbār said, And the all-powerful and great God commanded Gabriel to place a veil between them and Abraham, and when the troops advanced and the soldiers and their chiefs saw this veil, they were frightened and returned to Nimrod, saying, "He retreated at our approach and became master of the situation; we hardly have power over him and despair of being able to seize him." Nimrod asked, "Then what shall we do and what method shall we use?" They replied, "Let us go hence to another land." And Nimrod said, "I shall go."

8. So he prepared for the trip, supplied himself with food and ample provisions for the road, distributed money to his soldiers, his troops, his commanders, and his captains, and gave them the signal to leave. And Nimrod, accompanied by his lieutenants, his

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1. This statement reflects the creed of Islam: "There is no god but God, and Muḥammad is his prophet." Sincere recitation of this statement makes one a Muslim.

troops, and his commanders, went to the region of Iraq, taking with them their goods, their families, and their children.

9. Then the powerful and great God sent Gabriel to Abraham. [And the angel said to him, "God, your Master and the Master of the east and of the west, commands you to go rejoin Nimrod, your enemy, in the land of Iraq." Then Abraham asked Gabriel, "O my friend Gabriel, how shall I follow then, having neither provision for the road, nor mounts, nor army, nor chiefs, nor munitions, while they have troops, armies, munitions, provisions, and mounts?" And Gabriel answered him, "O Abraham, have no fear. You have no need of [provisions], nor of mounts, nor of troops, nor of armies. Sit on my back and I shall bring you to them." Upon [hearing] this, Abraham sat [on the back] of Gabriel.

10. In less than the blink of an eye, Gabriel, having placed him on [his back, transported him] to Iraq, saying to him, "Enter [into the city] and say, 'Repeat after me: [There is no other God] except God, Who is in the upper heavens and the lowest earth. He is one, unique, eternal, Who has neither father nor son, nor replacement, nor minister, nor similarity, nor equal. He is the Master of all the universe and the master of Nimrod, and I, Abraham, am the servant of God, His friend, His prophet.'" [While roaming] the streets, Abraham found his father Terah and his brother Haran. And Gabriel told him, "O Abraham, tell your father and your brother: 'Testify and confess that there [is no other God except God, alone without associates [. . .]'" So Abraham approached [his father and his brother and told them], "O my father and my brother, [you worship] a created god [. . .]"<sup>2</sup>

11. [Ka'b al-Aḥbār said:] Nimrod the accursed commanded that he be cast into the fire.<sup>3</sup> Then his mother came to him, pressed him against her breast, and kissed him, saying, "O my son, obey Nimrod in order to escape the punishment of his fire." Abraham said, "O my mother, know that the fire of Nimrod is extinguished, covered, and its flame burns out, while the fire of my Lord never diminishes in intensity, and its flame is never veiled. Those who are worthy of it, when they are alive, will not die of it and, after their death, they have no fear of its punishment." Having heard his words, his mother asked, "Do you mean to say by this that God hears and sees and that it is He Who will save you from the fire of Nimrod?" Abraham told her, "Yes, my mother. My God hears and sees, and it is He Who will save me from the fire of Nimrod." Then she let go of him with her own hands and went away.

12. At this, Abraham was carried and placed in the flat part of the catapult. Seeing this, the angels cried to the powerful and great God, glorifying, magnifying, sanctifying, praising, and exalting the Master of the heavens and the earth. And they said, "O our God and Lord, don't You see Your friend, Your prophet, and Your servant Abraham?" Then the powerful and great God appeared to the angels and said to them, "O my angels, I know and I see all, and I am the merciful among the merciful."

2. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

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

13. Ka'b al-Aḥbār said, "When Abraham was placed in the flat part of the catapult and the men had launched him, he left like the arrow of an archer. The angels retrieved him, and Gabriel appeared to him<sup>4</sup> and said, "O Abraham, do you have a request to make?" Abraham responded, "O Gabriel, my request I will address only to the Master of the Universe; He it is who fills needs, hears those who call on Him, dissipates sadness, and lifts up the fallen."

14. And the powerful and great God understood his intentions and said to the fire, "*Become cold and beneficial for my servant Abraham.*"<sup>5</sup> And the fire, said Ka'b al-Aḥbār, was extinguished, and the wood became covered with leaves and began to flower as trees flower, and each piece of wood gave forth fruits, and each branch produced as much as in the past. Then Nimrod the accursed saw the fire and saw angels who seemed to draw from the river of life and extinguish the fire. Each branch became what it had been, and each twig returned to its original state, and the trees separated themselves and became covered with leaves, each tree producing fruits of its species. The fire became like a garden among the gardens of paradise. When Nimrod the accursed saw this, he cried, "O Abraham, truly this is a fine bit of magic." Then some of his viziers said to him, "O king, this is not magic, but a manifestation of the power of the Master of the Universe, the God of Abraham, of high station and of magisterial reign. We testify that there is no other God except God alone, without associate in His reign, and that Abraham is His servant, His prophet, and friend." And the viziers believed in the powerful and magnificent God and in Abraham.

15. A crowd of people converged at the same time as them, which greatly bothered Nimrod the accursed. He therefore had Abraham come and said to him, "O Abraham, you have enchanted the fire, which is converted into a verdant garden." And Abraham replied to him, "Woe to you from God, O you who deny the powerful and great God and who do not believe in His signs, in His prophets, and in His messengers. This is only a result of the grace of my Master. Certainly my Master knows what is hidden and what is manifest. There is no other God but He; to Him belong magnificent attributes. He is the great Creator."

16. Then Nimrod the accursed asked, "And what does your master do, O Abraham?" Abraham replied, "*My master gives life and decrees death.*"<sup>6</sup> Upon this, Nimrod the accursed cried, "I also make alive and make die." And he made come two men from the prison and commanded that one be killed and the other be freed. "Behold," he said, "that I have given life and that I have given death." Abraham said to him again, "My Master makes the sun rise in the east and set in the west." Then Nimrod the accursed, the unbeliever, was left confounded. And Abraham added, "Indeed, God does not conduct perverse

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

5. Citing Qur'an 21:69.

6. Citing Qur'an 2:258. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:7.

people on the path of His obedience." And Nimrod the accursed remained perplexed, not knowing what to do with Abraham.

17. As they were seated, Iblīs<sup>7</sup> the accursed presented himself before [Nimrod] and said, "O king, I have come to you as a counselor, a bearer of good tidings. I shall show you a way by which you can kill the God of Abraham in the heaven where He resides." And Nimrod the accursed asked, "How shall I go to Him, since He is in the heaven and I am on the earth?" At this, Iblīs the accursed responded, "I advise you to construct a nacelle<sup>8</sup> of wood. You shall then take two great eagles that you shall starve for three days, and you shall attach the nacelle to the back of the eagles. You and your vizier shall enter into the nacelle, and you shall be careful to bring with you two lances, on the ends of which you shall place meat to show to the eagles. And when the eagles shall have seen the meat on the top of the lances, you will direct them always higher, and the eagles will ascend thence. You shall thus hold the lances above the back of the eagles until you arrive in the heavens. Then, launch arrows from your bow, and when one of them shall have reached God and returns, you shall direct the lances below; the eagles will see them and will descend to earth." Nimrod heard the words of Iblīs the accursed and made . . . [The manuscript breaks off here.]

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7. Iblīs, or Lucifer, is one of the most common Arabic names for the devil. This Arabic word is probably ultimately derived from Greek *diabolos*, "accuser," from which come our words *devil* and *diabolical*.

8. In modern usage the term *nacelle* can be the enclosed part of an airplane, dirigible, or balloon in which passengers, crew, or cargo is carried. Here it is likely a box of some sort in which to carry people.

## EXTRACTS FROM IBN ISHAQ

Muḥammad ibn Iṣḥāq ibn Yasār ibn Khiyār ibn Iṣḥāq (A.H. 85–150/A.D. 704–67) was born in Medina but later lived in Baghdad. He collected *ḥadīth* (the sayings and acts of Muḥammad) both from the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad and his own father and grandfather. His grandfather was originally Jewish, the first slave imported from Babylon under the first caliph, Abū Bakr. Ibn Iṣḥāq studied under several transmitters of traditions who are mentioned in lines of transmission found elsewhere in this volume (including Ibn Qatāda and Ibn Dinār). He also frequented the *warrāqs*: papermakers and book publishers who sold Qurʾans, Jewish and Christian scriptures, and apocryphal works and commentaries passed off as scripture. Ibn Iṣḥāq is most noted for writing the earliest biography of the Prophet Muḥammad, later abbreviated by Ibn Hishām (A.D. 834). The first part of his *Kitāb sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (Book of the Biography of the Messenger of God), or *Sīra*, the *Kitāb al-mubtadaʿ* (Book of the Beginnings), recorded history from the creation to the prehistory of Islam. Ibn Iṣḥāq used Christian and Jewish sources in this first part. By about a generation after Ibn Iṣḥāq, however, using such materials was no longer acceptable. It was at this time that Ibn Hishām deleted the Jewish and Christian materials in the *Kitāb al-mubtadaʿ*, and for the most part, the first part of Ibn Iṣḥāq’s book was lost. For this reason only abbreviated versions of his *Sīra* survive, and they do not contain the *Kitāb al-mubtadaʿ*. What we use here is Gordon D. Newby’s translation and reconstruction from sources that quote Ibn Iṣḥāq extensively: Gordon D. Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet: A Reconstruction of the Earliest Biography of Muhammad* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 67–72. Some of these sources are used in this volume as well, most notably al-Ṭabarī, al-Thaʿlabī, and al-Maḳḳisī. For reference purposes we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. Abraham was the son of Azar, that is, Tarikh, the son of Nahur, the son of Sarugh, the son of Arghu, the son of Faligh, the son of ʿAbir, the son of Shalikh,<sup>1</sup> the son of Qaynan,<sup>2</sup>

1. For this same genealogy in the Judeo-Christian tradition, see Genesis 11:15–25: Terah, Nahor, Serug, Reu (Arghu), Peleg (Faligh), Eber, Salah.
2. Qaynan, or Cainan, who is missing from the Hebrew (and KJV) text of Genesis 10:24 (and from 1 Chronicles 1:18, which is dependent on the Genesis passage). His name is, however, included in the genealogical listing in the Septuagint and the Samaritan, Syriac, and other Bibles and is also found in the genealogy of Christ in Luke 3:36. A number of early church fathers referred to Cainan’s absence from the Hebrew record as evidence that the Jews had tampered with the Bible text.

the son of Arfakhshad,<sup>3</sup> the son of Shem, the son of Noah. Muhammad b.<sup>4</sup> Ishaq told me that Azar came from the district of Kutha in the district of Kufah, which was, at that time, the eastern kingdom of Nimrod, who was called al-Hasir. According to what has been alleged, his kingdom encompassed the eastern and western portions of the earth while he lived in Babylon. His kingdom and his people were in the east before the time of the Persians. It is said that no king united the whole earth, and no people made the earth into one kingdom, except three kings: Nimrod the son of Arghu, Dhu-l-Qarnayn,<sup>5</sup> and Solomon the son of David.

2. When God wished to send Abraham, the Friend of God, as evidence to his people and as a messenger to his servants (there were no prophets between Noah and Abraham except Hud and Salih)<sup>6</sup> and when the time for Abraham approached, Nimrod's astrologers came to him and said: Know that by our science we have found that a youth will be born in such-and-such a month and such-and-such a year in this city of yours who will be called Abraham. He will cast your religion asunder and break your idols.<sup>7</sup> So when the year came which the astrologers had described, Nimrod sent for all pregnant women in his city and imprisoned them, except the mother of Abraham, the wife of Azar. Azar did not know of her pregnancy, because she did not talk about it.

3. So it happened that every boy born to a woman in that month in that year was ordered to be slaughtered.<sup>8</sup> When the mother of Abraham was parturient, she went out at night to a nearby cave and bore Abraham in it. Then she set everything in order for the newborn, blocked up the cave, and returned to her house. She went back to the cave to inspect him, and she found him alive, being suckled by wild beasts. It is alleged, and God knows best, that God provided for his suckling. According to what they assert, Azar asked Abraham's mother what happened to her pregnancy. She said, I bore a youth which died, and he believed her and kept quiet.

4. According to a report, a day for Abraham in his infancy was like a month and a month like a year. Abraham did not stay in the cave more than fifteen months until he said to his mother, Take me out so I can look around. So she took him out in the evening, and he looked and thought about the creation of the heavens and the earth<sup>9</sup> and said, He is my Lord who created me and provided for me and fed me and gave me drink; what would I be without Him?

5. He looked at heaven, saw a star, and said, This is my Lord. Then he followed it with his gaze until it set. When it set, he said, I do not like things which set. Then the

3. Biblical Arphaxad.

4. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read "son of."

5. "He of the two horns," the usual Arabic designation for Alexander the Great. Arabic traditions attribute to both Nimrod and Alexander the feat of having used eagles to bear them aloft in a box or basket.

6. Hūd and Šāliḥ are two pre-Islamic prophets mentioned in the Qur'an. For a discussion of Hūd as Lehi and of Šāliḥ, see William J. Hamblin, "Pre-Islamic Prophets," in *Mormons and Muslims*, ed. Spencer J. Palmer (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1983): 85–104.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

9. Cf. Abraham 4–5.

moon rose. He saw it coming out, and he said, This is my Lord. Then he followed it with his gaze until it set. When it set, he said, If my Lord does not guide me, I will become one of the people of error. When day came, and the sun rose, he saw the power of the sun, and he saw something with stronger light than anything he had seen before, so he said, "This is my Lord; this is the greatest. And when it set, he said, O people, I am free from your polytheism; I have set my face toward the One who created the heavens and the earth,<sup>10</sup> as a monotheist, and I am not one of the polytheists."<sup>11</sup>

6. Then Abraham returned to his father, Azar. His direction remained true, and he knew his Lord.<sup>12</sup> He was free from the religion of his people but he did not extirpate them for that belief. He told his father that he was his son, and Abraham's mother told Azar that he was his son, and she told him what she had done. Azar was happy at that and rejoiced greatly.

7. Now Azar used to make the idols his people would worship.<sup>13</sup> Then he would give them to Abraham to sell, and Abraham would go out with them and, according to what they assert, would say to him who bought one that it would not hurt him or help him. So no one would buy from him. When this activity proved unprofitable to him, he went to the river with the idols and immersed their heads in it.<sup>14</sup> He said, Drink, mocking his people and their error so that his shaming them and mocking them spread among his people and the rest of the people of the city until it reached Nimrod, the king. When it became clear to Abraham that he should declare his break with his people openly and declare his situation with God and his prayers to Him, he saw a vision in the stars,<sup>15</sup> and he said, "I am sick; so they turned their backs on him."<sup>16</sup> (His statement, I am sick, means stricken with sickness.) They went away from him when they heard him. Abraham wanted them to go away so he could do what he wanted with their idols. When they left him, he went to the idols which they worshiped instead of God and brought food to them. Then he said, reviling them for their condition and mocking them, "Do you not eat? What is the matter with you that you do not speak?"<sup>17</sup> Then he came up to them, as God said, striking them with his right hand, and began breaking them with an ax which was in his hand until only the largest idol remained.<sup>18</sup> Then he fastened the ax to its hand and left.

8. When the people returned, they saw what had been done to their idols. It frightened them, and they were amazed by it. They said, Who did this to our gods; he is one of the sinners. Then they remembered and said, We heard a youth called Abraham finding fault with them and mocking them, and we have not heard anyone say that except him.

10. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

11. Citing Qur'an 6:78–79. Note that in this translation, all statements from the Qur'an are in quotes.

12. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

14. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

15. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18.

16. Citing Qur'an 37:89–90.

17. Citing Qur'an 37:91–92.

18. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

He is the one whom we think did that. The affair came to the attention of Nimrod and the nobles of his people, and they said, Bring Abraham before the leaders of the people that perhaps they will bear witness about what we should do with him. When he was brought and his people were gathered against him before their king, Nimrod, they said, "Did you do this to our gods, Abraham? He said, Nay, their chief did this; so ask them, if they can speak."<sup>19</sup> He became angry that you worship these small ones along with him. He is bigger than they; so he shattered them.

9. Keeping an eye on him, they gathered apart from him to discuss the breaking, and they said, We have wronged him, and we do not see that it is other than as he said. Then knowing that the idols neither harmed nor helped and could not strike, they said, "You know that these do not speak,"<sup>20</sup> that is, they do not talk; so tell us who did this with them and why you struck them, and we will believe you. At that, when the proof came to them by their words, You know that these do not speak, Abraham said, "Do you worship what will not help you or harm you instead of God? Fie on you and what you worship instead of God. Do you not have any sense?"<sup>21</sup> And with that, his people disputed with him about God, and they argued with him to show that their gods were better than what he worshiped. So he said, "Do you dispute with me about God when he has guided me . . . up to his statement . . . Which of the two factions has more right to safety, if you know,"<sup>22</sup> offering them parables and fending off interpretations to teach them that it is more right to fear and worship God than what they worshiped.

10. It was told us, and God knows best, that Nimrod said to Abraham, What is this God of yours whom you worship, invite to His worship, and tell of His might, which you assert is greater than anything else. Abraham said, My Lord who gives life and death.<sup>23</sup> Nimrod said, But I give life and death. And Abraham said, How do you give life and death? He said, I take two men worthy of killing in my judgment, and I kill one of them, and I have given death to him. I forgive the other and release him, and I have given him life. Abraham said to that, "Show me how you give life to the dead. He said, Do you not believe? He said, Yes, but I ask in order that my heart be at ease"<sup>24</sup> from any doubt in God or His power. He wished to know that, and his heart yearned for it. "He said, take four birds and bring them to you. Then place a part of each on each mountain. Then call them. They will come to you quickly. Know that God is Mighty and Wise."<sup>25</sup>

11. The People of the Book said that he took four birds, a peacock, a cock, a raven, and a dove. He cut each bird into four pieces, and went to four mountains, placing a quarter of each bird on each mountain,<sup>26</sup> so there was on each mountain a quarter of the peacock, a quarter of the cock, a quarter of the raven, and a quarter of the dove. Then he called to

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19. Citing Qur'an 21:62–63.

20. Citing Qur'an 21:65.

21. Citing Qur'an 21:66–67.

22. Citing Qur'an 6:80–81. Both sets of ellipsis points are part of the translation.

23. Citing Qur'an 2:258. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:7.

24. Citing Qur'an 2:260.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Cf. Genesis 15:9–11.

them and said, Come, with the permission of God, as you were. Each quarter joined with its mate until they were reassembled, and each bird was as it was before it had been cut. Then they came to him quickly, just as God had said. It was said, O Abraham, thus God gathers His servants and gives life to the dead in the resurrection of the East and the West and the North and the South. So God showed him the quickening of the dead by His power, so that he would know that instead of what Nimrod said in lying and error. And Abraham said to them, "Indeed, God is the one who raises the sun from the East, so you bring it from the West,"<sup>27</sup> so that I will know if it is as you say. Nimrod was abashed at this and did not respond, and he knew that he could not do that. In the words of the Most High, "The sinner was abashed,"<sup>28</sup> meaning the proof fell on him, Nimrod, "and God does not guide a sinful people."<sup>29</sup>

12. Then Nimrod and his people gathered around Abraham and said, "Burn him and stick by your gods if you are men of action."<sup>30</sup> Ibn Hamid told me on the authority of Salamah, who got it from Muhammad b. Ishaq, who got it from al-Hasan b. Dinar, that Layth b. Abu Sulaym, who got it from Mujahid, said, I recited this verse to 'Abdullah b. 'Umar, and he said, Do you know, O Mujahid, who ordered the burning of Abraham by the fire? I said, No. He said, A man from the Arabs of the Persians. I said, O Abu 'Abd-ar-Rahman, do the Persians have Arabs? He said, Yes, the Kurds; they are the Arabs of the Persians, and one of them was the one who ordered the burning of Abraham in the fire.

13. Nimrod commanded that they bring him firewood, so they made a cross of all sorts of firewood.<sup>31</sup> There was a woman from Abraham's town who had vowed because of her religion that if she came across Abraham, she would gather the firewood for the fire in which he would be burned. When they wished to throw him in, they brought him and kindled the wood which they had gathered on all sides. When the fire ignited, and they gathered to throw him in it, heaven and earth and all the creatures in it except men and Jinn<sup>32</sup> cried out to God with one cry: Our Lord, there is no one in your land who worships you except Abraham, and he is being burned by fire. Give us permission to save him. They mention, and God knows best, that when they said that, God said, If he asks for rain from you or prays for it, it will save him. I have given permission to him for that, if he does not pray to anyone but me, for I am his protector. So leave the affair between me and him. I will protect him. So when they threw him in it,<sup>33</sup> He said, "O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham."<sup>34</sup> So it was as God said, and God sent the Angel of Shade in the image of Abraham, and he sat by his side<sup>35</sup> amusing him.

27. Citing Qur'an 2:258.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Citing Qur'an 21:68.

31. The author may have known a Christian tradition that explained the cross as a type of Christ to come.

32. Jinn are spirit beings, created from fire (unlike man, who is created from the earth). They can be good but are mostly mischievous or evil. They will also be judged at the last day.

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

34. Citing Qur'an 21:69.

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

14. Now Nimrod waited a few days, not doubting that the fire had consumed Abraham and was finished with him. Then he rode out and passed by where the fire was burning all the firewood that they had gathered, and he looked at it. He saw Abraham sitting in it with a man like him at his side. So Nimrod came back from his ride and said to his people, I have just seen Abraham alive in the fire, but this seems doubtful to me. Build me a tower that will take me up over the fire so that I can be certain. So they built him a tower, and he climbed up it over the fire, and he saw Abraham sitting in the fire, and he saw the angel sitting at his side<sup>36</sup> in his image. Nimrod called out to him, O Abraham, great is your God whose power and might reaches to the extent I see so that you are not harmed. O Abraham, are you able to come out of there? He said, Yes. Nimrod said, Are you afraid that if I leave you in the fire you will be harmed? He said, No. Nimrod said, Rise and come out. So Abraham got up and walked in the fire until he came out. When he came out to Nimrod, Nimrod said, O Abraham, who was the man in your image I saw with you, sitting at your side? He said, That was the Angel of Shade which my Lord sent to be with me and to amuse me. He placed coolness and peace over me. So Nimrod said, according to what I was told, O Abraham, I am going to sacrifice to your God because of what I have seen of His might and power, and because of what He did for you when you insisted on His worship and His unity. I will sacrifice four thousand cows for Him. Abraham said to him, God will not accept a sacrifice from you because of your religion unless you break with it. He said, O Abraham, I am not able to abandon my kingdom, but I will sacrifice them to Him. So Nimrod sacrificed them, and he kept away from Abraham. Thus God guarded Abraham from the torment.<sup>37</sup>

15. From Ibn Hamid, who got it from Salamah, who got it from Muhammad b. Ishaq, who got it from ‘Abd-ar-Rahman b. Abu az-Zanad, who got it from his father, who got it from ‘Abd-ar-Rahman al-A‘raj, Abu Hurayrah said, I heard the Messenger of God say, Abraham never said anything that was not true except three times: his saying that he was ill when he was not; his saying that the chief of the idols did that, so ask them, if they are able to talk; and his saying to Pharaoh, My sister, when Pharaoh asked him about Sarah, Who is this woman? Abraham never said anything that was not so except those. On the authority of Sa‘id b. Yahya, who got it from Ubayy, who got it from Muhammad b. Ishaq, who got it from Abu az-Zanad, who got it from ‘Abd-ar-Rahman al-A‘raj, Abu Hurayrah said, The Messenger of God said that Abraham never lied except thrice; then he narrated something like the above.

16. Abraham set out on a Hijrah<sup>38</sup> for his Lord, and Lot went with him. He married Sarah, the daughter of his paternal uncle, and left, fleeing, until, because of his religion, he settled in Harran, seeking safety in the worship of his Lord. He remained there as long

36. Ibid.

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

38. The word means “emigration.” The *Hijrah* refers to Muḥammad’s flight from Mecca to Medina in A.D. 622, marking the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

as God wished, and then he went to Egypt. On the authority of Muhammad b. Ishaq, who got it from ‘Abdullah b. Ka‘b, who got it from Malik al-Ansari, the Messenger of God said, When you conquer Egypt, treat its people well, for they have protection and mercy. So I asked az-Zuhri what the mercy was which the Messenger of God mentioned, and he said, Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, whom Abraham took from Egypt to Syria was from there. Then Abraham left Egypt for Syria.

EXTRACTS FROM  
ISHAQ IBN BISHR

Ishāq Abū Ḥudhayfa ibn Bishr al-Qurashī was a famous historian in his time. He authored several books, including the one we use here, the *Mubtadaʿ al-dunyā wa-qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (The Beginning of the World and the Stories of the Prophets). He died in A.H. 205/A.D. 821. Al-Ṭarafī, who appears later in this volume, apparently drew heavily from Ibn Bishr for his own *Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*; al-Thaʿlabī also used him. Ibn Bishr’s *Mubtadaʿ* depends upon Ibn Ishāq (among others), who is also included in this collection. Unfortunately, we do not have further information either on Ibn Bishr’s life or his writings. This work has never been published, and we include the original text of the portions translated as an appendix to the volume. The English translation, by Brian M. Hauglid, appears here for the first time. The text of the *Mubtadaʿ* is from MS Huntington 388, fols. 160B–170B, held in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. We are grateful to the Bodleian for providing photocopies of the manuscript, portions of which present difficulties in reading. The paragraphs are numbered according to the line numbers in the manuscript.

**Folio 160B**

6. The Character of Ibrahīm [Abraham]<sup>1</sup> and His Story
7. From the story of Ibrahīm and Nimrūd.<sup>2</sup> After Nimrūd<sup>3</sup>
8. had strengthened those of his kingdom and established the people, they invoked a blessing upon him as they were accustomed to do.
9. Nimrūd was informed he would have born in “your kingdom a child
10. who will contend with you in kingship; for there will be a wresting of kingship by his hand.” It is said [Nimrūd] called forth
11. six groups of the best of his people. He did not leave out any leaders and great ones and [honorable ones?],
12. except that he chose the best of them. So there were six [groups],<sup>4</sup> and [among] the sixth was [the father?] of Ibrahīm,

1. Biblical Abraham is rendered in Arabic as Ibrahīm and sometimes as Ibrāhīm. This transliteration, as well as Arabic transliterations of other names, is often used by translators throughout the remainder of the Islamic portion of this volume.

2. Biblical Nimrod.

3. We have eliminated the dittograph *after Nimrūd* here.

4. The implication here seems to be that the six groups are each responsible for a group of people.

13. and he was Tārah.<sup>5</sup> There was not a ruler over them
14. according to the [traditions] which were established [by] his kingdom [in order to] rule
15. over them and those included with them. But [Tārah? Nimrūd?] was obliged to take control over them so that they obeyed or
16. [fulfilled or changed?]. [Nimrūd] said: "O people! You are the best of

**Folio 161A**

1. my people and are their leaders and their great ones. Indeed I have remained since I established the order of
2. my kingdom and the people of my kingdom. I am concerned about what you are concerned about. You are the dearest and the choicest, and I
3. will look into your affairs. [illegible]
4. And this prompted me to ask you for advice and get help from you.
5. I have built for you a kingdom and the people according to seven traits [traditions?],
6. and I gave each one of you a trait from those traits."
7. The groups did not rule over the women nor rule over their families. So they left
8. and drew lots for the women. [illegible]
9. So one was [appointed] her guardian and the guardian of her family. He held him responsible for her and her family's needs and furnishings.<sup>6</sup> [illegible]
10. The king commanded and he assigned the people, [saying], "There is still no worship but that of my gods
11. and no establishment except of my custom, and there is not one more deserving, in himself and [in] his possessions, than I.
12. There is no one more to be feared among them [the people] than I. There is no one more [worthy] to obey among them than I.
13. So they separated one against their enemy, and they made my servants more wise among them
14. to observe and love me. Afterwards there will be born at this time a child
15. who will outdo me and renounce me; he will frighten my religious community; he will [seek to] defeat me and overpower me. I
16. pledge to you concerning this peculiarity. I [illegible] each household of my kingdom
17. as a single [person?] in their search [to] fight him and destroy him. The one who gains victory over him

**Folio 161B**

1. is my servant who will not judge arbitrarily nor [illegible]." So they departed and cast lots among each other. Then they informed me
2. what took place in the lots of each one among them in order to know him by his name and know what happened

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5. Biblical Terah.

6. To avoid any woman becoming pregnant, the women were guarded.

3. to him. When they cast lots it fell upon [his father's?] goddess<sup>7</sup> that the
4. people worshiped. But no one among the people worshiped an idol; not the king or any others, unless an
5. idol had [the name of] Āzar,<sup>8</sup> the father of Ibrahīm, stamped upon it. He was proficient [in] that and power was upon him. He became
6. their authorized representative in their desire concerning that [i.e., idol worship]. They [the people] were not equal to him, nor were they covetous of him.
7. They did not see him and feared him dying. It is said, that [position] was a kindness from God [upon]
8. His friend, Ibrahīm. When his mother conceived him,
9. she was called Amīla. She said to his father, Āzar, "I should like to give birth to
10. what is in my belly. It will be a child. You and I will bear fruit in spite of the king.
11. And he will be seen [live?]. You and I must sleep together. So
12. we have taken it upon ourselves to bring him forth. [illegible]
13. [illegible] If the king found out about that [pregnancy], his charity towards us and his trust in us and his honor and kindness to us would be removed. When he did not see you doing that concerning his arrival
14. his opinion rang out loudly, affectionately, and within proximity. And [God] sent down upon him His nobility and His opinion
15. and His protection. And [God] gave us glorification." And that was from the mother of Ibrahīm [illegible].
16. A trick and ruse and [illegible] by her husband. When she hoped
17. of him to herself of Ibrahīm, and she trusted him. Then

**Folio 162A**

1. she gave birth to him and hid him. Āzar believed her and trusted her. He supposed that the matter was according to
2. what she had said. When her month in which he would be born arrived, she said to her husband, "I
3. greatly fear my pregnancy. I did not fear any pregnancy that was before him.
4. I was afraid that there would be in him my fate of death. I had reconciled myself to death.
5. I began to wait for him, and it was not made known to me when he would come to me. I desire
6. you to [illegible] make true my companion and [illegible]. You boast of your truth so that you hurry to
7. the great god which the king and the majority of his people worship. You should plead

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7. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6, 27.

8. Āzar is the more common of the names given to Abraham's father by the Muslims and is the name by which he is known in the Qur'an.

8. for me with integrity and [provide] food to safeguard him. You should cover him until he lets you know [otherwise]. Indeed, I have
9. been unharmed and saved [rescued]. The Messenger [Ibrahīm] is more worthy than you and I in your correctness [self-righteousness]
10. and the correctness of your wife and companion to depart." [After] the mother of Ibrahīm
11. had [expressed] her desire, her husband left to protect [Ibrahīm]. They dug a tunnel for him under
12. the earth, which hid him. [Then] she left him. When her husband returned from his prayers, she reported that [Ibrahīm]
13. had died and was buried. But Amīna<sup>9</sup> had truly been with him because of her great worrying.
14. The man [Ibrahīm] was moved where his mother could busy herself
15. for forty nights. Ibrahīm was born at a time when his father was absent. So she covered him,
16. put him in order, and provided for him for forty nights [illegible]. She greatly desired from God
17. kindness, generosity, and safety for [Ibrahīm], and [to] keep from him

#### Folio 162B

1. enemies, deception, and hostility. The Messenger came out from his mother to his father
2. when she experienced pain and labor until she was done with what she desired. Then
3. her husband turned his attention to her. She informed him that she had given birth to a boy and that she had severe physical hardship,
4. so he died. She felt ashamed that the people would find out about him. So she hid him for that
5. reason, until she [could] bury him. Her husband believed her. But she began to visit Ibrahīm frequently.
6. She provided him with subsistence, but most of what kept him alive was milk. Because there was not a male infant born who wasn't killed.<sup>10</sup>
7. The woman provided milk for him,
8. [illegible] and [air?]. She found that [even if] she desired not to give him milk.
9. Because of that, he lived a good life, and it [milk] improved him fivefold. When he reached maturity
10. she weaned him from the milk. Isma'īl b.<sup>11</sup> 'Asā informed us on the authority of
11. Ishaq [who] said, Ibn Ḥarij reported—Mujāhid—Ibn 'Abbās,
12. God's mercy be upon him, [said] that Ibrahīm grew in a day as if it were a week, in a week as if it were a month,

9. Abraham's mother's name is spelled two different ways in this text.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

11. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read "son of."

13. in a month as if it were a year. It is related that Isma‘il b. ‘Asā said Isḥāq said
14. Ḥuwari reported on the authority of al-Ḍaḥḥāk and Muqātil b. Sulaymān—Sa‘id b. al-Jubayr—
15. Ibn ‘Abbās in which he said that when the mother of Ibrahīm was late [in visiting him],
16. Ibrahīm was sucking his thumb to get milk. It [the thumb] was a means of [providing?] milk
17. and honey. God would sustain him with that.

**Folio 163A**

1. One who was there said the boy sucked his thumb day to day. And Ibrahīm’s
2. youthfulness was quickened as God desired. When he was thirteen
3. years old, while in the cave, his mother brought him out of it [or] carried him out. His father did not know about him
4. until he saw him sitting [in front of him?]. When he saw [Ibrahīm], he asked his wife, “Who is this
5. boy whom the slaughterer has missed? I know that [he] was born after the king’s order to
6. slaughter newborn children.<sup>12</sup> How has the place of this boy been hidden to his [Nimrūd’s] search and his anger,
7. so that he has come of age?” He [Āzar] was at the point of attacking him. His wife said to him, “By your Messenger!
8. He lives to tell you. Let him tell you that he knows he is your son whom you fathered [that] night. I withdrew
9. and concealed him from you in a tunnel under the earth until he reached maturity.”
10. Her husband said to her, “What possessed you to betray me and yourself
11. and to betray the king? You have brought misfortune upon us. There is no surety for us in him after [our] well-being
12. and honor, and after our status has been elevated over all of our people.” She said, “Don’t worry about that.
13. I have a way out of this. I guarantee you will get back your
14. nobility, status, trustworthiness, and faultlessness in the eyes of the kings. I did what I did
15. for me, you, your son, and the general public to the extent that I kept it secret to myself.
16. One day I hid this boy, and I said I will hide him until he becomes a man, for if he was
17. an enemy to the king. [I suspected? (that) he was the one (the king) was looking for. He was raised (in stature and position) so that you disparaged him?]

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12. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

**Folio 163B**

1. because of his influence. Then we spoke of your religion, O king, as your enemy! God has placed you
2. with him. He has prohibited you from [being] covetous and mournful. He has mercy on the people in [terms of] their children.
3. [But] your servants and the people of your kingdom will end. The king and [Ibrahīm's] enemies could not lead [Ibrahīm] astray.
4. I could not sacrifice my son as the other newborns were slaughtered." [Ibrahīm's] father said to her, "I did not
5. think of you except as being truthful. The idea to have children delighted us, but don't we know he is an enemy
6. of the king? and others?" She said, "We confine[d Ibrahīm] and hid him, and we suggest[ed] to him the religion of the king
7. and his religious community. If [Ibrahīm had] complied with us accordingly, then he [would be] a man like the rest of the people. And [then] there [would be] no need to kill him.
8. But [Ibrahīm] disobeyed us, and he did not join our religious community. We know his attitude, and we will hand him over to be killed."<sup>13</sup>
9. When she said this to him, he agreed with it, and he saw that this [was] the right way. God put [upon Ibrahīm's father]
10. mercy and affection for Ibrahīm. And [God] made Ibrahīm beautiful in his father's eyes.
11. [God] did not make any of His children equal to [Ibrahīm]. If it was mentioned that [Ibrahīm] would be killed,
12. he [Ibrahīm's father] was more intense in his emotions on behalf of [Ibrahīm]. And [Ibrahīm's father] would weep from his compassion. The mother of Ibrahīm was certain
13. that if he was an enemy of the people, there was not any of the people of the earth who could [outdo?] or kill him. She saw that when he triumphed over them, her deliverance would be in that,
15. and his deliverance [also] from each of those Ibrahīm argued [with]. He supported her in what they hoped for [concerning] Ibrahīm,
16. whom God assisted against the conflict of Nimrūd and his religion
17. and his disobedience. Therefore, the power [of Ibrahīm] was itself stronger. Nimrūd had informed

**Folio 164A**

1. the people before[hand] of the birth of Ibrahīm, that a prophet would be coming
2. to vanquish and conquer him and frighten him away from his religion, to remove his religion and his authority.

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13. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 30.

3. Therefore, this is the reason for Ibrahīm. O this [is why the mother of Ibrahīm] was pursued from the conflict of Nimrūd

4. and the people of his religion concerning Ibrahīm. His father was one who, because of the intensity of his mercy,

5. made every effort to keep it secret. And he would advise [Ibrahīm's] mother to do the same. He said to her,

6. "Defend concerning your son and do not expose him to anything concerning the order of the king this day.

7. Indeed, he is a young boy. [illegible]

8. When [Ibrahīm] matured, I desired you. He [illegible] from his religion. Therefore,

9. you waited for him, and he requested that he speak" [illegible]. There was for Ibrahīm an end or a way out

10. when his father became angry with him because of the love, mercy, [illegible], and beauty which God had

11. [favored?] in a divine secret. Then Ibrahīm was granted all of that, and he [illegible] in God

12. in the same manner. He did not observe anything, and he did not [notice?] it in God, His indulgence. He was not encompassed by God's

13. censure. [Ibrahīm] spoke about the sun, moon, and the stars.<sup>14</sup> What he spoke [of]

14. happening Isma'īl said, Iṣḥāq reported to us who said Ḥuwayr on the authority of al-Ḍaḥḥāk

15. informed me [that] 'Uthmān b. 'Aṭā al-Ḥarāsānī and Muqātil b. Sulaymān informed me

16. on the authority of Ḥuwayr—al-Ḍaḥḥāk. Each mentioned the matter of Ibrahīm

17. as he spoke of the stars, moon, and sun, and such.<sup>15</sup> God said:

### Folio 164B

1. *So also did We show [Ibrahīm] the kingdom of the heavens and the earth*

2. *that he might have certitude. When the night covered him, and so forth.*<sup>16</sup>

3. The stars and [God's ] power in them were seen by [Ibrahīm]. This is before he had been shown the kingdom

4. of the heavens.<sup>17</sup> They said that when the night covered Ibrahīm, he

5. said one day, "O mother! who created you?" She said, "My father." He asked, "Who created me?" She said,

6. "Your father." He said, "Who created my father?" She said, "The king." He asked, "Who created the king?" She exclaimed,

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

15. Ibid.

16. Citing Qur'an 6:75–76.

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

7. "Be silent, my son!" [Ibrāhīm] asked, "Who is more admirable, I or my father?" She said, "You are." He said,

8. "Which is more excellent, the face of my father or the king?" She said, "Your father." He said, "O mother, if the king were

9. able to create a man, why did he create a man that is better than him?" So his mother hid him and didn't inform his father.

10. It is said, when the night covered [Ibrāhīm] and Venus ascended, it [was] at the end of the

11. month of June as the Byzantines reported it. He could not see a brighter star than it.

12. He said, "O mother, is this my Lord?" She silenced him. [Ibrāhīm] wanted that because it was mocking his mother.

13. When it [Venus] set, he said, "I do not like those who set. Because it set, this shows that there is a God

14. above it who controls it in accordance with His command." When it was later in the evening,

15. the moon ascended. [Ibrāhīm] watched it outside shining its light. He said, "O mother, this is brighter!

16. This is my Lord!" He was still watching it when it set, meaning it disappeared. He said,

17. "*Unless my Lord guide me, I shall surely be among those who go astray.*"<sup>18</sup> When the sun ascended

### Folio 165A

1. and broke forth, [Ibrāhīm] mockingly said, "This is my Lord! This is the greatest!" When it vanished he said,

2. *I am innocent of what you are associating [with God].*<sup>19</sup> [Ibrāhīm entered] Islam<sup>20</sup> and was about to utter a revelation.

3. God gave a parable of this in the Qurʾān to his Prophet [Muḥammad].

4. God said: *God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The parable*

5. *of His light is as if there were a niche and within it a lamp: the lamp enclosed in glass, the glass as it were a brilliant star,*

6. *lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east, nor of the west.*<sup>21</sup>

7. God applies this parable to Ibrāhīm, Muḥammad, ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, and ʿAbd

8. Allāh Abū Muḥammad. God said: *God is the light of the heavens and the earth.*

9. This means: [God] guides the people of the heavens and the earth. His guidance is as if it were a niche,

18. Citing Qurʾan 6:77.

19. Citing Qurʾan 6:78. In the Qurʾan, the verb *associate* refers to placing anything on a level equal with God. Doing so is an act tantamount to polytheism and is the most grievous sin in Islam.

20. I.e., submission (to God).

21. Citing Qurʾan 24:35.

10. and the niche is a small window in the language of the [Abyssinians?]. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib linked [the parable of the niche] to a small window

11. with a lamp in [the niche] and [the lamp in the glass]. ‘Abd Allāh linked [the parable of the niche] to the lamp which is [in]

12. the glass. Muḥammad is the lamp who shines between both of their frames

13. as if he were a brilliant star. This [term *brilliant*] means shining. And [the star] is Jupiter lit from a blessed tree.

14. This means [God’s] appointing prophethood upon Ibrahīm

15. is the blessed tree, meaning he submits to God, meaning the true religion is not

16. of the east, nor of the west, meaning it is not Jews or Christians. Its oil is at the point of

17. shining. Ibrahīm is at the point of speaking by revelation prior to a revelation given to him.

### Folio 165B

1. *Though fire scarce touched it: light upon light.*<sup>22</sup> [So] what is this [that] God has blessed and

2. exalted Ibrahīm with? It is the light of his prophethood in the light of

3. the prophethood of Muḥammad. If he did know of his prophethood, his light

4. would have lit with the light of the prophets on the day of judgment. When Ibrahīm said that,

5. it did not reach king [Nimrūd], but the saying of Ibrahīm spread and became clear.

6. Isma‘īl b. ‘Asā reported that Iṣḥāq reported Huwayr informed me on the authority of

7. al-Ḍaḥḥāk—Ibn ‘Abbās that Āzar used to make idols which

8. his people worshiped.<sup>23</sup> Then he would give them to his children, among them Ibrahīm, and they would sell them. [The people] would sell them. Ibrahīm would take

9. [the idols] and say, “Who would buy what harms and is of no use?”

10. So no one would buy from him. It is said, when it was futile for him, he took them to

11. a river near him. He [cut off?] their heads.<sup>24</sup> Then he said to [the idols], “Drink!”

He was mocking

12. his people and mocking their misled beliefs as he mocked them in the matter of the sun

13. and the moon, so that his fault-finding concerning [the idols] spread abroad, and [the people] mocked him concerning [the idols] among his people and the people

14. of his villages. However, that [news] did reach Nimrūd, the king of his people.

Then it became apparent

15. to Ibrahīm that he had to [argue?] with his people about that which they believed.

Isma‘īl reported that

22. Ibid.

23. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

24. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

16. Ishaq reported on the authority of Ibn Kharij—Mujāhid and Muqātil who said
17. [The people] held a yearly feast. They made it large, and they carved the idols for

### Folio 166A

1. their houses. And they offered to them the thank offering.<sup>25</sup> They placed food and drink between their hands,
2. then they left to their feast. They did not leave anyone behind in
3. their city. The king, men, and boys left. They used to observe [the sky]
4. until they saw the planet Venus. They would say, “Whoever sees it would get the plague.”
5. When they left it was at night. They said to Ibrahīm, “Depart with us.”
6. So he looked at the sky! He clenched his fist. They said, “What is the matter with you?” He said, “I saw
7. Venus and I got the plague.” [It is the first of the lies? and that is Ibrahīm’s] saying. He glanced
8. at the stars and he said, “I am sick! or plague-stricken!” They were watching
9. and fearing that he would be contagious, so they turned their backs and they left him alone. When
10. they left, [Ibrahīm] entered the house of their idols, and he had an ax with him. He said,
11. eat what is between your hands, what has been brought to you! You don’t eat what you have! So he turned
12. against them, hitting them with his right hand. [This is] according to God’s saying: *And by Allah, I will certainly plan against your idols*
13. *after ye go away and turn your backs.*<sup>26</sup> It is said he struck [them] with his right hand. It is said he cut off their hands,
14. their feet, and their ears. [This is] according to God’s saying: *So he broke them to pieces, (all)*
15. *but the biggest of them, that they might turn (and address themselves) to it.*<sup>27</sup> [Ibrahīm] placed the ax in its hand and he left it alone.
16. It is said when the people returned, they saw what had happened to their god; they tore out their hair, and
17. they rent their clothes. They said, “*Who has done this to our gods?*”<sup>28</sup> We know there is

### Folio 166B

1. no one who would do this but Ibrahīm. Indeed we have heard him speaking evil about them.” They said,

25. Cf. Abraham 1:10.

26. Citing Qur’an 21:57.

27. Citing Qur’an 21:58.

28. Citing Qur’an 21:59. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

2. "Then bring him before the eyes of the people that they may bear witness<sup>29</sup> that he did it."

It is said

3. some of them witnessed of the punishment that belonged to [Ibrahīm]. The people made it evident

4. in this manner. It is said [when] that [news] reached the king, he sent for Ibrahīm. And he brought

5. his father and his mother with him. [The king] said to both of them, "What possessed you to hide him [as a]

6. young boy until reaching this maturity. You are of the family of the prophet.<sup>30</sup> I [had] trust in

7. you. I had faith in you. I did not fear to [confide in you]. I felt that you [were] the most

8. intelligent of people and the easiest [best?] to destroy

9. my enemies."<sup>31</sup> Āzar said to him, "On the contrary, we considered the best for you and the people of

10. your kingdom. Indeed, you have certainly committed a great matter [crime] among them to slaughter

11. the children these past forty years.<sup>32</sup> When we felt sorry for the destruction, we related the [misfortune?]

12. to you and the people of your kingdom. I [illegible] to you [because of] the order to [slaughter] our child. We said

13. that his enemy and [illegible] his place among him according to the knowledge of his death while he knew him

14. and he was saved from him, but he [freed?] the people of his kingdom from the [country?]. If he wasn't

15. the one he was looking for, then he would have to decide whether he wanted [Ibrahīm's] life and death. Your religion is

16. your enemy. You defeated him and you [illegible]. Who is the most excellent among you

### **Folio 167A**

1. save [besides] the king? Are you greater than he? We have been with you in searching for your enemy

2. these past forty years. [illegible] did not grow in him. Nor did his power against you grow. [illegible]

3. But he harmed your property and the people of your kingdom. I labored to

29. Citing Qur'an 21:61.

30. It is unclear which prophet is meant here, but since Nimrod was also a descendant of Noah, one suspects that the passage refers to one of Abraham's other postdiluvian ancestors, such as Shem or Eber, who are considered prophets in Jewish tradition.

31. In a number of early traditions, Abraham's father is commander of Nimrod's army.

32. Cf. Abraham 1:7-8, 10-11.

4. [cease them?], and he became more harsh against you and them concerning that. He was sought for, and she [Ibrahīm's mother] kept all of those [things?] from us.
5. [illegible] and the excellency of you and your people."
6. The king said, "If you had killed him while he was young, he would not have challenged us, and
7. it would have been a comfort." Āzar said, "Indeed, this opinion did not occur to us. But,
8. tell us, O king, if we had killed him while he was young, would you have stopped
9. the slaughter of the newborns?<sup>33</sup> Or would you have known at the time of killing that he is your enemy
10. who was being searched [for]?" The king said to him, "I would not have known
11. whether he was my enemy or not." Āzar and his wife said, "Then what we did was more merciful and better."
12. The king told them to leave, but he watched them closely. The people were glad of those
13. among their children who were healthy. So they all began to sympathize with Āzar and his wife. They said,
14. "O king, do you not know that any upon the face of the earth [in your opinion?] who loves you or
15. who is greater than you is foolish? There is nothing more proper than your command, nor the excellence of control
16. over them. He will [recompense?] you on everything he has taken from your father. That will fall in

### Folio 167B

1. his opinion." They said, "Burn Ibrahīm!" Isma'īl said Ishaq reported
2. on the authority of Ibn Jarīḥ—Mujāhid [who] said: [They said,] "Build Ibrahīm a building." It is said
3. they built a very tall fenced-in enclosure for him. Its wall reached sixty cubits into the heavens and to the foot of a high mountain.
4. The mountain was very difficult, [so] there was no way to climb it. They lined the wall which they had built
5. for the enclosure. Nothing of the [illegible] touched him. The muezzin<sup>34</sup> of the king called forth the people, saying, "O people,
6. gather firewood for Ibrahīm's fire." No one failed to appear and gather wood, not male, female, servant,
7. noble, common, stubborn animals, and the gentle animals.
8. Whoever would not come would be cast into that fire. They gathered firewood for forty

33. Ibid.

34. I.e., the page or summoner. In Islam, the term refers to the one who summons the people to prayer.

9. nights, until the women among the people of his kingdom would swear by their god [saying], "Perhaps

10. I will attain unto such and such in regard to gathering firewood for Ibrahīm's fire until the firewood is almost

11. equal to the top of the wall." They barricaded the doors of the enclosure with copper.

12. Isma'īl related that Ishaq reported on the authority of Jūbayr—al-Ḍaḥāl—

13. Muqātil—Barīd b. Abī Ḥabīb and Faḥd b. Ishaq—Abū Allāh b. Abī Sajḥ—

14. Mujāhid, who said: When they said to Ibrahīm,

15. "Are you the one who did this to our gods," Ibrahīm said, "No, the biggest one did

16. this." And it was an untruth. [Ibrahīm] said, "Ask them, if they can speak." It is said: So they turned to themselves and said, "Surely you are among the wrong ones. Did you not

### Folio 168A

1. return the ax to the hand of the biggest?" God said: *Then were they confounded with shame; [they said],*

2. "You know well that these [idols] do not speak. How do we ask one who does not speak?"

So Ibrahīm revealed [the truth]

3. and he was invested with authority. He said, "Do you worship

4. besides God things that can neither be of any good to you nor do you harm if you didn't worship it?"

5. "Fie upon you!" This means "Fire upon you!" "And upon the things that ye worship besides God. Have you no sense?"<sup>35</sup>

6. They said, "We will hasten you to the fire." Thus they said, "Burn him!"<sup>36</sup>

7. Isma'īl related that Ishaq on the authority of Sa'īd and Muqātil b. Sulaymān said:

8. They said the firewood was upon the mules, and as for the rest of the animals, they (all of them) did not carry a

9. load. They left it to the mules. God stopped their progeny [i.e., they couldn't give birth anymore]. They ignited the firewood,

10. and its heat and flame intensified until it was impossible to get near it.

11. So they constructed a building and they made a catapult, the first one Nimrūd had made.

12. Indeed, Iblīs<sup>37</sup> brought [it] forth to them when they were not able to get near the fire. [Iblīs] said,

13. "I will guide you to make the catapult." He brought forth Ibrahīm, and

14. they pulled off his clothes. They fastened his shackles.<sup>38</sup> He was placed on the catapult.

35. The italics from fols. 167B, line 15 to 168A, line 5 are citing Qur'an 21:62–67.

36. Citing Qur'an 21:68.

37. Iblīs, or Lucifer, is one of the most common Arabic names for the devil. This Arabic word is probably ultimately derived from Greek *diabolos*, "accuser," from which come our words *devil* and *diabolical*.

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

15. The heavens, the earth, the mountains, the sun, the moon, the throne,  
 16. the clouds, and the wind, and the angels lamented, saying, “O Lord! Ibrahīm is your servant!

17. He is being burned by the fire.<sup>39</sup> Allow us to help him.” So the fire spoke and lamented itself [i.e., the fire]:

### Folio 168B

1. “O Lord, you made me for the son of Adam, and your servant is being burned by me.” God revealed

2. that “My servant is with Me in a friendly [illegible].” [God said], “If he will call Me, I will answer him.

3. If he asks you for assistance, then help him.” When he was thrown, Jibrīl<sup>40</sup> came before him between

4. the catapult and the fire.<sup>41</sup> He said to Ibrahīm, “I am Jibrīl. Are you in need of anything?”

5. [Ibrahīm] said, “As far as you are concerned, no! My need belongs to God.” When he was propelled into

6. the fire, Isrāfīl<sup>42</sup> went before him. The fire had power [i.e., could burn] over [only] his shackles.<sup>43</sup> God said,

7. “O fire, be cool and safe upon Ibrahīm.”<sup>44</sup> If He had not guarded with peace,

8. [it would have been cold?]. Jibrīl entered,<sup>45</sup> and God built from the

9. cold around him a green garden. In the middle, [Ibrahīm] had a carpet from [illegible] paradise. A garment was brought

10. from the clothing of paradise, the garden of Eden.<sup>46</sup> Isn’t it so that [God] bestowed upon [Ibrahīm] nourishment morning and night?

11. Isrāfīl was on his right and Jibrīl on his left<sup>47</sup> until the king and

12. the people saw the sight. [This] increased the saying concerning [Ibrahīm]. Isma‘īl reported that Ishaq said

13. Idrīs b. Wahb b. Munabiḥ said:

14. Ibrahīm stayed in the fire three days. Isma‘īl reported the report of

15. Ishaq and Jūbayr on the authority of al-Ḍaḥḥāk—Ibn ‘Abbās [who] said: The

16. mother of Ibrahīm saw a vision. Ibrahīm was sitting in the fire, and a

17. green garden was around him. She said to her husband while in her dream, “Don’t you see how God made Ibrahīm’s claim right?”

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

40. The angel Gabriel in Judeo-Christian tradition.

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

42. The name Isrāfīl is from Hebrew and means “fire of God.”

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

44. Citing Qur’an 21:69. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

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

46. In both Jewish and Muslim tradition, God sent an angel to deliver a garment from paradise to Joseph when he was sold into Egypt.

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

**Folio 169A**

1. The fire did not harm him." When she awakened, she informed her husband.
2. Isma'īl reported [that] Iṣḥāq related on the authority of Ibn Dāud al-Malī—his father—Abū Sa'īd
3. al-Khadarī [who] said: The king saw [that] Ibrahīm was coming out of the fire with a green garment upon him.
4. The king bowed before him. When his secret became clear that he lived, one
5. searched for him. So he ordered him to bring out the great Ibrahīm from the fire. There was no doubt
6. that the fire would burn him. Then he [?] saw a vision that he lived. He knew Ibrahīm as
7. [he] saw him to be. Then it became clear. He approached a tower and ascended it. Then the fire broke forth,
8. and he watched it. So it happened. When he saw Ibrahīm, he could not restrain himself from bowing
9. to him, believing in his vision. Then he sent for [Ibrahīm's] parents to ask for [Ibrahīm] so that [Ibrahīm] would allow them
10. to take him out. They asked for that, and he allowed them. When the door of the enclosure opened,
11. Jibrīl approached, and Ibrahīm after him. And he went on to say, "Who is looking for him
12. in the fire? Its end is here." He said, "Someone else is here." But his place was obscured to them.
13. [Ibrahīm] went out until he went past a [illegible], and he married Sāra<sup>48</sup> daughter of Qarhar b. Nākhūr according to [that?].
14. And according to what occurred [when] God destroyed the king. His command was to banish [Ibrahīm] from his country. His command [was]
15. to go to the Holy Land.
16. The day he was married, he left for the Holy Land, and he was eighty years old.<sup>49</sup> Hārūn, his brother, and Lūt,<sup>50</sup>
17. the son of Hārūn, and he is the son of his brother, all went with him.<sup>51</sup> And that is according to the saying of God: *But Lūt believed him:*

**Folio 169B**

1. *He said: "I will leave home for the sake of my Lord."*<sup>52</sup> So he departed with Ibrahīm. [Ibrahīm] was married to Sāra,

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48. Biblical Sarah.

49. This is at variance with both Genesis 12:4 and Abraham 2:14.

50. These two men are biblical Haran and Lot.

51. This is at variance with Genesis 11:28 and Abraham 2:1, in which Abraham's brother Haran dies before Abraham leaves Haran.

52. Citing Qur'an 29:26.

2. but he would not show her to others. She was among the most beautiful women in the world.

3. Ismaʿīl related [that] Ishaq reported—Muqātil b. Sulaymān—al-Ḍaḥḥāk—

4. Ibn ʿAbbās [who] said: God distributed beauty in ten parts. He put three

5. parts into Ḥawā,<sup>53</sup> three parts into Sāra, three parts into Yūsuf,<sup>54</sup> and one part

6. into the rest of the creation. Sāra was the most beautiful of the people of the earth, and she was the

7. most well endowed of their women, and so forth. So Ibrahīm left with

8. [Sāra], Hārūn, and Lūt. They travelled, the four of them, until they got to Egypt.

9. And a pharaoh from among the first pharaohs ruled over Egypt, and he was an obstinate tyrant. Ṣādūq b. Ṣādūq said:

10. Sāra was in her loveliness and her beauty

11. with all [God] had given her. Sāra did not disobey Ibrahīm in anything. Therefore,

12. God honored her. She was described to pharaoh, so the king sent for Ibrahīm.

13. He said, Who is this woman with you? [Ibrahīm] said, “She is my sister,” and this is the third lie.

14. Ibrahīm feared for himself. If he had said, “She is my wife,” [pharaoh] would have killed him.

15. He sent for Ibrahīm and told him to make her beautiful for him. Then he sent for her.

16. Ibrahīm talked to Sāra and asked her what she thought “if the king asked [about] me.

17. If you go to him say, ‘I am the sister of Ibrahīm,’ and God

### Folio 170A

1. will protect you from [pharaoh’s] evil.”<sup>55</sup> So she stood and got dressed, and she was certain that

2. God would not destroy her. It is said: When Sāra went in unto the pharaoh, he looked

3. at her beauty and loveliness and had never seen anything like her beauty, and he was alone with her.

4. God opened for Ibrahīm the doors, and he separated the wall and dropped

5. the veil between [Ibrahīm] and [Sāra] so that he saw them both. When the king stood up for Sāra, God

6. blinded his eyes, and he withered his hands and feet. God sent

7. the angel in charge of pain to him to strike all of his veins.

8. He was struck like a slaughtered bird. He said, “O woman! Ask

9. your Lord to dispel what is in me and free me from this situation. I will give you half my money.

10. Leave from my country.” It is said: She called upon the Lord, and God revealed what was happening to him.

53. Biblical Eve.

54. Biblical Joseph.

55. Abraham could make this promise to Sarah only if God had told him that she would be safe. Cf. Abraham 2:22–25.

11. So he gave her payment and that was Hajār, the mother of Ismaʿīl. Ismaʿīl reported that

12. Iṣḥāq said on the authority of Muqātil b. Sulaymān who said Abū Hurayrah used to say,

13. That is your mother, O community. We are the [captives?]. This means the Arabs.

14. Ismaʿīl reported on the authority of Iṣḥāq—Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq who said he heard it from my report—ʿArwa

15. b. al-Zabīr that the payment [Hajār] was his slave from [Jurham?]. So she [illegible] and she fell down in the presence

16. of the pharaoh of Egypt. Who is this? Abū Hurayra said: That is your mother, O my sons of [illegible].

17. His slave had curly black hair, [beautiful gap-teeth?].

### **Folio 170B**

1. He gave her one thousand sheep [and] one hundred cows

2. with their herdsmen. He also gave her fifty camels and fifty donkeys. It is said: Sāra came

3. to Ibrahīm and said, “I rejoice, for God has favored you!”

## EXTRACTS FROM AL-BUKHARI

Second only to the Qurʾan in authority among the Muslims are the *ḥadīth* (singular, *ḥadīth*) or “sayings” attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad. The *ḥadīth* were passed down by word of mouth along with their chain of transmitters (*isnād*), and several Arab writers made collections of them, most of which relate to Muslim religious beliefs. Though incomplete, perhaps the largest such collection was made by Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mughīra ibn Bardizbah Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Juʿfī al-Bukhārī (A.H. 194–256 / A.D. 810–70). He was born in Bukhara near Jed-Samarkande in present-day Uzbekistan and traveled widely from Khurasan and Iran to Egypt, spending time in the Hijāz (western Arabia). He had a remarkable memory and collected *ḥadīth* from a thousand sheikhs over a sixteen-year period. Of the resulting 300,000 traditions, he distinguished between those whose chain of transmission (*isnād*) was verifiable or authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and those that were not. His book, the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, contains some 7,397 *ḥadīth* with full *isnāds* (2,762 if repetitions are omitted) arranged by topic. What makes al-Bukhārī’s writings important to our present study is that, in addition to religious precepts, he includes a section called “The Prophets” (section 55), with information on Abraham and other early prophets. Al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* became one of the foremost collections used by Muslims and as such has been well preserved. However, the first translation into a Western language did not come until 1862, into French. The English version used here is from Muhammad M. Khan, trans., *The Translation of the Meanings of Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 3rd ed., rev. (Chicago: Publications, 1979), 4:365–66, 368–69. The number at the beginning of each extract designates the *ḥadīth*.

569

Narrated Abū Huraira:

The Prophet said, “On the Day of Resurrection Abraham will meet his father Āzar whose face will be dark and covered with dust. (The Prophet) Abraham will say (to him)—: ‘Didn’t I tell you not to disobey me?’ His father will reply: ‘Today I will not disobey you.’ Abraham will say: ‘O Lord! You promised me not to disgrace me on the Day of Resurrection; and what will be more disgraceful to me than cursing and dishonouring my father?’

Then Allāh will say (to him): ‘I have forbidden Paradise for the disbelievers.’ Then he will be addressed, ‘O Abraham! Look! What is underneath your feet?’ He will look and

there he will see a Dhabḥ (an animal,) blood-stained, which will be caught by the legs and thrown in the (Hell) Fire.”<sup>1</sup>

570

Narrated Ibn ‘Abbās:

The Prophet entered the Ka‘ba<sup>2</sup> and found in it the pictures of (Prophet) Abraham and Mary. On that he said “What is the matter with them (i.e. Quraish)?<sup>3</sup> They have already heard that angels do not enter a house in which there are pictures; yet this is the picture of Abraham. And why is he depicted as practising divination by arrows?”<sup>4</sup>

571

Narrated Ibn ‘Abbās:

When the Prophet saw pictures in the Ka‘ba, he did not enter it till he ordered them to be erased. When he saw (the pictures of) Abraham and Ishmael carrying the arrows of divination, he said, “May Allāh curse them (i.e. the Quraish)! By Allāh, neither Abraham nor Ishmael practised divination by arrows.”

578

Narrated Abū Huraira:

Abraham did not tell a lie except on three occasions. Twice for the Sake of Allāh when he said, “I am sick,” and he said, “(I have not done this but) the big idol has done it.” The (third was) that while Abraham and Sārah (his wife) were going (on a journey) they passed by (the territory of) a tyrant. Someone said to the tyrant, “This man (i.e. Abraham) is accompanied by a very charming lady.” So, he sent for Abraham and asked him about Sārah saying, “Who is this lady?” Abraham said, “She is my sister.” Abraham went to Sārah and said, “O Sārah! There are no believers on the surface of the earth except you and I. This man asked me about you and I have told him that you are my sister, so don’t contradict my statement.” The tyrant then called Sārah and when she went to him, he tried to take hold of her with his hand, but (his hand got stiff and) he was confounded. He asked Sārah, “Pray to Allāh for me, and I shall not harm you.” So Sārah asked Allāh to cure him and he got cured. He tried to take hold of her for the second time, but (his hand got as stiff as or stiffer than before and) was more confounded. He again requested Sārah, “Pray to Allāh for me, and I will not harm you.” Sārah asked Allāh again and he

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1. Muslims interpret this to mean that Abraham’s father will be transformed into an animal and thrown into the Fire.
  2. The sacred shrine at Mecca, toward which Muslims throughout the world pray. Muslim tradition indicates that it was first constructed in the days of Adam, then reconstructed by Abraham and his son Ishmael.
  3. The Quraish were Muḥammad’s tribe; they lived in and around the city of Mecca.
  4. For a discussion of arrow-divination among the Arabs, see Hugh W. Nibley, “The Liahona’s Cousins,” *Improvement Era* 64 (February 1961): 87–89, 104, 106, 108–11. See also Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 2nd ed., (Salt Lake City: FARMS and Deseret Book, 1988), 255–63.

became alright. He then called one of his guards (who had brought her) and said, "You have not brought me a human being but have brought me a devil." The tyrant then gave Hājar<sup>5</sup> as a girl-servant to Sārah. Sārah came back (to Abraham) while he was praying. Abraham, gesturing with his hand, asked, "What has happened?" She replied, "Allāh has spoiled the evil plot of the infidel (or immoral person) and gave me Hājar for service."

579

Narrated Um Sharik:

Allāh's Apostle ordered that the salamander should be killed and said, "It (i.e. the salamander) blew (the fire) on Abraham."<sup>6</sup>

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5. Biblical Hagar.

6. The translator adds the following footnote (p. 370): "When Abraham was thrown into the fire, it is said, all the animals tried to put the fire out except the salamander which blew it up." Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

## EXTRACTS FROM AL-YA‘QUBI

Aḥmad ibn Abī Ya‘qūb ibn Ja‘far ibn Wahb ibn Waḍiḥ al-‘Abbāsī, known as al-Ya‘qūbī (d. A.H. 284/A.D. 897), was a Shī‘a Arab historian and geographer, born in Armenia. His *Ta‘rīkh al-Ya‘qūbī* (History of al-Ya‘qūbī) provides an important contrast to al-Ṭabarī, upon whose monumental work the Arab historiographic tradition mostly relies. Unfortunately, al-Ya‘qūbī rarely mentions his sources, and only two manuscripts are now known of his history. M. Th. Houtsma used one of these manuscripts to create an edited text in 1883. This English translation by Brian M. Hauglid is based on al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta‘rīkh al-Ya‘qūbī* (Beirut: Dār Sadr, A.H. 1379 [A.D. 1960]), 24. We have numbered the paragraphs for reference purposes.

1. Ibrāhīm [Abraham] lived during the time of Nimrūd the tyrant. When [Ibrāhīm] came out of the cave in which he was staying, he looked up into the heavens. He noticed Venus, perceiving it a luminous star. He said, “This is my Lord. Truly, it is high and exalted.” Then the star set. He said, “Verily, my Lord does not set.” He observed the moon as it ascended and said, “This is my Lord.” But it did not take long before the moon set. Then [Ibrāhīm] said, “Unless my Lord guide me, I shall certainly be among those who go astray.” When daylight approached, the sun arose. So he said, “This is my Lord; this is lighter, brighter!” When the sun set he said, “The sun set, but my Lord does not set!”<sup>1</sup> This is just as God related in his report and command.<sup>2</sup>

2. When [Ibrāhīm] became older, he began to be astonished, seeing his people worshipping idols. He asked, “You worship what you have made?” They said, “Your father taught us this.”<sup>3</sup> He said, “Indeed, my father is among those who strayed.” So [Ibrāhīm’s] declaration was made known to his people, and they talked about it. And God sent him forth as a prophet. God sent Jibrīl<sup>4</sup> to him, and he [the angel] taught him his religion. So [Ibrāhīm] began to speak to his people. “Indeed, I am free from your associating partners to God.”<sup>5</sup>

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

2. I.e., in the Qur’an. See Qur’an 6:76–78.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

4. The angel Gabriel in Judeo-Christian tradition.

5. Citing Qur’an 6:78. In the Qur’an, the verb *associate* refers to placing anything on a level equal with God. Doing so is an act tantamount to polytheism and is the most grievous sin in Islam.

3. News of him reached Nimrūd, so [Nimrūd] sent for him. Thereupon Ibrāhīm began smashing their [Nimrūd's people's] idols and saying, "Defend yourselves to your idols."<sup>6</sup> So Nimrūd ignited a fire and placed Ibrāhīm on a catapult and propelled him into the fire.<sup>7</sup> But God told the fire to *be cold and calm upon Ibrāhīm*.<sup>8</sup> Thus [Ibrāhīm] sat in the midst of the fire, which did not harm him. Nimrūd said, "Whoever adopts a god, let him adopt a god like the God of Ibrāhīm."

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6. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

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

8. Citing Qur'an 21:69. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

## EXTRACTS FROM AL-ṬABARĪ

The Arab historian Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (A.H. 225–310 / A.D. 840–923), from Amul in Tabaristan in Persia, traveled to Baghdad, Basra, and Kufa as well as Spain, Egypt, and Syria (where Abraham was born, according to Muslim tradition), studying *ʾaḥādīth* (the sayings and acts of Muḥammad). He was a precocious child who had the Qurʾan memorized by the age of seven and became one of the most productive scholars of Islamic studies. In his younger years he researched Arab and Muslim traditions, and in later years he mostly taught. He dealt with history, *fiqh* (Islamic law), and the recitation and exegesis of the Qurʾan. He covers, in his *Taʾrīkh al-rusūl wa-al-mulūk* (History of the Messengers and the Kings), the history of the world from the early prophets through July A.D. 915, and he includes stories about Abraham mostly gleaned from other Arab writers (like Ibn Ishāq, who relied heavily on Jewish sources). Al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* proved to be the standard work in Arabic historiography and so has been preserved in many copies, not only in its original Arabic, but also in Turkish and Persian translations. It was first translated into Latin in 1554 and into French in 1867. The excerpts here are part of a multivolume English translation that used the Leiden 1879–1901 Arabic critical text as its base: William M. Brinner, trans., *Prophets and Patriarchs* (Albany: SUNY, 1987). The references at the beginning of each entry refer to the page in the critical text, and the numbers at the end refer to the pages in the translation. Each tradition begins with the line of transmission by which al-Ṭabarī received it. For the longer passages, we have numbered the paragraphs for indexing purposes.

### 204–5

1. According to Hishām b.<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad: Al-Ḍaḥḥāk reportedly reigned for one thousand years after Jam—but God knows better. Settling in the Sawād in a town called Nars<sup>2</sup> near the Kūfah Road, he ruled over all the earth, displaying tyranny and oppression. He killed excessively and was the first to enact (the punishments of) crucifixion and mutilation. He was also the first to levy tithes and to mint dirhams, and the first to sing and

1. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read “son of.”

2. Translator's note: “Nars, on the canal of the same name, which took its name from the Sassanian king Narses who came to the throne in A.D. 292 . . . to the east of al-Kūfah.”

be sung to. It is said that there were two ganglia growing out of his shoulders, which caused pain to him. The pain became so intense for him that he would anoint them with the brains of human beings. For this purpose he killed two men each day<sup>3</sup> and anointed his ganglia with their brains. When he did this, the pain would abate.

2. A man of the common people of Babylon rebelled against him; he set up a banner and many people rallied to him. When al-Ḍaḥḥāk learned of this he was alarmed and sent (the following message) to him, "What is the matter? What do you want?" The man replied, "Do you not claim that you are the ruler of the world, and that the world belongs to you?" Al-Ḍaḥḥāk replied, "Certainly." Whereupon the rebellious man said, "Then let your thirst be for all the world and not only for us, for you kill us alone of all the people." Al-Ḍaḥḥāk agreed with him about this and ordered that the two men whom he would slay each day should be divided among all the people and should not be taken specifically from one place rather than another. . . .

3. Hishām continued: We have been told that al-Ḍaḥḥāk was Nimrod and that Abraham, the Friend of the Merciful, was born during his era, and that al-Ḍaḥḥāk was Abraham's master who wanted to burn him. (3–4)

## 206

The Persians claim that rule will belong only to the clan from which Awshhanj, Jam, and Ṭahmurat came, and that al-Ḍaḥḥāk had been a rebel who had seized the people of the land with witchcraft and deceit and had completely terrified them with the two serpents which had been on his shoulders. They also said that he had built a city in the land of Babylon<sup>4</sup> and named it Ḥawb, and that he made the Nabateans his companions and courtiers. The people were subjected to every kind of pressure by him, and he slew the young boys.<sup>5</sup> (6)

## 213, 215

Others besides Ibn Ishāq have said that Noah . . . prayed that Ham's color would be changed and that his descendants would be slaves to the children of Shem and Japheth. . . . He also prayed for some of his children's children—for Cush b. Ham.<sup>6</sup> (14)

## 216

From the descendants of Arpachshad came the prophets and apostles and the Best of Mankind<sup>7</sup> and all the Arabs and the Pharaohs of Egypt.<sup>8</sup> (14)

3. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

4. According to Genesis 11:8–11, it was Nimrod who began building cities in the land of Babel (Babylon), thus strengthening the identification of Nimrod with the legendary al-Ḍaḥḥāk.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

7. The translator notes that the Muslims denote Muḥammad by the epithet "Best of Mankind."

8. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27; 3:21–24.

**218, 219**

According to al-Ḥārith b. Muḥammad—Muḥammad b. Saʿd—Hishām b. Muḥammad b. al-Saʿib—his father: . . .

. . . Nimrod was the son of Cush b. Canaan b. Ham b. Noah. He was the lord of Babylon and of Abraham, the Friend of the Merciful. (17, 18)

**220**

All of them were of Islam<sup>9</sup> while they lived in Babylon, until Nimrod b. Cush b. Canaan b. Ham b. Noah ruled over them and called on them to worship idols, which they did.<sup>10</sup> Whereas one evening their speech was Syriac, the next morning God had confused their tongues, and thus they became unable to understand each other. (18)

**223**

It is related by Ḍamrah b. Rabīʿah—Ibn ʿAṭāʾ—his father: Ham begat all those who are black and curly-haired, while Japheth begat all those who are full-faced with small eyes, and Shem begat everyone who is handsome of face with beautiful hair. Noah prayed that the hair of Ham’s descendants would not grow beyond their ears, and that wherever his descendants met the children of Shem, the latter would enslave them. (21)

**224–25**

[Continuing the account Ḍamrah b. Rabīʿah—Ibn ʿAṭāʾ—his father:]

Terah, the father of Abraham, was born to Nahor. This name was the one Terah’s father had given him, but when Terah became Nimrod’s custodian of the treasury of his gods,<sup>11</sup> he named him Āzar. It has been said that Āzar was not the name of Abraham’s father, but was rather the name of an idol; this latter tradition is related on the authority of Mujāhid. It has also been said that the word *āzar* means “crooked” and that he disgraced him with it. This was after twenty-seven years of Nahor’s life had passed. Nahor lived two hundred and forty-eight years in all. Abraham was born to Terah. (22)

**226**

According to Hishām b. Muḥammad b. al-Sāʿib [regarding Afaridhūn, who defeated al-Ḍaḥḥāk or Nimrod]:<sup>12</sup> . . . It is said that he was the first to name the food-animals, and the first to concern himself with medicine and with the stars. (23, 24)

**252–70**

1. There is a disagreement about where he [Abraham]<sup>13</sup> came from and where he was born. Some say his birthplace was al-Sūs in the province of al-Ahwāz, while others say it was Babylon in the land of the Sawād, while still others say it was in the Sawād but in

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9. I.e., submission (to God).

10. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6, 27.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

12. This is our insertion.

13. Ibid.

the region of Kūthā. Others say that his birthplace was in al-Warkā<sup>14</sup> in the region of al-Zawābī on the borders of Kaskar and that after his birth his father took him to where Nimrod lived in the region of Kūthā. Others say that he was born in Ḥarrān but that his father took him to the land of Babylon. Most of the earlier sages have said that Abraham was born during the era of Nimrod b. Cush, while most historians say that Nimrod was an official of al-Azdahāq. . . .

2. According to Ibn Ḥumayd—Salamah—Muḥammad b. Ishāq: According to what has been said to us—and God knows best—there was an inhabitant of Kūthā named Āzar from a town in the Sawād, in the environs of al-Kūfah. At that time Nimrod the Sinner was the ruler of the East. He was called the Lion, and it is said that his rule encompassed the East and West of the earth, and that his capital was Babylon. His domain and that of his people was in the East before the rule of the Persians. It is said that there were only three kings (in all of history) who ruled over the entire earth and all its people: Nimrod b. Arghu, Dhū al-Qarnayn, and Solomon b. David.

3. One source claims that Nimrod was al-Ḍaḥḥāk himself.

4. Hishām b. Muḥammad said: We have been told—though God knows best—that al-Ḍaḥḥāk was Nimrod, that Abraham, the Friend of the Merciful, was born during his days, and that Nimrod was his master who wanted to burn him.<sup>15</sup>

5. According to Mūsā b. Hārūn—ʿAmr b. Ḥammād—Asbāṭ—al-Suddī—Abū Ṣāliḥ and Abū-Mālik—Ibn ʿAbbās and Murrah al-Hamdānī—Ibn Masʿūd and some of the companions of the Prophet: The first king who ruled over all the earth, east and west, was Nimrod b. Canaan b. Cush b. Shem<sup>16</sup> b. Noah. There were four such kings who ruled all the earth: Nimrod, Solomon b. David, Dhū al-Qarnayn,<sup>17</sup> and Nebuchadnezzar—two believers and two infidels.

6. According to Ibn Ishāq—Ibn Ḥumayd—Salamah—Ibn Ishāq: God desired to send Abraham, the Friend of the Merciful, as an argument against his people and as a messenger to His worshippers, since there had been no such messengers between Noah and Abraham<sup>18</sup> except Hūd and Ṣāliḥ.<sup>19</sup> As the time when God desired to do this drew near, the astrologers came to Nimrod and said to him, “Know that we have learned from our lore that a boy will be born in this city of yours who will be called Abraham. He will abandon your religion and break your idols<sup>20</sup> in such and such a month of such and such a year.” When the year which the astrologers described to Nimrod began, Nimrod had

14. Biblical Erech, ancient Uruk.

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

16. Shem is an error; Cush was the son of Shem’s brother Ham. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

17. “He of the two horns,” a title of Alexander the Great.

18. Cf. Abraham 1:19; Facsimile 2, figure 3. Though Abraham’s other ancestors were idolators (Abraham 1:5–6), the patriarch notes that he was heir to the priesthood from the fathers (Abraham 1:2–3, 8; cf. 1:2; 2:9, 11; Facsimile 2, figure 3; Facsimile 3, figure 1).

19. Hūd and Ṣāliḥ are two pre-Islamic prophets mentioned in the Qur’an. For a discussion of Hūd as Lehi and of Ṣāliḥ, see William J. Hamblin, “Pre-Islamic Prophets,” in *Mormons and Muslims*, ed. Spencer J. Palmer (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1983): 85–104.

20. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

every pregnant woman in his city imprisoned except for Āzar's wife, the mother of Abraham, for he did not know she was pregnant. That was because she was a young maiden and her pregnancy was not very visible. During that month of the year, whenever a woman bore a boy, Nimrod commanded that he be killed. When the mother of Abraham found that she was in labor, she went out by night to a cave near her home and bore Abraham there. She took care of his needs as one does for a newborn, then shut the cave up on him and returned home. Later she went to look at him in the cave to see what he would do and found him alive, sucking his thumb. It is said—and God knows best—that God had placed Abraham's sustenance in it, and that is what came to him from his sucking.

7. According to the story, Āzar asked Abraham's mother what had happened with her pregnancy and she said, "I gave birth to a boy and he died." He believed her and remained silent about it.

8. For Abraham, one day of growing up was like a month, and a month was like a year. Abraham had been in the cave for only fifteen months when he said to his mother, "Take me out that I may look around." So she took him out one evening and he looked about and thought about the creation of the heavens and the earth and said, "Verily the One who created me and sustained me, who fed me and gave me drink, is my Lord—I have no god but Him." He looked out at the sky and saw a star, and said, "This is my Lord." Then he followed it with his eyes, watching it until it disappeared. When it had set he said, "I do not like things that set." Then he saw the moon rising and said, "This is my Lord." And he followed it with his eyes until it disappeared, and when it had set, he said, "If my Lord did not guide me, verily I would be one of those who go astray."

9. When day came upon him and the sun rose, he saw the greatness of the sun and saw that here was something with more light than he had ever seen before. He said, "This is my Lord! This is greater!" And when it, too, set he exclaimed, "O my people! I am free from all the things which ye associate (with Him). I have turned my face toward Him that created the heavens and the earth, as one upright by nature; I am not an idolator."<sup>21</sup>

10. Then Abraham returned to his father Āzar, having seen the right course. He had recognized his Lord and he was free of the religion of his people,<sup>22</sup> but he did not tell them that. He informed Āzar that he was his son, and the mother of Abraham agreed that it was true and told Āzar what she had done when Abraham was born. Āzar was happy about that and rejoiced greatly.

11. Āzar made his living by making the idols which his people worshipped,<sup>23</sup> and he employed Abraham to sell them. It is said that Abraham would take them and would call out to people, "Who will buy what will harm him and be of no use to him?" So no one would buy them from him, and when they became unsellable, he would take them

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

22. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

23. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

to the river and point their heads at it and say, "Drink!" mocking his people and their erroneous ways. At length his disrespect for them and his mocking of them spread about among his people and the inhabitants of his town, although Nimrod the king did not hear of it. Then, when the time seemed right to Abraham to reveal to his people the error of what they were doing, and to tell them of God's command and of how to pray to Him, he glanced up at the stars, and said, "I feel sick!" God said, "And they turned their backs on him and left him."

12. His saying "I am sick" meant he was attacked by illness. They fled from him when they heard it, but Abraham had only said it to make them go away so that he could do what he wanted with their idols. When they left him he went to the idols whom they worshipped instead of God, and he brought them food. He said, "Will you not eat? What is the matter? Why do you not speak?" reproaching their falsely elevated position and mocking them.

13. On this same subject, scholars other than Ibn Ishāq quoted Mūsā b. Hārūn—ʿAmr b. Ḥammād—Asbāṭ—al-Suddī—Abū Ṣāliḥ and Abū Mālik—Ibn ʿAbbās and Murrah al-Ḥamdānī—Ibn Masʿūd and some of the companions of the Prophet: Another story about Abraham is that a star arose over Nimrod so bright that it blotted out the light of the sun and the moon. He became very frightened about this and called upon the magicians and soothsayers, the prognosticators and physiognomists, to ask them about it. They said, "A man will arise in your domain whose destiny is to destroy you and your rule." At this time Nimrod lived in Babylon near al-Kūfah. He left his town and moved to another town, forcing all the men to leave with him but leaving the women. He ordered that any male child who was born should be slain, and he slew their children.

14. Then, however, some task in Babylon came up for which he could trust only Āzar, the father of Abraham. He called Āzar and sent him to do the job, saying, "See that you do not have intercourse with your wife." Āzar said to him, "I am too tenacious in my religion for that." But when he entered Babylon he visited his wife and could not control himself; he had intercourse with her and fled with her to a town called Ur between al-Kūfah and al-Baṣrah. He placed her in a cavern there, promising to bring her food and drink and whatever else she needed.

15. As for the king, after a long time went by and nothing happened he decided the astrologers had been wrong and told everyone, "It was the speech of lying magicians; return to your lands!" So they returned. Soon Abraham was born. He grew so fast that each day that passed was like a week, and each week like a month, and each month like a year. Meanwhile the king had forgotten the whole incident. Abraham grew up without ever seeing that there was anyone in creation besides him, his father, and his mother. Abraham's father said to his companions, "I have a son whom I have hidden. Do you fear the king on his account if I bring him out?" They said, "No, bring him!" So he went and brought him forth. When the boy came forth from the cavern, he looked at the beasts and cattle and creatures and began asking his father what they were. So his father told him that "this is a camel," "this is a cow," and "this is a horse," and "this is a sheep." Then Abraham said, "These creatures must have a master."

16. When he came out of the cavern it was after sundown. He raised his head toward the sky and saw a star—it was Jupiter—and he said, “This is my Lord!” But presently it disappeared, and he said, “I do not like things that set.” That is to say, “I do not like a lord who disappears.”

17. According to Ibn ‘Abbās: He went forth from the cavern at the end of the month and for that reason he did not see the moon before he saw the stars. But when it was the end of the night he saw the moon rising and he said, “This is my Lord!” But when it set—he (Ibn ‘Abbās) says “disappeared”—he said, “If my Lord does not guide me, I shall indeed be one of those who go astray.” When dawn came and he saw the sun rising, he said, “This is my Lord! This is greater!” But when it too disappeared, God said, “Surrender yourself!” And Abraham replied, “I have already surrendered myself to the Lord of the Worlds!”<sup>24</sup> He went to his people and called out to them, saying, “O my people! I am free of all the false partners which you associate with Him. I have turned my face toward Him Who created the heavens and the earth, as one upright by nature”—he (Ibn ‘Abbās) says “one who is sincere.” And he began to preach to his people and to warn them.

18. His father made his living by making idols,<sup>25</sup> and he gave them to his sons to sell them. He would give them to Abraham, but when selling them Abraham would call out, “Who will buy that which will harm him and will not benefit him?” His brothers would come back having sold all their idols, while Abraham would come back with all of his still unsold. Then he called upon his father, saying, “O my father! Why do you worship that which neither hears nor sees, nor can in any way help you?” His father said, “Do you reject my gods, O Abraham? If you do not cease this, I shall surely stone you. Leave me for a long while”—he (Ibn ‘Abbās) said, “forever.”

19. His father told him, “Abraham, we have a festival. If you go to it with us, you would learn to like our religion.” The day of the festival came, and they went to it. Abraham also went along with them, but on the way he threw himself down and said, “I am sick”—he (Ibn ‘Abbās) says, “My foot is in pain.” They sat down by his feet while he was lying down. When they went away he called at the last of them—for two of the people had remained—“By God, I shall deal with your idols after you have gone away and turned your backs.” They heard him say it. Then Abraham went back to the house of the gods, which was in a great hall. Opposite the entrance to the hall was a great idol, and at his side a smaller one, and next to him a smaller one, and so on down to the entrance to the hall. The people had prepared food and placed it before the gods, saying, “When we come back the gods will have blessed our food, and we will eat.” When Abraham saw them with the food in front of them, he said, “Will you not eat?” And when they did not answer him, he said, “What ails you that you do not speak?” Then he attacked them, striking them with his right hand. He took a piece of iron and cut off each idol’s extremities,<sup>26</sup> then suspended the axe from the neck of the largest idol and went out. When

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

25. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

26. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

the people came to get their food and saw their gods in this state, they said, "Who has done this to our gods? It must be some evildoer." Those who had overheard Abraham's earlier remark said, "We heard a youth make mention of them, one called Abraham."

20. Abū Ja'far gives Ibn Ishāq's version of the story as follows: Abraham approached them, "striking with his right hand," as God described it. Then he began breaking them up with an axe.<sup>27</sup> When only the largest of the idols remained, he tied the axe to that idol's hand and left them. When his people returned they saw what he had done to their idols, and it frightened and distressed them. They said, "Who has done this to our gods? Surely it must be some evildoer." Then they remembered and said, "We heard a youth make mention of them, one called Abraham." They meant a youth who reviled, dishonored, and mocked them. "We have never heard anyone else say that, and we think he must be the one who did this to them."

21. Word of this reached Nimrod and the nobles of his people, and they said, "Then bring him before the people so that they may testify"—that is, testify about what should be done to him.

22. Some interpreters of the text, among them Qatādah and al-Suddī, give this (phrase) as follows: That they may testify against him, for he was the one who had done it, and they (Nimrod and the nobles) said that they did not want to seize him without proof.

23. Returning to Ibn Ishāq's account: When he was brought in with his people before their king Nimrod, they said, "Are you the one who did this to our gods, O Abraham?" He said, "But it was this one, their chief—that is, the biggest idol—who did it. So question them, if they can speak. He became angry because you worshipped these little ones together with him while he is greater than they are, so he broke them." Then they left him alone and stopped telling each other that he had broken them. They said, "We have wronged him. We think it happened as he said." But then, knowing that the idols really could neither cause harm nor cause benefit nor commit physical violence, they demanded, "You know well that these do not speak"—meaning, they do not utter sounds—"so tell us who did this to them, for they do not strike with the hands. Then we will believe you."

24. Almighty God said, "Then they were utterly confounded [and they said], 'You know well that these do not speak.'" The fact is that they exposed the wrongness of their own belief in these idols when they said these words against Abraham. And when the proof appeared against them in the form of their statement that the idols could not speak, Abraham said, "Then why do you worship things which can bring you no profit at all, nor harm you, instead of worshipping God? Fie on you and all that you worship instead of God! Have you no sense?"

25. His people then argued with him about God, asking him to describe Him and telling him that their gods were better than what he worshipped. He said, "Do you dispute with me concerning God when He has guided me?" He used in his argument God's own words, "Which of the two factions has more right to safety? If you have knowledge, answer the question." He told them proverbs and provided examples to make them see

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27. Ibid.

that God had more right to be feared and worshipped than anything else that they worshipped besides Him.

26. According to Abū Jaʿfar: Then Nimrod said to Abraham, “Have you seen this God Whom you worship and to Whose worship you call others, and of Whose power you speak and Whom you glorify above any other? Who is He?” Abraham replied to him, “My Lord, Who gives life and causes death.”<sup>28</sup> And Nimrod said, “I, too, give life and cause death.” Abraham asked, “How do you give life and death?” He replied, “I shall take two men—two were condemned to death by my order—and I’ll kill one of them, so I will have caused him to die, and I’ll pardon the other and free him, so I will have made him live.” But upon hearing that, Abraham said to him, “God causes the sun to rise in the East, so can you make it rise in the West?” Knowing that it was as Abraham said, “Thus was . . .”<sup>29</sup> [Nimrod] abashed,” and he gave no answer; he knew that he was not able to do that. God said, “Thus was the unbeliever abashed”—that is to say, the proof was against him. Then Nimrod and his people joined against Abraham saying, “Burn him and stand by your gods, if you will be doing.”

27. According to Ibn Ḥumayd—Salamah—Muḥammad b. Ishāq—al-Ḥasan b. Dīnār—Layth b. Abī Sulaym—Mujāhid: I recited this verse before ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar, and he said, “Do you know, O Mujāhid, who it was that advised burning Abraham in fire?”<sup>30</sup> I answered, “No.” He said, “One of the nomads of Persia.” I said, “O ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, do the Persians have nomads?” He answered, “Yes, the Kurds are the nomads of Persia, and it was one of them who advised burning Abraham in fire.”

28. According to Yaʿqūb—Ibn ‘Ulayyah—Layth—Mujāhid: Regarding the order “Burn him and stand by your gods,”<sup>31</sup> it was a man from the nomads of Persia, meaning the Kurds, who gave it.

29. According to al-Qāsim—al-Ḥusayn—Ḥajjāj—Ibn Jurayj—Wahb b. Sulaymān—Shuʿayb al-Jabāʿī: The name of the man who said “burn him”<sup>32</sup> was Hayzan, and God caused the earth to swallow him up.<sup>33</sup> He will be tossed around therein until the Day of Resurrection.

30. Returning to Ibn Ishāq’s account: Then Nimrod gave orders, and wood was gathered for him. They gathered hard wood of various kinds of trees, and it is said that whenever a woman from Abraham’s town was determined to get something done, she would vow that if she got her way she would help gather wood for the fire of Abraham in repayment of her debt. When they wanted to cast him into the fire, they brought him and lit every corner of the heap of wood which they had gathered for him, until the fire flared up. And they assembled to push him into it.<sup>34</sup> Then heaven and earth and all the

28. Citing Qur’an 2:258. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:7.

29. The ellipsis points are part of the translation.

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

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

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

creatures therein except humans and jinns<sup>35</sup> shouted to God, “Our Lord! Abraham, the only one on Your earth who worships you, is being burned in fire for Your sake. Permit us to help him!” It is said—and God knows best—that when they said that, God answered, “If he should ask for help from any of you, then you may help him, for I have given permission for that. But if he calls on no one but Me, I am his Friend; leave it between Me and him. I will protect him.” When they cast Abraham into the fire, God said, “O fire! Be coolness and peace for Abraham,” and the fire did as God ordered.

31. According to Mūsā b. Hārūn—‘Amr b. Ḥammād—Asbāṭ—al-Suddī: They said, “Imprison him in a building and cast him into Hell.” They imprisoned him in a house and went to gather wood for him. The job became so all-important that if a woman became ill, she would say, “If God heals me, I will gather wood for Abraham.” When they had gathered it for him, and had got so much that a bird passing over it would have been burned by the force of its heat, they brought Abraham and set him on top of the pyre. Then Abraham raised his head to heaven,<sup>36</sup> and heaven and earth and the mountains and the angels all said, “Our Lord, Abraham is burning for Your sake.” And He said, “I am most knowledgeable about him. If he calls on you, help him.” When he raised his head to heaven, Abraham said, “O God! You are alone in heaven and I am alone on earth—there is no one besides me who worships You. God is sufficient for me, and how goodly is He in Whom I trust.” When they pushed Abraham into the fire,<sup>37</sup> God called out to it saying, “O fire! Be coolness and peace for Abraham,” and it was Gabriel who called out.<sup>38</sup>

32. Ibn ‘Abbās said: “If its cold had not been followed by peace, Abraham would have died of the cold. Every fire on earth that day went out, thinking that it was the one that was meant.”

33. When the fire was extinguished, they looked at Abraham and saw that there was another man with him, with Abraham’s head in his lap. He was wiping the sweat from his face. It is mentioned that that man was the angel of shade.<sup>39</sup> God himself had sent down fire to mankind, which had benefitted from it (in general). They brought forth Abraham and took him to the king, though he had never previously come before him.

34. Returning to the story according to Ibn Ishāq: God sent the angel of shade in the form of Abraham and he sat at his side in that form, comforting him. For days Nimrod continued to believe that the fire had consumed Abraham and had finished him. Then one day he rode past it while it was burning all the wood that had been gathered for it, and he looked at it and saw Abraham sitting in it with a man resembling him at his side. Nimrod returned from that ride and said to his people, “I have seen Abraham alive in the fire, but perhaps it was only his image that appeared to me. Build me a tall structure from which I may look down upon the fire so that I can be sure.” So they built him a tall

35. Jinn are spirit beings, created from fire (unlike man, who is created from the earth). They can be good but are mostly mischievous or evil. They will also be judged at the last day.

36. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

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

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

39. Ibid.

structure from which he looked down into the fire. He saw Abraham sitting in it and saw the angel sitting by his side<sup>40</sup> in a form similar to his. Nimrod called out to him, saying, "O Abraham! Great is your God Whose might and power even allow Him to prevent what I see from harming you. Will you be able to come out of it?" Abraham answered, "Yes!" Nimrod said, "Are you afraid that if you remain in it, it will harm you?" Abraham answered, "No." Then Nimrod said, "Arise, then, and come out of it!" So Abraham got up and walked through the fire until he had come out of it. When he came out to him, Nimrod said, "O Abraham! Who was the man whom I saw with you, like you in appearance, sitting at your side?" Abraham said, "That was the angel of shade<sup>41</sup> whom my Lord sent to me to be with me in the fire, to comfort me. For me He made the fire coolness and peace." Then Nimrod said, "O Abraham! I shall offer a sacrifice to your God because of His glory and power which I have seen, and because of what He did for you when you refused to worship or ascribe unity to any but Him. I shall offer up to Him four thousand cattle." Thereupon Abraham said to him, "God will not accept anything from you as long as you keep any vestige of this old religion of yours. You must leave it for my religion." Nimrod answered, "O Abraham! I cannot abandon my kingship, but I will slaughter the cattle for Him." And he slaughtered them. Then he left Abraham alone, and God held him back from him.

35. According to Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Mughīrah—al-Ḥārith—Abū Zur‘ah—Abū Hurayrah: The best thing he said to Abraham was when he lifted up the cover from him when he was in the fire alone, his brow covered with sweat. And he said, "How excellent is the Lord, your Lord, O Abraham!"

36. According to al-Qāsim—al-Ḥusayn—Mu‘tamir b. Sulaymān al-Taymī—some of his [Muḥammad’s]<sup>42</sup> companions: Gabriel came down to Abraham while he was being tied up and shackled to be thrown into the fire,<sup>43</sup> and he said, "O Abraham! Do you need anything?" Abraham replied, "From you, no!"

37. According to Aḥmad b. al-Miqdām—al-Mu‘tamir—his father—Qatādah—Abū Sulaymān: The fire burned nothing on Abraham except his fetters.

38. Abū Ja‘far said the account returns to that of Ibn Ishāq.

39. Some of Abraham’s people became his followers when they saw what God did for him, though they were still afraid of Nimrod and of their community. Lot, the son of his brother, believed in him. He was Lot b. Haran b. Terah. Haran was Abraham’s brother, and they had a third brother who was called Nahor b. Terah. Haran was the father of Lot, and Nahor was the father of Bethuel. Bethuel was the father of Laban. Rebecca, Bethuel’s daughter, was the wife of Isaac b. Abraham and the mother of Jacob. Jacob’s wives Leah and Rachel were both daughters of Laban. Sarah, the daughter of Abraham’s paternal uncle, believed in him. Her father was Haran the Elder, Abraham’s paternal uncle. She had a sister named Milcah, who was Nahor’s wife.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Our insertion.

43. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figures 1–3.

40. Some claim that Sarah was the daughter of the king of Ḥarrān.

41. According to Mūsā b. Hārūn—ʿAmr b. Ḥammād—Asbāṭ—al-Suddī: Abraham and Lot set out for Syria. On the way Abraham met Sarah, who was the daughter of the king of Ḥarrān. She had criticized her people about their religion, so he married her, since he would thus be able to have a believing wife without having to convert her. Abraham called on his father Āzar to join his religion, saying to him, “O my father! Why do you worship that which cannot hear nor see, and which you do not need at all?”<sup>44</sup> His father, however, refused to respond to his call,<sup>45</sup> whereupon Abraham and his companions who followed his command<sup>46</sup> decided to leave their people. They said, “We are free from you and from those things other than God which you worship. We disbelieve in you, O you [idols] who are worshipped beside God! And eternal enmity and hatred have arisen between us, O worshippers [of them], until you believe in God alone!”<sup>47</sup>

42. Then Abraham went forth, a fugitive for the sake of his Lord, and Lot went with him. Abraham married Sarah, the daughter of his paternal uncle, and took her out with him when he fled for the sake of being able to practice his religion and worship his Lord in safety. He settled in Ḥarrān and stayed as long as God willed him to stay. Then he left as a fugitive and traveled to Egypt, which was then under the rule of one of the earliest Pharaohs.<sup>48</sup>

43. It is said that Sarah was one of the best human beings that ever existed. She would not disobey Abraham in any way, for which God honored her. When her goodness and beauty were described to Pharaoh, he sent a message to Abraham asking, “Who is this woman who is with you?” He replied, “She is my sister.” He feared that if Pharaoh learned that Sarah was his wife, he would kill him to possess her. Pharaoh said to Abraham, “Adorn her and send her to me so that I may look at her.” Abraham went back to Sarah and ordered her to prepare herself, then sent her to Pharaoh. She went in and approached him. When she sat next to him, he reached out to her with his hand, but his arm suddenly became stiff all the way up to his chest. When he saw that, he looked at her with awe and said, “Pray to God to release me! By God, I shall not cast suspicion on you. I shall indeed be good to you.” So she said, “My God, if he is being truthful, release his hand.” And God released his hand and he sent her back to Abraham. Pharaoh also gave her Hagar, a Coptic<sup>49</sup> slave-girl of his.

44. According to Abū Kurayb—Abū Usāmah—Hishām—Muḥammad—Abū Hurayrah—the Messenger of God [the prophet Muḥammad]:<sup>50</sup> Abraham told only three lies in his life. Two of them were about God—his saying “I feel sick” and his saying “But this,

44. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

45. Cf. Abraham 2:5.

46. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

47. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

48. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

49. The term *Coptic* means “Egyptian” and, in fact, *Copt* derives from the same Egyptian name for the land as the Greek form *Egypt*. Today, the terms *Copt* and *Coptic* refer to the Christian church of Egypt.

50. Our insertion.

their chief, is the one who did it." While he was traveling through the land of a certain tyrant,<sup>51</sup> he stopped at a place, and a man went to the tyrant, saying: "There is in your land"—or "There is here—a man with a wife who is one of the most beautiful of mankind." So the tyrant sent for Abraham, and when he came, he asked him, "What [relation] is this woman to you?" Abraham replied, "She is my sister." The tyrant said, "Go and send her to me." Abraham went back to Sarah and said, "This tyrant asked me about you, and I told him that you are my sister. So do not give me the lie when you see him. You are my sister in God, for in all this land there are no Muslims<sup>52</sup> except ourselves."

45. Abraham took her to the tyrant and stood up to pray. When she came into the tyrant's presence, he bent forward to touch her, but was suddenly seized by a powerful paralysis. He said, "Pray to God and I will not harm you." So she prayed for him, and he was set free. Then he reached out for her again, and again, he was seized by the paralysis. And he said, "Pray to God and I will not harm you." So she prayed for him and he was released. Then he did the same thing yet again, and again he was seized. And he asked Sarah to pray for him and was released. He called the lowest of his chamberlains and said, "You did not bring me a human being, you brought me a devil. Take her away and give Hagar to her." She was taken out and given Hagar, and she went away with her. When Abraham saw her coming back, he interrupted his prayer and said, "What is the matter?" She answered, "God has protected me from the unbelieving libertine and has given me Hagar as a servant."

46. According to Muḥammad b. Sirīn: When Abū Hurayrah related this account, he would say, "This is your mother, O Arabs!"<sup>53</sup>

47. According to Ibn Ḥumayd—Salamah—Muḥammad b. Ishāq—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī al-Zinād—his father—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Aʿraj—Abū Hurayrah—the Messenger of God: Abraham said only three things that were not true. He said, "I am sick," when there was no sickness in him; he said, "But this, their chief, is the one who did it, so question them if they can speak"; and when Pharaoh asked him about Sarah, "Who is this woman with you?" he answered, "My sister." Abraham never said anything untrue except these things.

48. According to Saʿīd b. Yaḥyā al-Umawī—his father—Muḥammad b. Ishāq—Abū al-Zinād—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Aʿraj—Abū Hurayrah: The Messenger of God said, "Abraham never lied except about three things." Then he mentioned the same.

49. According to Abū Kurayb—Abū Usāmah—Hishām—Muḥammad—Abū Hurayrah—the Messenger of God: Abraham lied only three times, twice about God—his saying, "I feel sick";<sup>54</sup> his saying, "But this, their chief, is the one who did it";<sup>55</sup> and his saying about Sarah, "She is my sister."

51. The two tyrants to whom Abraham said that Sarah was his sister were the king of Egypt (Genesis 12:14–20) and the Philistine king Abimelech (Genesis 20:1–18).

52. I.e., those who submit (to God).

53. The translator's note indicates that the original reads "O sons of the water of heaven" instead of "Arabs."

54. Citing Qurʾan 37:89.

55. Citing Qurʾan 21:63.

50. According to Ibn Ḥumayd—Jarīr—Mughīrah—al-Musayyib b. Rāfiʿ—Abū Hurayrah: Abraham told only three lies—his saying, “I feel sick”; his saying, “But this, their chief, is the one who did it,” but this second lie was only by way of admonition; and his saying, “She is my sister,” when the king asked him about his wife Sarah.

51. According to Yaʿqūb—Ibn ʿUlayyah—Ayyūb—Muḥammad: Abraham told only three lies, two about God and one about himself. The first two were his saying, “I feel sick,” and his saying, “But this, their chief, is the one who did it”; the other was his tale about Sarah. And Muḥammad related the story of her and the king. (48–65)

### 316–17

[Regarding the commands with which Abraham was tested:]

1. Others have said that the commands were six tests: the star, the moon, the sun,<sup>56</sup> the fire,<sup>57</sup> emigration,<sup>58</sup> and circumcision, and that Abraham was tested with all of them and remained steadfast in faith through all of them.

2. According to Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm—Ibn ʿUlayyah—Abū Rajāʾ: I asked al-Ḥasan about the quote, “And when his Lord tried Abraham with commands and he fulfilled them.” Al-Ḥasan said, “He tested him with the star and was satisfied with him; He tested him with the moon and was satisfied with him; He tested him with the sun and was satisfied with him;<sup>59</sup> He tested him with fire<sup>60</sup> and was satisfied with him; He tested him with emigration; and He tested him with circumcision.”

3. According to Bishr—Yazīd b. Zurayʿ—Saʿīd—Qatādah—al-Ḥasan: When God tested Abraham with a command, he was steadfast in obeying it. He tested him with the star, the sun, and the moon, and he did well with those and knew that his Lord is eternal and He will not cease. Then he turned his face to the One Who created the heavens and the earth,<sup>61</sup> as one upright by nature; he was not one of those who attributed partners to God. Then He tested him with emigration, and he left his land and took his people to Syria, journeying to God. Before the emigration He tested him with fire and he was steadfast, and He tested him with the sacrifice of his son and with circumcision, and he was steadfast.

4. According to al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā—ʿAbd al-Razzāq—Maʿmar—someone—al-Ḥasan: His word, “And when his Lord tried Abraham with commands,” means He tested him with the star, the sun, and the moon.<sup>62</sup>

5. According to Ibn Bashshār—Salm b. Qutaybah—Abū Hilāl—al-Ḥasan: The quote “And when his Lord tried Abraham with commands,” means He tested him with the star, the sun, and the moon,<sup>63</sup> and found him steadfast. (103–4)

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

57. This refers to the sacrificial fire. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

58. See Genesis 12:1–5. Emigration is particularly significant for Muslims because Muḥammad, too, had to flee his hometown of Mecca and go to Medina in A.D. 622, in what has come to be known as the *Hijrah*, “emigration.” Indeed, the Muslim calendar is based on this event, hence A.H., “after *Hijrah*.”

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

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

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

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

**318–24**

1. Let us now return to the account of the enemy of God and of Abraham, who refused to believe in what Abraham had brought from God and who rejected Abraham's counsel out of ignorance and error about God's indulgences with him.

2. Nimrod b. Cush b. Canaan b. Ham b. Noah, and what happened to him in this world when he rebelled against his Lord, even though God was forbearing with him and did not make haste to punish him for his unbelief in Him and for his attempt to burn His friend Abraham<sup>64</sup> for calling upon him (Nimrod) to believe only in God and to abandon his gods and idols. Nimrod's arrogance and rebelliousness against his Lord went on for a long time—some say for four hundred years—in spite of God's forbearance with him. The proofs of Himself which God advanced to Nimrod and the examples which He showed him only made Nimrod persist in his transgression. As some have mentioned, God punished him in this world. This punishment, which extended over a span of time as long as that during which God had been forbearing with him, was carried out by means of the weakest of His creatures—a gnat to which God gave dominion over Nimrod.

3. Accounts which have reached us about him concerning what I have mentioned about his ignorance and the vengeance which God set in motion against him, according to al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā—ʿAbd al-Razzāq—Maʿmar—Zayd b. Aslam: The first tyrant on earth was Nimrod. People used to go to him seeking provisions of food. When they came to him he would ask them, "Who is your lord?" They would say, "You." When Abraham came to him, he asked him, "Who is your lord?" Abraham answered, "My Lord is He Who gives life and causes death."<sup>65</sup> Nimrod told him, "I give life and cause death." Abraham said, "God brings the sun from the East; so cause it to rise in the West." "Thus was the disbeliever abashed."<sup>66</sup> So he sent Abraham away without food.

4. Abraham went back to his family. On the way he passed a dust-colored sand dune and said to himself, "Let me take some of this and bring it to my family, to make them feel better when I come to them." So he took some of it to bring to his family. He put his baggage down and slept. His wife arose, went to his baggage and opened it, and found there the best food anyone had ever seen. So she prepared some of it and presented it to him. To his knowledge the family had no food, so he asked, "From where did this come?" She answered, "From the food which you brought." So he knew that God had supplied it to him, and he praised God.

5. Then God sent an angel to the tyrant, saying, "Believe in Me and I will leave you in your realm." Nimrod said, "Is there any lord besides me?" The angel came a second time and said the same, and again Nimrod refused. And he came a third time, and yet again Nimrod refused. So the angel said to him, "Gather your assembly in three days." The tyrant gathered his assembly, and God gave a command to the angel and he unleashed upon them a swarm of gnats. The sun was blotted out by their numbers. God

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64. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

65. Citing Qur'an 2:258. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:7.

66. Citing Qur'an 2:258.

sent the gnats against them, and they ate their flesh and drank their blood, and nothing but their bones was left.

6. The king was as before, however; none of that befell him. But God sent to him a single gnat which entered his nostril and went on beating the inside of his head with hammers for four hundred years. The most merciful to him of his friends was he who bunched up his hands and beat Nimrod's head with them. He had been a tyrant for four hundred years and God punished him for four hundred years—just as long as he had reigned—and then He caused him to die. He was the one who built a tower to heaven, only to have God strike at its foundations—it was about this that God said, "So God struck at the foundations of their building."<sup>67</sup>

7. According to Mūsā b. Hārūn—ʿAmr b. Ḥammad—Asbāṭ—al-Suddī—Abū Mālik and Abū Sālih—Ibn ʿAbbās and—Murrah—Ibn Masʿūd and—some of the companions of the Prophet [Muḥammad]:<sup>68</sup> The one who argued with Abraham about his Lord gave orders that Abraham be sent out of the city, and he was sent out. He met Lot, the son of his brother, at the gate and called upon him, and he believed in him. Abraham said, "I am a fugitive unto my Lord."<sup>69</sup>

8. Nimrod had vowed to seek out Abraham's God. He took four eagle fledgelings and nurtured them on meat and wine so that they grew up tough and strong. Then he tied them to a chest and sat in that chest. He suspended a piece of meat over them, and they flew up trying to reach it. When they had risen high in the sky, Nimrod looked down and beheld the earth. He saw the mountains crawling below like creeping ants. When they had risen still higher he looked down again and saw the earth with a sea surrounding it, as though it were a sphere in water. After climbing still higher for a long time, he came into a region of darkness and could not see what was above him, nor what was below him. He became frightened and threw the meat down, and the eagles followed it, darting downwards. When the mountains saw them coming near, darting down, and heard their noise, they became afraid and almost moved from their places, but did not do so. As God says, "Verily they have plotted their plot, and their plot is with God, even if their plot were one whereby the mountains should be moved."<sup>70</sup> The reading of Ibn Masʿūd has it, "though their plot were almost one." They took off from Jerusalem and they fell down in the Mountain of Smoke.

9. When Nimrod saw that this method would accomplish nothing, he began building the tower. He built it taller and taller until, when it reached heaven, he went up to the top to look, in his pride, at the God of Abraham. Then he voided excrement though he had not done so. God seized his building by its foundations and the roof fell down upon them, "and doom came upon them whence they knew not"<sup>71</sup>—from their place of safety.

67. Citing Qurʾan 16:26, in reference to the Tower of Babel. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

68. Our insertion.

69. Citing Qurʾan 29:26.

70. Citing Qurʾan 14:46.

71. Citing Qurʾan 16:26.

And He took them from the foundations of the building, and it was demolished.<sup>72</sup> Then it fell, and on that day the languages of mankind became confused from fright, and mankind came to speak seventy-three languages. Before that the only language had been Syriac. It was thus called Babel.

10. According to Ibn Wakī—Abū Dawūd al-Ḥafarī—Ya‘qūb—Ḥafṣ b. Ḥumayd or Ja‘far—Sa‘īd b. Jubayr: “Even if their plot were one whereby the mountains should be moved.”<sup>73</sup> Nimrod, master of the eagles, ordered a chest brought. He was placed in it, and placed another man in it with him. Then he commanded the eagles and they carried them aloft. When they had risen to a great height, Nimrod asked his companion, “What do you see?” He answered, “I see the water and the island”—meaning the world. After they had climbed higher, he again asked his companion, “What do you see?” He answered, “We are only growing farther from heaven.” And Nimrod said, “Descend!”

11. Someone else has said: A voice proclaimed, “O tyrant, where do you want to go?” The mountains heard the rustling of the eagles and thought it was something from heaven, and would have moved, for that is His Word, “Even if their plot were one whereby the mountains should be moved.”<sup>74</sup>

12. According to al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad—Muḥammad b. Abī ‘Adī—Shu‘bah—Abū Ishāq—‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Dāniyal—‘Alī [nephew of the prophet Muḥammad]:<sup>75</sup> Regarding the verse “even if their plot were one whereby the mountains should be moved,”<sup>76</sup> the one who argued with Abraham about his Lord took two small eagles and raised them until they became tough, strong, and mature. Then he tied a foot of each one of them to a chest by a string. He starved them, and sat in the chest with another man. Then he raised a staff in the chest, with meat at its top end, and the eagles ascended. Nimrod began saying to his companion, “Look! What do you see?” He described what he saw, finally saying, “I see the world as though it were insects.” Then he said “Aim!” And he aimed it and they descended. And this is His word, “even if their plot were one whereby the mountains should be moved.” Abū Ishāq said: Thus in the reading of ‘Abd-allāh, it is, “Though their plot were almost. . . .”<sup>77</sup>

13. This is what is mentioned of the story of Nimrod b. Cush b. Canaan.

14. Some say that this Nimrod b. Cush b. Canaan was the king of the entire earth, east and west. This is a statement which scholars familiar with the biographies of kings and with the accounts of the past reject. This is because they accept the fact that Abraham was born during the era of al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Andarmāsb, (concerning whom we have given some accounts above), and that at that time this al-Ḍaḥḥāk was the king of all the earth. One of those who knew about the era of al-Ḍaḥḥāk, who was uncertain about the extent

72. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

73. Citing Qur’an 14:46.

74. Ibid.

75. Bracketed material is our clarification.

76. Citing Qur’an 14:46.

77. The ellipsis points are in the translation.

of Nimrod's power, said that he did not know the truth of the matter even though certain accounts had been related to him on the subject. These accounts said that there were four kings who ruled the whole world, two unbelievers and two believers. The unbelievers were Nimrod and Nechuchadnezzar, while the believers were Solomon b. David and Alexander. Those chroniclers who speak of the matter say that it was al-Ḍaḥḥāk who was king of the earth, east and west, during Abraham's time, and that Nimrod and al-Ḍaḥḥāk were the same person. Scholars expert in the accounts of the forebears and in knowledge of the affairs of the peoples of ancient times have a different view, because according to them it is well known that Nimrod was of Nabatean origin, whereas al-Ḍaḥḥāk was of Persian origin. (105–9)

### 325–26

1. We will now return to the story of the events which took place during Abraham's days, including the story of Lot b. Haran b. Terah, son of Abraham's brother, and his people—the people of Sodom. It is said that Lot traveled from the land of Babylon with his paternal uncle Abraham, the Friend of the Merciful, believing in him and following his religion. They went to Syria as fugitives, and with them went Sarah bt.<sup>78</sup> Nahor, who some say was Sarah bt. Hanāl bt. Nahor. It is said that Abraham's father Terah went with them, still opposing Abraham's religion and remaining an unbeliever.<sup>79</sup> When they reached Ḥarrān Terah died, still an unbeliever. Abraham, Lot, and Sarah went to Syria and then to Egypt, which was then ruled by a Pharaoh. It is mentioned that this Pharaoh was Sinān b. ʿAlwān b. ʿUbayd b. ʿUwayj b. ʿImlāq b. Lud b. Shem b. Noah.<sup>80</sup> It is also said that he was a brother of al-Ḍaḥḥāk, who had appointed him governor of Egypt. I have already given some of the story of what happened between him and Abraham above.

2. After this, Abraham, Lot, and Sarah went back to Syria. It is said that Abraham settled in Palestine and settled his nephew Lot in Jordan, and that God sent Lot to the people of Sodom. (111–12)

### 346–47

1. According to al-Ḥārith—Muḥammad b. Saʿd—Hishām b. Muḥammad—his father: The river of Kūthā was dug by Karītā, Abraham's grandfather on his mother's side. His father was in charge of King Nimrod's idols.<sup>81</sup> Abraham was born in Hurmuzjird, then moved to Kūthā in the land of Babylon. When Abraham grew up he rejected his people's beliefs and called upon them to worship God. This reached King Nimrod, who imprisoned him for seven years. Then he built for Abraham an enclosure of plaster, and kindled thick firewood therein, and threw Abraham into it.<sup>82</sup> Abraham said, "God suffices me; how excellent is He in Whom I trust." And he left the fire safe and unhurt.

78. Abbreviation for *bint*, meaning "daughter of."

79. Cf. Abraham 2:5.

80. Contrast this with Abraham 1:21–27.

81. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

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

2. According to al-Ḥārith—Muḥammad b. Saʿd—Hishām b. Muḥammad—his father—Abū Ṣāliḥ—Ibn ʿAbbās: When Abraham fled from Kūthā and came out of the fire,<sup>83</sup> his language was Syriac. But when he crossed the Euphrates from Ḥarrān, God changed his language and it was called Hebrew (*ʿIbrānī*) because he had crossed (*ʿabara*) the Euphrates.<sup>84</sup> Nimrod sent men to look for him, telling them, “If you find anyone who speaks Syriac, do not leave him, but bring him to me.” They met Abraham, but left him because he spoke Hebrew and they did not understand his language.

3. According to al-Ḥārith—Ibn Saʿd—Hishām—his father: Abraham migrated from Babylon to Syria, and Sarah came to him and offered herself to him, so he married her and took her with him. At that time he was thirty-seven years old, and he came to Ḥarrān and stayed there for a while. Then he came to Jordan and stayed there for a while. Then he went to Egypt and stayed there for a while; then went back to Syria and settled in the land of Beersheba between ʿĪliyā<sup>85</sup> and Palestine. (128)

### 350

It is said that the leaves which God revealed to Abraham were ten in number. I heard this from Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Wahb—his paternal uncle ʿAbdallāh b. Wahb—al-Māḍī b. Muḥammad—Abū Sulaymān—al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad—Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī—Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī: I asked, “O Messenger of God! How many books did God reveal?” He said, “One hundred and four books. To Adam He revealed ten leaves, to Seth fifty leaves, and to Enoch thirty leaves. To Abraham he revealed ten leaves<sup>86</sup> and also the Torah,<sup>87</sup> the Injīl,<sup>88</sup> the Zabūr,<sup>89</sup> and the Furqān.”<sup>90</sup> I said, “O Messenger of God! What were the leaves of Abraham?” He answered, “They were all proverbs, such as, ‘O dominated, afflicted, and deceived king! I did not send you to collect all the world, one part to another.’” (130)

83. I.e., Ur, the sacrificial fire. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

84. The Hebrew word for *Hebrew* is cognate to the Arabic term given here and derives from a verb root meaning “to cross,” indicating that Abraham crossed the Euphrates to find a new home.

85. ʿĪliyā probably refers to Jerusalem, which Hadrian renamed Aelia Capitolina in the first part of the second century A.D.

86. The Arabic term refers to written records. For records possessed by Abraham, see Abraham 1:28, 31.

87. The Torah or “law” denotes the five books attributed to Moses, i.e., Genesis through Deuteronomy.

88. The term *Injīl* is from Greek *euangelion*, “good news” or “gospel,” and denotes the New Testament.

89. The Arabic name for the biblical book of Psalms.

90. An Arabic word meaning “the proof,” a title given to the Qurʾān.

## EXTRACTS FROM AL-MAS'UDI

Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusain al-Masʿūdī (d. A.H. 345/A.D. 956) of Baghdad, well traveled and well educated, possessed an immense intellectual curiosity. He was a prolific writer who dealt with a wide variety of historical and geographical topics. He was acquainted with the works of several Christian writers and may have personally known al-Ṭabarī. He also refers to Plato, Aristotle, and Ptolemy in his works. He was strongly sympathetic to Imāmī Shīʿism; therefore, his works were somewhat ignored, and most have not survived. Here, we draw from two of his published works. The first is the *Murūj al-dhahab wa maʿādin al-jawāhir*, written in A.H. 332/A.D. 943 and revised twice; al-Masʿūdī owes his reputation to this work. The first part of this work covers sacred history before Muḥammad. The text of the original through the first version has survived well, and in 1841 Aloys Sprenger made the first English translation, which we use here: Aloys Sprenger, trans., *El Masʿūdī's Historical Encyclopædia, Entitled "Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems"* (London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1841), 1:80–86. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs. Sprenger used diacritics, but we have removed them since they do not fit any current style. The second work, *Akhbār al-zamān* (The News of the Ages), was probably al-Masʿūdī's largest, but information on it is scarce, other than that it apparently contained the same, but more detailed, information as that in the *Murūj*. Brian M. Hauglid translated the extracts from this second work using al-Masʿūdī, *Akhbār al-zamān* (Beirut: n.p., A.H. 1386 [A.D. 1966]), 103.

### Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems

#### Chapter 3

[Speaking of Nahor:]

1. He lived one hundred and forty-six years and was succeeded by his son Tarah;<sup>1</sup> this is the name for Azar, the father of Ibrahim.<sup>2</sup> In his days Nimrud Ben Kanʿan<sup>3</sup> rose. Under

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1. Biblical Terah.

2. Biblical Abraham.

3. I.e., "Nimrod, son of Canaan." According to Genesis 10:8, Nimrod was the son of Cush, not Canaan. Note that Cush and Canaan are both sons of Ham and that the Egyptians descend from Mizraim, another of his sons (Genesis 10:6). Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

en-Nimrud<sup>4</sup> the practice of worshipping fire and light<sup>5</sup> came first in use, and he introduced certain (holy) orders in their cultus. There were great troubles and wars in this age in the world. New empires and provinces were formed in the east and west. It was at this time when the stars and their predictions began to be an object of study. The heavens were divided into regions, and astronomical instruments were invented. Man began to understand the meaning of all these things. The astrologers observed the aspect of the heaven for the coming year, and its prediction, and told en-Nimrud that a child would be born, who would expose the folly of their dreams, and do away with their worship. En-Nimrud ordered the child to be killed;<sup>6</sup> but Ibrahim was concealed. Tarah, who is the same person as Azer,<sup>7</sup> died at the age of two hundred and sixty years.

#### Chapter 4

1. When Ibrahim was grown up, he went out from the cavern where he had been concealed, contemplated the phenomena of nature, and reflected on their meaning. Looking at the planet Venus, and observing how it rose, he said: "This is my Lord!" When the moon rose, and he saw that it was much brighter, he exclaimed: "*This* is my Lord!" But when the sun displayed its splendour, he cried out full of astonishment, "*This* is my Lord!"<sup>8</sup> The commentators do not agree in the meaning of the words of Ibrahim "This is my Lord." Some believe this to be related by the way of induction and parable; whilst others are of [the]<sup>9</sup> opinion that it happened before he had come to the knowledge of truth, when he was still striving. Gabriel came now to him, and taught him his religion, and God chose him as his prophet and friend. (I have to observe against this explanation that) Ibrahim had received the strength of God; and he who is strengthened by God will be kept pure from sin and fall, and from any worship besides the One the Eternal.<sup>10</sup>

2. Ibrahim blamed his people for their idolatry.<sup>11</sup> When they were annoyed by the disdain with which Ibrahim scorned their gods, and which had attracted public notice, en-Nimrud threw him into the fire:<sup>12</sup> but God converted the fire into coolness, and he was preserved.<sup>13</sup> The fire did not flame anywhere on earth on that day.

3. After Ibrahim had passed the eighty-sixth or ninetieth year of his age, Isma'il was born to him by Hajir<sup>14</sup> who was a slave-woman to Sarah. Sarah was the first person who

4. The name given here means, literally, "the Nimrod," the prefix *en-* being the definite article.

5. The translator's note reads: "the Moon was considered as the concentration of light, whilst the Sun is the centre of fire. (Tradition of Wahb Ben Monabbih.)" But according to other accounts cited in this collection, Nimrod had a vision of fire that caused him to establish the worship of fire.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

7. This name is spelled two different ways in this text; we do not know if the different spellings are intentional or not.

8. Citing Qur'an 6:76–78.

9. Our insertion.

10. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

12. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 11–12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

13. Citing Qur'an 21:69. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

14. Biblical Ishmael and Hagar.

believed on Ibrahim. She was the daughter of Batuwil, the son of Nahur,<sup>15</sup> and uncle of Ibrahim. This, however, is controverted, as we shall mention hereafter.

4. Lut,<sup>16</sup> the son of Haran Ben<sup>17</sup> Tarikh<sup>18</sup> Ben Nahur, was Ibrahim's nephew, and one of those who believed on him. . . .

5. . . . Ibrahim died in Syria, one hundred and seventy years of age: God revealed to him ten sacred books.<sup>19</sup>

## The News of the Ages

### An Account of Ibrāhīm

1. Concerning Ibrāhīm, our master Ismāʿil was born to him, whose mother is [Hājar], the Egyptian.<sup>20</sup> And Iṣḥaq was born to him, and his mother was Sāra, the daughter of Harūn. [Harūn] is from the people of Ḥarrān. The life of Ibrāhīm was 175 years. The king of Bābal in the time of [Ibrāhīm] was Nimrūdh, who was the son of Kūsh b.<sup>21</sup> Ḥām. After Ibrāhīm had performed his pilgrimage, he smashed the idols.<sup>22</sup> The king ignited a large fire for him and threw him into it.<sup>23</sup> God made the fire upon [Ibrāhīm] cold and safe.<sup>24</sup> A wind came and blew the fire into the faces of the onlookers with the king.<sup>25</sup>

2. [Ibrāhīm] left for Ḥarrān. The son of his sister, Lūṭ, and Sāra, the daughter of his uncle, believed him. He was thirty-seven years old when he departed.<sup>26</sup> He married Sāra by virtue of a revelation that came to him. He took with him three books [leaves, journals] written in the Hebrew language,<sup>27</sup> but his language was Syriac. There were in the books proverbs, glorifications of God, rejoicings, and praises. [Ibrāhīm] was commanded to move, so he crossed the Euphrates and moved on to Egypt.

15. I.e., biblical Bethuel, son of Nahor, who, in Genesis 24:15, is the father of Sarah's daughter-in-law, Rebekah. Nahor was Abraham's brother (Genesis 11:26).

16. Biblical Lot.

17. The word means "son of."

18. Biblical Terah.

19. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

20. The text here uses the term *Coptic*, rather than the usual Arabic word for "Egyptian."

21. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read "son of."

22. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

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

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

25. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

26. Cf. Abraham 2:14.

27. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

## EXTRACTS FROM AL-MAQDISI

A relatively unknown scholar, al-Muṭahhar ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (fl. A.H. 355/A.D. 966), who lived in what is now southern Afghanistan, nevertheless displays a good knowledge of cultures other than his own and much originality of thought in his encyclopedia *Kitāb al-badʿ wa-al-taʾrīkh* (Book of the Beginning and the History). This originality is perhaps why the book fell into oblivion in the Muslim world; all extant manuscripts are located in Istanbul, and not even Western Orientalists have explored the possibilities of the work. The encyclopedia is similar to al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj*. A French translation together with the Arabic text was first published by Cl. Huart, in al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-badʿ wa-al-taʾrīkh* (1899–1919; reprint, Baghdad: Dar al-Kutūb al-Haditha, 1960), 45–56. Brian M. Hauglid used this publication to prepare this translation from the Arabic. The numbers preceding the paragraphs refer to the page numbers of the Arabic.

45–46. The story of Ibrahīm [Abraham]. It is found in the report that those kings who ruled all the earth were four persons: two believers and two unbelievers. He who will rule this generation is a fifth. The first [of the unbelievers] is Nimrūdh<sup>1</sup> b.<sup>2</sup> Kanʿān<sup>3</sup> b. Kūsh<sup>4</sup> b. Ḥām b. Nūḥ.<sup>5</sup> It is [also] said Nimrūdh was the son of Kūsh b. Saḥyārib<sup>6</sup> b. Kanʿān b. Sām<sup>7</sup> b. Nūḥ; God knows best. The second is Athdahāq, master of the two snakes, three mouths, and six eyes. The Arabs call him al-Ḍaḥḥāk. He is the same person as Nimrūdh, but he was called al-Ḍaḥḥāk because he laughed<sup>8</sup> just as he dropped from the womb of his mother. She placed him in a desert, and a tiger was caught for him. The tiger breast-fed him when he desired it. [It is also said] that the breast of his mother was cut off so she would breast-feed him with tiger milk. So Nimrūdh was called by that

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1. Biblical Nimrod.
  2. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read “son of.”
  3. Biblical Canaan.
  4. Biblical Cush.
  5. Biblical Noah.
  6. Unknown from the biblical genealogy, which makes Cush the son of Ham and brother of Canaan.
  7. Biblical Shem.
  8. The Arabic name derives from the verb meaning “to laugh” and is cognate to the Hebrew root from which comes the name Isaac.

name. It is said the second was Bukhtanaṣr.<sup>9</sup> The people of Yemen claim that the second was Tubbaʿa b. Malkīrab. As for the two believers, one of them is Sulaymān b. Dāūd.<sup>10</sup> The Persians claim that he was Jam Shādh. The other is Dhū al-Qarnayn.<sup>11</sup> The [scholars] differ concerning Dhū al-Qarnayn. Is he the Roman<sup>12</sup> Alexander or some other? Concerning these the poet says:

They ruled all of the east and the west; they made sure that they did not leave behind a command in vain. . . .

47. People of this knowledge relate that Ibrahīm is the son of Tārah b. Nāḥūr b. Sārūkh b. Argū b. Fāllaj b. ʿĀbir b. Shāllaḥ b. Arfakhshadh b. Sām b. Nūḥ.<sup>13</sup> When the time of his appearance approached, the priestly astrologers informed Nimrūdh that “a child will be born in this year. Your kingdom will be destroyed by his hand.” . . .

48. The king ordered the killing of all [male] children.<sup>14</sup> Fearing that what was said would truly take place, Anīla, the mother of Ibrahīm, being with child, hid her pregnancy until her delivery came near. Then she gave birth to him and concealed him in a cave. She began to go to him secretly to breast-feed him, and she took care of him until she weaned him, and he grew to a fifteen-year-old adolescent. His body grew, and because of his handsomeness and the speed of his growth, it was uncertain whether his birth occurred at the time of the slaughter of the boys.

53–54. Different people relate in this story, brought out in some accounts, that when his mother hid Ibrahīm in a cave, Jibrīl<sup>15</sup> came to him and made him suck his forefinger and his thumb. [Ibrahīm] began to drink milk from one of them and honey from the other. It is related on the authority of Nūf al-Kālī that a gazelle took hold of him and fed him, when his mother was slow in visiting him. Some have commented that God’s saying *So also did We show Ibrahīm the kingdom of the heavens and earth*<sup>16</sup> [means] that [Ibrahīm] was lifted above the heavens so that he saw what was in them and what belonged to them.<sup>17</sup> They mention the characteristics of the fire [i.e., of Ibrahīm] and [its?] building, the gathering of the firewood for the fire for years, according to what God knows best.<sup>18</sup> . . . The fire was ignited and it flared up, . . . [and] it burned the birds of the heavens. The

9. Biblical Nebuchadnezzar.

10. Biblical Solomon, son of David.

11. Meaning “he of the two horns,” an epithet of Alexander the Great.

12. Alexander was not Roman, but Macedonian, i.e., Greek.

13. See Genesis 11:10–25 for this same genealogy in the Judeo-Christian tradition: biblical Terah, Nahor, Serug, Reu (Argū), Peleg (Fāllaj), Eber, Salah, Arphaxad, Shem, and Noah.

14. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

15. The angel Gabriel in Judeo-Christian tradition.

16. Citing Qurʾan 6:75.

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

18. Arabic idiomatic expression.

animals and predatory beasts fled. Iblīs<sup>19</sup> came among them and taught them to build a catapult. So they did evil and threw Ibrāhīm into the fire.<sup>20</sup> But God said: *O fire, be cool and safe upon Ibrāhīm.*<sup>21</sup>

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19. Iblīs, or Lucifer, is one of the most common Arabic names for the devil. This Arabic word is probably ultimately derived from Greek *diabolos*, "accuser," from which come our words *devil* and *diabolical*.

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

21. Citing Qurʾan 21:69. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

## EXTRACTS FROM AL-ṬHAʿLABI

A theologian and Qurʾan exegete, Abū Ishāq Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Thaʿlabī died in A.H. 427/A.D. 1036. His commentary on the Qurʾan, although popular for some time, has since fallen into disuse. A more enduring text is his *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (Stories of the Prophets), which has been printed many times. Although popularity has ensured its survival, the text has not always been treated with care: at least one manuscript has incorporated al-Thaʿlabī's tales into those of al-Kisāʾī. As far as we know, no English translation of this work has yet become available. The following was translated by Brian M. Hauglid from the Arabic text in al-Thaʿlabī, *Kitāb ʿarāʾis al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (Cairo: Muṣṭafa al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, A.H. 1340 [A.D. 1921]), 51–56, and was prepared especially for this collection. The words in parentheses are those added by the editors of the Arabic text, and the words in brackets are the translator's. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

Ibrāhīm [Abraham] is the son of Tārakh b.<sup>1</sup> Nakhūr b. Sārugh b. Arghū b. Fāllag b. ʿĀbir b. Shālah b. Fīnān b. Arphakhshadh b. Sām b. Nūḥ.<sup>2</sup> Tārakh was the name of Ibrāhīm's father, for Ibrāhīm is the one who called him by that name. But when Tārakh and Nimrūd<sup>3</sup> created the public treasury for his goddesses, he was named Āzar. Mujāhid said that Āzar is not the name of Ibrāhīm's father but the name of an idol. Ibn Ishāq said: His name is not the name of an idol but rather a surname that denotes a defect in the father of Ibrāhīm and means bowed or stooping. It is said the father of Ibrāhīm was the old Nabaṭīya sheik. He was born to Nakhūr as Tārakh and left [home] when he was twenty-seven years old. This collection contains the [pertinent] chapters, and God knows best.

### Chapter 1: The childhood of Ibrāhīm.

1. The learned people differ as to the place in which Ibrāhīm was born. Some of them say his birthplace was in Sūs [Susa?] in the land of al-Ahwāz.<sup>4</sup> Some of them say his

1. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read "son of."

2. See Genesis 11:10–25 for this same genealogy in the Judeo-Christian tradition: Terah, Nahor, Serug, Reu, Peleg, Salah, Arphaxad, Shem, and Noah. Note that Fīnān is not found in the biblical record.

3. Biblical Nimrod.

4. Some of these place-names mentioned refer to places in ancient times. One would need to consult old geographical texts to ascertain their modern equivalents.

birthplace was in Bābal in the land of al-Sawād [rural area of Iraq]. Kūthā has also been mentioned. Some of them say his birthplace was in Warkā,<sup>5</sup> a region on the borders of Kaskar [and that] his father moved him to the place where Nimrūdh was in the region of Kūthā.<sup>6</sup> Some of them say his birthplace was Ḥarrān, but his father moved him to the land of Bābal.<sup>7</sup> The earliest generations of the people of learning said that Ibrāhīm was born in the time of Nimrūdh b. Kanʿān.<sup>8</sup> Between the flood and the birth of Ibrāhīm were 1,263 years. The flood was after the creation of Ādam in the year 3337.<sup>9</sup> And Nimrūdh, in whose kingdom Ibrāhīm was born, is Nimrūdh b. Kanʿān b. Sanjārīb b. Kūrash<sup>10</sup> b. Ḥām b. Nūḥ.<sup>11</sup> (According to the *ḥadīth*),<sup>12</sup> there are four kings who have ruled the earth: two believers and two unbelievers. As for the believers, there were Sulaymān b. Dāūd<sup>13</sup> and Dhū al-Qarnayn;<sup>14</sup> as for the unbelievers, there were Nimrūdh and Bukhtanaṣr.<sup>15</sup>

2. Nimrūdh was the first of these rulers to place the crown upon his head, and he showed himself a tyrant upon the earth. He prevailed upon the people to worship him. He had in his company priests and astrologers. They informed him that “in this year a boy who will change the religion of the people of the land will be born in your country. He will destroy you, and your kingdom will come to an end by his hand.” It was said that they found this [prophecy] in the books of the prophets.<sup>16</sup> (Al-Suddī said) that Nimrūdh saw in his sleep a star as if it were rising. The star took away the light of the sun and the moon until no light remained in either of them.<sup>17</sup> He was struck with a powerful fear from that dream and summoned the sorcerers, priests, the able prognosticators, all who are the ones upon the earth who engage in writing. He asked them about the dream. They said, “The star represents a newborn baby who will be born in your area this year. He will destroy you and destroy the kinfolk of your house by his hand.” It is said that Nimrūdh commanded the slaughter of every boy born in the area that year.<sup>18</sup> He commanded that the men be segregated from the women. He placed over each ten [women] a reliable male guardian. When a woman menstruated, [one] could have intercourse with her, if he was trusted. But when she became clean, the man would be separated

5. Probably biblical Erech and ancient Uruk.

6. Cush is the ancient Mesopotamian city of Kish, but cf. Cush the father of Nimrod in Genesis 10:8.

7. Biblical Babel and Babylon.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27. Kanʿān is biblical Canaan.

9. This would place Abraham’s birth in 2074 B.C.

10. Sanjārīb and Kūrash are not known from the Bible, in which Canaan is the son of Ham.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

12. For an explanation of this term, see the account of al-Bukhārī, in this collection.

13. Solomon, son of David.

14. “The two-horned”; this has reference to Alexander the Great (d. 323 B.C.).

15. The name Bukhtanaṣr refers to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (604–561 B.C.).

16. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

17. Cf. the star and the light that signaled Christ’s birth in Helaman 14:3–6 and 3 Nephi 1:15–21.

18. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

from her. But Āzar, the father of Ibrāhīm, returned, and he found his wife. She had been cleansed from the menstruation. So [Ibrāhīm's father] knew her in her cleanliness, and she became pregnant with Ibrāhīm.

3. It is said, according to Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq, that Nimrūdh called forth each pregnant woman in his village, and he would keep them with him. However, this was not so with the mother of Ibrāhīm because [Nimrūdh] did not know of her pregnancy. And that was because she was a very young slave girl, and she did not know of the pregnancy, for her abdomen did not show. (Al-Suddī said) that Nimrūdh had sent the men to the army, removing them from the women out of fear the infant would be born. He remained thus as long as God willed. Then a need pertaining to the city arose. [Nimrūdh] did not trust any of his people except Āzar, so he summoned him and said to him, "I have a need. I wish to entrust you with it. I did not call you forth except to place my confidence with you. So I decree that you do not go near your family and you do not have intercourse with your wife." Āzar said, "I am too zealous for my religion to do that." So [Nimrūdh] entrusted him with his matter. Then [Nimrūdh] sent him out, and [Āzar] entered the city and accomplished [Nimrūdh's] business. Then [Āzar] said, "If I could go to my family, then I could see them." But when he saw the mother of Ibrāhīm, he could not refrain from knowing her, and she became pregnant with Ibrāhīm. (Ibn ʿAbbās said) that when the mother of Ibrāhīm was pregnant, the priests said to Nimrūdh that "the boy, whom we informed you about, was conceived of his mother this very night." So Nimrūdh ordered the slaughter of all boys.<sup>19</sup> When the time of birth approached, the labor pains began for the mother of Ibrāhīm, and she fled, a fugitive, fearing that [Nimrūdh] would find her and kill her child. So [after the birth], she placed him in a dried-out river, then wrapped him in rags and put him in alfalfa, and she returned. She told her husband of her son and that she had given birth, but that the child was in a [certain] place, so his father left and took him from that place and dug for him a subterranean place [cave] near a river. His father then concealed him and barricaded his door with a rock, fearing the preying beast. His mother would visit him frequently and breast-feed him.

4. (Al-Suddī said) that when the abdomen of the mother of Ibrāhīm became large, Āzar feared that [Ibrāhīm] would be slaughtered, so he set out with her to a land between Kūfa and Baṣra. It was called Warkā. So [Āzar] took her down into a cave, and he placed [there] what would help her and took care of her. He concealed this from his companions. She gave birth to Ibrāhīm in this hidden place, and he became a young man. When he was a year old, it was as if he were three years old. He grew into a young man in a condition [or place] that kept him away from [Nimrūdh's] edict of slaughter. Then Āzar reported to his friends that he had an older son, and [Ibrāhīm] was taken to them.

5. (Ibn Iṣḥāq said) that when the mother of Ibrāhīm went into labor, she left at night to a cave that was nearby, and she gave birth [in the cave] to Ibrāhīm. She did what was necessary for an infant, barricaded the cave for him, and returned to her house. As she

19. Ibid.

would inspect him in the cave, she would find him alive, sucking his thumb. Abū Zarīq said that whenever the mother of Ibrāhīm came to see Ibrāhīm, she found him sucking his thumb. She said, “One day I will look at his fingers,” and she found him sucking water from one finger and milk from another, honey from one finger and butter from another.

6. (Ibn Ishaq said): Āzar had asked the mother of Ibrāhīm what had happened with her pregnancy. She said she gave birth to a boy, but he died. He believed her and kept silent about it. One day [of growth] for Ibrāhīm was for the boy as a month, and a month was as a year. Ibrāhīm remained in the cave for fifteen days until he came to his father, Āzar. [Ibrāhīm] informed him that he was his son, and his wife informed him concerning what she had done with respect to [Ibrāhīm]. So Āzar was delighted and rejoiced greatly.

**Chapter 2: Ibrāhīm’s departure from his secret place and his return to his family. His argument with them concerning religion, their casting him into the fire, and what took place pertaining to that.**

1. (The historians, people of knowledge concerning the way of the past) said that when Ibrāhīm grew up while in the secret place, he asked his mother, “Who is my Lord?” She said, “I am.” He said, “But who is your Lord?” She replied, “Your father.” He said, “But who is the Lord of my father?” She answered, “Nimrūdh is his Lord.” He asked, “But who is the Lord of Nimrūdh?” She said to him, “Be silent!” So [Ibrāhīm] was silent. Then she returned to her husband. She said, “I saw the boy who speaks of changing the religion of the people of the land, and he is your son.” Then she informed him of what [Ibrāhīm] had told her. So his father, Āzar, came to him. Ibrāhīm asked him, “Who is my Lord?” [Āzar] answered, “Your mother.” [Ibrāhīm] said, “But who is the Lord of my mother?” [His father] said, “I am.” [Ibrāhīm] asked, “But who is your Lord?” He answered, “Nimrūdh.” [Ibrāhīm] said, “But who is the Lord of Nimrūdh?” Then [Āzar] slapped him hard and said, “Be silent!” And because of that, God said about [Ibrāhīm]: *We<sup>20</sup> gave Ibrāhīm aforetime his rectitude—for We knew him.*<sup>21</sup> Then [Ibrāhīm] said to his parents, “Take me out!” So they took him out of the secret place and traveled until the sun went down, and Ibrāhīm looked at the camels, the cattle, the sheep, and the horses resting with them. He asked his father, “What are these?” [Āzar] said, “camels, horses, cattle, and sheep.” [Ibrāhīm] said, “There must be a Lord Creator for them!” Then he looked [at the heavens] and pondered the creation of the heavens and the earth.<sup>22</sup> He said, “Indeed, the One who created me, my subsistence, my meals, my drink, my property, and so forth, is my Lord.

20. The Qur’an uses the royal plural (we, us, our) when God is speaking.

21. Citing Qur’an 21:51. The translation used here is from A. J. Arberry, trans., *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 2:21. As with most Islamic texts of this kind, the Qur’an is usually cited quite frequently. There are, however, many English translations of the Qur’an available. All of them vary in their interpretations to one degree or another. Because of the complexities inevitably encountered in this type of text, I will use whatever translation (mostly my own) I think best fits the flow of the text. I will cite the translations that are not mine.

22. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3–5.

There is not for me a God other than He.” Then he watched as Jupiter ascended, and it is [also] said [it was] Venus. That night was towards the end of the month. And he saw the star before the moon, so he said “This is my Lord!” This is what God has said:

2. *When the night descended upon [Ibrāhīm], he saw a star and exclaimed, “This is my Lord!” When the star had set, [Ibrāhīm] said, “I love not those that set.” But when he saw the moon shining, he exclaimed, “This is my Lord!” But when it set he said, “Unless my Lord guide me, I shall be as those who have gone astray.” When he saw the sun rising in splendor, he exclaimed, “This is my Lord! This is the greatest of them!” But when it set he said, “O people I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to God. I turn my face to the One who created the heavens and the earth. And never shall I give partners to God.”*<sup>23</sup>

3. They [the historians] said: his father used to make idols.<sup>24</sup> When Ibrāhīm started working with his father, his father made the idols and started giving them to Ibrāhīm to sell them. Ibrāhīm took them and called out, “Who buys what injures and is not beneficial?” So they would not buy any from him. When he didn’t sell them, [Ibrāhīm] took the idols to a river and smashed their heads<sup>25</sup> and mocked them, saying, “Drink! You are useless!” deriding the people and their ignorance and waywardness, until his finding fault with the idols and his mocking them became widely known among his people and countrymen. His people argued with him concerning his religion, so [Ibrāhīm] said to them, “Do you argue with me concerning God, when he has guided me?”<sup>26</sup> . . . God says: *That was the reasoning about us, which We gave to [Ibrāhīm] (to use) against his people. We raise whom We will, degree after degree: for the Lord is full of wisdom and knowledge,*<sup>27</sup> so that God defeats and conquers them with the argument. Then [Ibrāhīm] summoned Āzar to his religion. He said, “O my father, why do you worship what cannot hear, nor see, nor can profit you anything?”<sup>28</sup> etc., according to the story. But his father refused to answer [Ibrāhīm’s] invitation to him.<sup>29</sup> So Ibrāhīm declared to his people openly and in guiltlessness what they were worshiping and manifested his religion. [Ibrāhīm] said, “I am amazed at what you and your fathers are worshiping. Indeed, they [referring to the previous argument with the people] would have hindered me if not for the Lord Omnipotent.” They asked, “Who do you worship?” [Ibrāhīm] answered, “The Lord Omnipotent!” They asked, “Does that mean Nimrūdh?” [Ibrāhīm] answered, “No! It is the One who created me, it is He Who guides!” etc. [Ibrāhīm] circulated this message among the people until it reached Nimrūdh the tyrant.

23. Citing Qurʾan 6:76–79. The translation used here is from Yusuf Ali, trans., *The Meaning of the Holy Qur-ān: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary* (Saudi Arabia: King Fahd Complex, 1992), and has been modified in some places by the translator of al-Thaʿlabi (Brian M. Hauglid). Because of the modifications and the use of other translations, Ali’s versification of the Qurʾan has been dropped. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

24. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

25. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

26. Citing Qurʾan 6:80.

27. Citing Qurʾan 6:83, translation by Yusuf Ali (modified).

28. Citing Qurʾan 19:42.

29. Cf. Abraham 2:5.

4. So [Nimrūdh] summoned [Ibrāhīm] and said to him, “O Ibrāhīm, have you seen the God that sent you and that you invite to worship; that you speak of His power with which you exalt him over what is other than he?” Ibrāhīm said, “My Lord is the One Who causes life and death.”<sup>30</sup> Nimrūdh said, “I cause life and death.” Ibrāhīm asked, “How do you cause life and death?” [Nimrūdh] answered, “I take two men who are worthy of death in my wisdom. I kill one of them; thus, I have put him to death. Then I forgive the other and leave him; therefore, I have given him life.” At that moment, as Ibrāhīm spoke to him, God brought forth the sun from the east and then he brought it forth from the west. Nimrūdh was so amazed, he did not counter [Ibrāhīm] with anything because of the evidence which attended him. As God says: *He who was amazed was an apostate.*<sup>31</sup>

5. Indeed, Ibrāhīm desired that his people see the weakness of their idols, which they were worshipping besides God, and the powerlessness of the idols forced the proof upon them. [Ibrāhīm] began, therefore, to seize the opportunity and made his effort until a feast for them had arrived. (Al-Suddī said): There was a feast for them each year which they made public and at which they would assemble. When they went to their feast, they would call upon the idols and they would bow down to them. Then they would return to their homes. When it was the time of the feast, Ibrāhīm’s father said, “O Ibrāhīm, if you depart with us to our feast, our religion will amaze you!” So Ibrāhīm left with them. When he had gone some of the way, he threw himself down saying, “I am sick! My leg suffers!” The people turned from him as he fell. When they had departed, [Ibrāhīm] shouted to those at the rear [the weaker of the people had remained], “By God, I will certainly plan against your idols.”<sup>32</sup> They heard it from him.

6. (Mujāhid said), and Qatāda related that, Ibrāhīm had said, this [account] is a secret among his people [meaning, the leg story was not heard]. However, no one heard this but one man, and he is the one who revealed this story to him [Qatāda]. These reporters said: Ibrāhīm then returned from the road to the House of the Gods [al-Ālaha].<sup>33</sup> Within this house was a great hallway, and the front part of the door of the hallway had a great idol that was next to a smaller idol, and there were idols lined up side by side to the first two, each one of which was next to a smaller idol, and thus was the door of the hallway.<sup>34</sup> When the people produced food, they placed it in the presence of these gods. They would say, “When it is time for our return, the gods will have blessed our food for our eating.” When Ibrāhīm looked at the idols and at the food they had, he said to these idols by way

30. Citing Qur’an 2:258. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:7.

31. Citing Qur’an 2:258.

32. Citing Qur’an 21:57.

33. Referring to the Ka’ba in Mecca, from which Muḥammad later removed pagan idols in order to establish the worship of Allah.

34. This is an extremely difficult passage. In Tha’labī’s text, the phrase is فاذا فى البيت نهر مستقبل باب النهر صنم . عظيم يليه اصغر الى باب النهر . The باب النهر (*bāb al-nahr*, i.e., door of the river) was very confusing. Baiḍāwī uses باب البهو (*bāb al-bahw*, i.e., door of the hallway), which makes more sense. See al-Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta’wīl* (n.p., 1899–1902), 4:254.

of ridicule, “Why don’t you eat?” When they did not answer, [Ibrāhīm] said, “Why don’t you speak?” So he quickly hit them with the right hand and began shattering them with an ax in his hand until only the largest remained.<sup>35</sup> He put the ax on it and left. Thus has God said: *So he broke them into fragments, all but a great one they had, for haply they would return to it.*<sup>36</sup> When the people returned from their feast to the house of their gods, they saw them in that condition. They asked, “Who has done this to our gods? He must indeed be some man of impiety.” They said, “We heard a youth talk of them: he is called [Ibrāhīm].”<sup>37</sup> He is the one we think did this dirty trick. So this [news] reached Nimrūdh, the tyrant, and the exalted of his people. They said, “Then bring him before the eyes of the people, that they may bear witness<sup>38</sup> of this, that he is the one who did this.” They were loathe to take him without any evidence, according to Qatāda and al-Suddī.

7. Al-Ḍaḥḥāk says they would bear witness to what we [God? the people?] are going to do with [Ibrāhīm]—our punishment of him. When they came to him they said, “Are you the one that did this with our gods, O Ibrāhīm?” Ibrāhīm said, “No! The biggest of them did it. This one became angry that you worshiped these smaller gods. And the biggest one shattered them. Ask them, if [since] they can talk.”<sup>39</sup>

8. The Prophet said that Ibrāhīm told only three lies according to God: [Ibrāhīm] says (1) “I am sick,” (2) “No! The biggest one did this,” and (3) he said to the king, “O one who deals with Sarah, she is my sister.” When Ibrāhīm had said that to them, they turned to themselves and said, “Surely you have wronged this man in your questioning of him when these gods of yours with whom he has done what he has done are here [with us]. So ask them.” This is what Ibrāhīm had said: “Ask the gods if they have the ability to speak,” but his people said, “We did not see it,” just as [Ibrāhīm] had said. (It is said): “Surely you are in error with your worship of the small idols with this big one.” Then they bowed their heads, confused by Ibrāhīm’s command, for they knew that these gods did not speak nor hit.<sup>40</sup> They said, “You know these two [small and big gods] could not speak.” When Ibrāhīm’s argument confronted them, he said to them, “You worship to the exclusion of God what cannot benefit you at all and cannot harm you. Shame upon you and what you worship besides God; have you no sense?”<sup>41</sup> When the argument compelled them they were unable to answer. They said, “Burn him and protect your gods, if you do (anything at all.)”<sup>42</sup>

35. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

36. Citing Qurʾan 21:58, translation by A. J. Arberry.

37. Citing Qurʾan 21:59–60, translation by Yusuf Ali (modified). Ali comments, “Different groups of people are speaking. Those who were not present at Abraham’s speech in verse 57 [And by Allah, I have a plan for your idols—after ye go away and turn your backs], ask ‘Who has done this?’” Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur-ān*, 932 n. 2719.

38. Citing Qurʾan 21:61, translation by Yusuf Ali.

39. Citing Qurʾan 21:62–63.

40. See Qurʾan 21:65.

41. Citing Qurʾan 21:66–67.

42. Citing Qurʾan 21:68, translation by Yusuf Ali.

9. ‘Abd al-Allāh b. ‘Umar said that the one who advised them to burn Ibrāhīm with fire was a man from the Akrād. Sha‘īb al-Jabā’ī said his name was Haynūn. God swallowed him up in the earth, and there he will continue to reverberate until the Day of the Resurrection. When Nimrūdh and his people gathered to burn Ibrāhīm, they confined him at home. They built him a structure, like a fence; thus God says, “They built a structure for him and threw him in the fire.”<sup>43</sup> They gathered the firmest firewood and all kinds of wood for him. If a woman became ill, she would say, “If God will restore me, surely I will gather wood for Ibrāhīm.” Some women would make vows to search [for wood] out of a desire to achieve their goal. Then they would gather the firewood and place it in the fire in which Ibrāhīm was to be burned, seeking a reward in their religion.

10. Ibn Ishaq said: They gathered wood for a month until they had gathered much of it. When they had gathered what they desired, they ignited each piece of wood with fire.<sup>44</sup> As the fire ignited [it rose] until the birds flying over were consumed from the intensity of its heat. They approached Ibrāhīm and raised him to the top of the structure and they bound him. They made a catapult, according to the instruction of Iblīs,<sup>45</sup> since they were not able to propel him into the fire because of the intensity of the heat. They made the catapult and placed [Ibrāhīm] in it, chained and fettered.<sup>46</sup> The heavens, the earth, the mountains, and those upon it, and those angels and all creation except men and jinn<sup>47</sup> raised a hue and a cry together. They said, “By our Lord, There is none in your land who worships you except Ibrāhīm. He is burning in the fire. Permit us to rescue him.” God said to them, “Indeed, if he seeks help from you in any way or by any summons, then rescue him. I permit [you] to do that. Indeed, even if he summons [someone] other than Me, I will teach him and be near him. I know how to deal with him.” When they desired to throw him into the fire, the angel of water came to [Ibrāhīm].<sup>48</sup> He said, “Indeed, if you desire, I will smother the fire. Indeed, the water stores and the rains are under my power.” The keeper of the wind came to him and said, “If you wish, I will blow out the fire.” Ibrāhīm said, “I do not need you.” Then he raised his head to the heavens and said to them, “You are the only One in the heavens and the earth, and there is not anyone on the earth besides me who worships you,” etc.<sup>49</sup> Mu‘atamir on the authority of Abū b. Ka‘b—Arqām reported that when they tied him up to throw him into the fire, Ibrāhīm said, “There is no other God but You, praise be to You, the Lord Omniscient, praise be to You, dominion be to You, You who have no partner.” Then they hurled him with the cata-

43. Not in the Qur’an.

44. Tha‘labī’s text is unclear here; again Baiḍāwī’s version is used. See Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl*, 4:258.

45. Iblīs, or Lucifer, is one of the most common Arabic names for the devil. This Arabic word is probably ultimately derived from Greek *diabolos*, “accuser,” from which come our words *devil* and *diabolical*.

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

47. Jinn are spirit beings, created from fire (unlike man, who is created from the earth). They can be good but are mostly mischievous or evil. They will also be judged at the last day.

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

49. Cf. Abraham 1:15; 2:12.

pult into a large place in the fire.<sup>50</sup> Then Jibrīl<sup>51</sup> met him and said, “O Ibrāhīm, are you in need?” “From you, no!”<sup>52</sup> Jibrīl said to [Ibrāhīm], “Ask your Lord.” But Ibrāhīm said, “I am content with His knowledge of my situation. God can protect me, for He is an excellent Trustee.” In the report, Ibrāhīm was rescued [from the fire] by his saying, “God can protect me for He is an excellent Trustee.” God said, “O fire! Be thou cool, and safe upon Ibrāhīm!”<sup>53</sup> Al-Suddī said: Jibrīl is the one who declared it by the command of God.

11. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and Ibn ʿAbbās said: If Jibrīl did not say “be safe,” Ibrāhīm would have died from the coldness of the fire. But at that moment, the fire did not remain in the earth, meaning only that it was considered to be extinguished. Kaʿb al-Aḥbār said that Qatāda and Zahrī related that no one used fire that day, for the fire did not burn anything that day except the fetters of Ibrāhīm.<sup>54</sup> Everybody joined to put out the fire for [Ibrāhīm] except the lizard. So the Prophet commanded to kill it and renamed it Fawīsqā. Al-Suddī said: The angels took Ibrāhīm and sat him upon the earth. Suddenly there appeared a spring of water, red flowers, and a narcissus flower. They say Ibrāhīm stayed in the fire for seven days. Al-Minhāl b. ʿUmar said: Ibrāhīm, the friend of God, said, “There were no more pleasurable days than the days I lived in the fire.” Ibn Isḥāq and others said: God sent the angel of shade in the form of Ibrāhīm, and he remained in the fire next to Ibrāhīm and kept him company.<sup>55</sup> Jibrīl came to [Ibrāhīm] with a garment of silk. He said to him, “O Ibrāhīm, indeed your Lord says, ‘Do you not know that the fire will not injure my beloved ones?’” And Jibrīl put the garment on [Ibrāhīm].<sup>56</sup> Then Nimrūdh lamented as he looked down from a palace at [Ibrāhīm]. Nimrūdh considered that there was no doubt that [Ibrāhīm] had died. But he saw [Ibrāhīm] sitting in a garden. And Nimrūdh saw the angel seated at [Ibrāhīm]’s side,<sup>57</sup> and although fire was burning all around him, only the firewood that had been gathered was being burned. Nimrūdh called to him, “O Ibrāhīm, your God is the One Who has brought His power that is placed between you and the fire so that you are not harmed. O Ibrāhīm, are you able to leave from the fire?” [Ibrāhīm] said, “Yes.” [Nimrūdh] said, “Are you afraid to rise from it lest you be hurt?” [Ibrāhīm] answered, “No.” Nimrūdh said, “Arise!” And so [Ibrāhīm] left from the fire. Ibrāhīm walked around in the fire and left from it. And when he walked out to him, [Nimrūdh] asked, “O Ibrāhīm, who is the man whom I saw with you in the likeness of your form, who stayed at your side?” [Ibrāhīm] replied, “The angel of shade. My Lord sent him to keep me company in the fire.” Nimrūdh said, “O Ibrāhīm, I was very close to your God when I saw His power and determination in the fire and when

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

51. The angel Gabriel in Judeo-Christian tradition.

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

53. Citing Qurʾan 21:69.

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

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

56. The tradition that Gabriel brought Abraham a garment from paradise has been noted in other texts.

57. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

you refused all worship except Him and His unification. I will sacrifice four thousand cows for God." Ibrāhīm said to him, "God will not accept anything from you as long as you remain in your religion. You should leave your religion and come to my religion." [Nimrūdh] said, "I am not able to give up my kingdom, but I will sacrifice [the cows] for Him." He was close to sacrificing them, but the sacrifice was prevented by the authority of Ibrāhīm. Then, indeed, [Nimrūdh] said to Ibrāhīm, "The best Lord is your Lord, O Ibrāhīm!"

12. (Al-Shaʿbī said): Ibrāhīm was thrown into the fire<sup>58</sup> when he was sixteen years old; he sacrificed Iṣḥāq<sup>59</sup> when [Iṣḥāq] was seven years old, and Sāra gave birth to [Iṣḥāq] when she was ninety years old. [Ibrāhīm] sacrificed [Iṣḥāq] in Jerusalem upon a [mound?]. When Sāra learned of what God willed concerning Iṣḥāq, she remained for two days and she died on the third day. (Ibn Iṣḥāq said): To comply with the request of Ibrāhīm, some of his people, when they saw what God had done in the way of cooling the fire for him and giving safety, [became fearful of Nimrūdh and their religion]. Lūṭ believed [Ibrāhīm]. He was the son of [Ibrāhīm's] brother. Lūṭ is the son of Hārān b. Tārakh [Terah]. Hārān is the brother of Ibrāhīm, and they have a third brother and he is called Nāḥūr b. Tārakh. Hārān is the father of Lūṭ,<sup>60</sup> Nāḥūr is the father of Tanwīl, Tanwīl is the father of Lābān, and Rifqā<sup>61</sup> is the daughter of Tanwīl [and] the wife of Iṣḥāq, son of Ibrāhīm, and mother of Yaʿqūb. Liyā<sup>62</sup> and Rāḥīl<sup>63</sup> are the wives of Yaʿqūb, and they are the daughters of Lābān. Sāra also believed [Ibrāhīm], and she is the daughter of [Ibrāhīm's] uncle. Sāra is the daughter of Hārān. However, Ibrāhīm is greater than [Hārān]. Al-Suddī said: Sāra was the daughter of the King of Ḥarrān, and Ibrāhīm and Lūṭ departed in the direction of Syria. She had spoken evil against their people concerning their religion. Ibrāhīm married her, but he did not force her [to marry him].

13. (Ibn Iṣḥāq said): Ibrāhīm left from Kūthā in the land of Iraq; he left home for the sake of his Lord, and Lūṭ and Sāra left with him just as God had said: *Lūṭ had faith in him, he said, "I will leave home for the sake of my Lord."*<sup>64</sup> They traveled until they reached Ḥarrān. [Ibrāhīm] lived with them there as long as God, the Exalted, willed him to stay. Then he moved from there until he arrived at Egypt. He then left Egypt for Syria. He camped at al-Sabʿa in Palestine, and it is a desert area of Syria. Lūṭ camped in al-Muʿtafiqa, and it is in the area of al-Sabʿa, a day and a night's journey. God sent forth [Ibrāhīm] as a prophet, therefore God says: *We delivered him, and Lūṭ, unto the Land that We had blessed for all beings,*<sup>65</sup> which means Syria. The blessing of the land is that God sent forth from there many of

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

59. Biblical Isaac.

60. Biblical Lot.

61. Biblical Rebecca; the text reflects the Hebrew name Ribqāh (Rivka in modern Hebrew), which the King James Version spells Rebekah (e.g., Genesis 24:58–61).

62. Biblical Leah.

63. Biblical Rachel.

64. Citing Qurʾan 29:26, translation by Yusuf Ali (modified).

65. Citing Qurʾan 21:71, translation by A. J. Arberry.

the prophets, and so it is a holy land. ʿĪsā [Jesus], the son of Mary, lived in it, and the false messiah perished in it at the gate of Ad. It is a land fertile with trees, rivers, and fruits. Life for the rich and the poor is pleasing in this land. (Abū b. Kaʿb said): There is nothing but sweet water with its source springing from under the Dome of the Rock,<sup>66</sup> which then divides in the earth, and God knows best.

**Chapter 3: The birth of Ismāʿīl<sup>67</sup> and Ishaq. Ismaʿīl and his mother Hājar embark on a pilgrimage to the Holy Place. The story of the well of Zamzam.**

1. (The historians say): When God, the Exalted, delivered His friend, Ibrāhīm had faith in God. Those who believed followed him, separating from their people and demonstrating freedom from them.<sup>68</sup> They said, “We are free from you and from what you worship besides God; we disbelieve you, O worshipers of that which is besides God; hostility and hatred have begun between us. O worship until you believe in the One God.” Then Ibrāhīm left his home for the sake of his Lord and Lūṭ went with him. Ibrāhīm married the daughter of his uncle, Sāra. [Ibrāhīm] left with them, seeking to take flight in his religion, seeking the safety to worship his Lord,<sup>69</sup> until he reached Ḥarrān. [Ibrāhīm] stayed there as long as God willed, then he moved from his home there to live in Egypt wherein was the pharaoh who was of the first pharaohs.<sup>70</sup> Sāra was the most lovely and beautiful of women. She did not disobey Ibrāhīm in anything, and therefore God, the Exalted, honored her. A man reported to the tyrant [pharaoh] that, “in this place is a man, and with him is a woman who is the most lovely of women,” and he described her loveliness and beauty to him. The tyrant sent for Ibrāhīm and he came. [The pharaoh] asked [Ibrāhīm], “Who is this woman with you?” [Ibrāhīm] answered, “She is my sister.” Ibrāhīm feared to say “she is my wife” because the pharaoh would kill him. [The pharaoh] said to [Ibrāhīm], “have her adorned and bring her so that I may see her.” So Ibrāhīm returned to Sāra and said to her, “This tyrant has asked me about you; I told him that you are my sister. Don’t contradict that when you are with him in front of God. You are my sister. Indeed there is not in this land a Muslim<sup>71</sup> excepting you and me.” Then Sāra left to meet the tyrant and Ibrāhīm performed prayer. When she entered into the presence of [the pharaoh] and he saw her, he reached out to her, taking her by the hand. She caused his hand to wither up to his chest. When [the pharaoh] saw that her command was greater, he said to her, “Ask your Lord to free my hand; I don’t want to harm you.” Sarah said, “O God, if he is truthful, release his hand for him.” So God released his hand.

66. The Dome of the Rock is the shrine that sits atop the site formerly occupied by the temple in Jerusalem. For the water that is to flow in the last days from beneath the altar of the temple (which some believe to have been atop the bedrock inside the shrine), see Ezekiel 47:1–12 and Zechariah 14:8.

67. Biblical Ishmael. The name is spelled two different ways by Thaʿlabī.

68. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

69. Ibid.

70. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

71. I.e., one who submits (to God).

2. (In some of the supporting reports), [the pharaoh] did that three times, wanting to touch her, but his hand withered. When he saw that, he returned her to Ibrāhīm, and [the pharaoh] had granted her Hājar, and she was an Egyptian<sup>72</sup> slave. When Ibrāhīm heard Sāra he turned from his prayer and said, “*Mahīm* [What is the report?]”<sup>73</sup> She said, “God stopped the deceit of the shameless [pharaoh]; he has given me the slave-girl, Hājar.”<sup>74</sup> Muḥammad b. Sirīn said: Abū Hurayra had discussed this on the authority of the Prophet. According to him, Sāra said, “This is your bondwoman, O Prophet of the Highest!” (According to some reports), God lifted the veil between Ibrāhīm and Sāra so that he could see her from the time she left [Ibrāhīm’s] presence until her departure [from the pharaoh] to him. [Sāra’s] nobility and purity belonged to the heart of Ibrāhīm. These sources say that Hājar was a slave girl with beauty and that Sāra gave her to Ibrāhīm. She said, “See her, a pure woman. Perhaps God will bless you with a son from her.” Sāra could not have a son because she was advanced in age. So Ibrāhīm knew Hājar and she conceived Isma‘īl for him. (It is related): Muḥammad b. Isḥāq on the authority of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abd al-Allāh b. Ka‘b b. Mālīk al-Ansārī said that the Prophet said: When you conquer Egypt, treat its people well, for protection and kinship belong to them. Ibn Isḥāq said: al-Zahrī asked, “What is the kinship which the Prophet mentioned?” The Prophet answered, “It is Hājar the mother of Isma‘īl.” The sources say that Ibrāhīm then left Egypt and returned to Syria.

72. The text here uses the term *Coptic*, rather than the usual Arabic word for Egyptian.

73. This word is not listed in any dictionary accessible to this translator, but fortunately, Ibn Kathīr explains the meaning of *mahīm* (مَاهِيم) in his *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’*. See Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’* (Cairo: Dār al-‘Ulūm al-‘Arabiyya, 1998), 161.

74. Biblical Hagar.

## EXTRACTS FROM AL-BIRUNI

The Persian historian Abū al-Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, sometimes called al-Khwārizmī (A.H. 362–ca. 442/A.D. 973–ca. 1050), was one of the greatest medieval Islamic scholars known, deserving his title *al-Ustādh*, or “the master,” as about 180 works are attributed to him. He used Arabic for his scientific writings, although other writings may have been in Persian or both Persian and Arabic. C. Edward Sachau made an English translation of the *Athār al-bākiya al-Bīrūnī* and published it under the title *The Chronology of Ancient Nations* (1879; reprint, Frankfurt: Minerva, 1969), from which we take the following selection (pp. 186–87). We have removed Sachau’s diacritics because they are inconsistent with modern usage.

1. The remnants of those Sabians are living in Harran, their name (*i.e.* *Alharraniyya*) being derived from their place. Others derive it from Haran b.<sup>1</sup> Terah, the brother of Abraham, saying that he among their chiefs was the most deeply imbued with their religion and its most tenacious adherent. *Ibn Sankila* (Syncellus),<sup>2</sup> the Christian, relates in his book which he, intending to refute their creed, stuffed with lies and futile stories, that Abraham left their community simply because leprosy appeared on his foreskin, and that everybody who suffered from this disease was considered impure, and excluded from all society. Therefore he cut off his foreskin, *i.e.* he circumcised himself. In this state he entered one of their idol-temples, when he heard a voice speaking to him: “O Abraham, you went away from us with one sin, and you return to us with two sins. Go away, and do not again come to us.”

2. Thereupon Abraham, seized by wrath, broke the idols in pieces,<sup>3</sup> and left their community. But, after having done it, he repented and wished to sacrifice his son to the planet Saturn, it being their custom to sacrifice their children,<sup>4</sup> as that author maintains. Saturn, however, on seeing him truly repentant, let him go free with the sacrifice of a ram.

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1. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read “son of.”

2. Syncellus’s account is included in the Christian section of this work.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

## EXTRACTS FROM AL-TARAFI

Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muṭarrif al-Kinānī, known by the *nisba* (nickname) al-Ṭarafī (A.H. 387–457 / A.D. 997–1065), also known as al-Qurṭubī, was another of the Arab chronographers who wrote a book entitled *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’* (Stories of the Prophets). He was heavily involved in Qur’anic exegesis, and that is reflected in his many Qur’anic quotations. Born perhaps in Cordoba on the Iberian peninsula, al-Ṭarafī was well read and well taught. He based his *Qiṣaṣ* on many earlier scholars, among them four that we include in this volume: Ibn Ishāq, Ibn Bishr, al-Ṭabarī, and Ka‘b al-Aḥbār. The Arabic text has not yet been published, but an Italian translation was made by Roberto Tottoli in his book *Al-Tarafi: Storie dei profeti* (Genoa, Italy: il Nuovo Melangolo, n.d.), 72–75, 82–96. The English translation used here was made from the Italian by Aaron Christensen. We have numbered the paragraphs for indexing purposes.

1. The history of Abraham: of the controversy he had with Nimrod; of when he was thrown into the fire; of the word he said to his father Āzar and of the reproaches of his people because they worshiped idols, the stars, the sun, and the moon;<sup>1</sup> and others of his stories. His name was Abraham (Ibrāhīm) b.<sup>2</sup> Tārah b. Nāḥūr b. Asru‘ b. Arghuw b. Fāligh b. ‘Ā’ir b. Shālikh b. Arfakhshad b. Sām b. Nūḥ b. Lamk b. Matūshalakh b. Akhnūkh b. Bāradh b. Mahlābil b. Anūsh b. Qaynān b. Shīth b. Ādam,<sup>3</sup> and he lived 175 years or 195 years.<sup>4</sup>

2. His father Tārah lived 250 years, when Abraham was circumcised with a hatchet at the age of 80 years. His mother was Nūnāniyya, of the descendants of Arfakhshad, and the great and powerful God said:

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

2. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read “son of.”

3. For the equivalent genealogy in the Judeo-Christian tradition, see Genesis 5; 11:10–25: Terah, Nahor, Serug, Reu (Arghuw), Peleg (Fāligh), Eber, Salah, Arphaxad, Shem, Ham, Noah, Lamech, Methuselah, Enoch, Jared, Mahaleel, Enos, Cainan, Seth, and Adam. Note that the usual Arabic equivalents for Serug and Eber are missing, with Asru‘ and ‘Ā’ir listed instead. The names for Jared (Bāradh) and Mahaleel (Mahlābil) have been corrupted, and finally, the order for Cainan and Enos has been reversed (see Genesis 5:9–13).

4. According to Genesis 25:7, Abraham lived 175 years.

3. "Haven't you seen him who disputed about his Lord with Abraham because God had given him supreme power?"<sup>5</sup>

4. Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī and some experts on tradition reported that the first tyrant on the earth was Nimrod b. Kin'an<sup>6</sup> b. Kūsh<sup>7</sup> b. Sām<sup>8</sup> b. Nūḥ; it was he who built the tower [of Babel]. The people came to him to receive food, and once even Abraham came to procure food with the others. When they arrived before him, Nimrod asked,

5. "Who is your Lord?" and they responded,

6. "You!"

7. When Abraham then approached him, he asked,

8. "Who is your Lord?" and Abraham answered,

9. "He is my Lord who gives life and gives death!"<sup>9</sup>

10. "It is I," the other replied, "who give life and give death. I leave [him] alive whom I wish to slay when I don't slay [him], and in this way I give life, while when I slay another, I give him death." Abraham answered him,

11. "God surely makes the sun rise from the east. You therefore make it rise from the west, if you are truthful when you say that you are a god!"

12. Thus said the great and powerful God in the Qur'an: *Thus the infidel remained ashamed*, which means he was quieted and that which he claimed was revealed as false. After this dispute, Nimrod sent him away without food. Abraham returned to his family, and on the way back he crossed a colored sand dune and said to himself,

13. "Why not take some of this sand and carry it to my family, to delude them and at least make them feel better when I arrive with it?" Thus it was that he took some of it and came to his family, put down the full baggage, and went to sleep. His wife arose and took the baggage, opened it, and found there the best food that anyone had ever seen. She cooked some of it and brought it to Abraham, who asked her,

14. "Where did this come from?"

15. "From the food you brought," she answered.

16. Thus Abraham knew that it was the great and powerful God who had provided the food, and he praised Him for this. Then God sent an angel to the tyrant with this message:

17. "Believe in me, and I will leave you in your reign."

18. "Is there then another Lord besides me?" answered Nimrod.

19. The angel came a second time, saying the same thing, but Nimrod refused. He came a third time, but again Nimrod refused. Then the angel told him,

20. "Gather your assembly in three days." The tyrant gathered his assembly, and God sent the angel, and he threw against all present so many mosquitoes that the sun arose

5. Citing Qur'an 2:258.

6. Biblical Canaan. According to the Bible, Nimrod's father was Cush (Genesis 10:8), while Canaan was his uncle (Genesis 10:6). Cf. Abraham 1:21-22.

7. Biblical Cush.

8. Biblical Shem.

9. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:7. These and all italics through paragraph 12 are citing Qur'an 2:258.

without being seen. The mosquitoes that God had sent against them devoured their flesh and drank their blood until nothing remained but their bones. King Nimrod was nevertheless untouched, as at the first. None of all this happened to him. But for him, God sent a single mosquito that entered one nostril and remained [there] to hit the inside of his head with hammers for four hundred years. The most compassionate with him were those who clenched [their] hands and struck him on the head. Nimrod had been a tyrant for four hundred years, and for four hundred years God punished him, exactly as long as he had reigned; then God made him die.<sup>10</sup>

21. This is he who constructed a tower to heaven, *but God struck their building to the foundations, and the roof collapsed on them from above, and they reaped their punishment from where they least expected it.*<sup>11</sup>

22. Nimrod was also he who took two small eagles, and he raised them until they grew, and they became great and large. Then he tied the legs of the two of them to a box, starved them, and sat down, together with another man, in the box. When he raised from the box a stick with a piece of meat at the top, [the eagles] took flight, and Nimrod said to his companion,

23. "Look, what do you see?" and he responded,

24. "I see this and that." Then he said, "I see the earth as if it were a fly!"

25. "Turn the stick," Nimrod then ordered. The man turned and they descended.

26. The mountains became [so] afraid, because they thought the hour of judgment was come, that they were almost moved [out of their places]. In fact God, great is His praise, said: *Even if their plots were such to shake the hills.*<sup>12</sup> . . .

[Construction of the Ka'ba by Abraham and Isaac]

27. Another Qur'anic passage reports: *And remember when Abraham said to his father Āzar,*

28. *"Shall you take idols for gods?"*<sup>13</sup>

29. Al-Suddī holds that Āzar was the name of the father of Abraham, a man of the people of Kawthā [Cutha], from a village in Sawād, the district of Kūfa, and it is told that he had a double name, Āzar Tārah, like Israel Jacob. According to other interpretations, Āzar was instead an epithet that meant "the false one who distorts religion," and it was the harshest word that Abraham directed at him. In fact, the word Āzar is also read with the ending of the nominative of the interjection, as though it were written, when Abraham said to his father, "O you who distort religion, O false one, *shall you take idols for gods?*"<sup>14</sup>

10. This story, often repeated in the Arabic texts, may derive from the Talmudic account of the gnat that entered the nose of Titus and picked at his brain for seven years following his desecration of the temple in Jerusalem (Babylonian Talmud *Gittin* 56b).

11. Citing Qur'an 16:26.

12. Citing Qur'an 14:46.

13. Citing Qur'an 6:74. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

14. *Ibid.*

30. Then said the great and powerful God in the Qur'an: *And thus We<sup>15</sup> showed to Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and of the earth so that he might be one of those who are firmly convinced.*<sup>16</sup>

31. Mujāhid holds that this verse means, "I showed him the signs of the heavens and of the earth"; indeed, the seven heavens gaped open before him even to the throne, and he contemplated them, and the seven earths were opened before him, and he contemplated them.<sup>17</sup>

32. Al-Suddī holds that Abraham was lifted up on a stone, and the heavens opened wide, and he saw the grandeur of God in them. He saw his place in paradise,<sup>18</sup> and the lands were opened to him even until he could see the ends of the earth; for this intent are the words of the Qur'an, *and We gave him his reward in the world,*<sup>19</sup> which means: I showed him his place in paradise. According to various opinions, "*his reward in the world*" means "the beautiful praise." . . .

33. *And when the darkness of night enwrapped him, Abraham saw a star, and said,*

34. *"This is my Lord."*<sup>20</sup>

35. It is passed down by Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq that the reason Abraham saw the star was that Āzar was a man of the city in the district of Kūfa. At that time Nimrod b. Kin'ān<sup>21</sup> reigned over the east. God wanted to send Abraham as a witness against his people, since in the period of time between Noah and Abraham there had been no prophet, with the exception of Hūd and Ṣāliḥ.<sup>22</sup> When the time approached that God had established for Abraham, the astrologers went to Nimrod and told him,

36. "Know that we have discovered by our knowledge that a boy by the name of Abraham will be born in this your city. This man will abandon your religion and will destroy your idols in such a month of such a year."

37. When that year began, Nimrod sent to seek all the pregnant women in his city and held them prisoner near himself, except the mother of Abraham, the wife of Āzar, because he didn't know she was pregnant, because she was a young woman and didn't know how to recognize that she had conceived in her own womb. When the imprisoned women gave birth that year, Nimrod ordered the killing of each male born. But when the labor pains began, the mother of Abraham went out by night into a nearby cave, and there she bore Abraham. She prepared for him everything that would be necessary, as one does for every newborn, and then she closed up the cave with him inside. It is said,

15. The Qur'an always uses the royal plural (we, our, us) when God is speaking.

16. Citing Qur'an 6:75.

17. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1-18; Facsimiles 2 and 3. See also Moses 1:27-29.

18. Cf. Abraham 3:21-24.

19. Citing Qur'an 29:27.

20. Citing Qur'an 6:76.

21. Biblical Canaan. Cf. Abraham 1:21-22.

22. Hūd and Ṣāliḥ are two pre-Islamic prophets mentioned in the Qur'an. For a discussion of Hūd as Lehi and of Ṣāliḥ, see William J. Hamblin, "Pre-Islamic Prophets," in *Mormons and Muslims*, ed. Spencer J. Palmer (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1983): 85-104.

according to another version, that the mother gave birth to him, then wrapped him in blankets and put him in a narrow place in the bed of a dried-up river.

38. The mother, after the birth, came to the cave to check on his condition and what he was doing; she found him living by sucking his thumb and [receiving] his sustenance from God. It is said that Āzar asked the mother of Abraham about the state of her pregnancy, and she responded,

39. "I gave birth to a boy, but he died." Āzar believed her and said nothing of it.

40. For Abraham, as he grew, every day was like a month and every month was like a year, and he had not been in the cave but fifteen days when he said to his mother,

41. "Let me go out to look around." His mother carried him outside by night. Abraham looked around, considered the creation of the heavens and the earth, and said, "Truly, He who created me, sustained me, and nourished me is my Lord. I have no other God but He."

42. Then Abraham looked toward the sky, saw a star, and said,

43. "*This is my Lord!*"<sup>23</sup> It is said that this star was Venus. Abraham followed it with his eyes until it disappeared,<sup>24</sup> and when the star set he said,

44. "*I do not like that which sets.*"<sup>25</sup> I do not like that which, by its condition, rises and moves in a manner by which it is evident that it is a created thing, which moves from one place to another just like all things that, you agree with me, are not God." Then Abraham saw the sun and said that which God has said in His Book.<sup>26</sup>

45. It is said that his mother visited him periodically in that secret place, nursing him until he arrived at the age of weaning, and she weaned him, taking care of him until Abraham was capable of reasoning. One day he asked his mother,

46. "Who is my lord?"

47. "I am," responded his mother. Abraham asked again,

48. "And who is your lord?"

49. "Your father."

50. "Who is the lord of my father?" Abraham responded.

51. "Be still!" responded his mother, and then she returned to his father and recounted to him what had happened, adding, "This is he of whom we were warned who will change the religion of men."

52. Then Abraham looked to the heavens<sup>27</sup> and said,

53. "My Lord is He who has created these things";<sup>28</sup> then he went among his people and discovered that they were devoted to some of their idols.<sup>29</sup> He said to them,

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23. Citing Qur'an 6:76.

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

25. Citing Qur'an 6:76.

26. I.e., in the Qur'an; see 6:78.

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

28. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 4–5.

29. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

54. "O my people! I am innocent of your idolatry! I turn my face towards Him who has created the heavens and the earth,<sup>30</sup> preferring Islam,<sup>31</sup> without second thoughts; He is God to whom I will never associate anything."<sup>32</sup>

55. Abraham, may peace be upon him, did not cease to proclaim the uniqueness of God and to break the idols of his people, debating with them and denying [the gods'] divinity continually. In fact, the great and powerful God has said in the Qur'an: *And even from the beginning We gave unto Abraham rectitude, because We knew him well,*<sup>33</sup> We knew he had conviction, faith in God and in His uniqueness. And again the Qur'anic passage "when (Abraham) said to his father and to his people, 'what are these imitations to which you are devoted?'"<sup>34</sup> refers to the idols that they adored.<sup>35</sup>

56. And again, as attested in the Qur'an, Abraham said,

57. "I swear by God that I will plan an ambush for your idols when you are gone away, your backs turned."<sup>36</sup>

58. It is reported in the Qur'anic commentary (of Ṭabarī) that Abraham made this oath in secret and in hiding from his people, and that no one heard it save he who declared it when the people said,

59. "Who has done this to our gods? Surely it must be an impious man." Others responded,

60. "We have heard a youth who spoke evil of them: they call him Abraham."<sup>37</sup> The Qur'anic verse "and he broke them all to pieces"<sup>38</sup> means that that Abraham broke their idols to pieces and shreds.<sup>39</sup>

61. The reason Abraham did this to the gods of his people:

62. It is said in the Qur'anic commentary (of Ṭabarī) that the people of Abraham said to him,

63. "O Abraham, we have a feast; if you go to it with us, you will like our religion."

64. When it was the day of the feast, they went up to it, and with them also went Abraham, may God bless him, but at a certain place in the road, he threw himself to the earth and said,

65. "I am sick;<sup>40</sup> my foot hurts." They had stomped on his feet while he was lying down. It is also said that he bandaged his head and his body hurt him, and he remained, without

30. Citing Qur'an 6:78-79. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 4-5.

31. The Muslims believe that Islam (which means "submission," i.e., to God's will) was the religion of the ancient patriarchs.

32. In the Qur'an, the verb *associate* refers to placing anything on a level equal with God. Doing so is an act tantamount to polytheism and is the most grievous sin in Islam.

33. Citing Qur'an 21:51.

34. Citing Qur'an 21:52.

35. Cf. Abraham 1:5-6.

36. Citing Qur'an 21:57.

37. Citing Qur'an 21:59-60.

38. Citing Qur'an 21:58.

39. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

40. Citing Qur'an 37:89.

again leaving the house of the gods. When they were gone, he cried to the last of them, since the weakest of them had stayed,

66. *"I swear, by God, that I will plot an ambush against your idols when you are gone away, your backs turned."*<sup>41</sup>

67. Then Abraham returned to the house of the gods. He found himself in a large hall, and in front of the door of the hall there was a large idol with a smaller one at its side; the idols were all side by side, and every idol had near it a smaller one, even to the door of the hall. The people had already brought food and had left it in front of the gods, saying,

68. *"When it is time to return, our gods shall have blessed our food and we will eat it."* When Abraham saw [the idols] and saw the food they had before them, he said,

69. *"Aren't you going to eat?"*<sup>42</sup> and when he received no answer he said again: *"Why do you not speak?"* and he fell on them, striking them with his right hand.<sup>43</sup>

70. He took a piece of iron and cut off the extremities of each idol,<sup>44</sup> then hung the axe on the neck of the largest idol and went away. When the people came back to get the food, they saw the gods and said,

71. *"Who has done this to our gods? Assuredly it must be an impious man!"*<sup>45</sup>

72. Some of the weak ones who had remained behind, who had heard his oath, said,

73. *"We have heard a young man who spoke evil of them: they call him Abraham."* Then others cried,

74. *"Bring him here before the presence of all, that they might testify against him!"*<sup>46</sup>

75. The commentators hold that the people were loathe to take him without clear proof.

76. According to some opinions, the meaning of this verse is *"that they testify [of]"*<sup>47</sup> our punishment concerning him"; or rather the meaning is *"that they stop"*; or rather Abraham did this so that they would learn and know that if the idols had no defense against what Abraham had done to them, it was even more improbable that they could get away from someone else who intended to ensnare them. He did this, therefore, so that the people would cease to worship the idols, to the end of embracing that which he professed: his religion and belief in the uniqueness of the great and powerful God. *But they asked,*

77. *"Is it you that have done this to our gods, O Abraham?"*

78. *"No,"* he responded, *"the one who has done this is he who is the greatest of them. Ask him therefore, if these idols can speak!"*<sup>48</sup>

79. Concerning the words of the great and powerful God in the Qur'an, they said unto [Abraham], before the king Nimrod:

41. Citing Qur'an 21:57.

42. Citing Qur'an 37:91.

43. Citing Qur'an 37:92-93.

44. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

45. Citing Qur'an 21:59.

46. Citing Qur'an 21:60-61.

47. Citing Qur'an 21:61.

48. Citing Qur'an 21:62-63.

80. *"Is it you who have done this to our gods?"*<sup>49</sup> Is it you who have broken them?"

81. *"No," Abraham answered them, "the one who has committed this is he who is the greatest of them"*<sup>50</sup> and the most important. Ask the gods who has done this to them and has broken them, if they can speak and explain it." *Then they spoke amongst themselves and exclaimed,*

82. *"Verily, you are the guilty ones!"*<sup>51</sup> This means that they thought of the words of Abraham in their hearts; they meditated on them, looking at one another, and they said, "You are a group of fools, for that which you have asked and for your words '*who has done this to our gods,*'<sup>52</sup> O Abraham,' for these your gods to whom this was done are here with you, and therefore ask them, if they really can speak and are intelligent and aware, and they shall give the report of who destroyed and demolished them without any doubt." *But then they again fell into the ancient error,*<sup>53</sup> even that on which Abraham had confuted them, when he had contested against them until the arguments against them had become clear. In fact, they said to him,

83. *"You know well that they do not speak!"*<sup>54</sup>

84. Thus they admitted the inability of that which they worshiped to speak. Qatāda maintains that an evil confusion overcame them.

85. *And they cried,*

86. *"Burn him, and thus appease your gods, if you want to do something."*<sup>55</sup>

87. It is reported in the Qur'anic commentary (of Ṭabarī) that the one who said these last words was a Kurd by the name of Habzar. God caused him to fall into the earth, and he shall sink there until the day of the resurrection.

88. It is reported again in the Qur'anic commentary (of Ṭabarī) that the people of Abraham, may God bless him and grant him salvation, when they wanted to burn him, erected a building to that purpose. They closed him inside it, and they gathered wood.<sup>56</sup> It got to the point that, if a woman took ill, she said,

89. *"If God will make me whole, I will collect wood for Abraham."*

90. When they had collected for such a purpose, and there was much wood, they put fire to it such that the birds that passed over it burned from the intensity of the flame and of the heat. Then they took Abraham and raised him up to the top of the pyre.<sup>57</sup> Abraham raised his head to heaven,<sup>58</sup> but the heaven, the earth, and the mountains said,

91. *"Our Lord, Abraham, your friend, is about to be burned for You in the fire."*

49. Citing Qur'an 21:62.

50. Citing Qur'an 21:63.

51. Citing Qur'an 21:64.

52. Citing Qur'an 21:59.

53. Citing Qur'an 21:65.

54. Citing Qur'an 21:65.

55. Citing Qur'an 21:68.

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

57. Ibid.

58. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

92. "I know more about the situation. If he does invoke your help, aid him," responded God. Then said Abraham, when he raised his head to heaven,

93. "O God! You are alone in heaven, and I am alone on the earth because there is no other on the earth who worships you other than me; God is all that I need, and what an infallible support He is!"<sup>59</sup> Then they pushed him in the fire,<sup>60</sup> but Gabriel cried, by order of God,<sup>61</sup>

94. "*O fire! Be cool and pleasant for Abraham!*"<sup>62</sup>

95. Ibn ʿAbbās reports that if after the cool the "pleasant" had not been added, Abraham would have died from the cold. That day there was not a single fire on the earth that did not extinguish itself, thinking to be that to which God referred.

96. When the fire went out, the people looked upon Abraham and saw that there was a man together with him, and Abraham rested his head in the other's bosom, [and the other] was wiping the sweat from [Abraham's] face. It is said that this person was the angel of shade.<sup>63</sup> God Himself had sent fire, and men had profited therefrom. The people pulled Abraham from the fire, and they took him before the presence of King Nimrod, something they had never before done.

97. It is said that when the people saw him again, after having left him in the flames for seven days, they found he was oozing a white liquid that the fire had not even singed. Then the father of Lot said to them,

98. "The fire will not burn him because you worship it and because he has bewitched it. Rather, put him on top of something and light a fire under him so that he will be killed by the smoke."

99. Thus it was that they put him on top of something that lifted him up, and they kindled the fire under him, but a spark flew up, fell on the beard of the father of Lot, and burned him.<sup>64</sup> He was the most wicked of all regarding Abraham.

100. According to other traditions, they covered him again, with the fire under him, and then they uncovered him, but they did not find [him] where they had put him because God had ordered him to go to the Holy Land. Nimrod left on his trail and began searching for Abraham; he cautioned the frontier lookouts, telling them,

101. "Whoever happens upon you who speaks Syriac, hold him!"

102. Nevertheless, God changed the language spoken by Abraham to Hebrew, and he came to Lot, the son of his uncle, and together with him they went to his people in Ḥar-rān; these are His words in the Qurʾan:

103. "*They wanted to ensnare him, but I made of them the greatest of losers. And I saved him*

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59. Ibid.

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

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

62. Citing Qurʾan 21:69.

63. Tottoli's note: "In the text *al-zill*, which means shade, is also, in the second place, protection."

64. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

and Lot, bringing them to the land blessed by me for all creatures,"<sup>65</sup> which I have blessed with water, plants, fruits, and palms; and it is a holy land, Palestine and Jordan.

104. It is said that this land extended from Syria to Iraq. Some commentators hold that Abraham said instead, when the people were at the point of throwing him into the fire,

105. "There is no God but Thee, be Thou praised, Lord of creations, Thine is the kingdom, Thine is the praise, and no one is Thine equal," and the fire became *cool and pleasant*.<sup>66</sup>

106. Al-Ḥasan recounts that Abraham, when he was thrown into the fire, was not harmed by its heat, and the people said,

107. "He has bewitched it, and for this he feels not the heat." Then Abraham said unto them,

108. "Try with one of your own!" They threw a man into the fire, and he was devoured by it.

109. It has been passed down by Ka'b al-Aḥbār<sup>67</sup> that no one, from west to east, realized a profit that day, and that the fire burned nothing but the rope with which they bound [Abraham].<sup>68</sup>

110. When the people wanted to throw Abraham into the fire, according to 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd, the creatures said,

111. "O Lord, Your friend is thrown into the fire; give us permission to help him." The great and powerful One answered them,

112. "He is My friend; I have no friends other than him, and I am his God, and he has no gods other than me; if he asks you for help, succor him." And the great and powerful God said, "O fire! Be cool and pleasant to Abraham!"<sup>69</sup>

113. That day the fire burned not even a leg of mutton. Qatāda holds that no animals came that day that did not extinguish the fire around Abraham save the gecko. In fact, Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri<sup>70</sup> reports that the Prophet Muḥammad ordered that the gecko be killed, and he nicknamed it "little pest."

114. It is passed down that Abraham was thrown into the fire at the age of sixteen years, while Sarah gave birth at the age of ninety years.

115. On the other hand, according to the Prophet Muḥammad, Abraham did not lie but three times, all about God, or rather his words "The greatest of these has committed this,"<sup>71</sup> his words "I am sick!"<sup>72</sup> and his words concerning Sarah, "She is my sister." These

65. Citing Qur'an 21:70–71.

66. Citing Qur'an 21:69.

67. Tottoli's note: "A Jew converted to Islam and transmitter of numerous traditions of the prophets, he died around [A.D.] 654."

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

69. Citing Qur'an 21:69. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

70. Tottoli's note: "Refers to the famous traditionalist Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri, who died in [A.D.] 742."

71. Citing Qur'an 21:63.

72. Citing Qur'an 37:89.

three expressions have an interpretation that explains the truth of them. Sarah was in fact his sister in religion.<sup>73</sup>

116. Regarding his words "*I am sick!*"<sup>74</sup> they have more interpretations, and according to one of these, Abraham would have meant to say,

117. "I am prostrated because of your error to the point of being for this reason as a sick man." There was in fact a possibility that a disease infected him, but God knows more about it, seeing that it is reported in a passage from the Qur'anic commentary (of Ṭabarī) that with his words "*I am sick!*"<sup>75</sup> he meant "I am infected [with a plague]," because his people fled at hearing the mention of the plague.

118. Regarding instead his words about Sarah, that she was his sister, they were said because of a tyrant who threatened to hurt Abraham. In fact it was said to the tyrant:

119. "There is in the area a man with the most beautiful of women." The tyrant sent to search for [Abraham], and then he asked him of her,

120. "Who is she?"

121. "My sister," responded Abraham; then he returned to Sarah and said to her, "O Sarah, there is not on the face of the earth a believer, other than me and you; that man asked me about you, and I said that you are my sister; do not belie me."

122. The tyrant sent [his people] to search for Sarah, and when she had entered into his presence, he sought to take her by the hand, but he was paralyzed, and he told her,

123. "Call upon God for me, and we will not hurt you!" Sarah prayed to Him, and [the tyrant] was restored. [He] then called one of his chamberlains, to whom he said, "That is not a human being that you have brought me but a demon!"

124. The tyrant therefore gave her Hagar as a slave, and Sarah returned to Abraham while he was praying. He made a gesture to her with his hand and she said,

125. "God has driven back the plans of the unbeliever and fornicator and has given me Hagar as a slave."

126. When God had him outwit his people and freed him from their designs, *Abraham said,*

127. "*Now I will go to the Lord!*"<sup>76</sup> "I will emerge from the land of my people to God"—meaning to the Holy Land—"and I shall separate myself from them."

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73. Cf. Abraham 2:22–25.

74. Citing Qur'an 37:89.

75. Ibid.

76. Citing Qur'an 37:99.

## EXTRACTS FROM AL-KISA'I

This *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* (Stories of the Prophets) is attributed to an al-Kisā'i about whom nothing else is known. Some have tried to link the work to the famous eighth-century philologist and grammarian Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Hamza ibn al-Kisā'i (A.D. 737–805), though others argue that no mention is made of this philologist making any collection of stories of the prophets. Because the oldest known manuscript dates to A.H. 617/A.D. 1220, the text can have been written no later than the early thirteenth century. The manuscripts vary considerably in size and content because stories have been added and deleted. Al-Kisā'i popularized the genre of the stories of the prophets (*Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*). The first full edition of the Arabic text was published in 1922. We use the first English translation: W. W. M. Thackston Jr., trans., *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisa'i* (Boston: Twayne, 1978), 2:131–50. The pages from which the stories are drawn are noted after each entry. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs. Thackston has placed asterisks at various intervals in his translation; however, he does not explain their function to his reader (they do not seem to indicate omissions in the text). Hence, we have removed them.

[After speaking of Nimrod's conquests:]

1. Upon his return to Cuthah-rabba, he summoned the master-carpenter and architect, Terah son of Nahor, and ordered him to build a magnificent house. Terah constructed for him a square palace, a thousand cubits in length and breadth. The walls he made of pearl and the floor of silver, the roof of sandal-wood and the gates of ivory. Inside he caused rivers of milk and honey, wine and water to flow, and trees of silver and gold were planted along the borders. He put many assembly-halls in it, in each of which was a portrait of Nimrod. When he had finished, Nimrod was so pleased with it that he made Terah one of his boon-companions and his grand vizier.

2. Nimrod became so haughty and tyrannical that he claimed godship. In addition he wanted to learn star-gazing, the science that God had given to Idris.<sup>1</sup> When Idris was

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1. Idris is the Arabic name for Enoch.

translated into heaven,<sup>2</sup> this science was taken by his successor, a devout man named Hermes;<sup>3</sup> and the faithful had continued to learn it until Nimrod's time.

3. One day, while walking in one of his pleasure-parks, Nimrod found a group of ascetics, clad in wool and hair shirts,<sup>4</sup> and asked them who they were.

4. "We are what remains of Idris's people, and we worship God in this place," they told him.

5. Nimrod ordered them into his palace, where he said to them, "You have two choices: either enter into my religion or teach me knowledge of the stars."

6. "We will teach you what we know," they answered.

7. When he had learned something from them, Iblis<sup>5</sup> appeared to him in the guise of an old man and said, "You have occupied yourself with learning about the stars, but I know something more than they do."

8. "What is that?" asked Nimrod.

9. "Sorcery and soothsaying," said Iblis; and he taught him those sciences. Then he said, "The kings of old had their own gods to worship and other idols for the people. As you are the greatest and noblest of them, you should build an idol for yourself apart from those of your people." Therefore Nimrod summoned Terah and ordered him to construct seventy idols of gold in his own image.<sup>6</sup> Then he ordered his people to build idols for themselves; and everyone constructed an idol in his own likeness. Terah also built for Nimrod a golden idol, seven cubits high and two cubits broad, with ruby eyes and an emerald nose. On its head he placed a golden crown studded with pearls and called it Dilun. Then he built for it a throne of ivory<sup>7</sup> and aloe-wood.

10. Nimrod ordered sacrifices to be made to the idol, and the people worshipped idols until they knew nothing else.

11. One day when Nimrod mounted his throne, he heard a voice say, "Wretched be he who is ungrateful to Abraham's God!"

12. To Terah, who was standing beside him, he said, "Terah, who is Abraham?"

13. "I do not know," he answered.

14. Some time later, while Nimrod was contemplating the beauty of his palace, he heard a voice say, "O Nimrod, be not deceived by this palace of yours! Where shall you flee from Abraham and his God?" And Nimrod was vexed.

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2. Cf. Moses 7:18–23.

3. Hermes derives from the hermetic tradition, in which he was considered the teacher of secrets to Moses. The Hermes Trismegistes (thrice great) of the hermetic tradition derives originally from the Egyptian god of writing and knowledge, Thoth (the twice great, thrice great, and five times great), whom the Greeks called Hermes. Some Jewish and Christian traditions identify Hermes with Enoch.

4. This seems to be a reference to the Sufis, who are so named because they used to wear woolen garments (*ṣūf*). Sufism is a mystical trend that emerged in early Islam.

5. Iblis, or Lucifer, is one of the most common Arabic names for the devil. This Arabic word is probably ultimately derived from Greek *diabolos*, "accuser," from which come our words *devil* and *diabolical*.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

7. Cf. 2 Chronicles 9:17.

15. Then one day he went out hunting. When he was all alone, there came a voice, which said, "O Nimrod, do not be deceived by the lions, elephants and weapons you have collected, for they will be the first to be avenged of you." Nimrod returned anxiously to his palace and went to his idol Dilun. Bowing down, he asked about Abraham. The idol said, "Despair, O Nimrod! for Abraham will wrench your kingdom from you, unless you believe in him and his Lord." Nimrod sacrificed seven hundred bulls, sheep and cows to the idol.

16. One day, while Nimrod was in the courtyard of his palace, two white birds descended from the air and hovered before him. One of them said, "You and your kingdom are doomed! I am a bird of the East, and this is a bird of the West. We bring you tidings that Abraham's God will destroy you by Abraham's hand." Then they flew away.

17. Nimrod summoned Terah, who, upon hearing the story, said, "Sire, I think these were no more than rebellious genii who covet your position." But that night Nimrod had a terrifying dream. When he awoke, he summoned the astrologers and said, "I dreamed of a man from whose eyes came forth a light as bright as the sun. He wore two white garments and in his hand was a black stalk. He kicked me with his foot and said, 'O Nimrod, which would you prefer: to believe in Abraham's Lord or to have me shatter your crown?' Then he plucked out my right eye, and I began to cry for help; but no one would come to my assistance. Then the man said, 'Be you blind in eye and in heart!' Then he left me. This is what I saw."

18. The dream-interpreters said to him, "Sire, such terrifying dreams may be produced by various foods. Do not let it trouble you." But when they had gone away they said to each other, "This dream indicates the passing of his kingdom and his own destruction."

19. One day while he was seated on his throne, an angel came to him in the guise of a man carrying a white vial in his right hand and a black vial in his left.<sup>8</sup>

20. "Who let you into my house?" asked Nimrod.

21. "The Lord of the House let me in," he replied. "These two vials are a parable for you: this is Paradise, and this is Hell. Choose whichever one you desire." As the angel was departing, he struck the two vials together and said, "Your kingdom is doomed."

22. That night Nimrod had another dream and, summoning Terah, said, "Terah, in my dream I saw the moon rise from your loins and cast its light between heaven and earth. Then I heard a voice saying, '*The truth is come and falsehood is vanished.*'<sup>9</sup> And I looked at the idols and saw that they were trembling."

23. "Sire," said Terah, "on earth I am like unto the rising moon because of my great devotion to the idols."

24. Then, while Nimrod was asleep seated on his throne, he had another dream, from which he awoke in fright. Summoning the people of his realm, he said, "I see miracles from Terah. Were he not one of the élite of my realm, I would say that he is my enemy, for I saw growing from his loins a green branch covered with clusters of grapes. Then

8. Cf. Revelation 15:7–17:1; 21:9.

9. Citing Qur'an 17:81.

twigs sprouted from the branch and twined around the east and the west and the heavens, and not one of my subjects was left who did not bow down before that branch—even my own palace and throne and all that is in my palace.”

25. Afterwards Nimrod went to sleep and dreamed of a man standing with the sun in his right hand, the moon in his left, and all the stars between his hands. Then the man said, “Worship the Lord of heaven and earth!” whereupon the throne convulsed and threw him down.

26. Then Nimrod went to sleep again and had another terrifying dream. When he awoke he sent for the soothsayers and dream-interpreters and said to them, “I had a horrible dream. If you conceal its true meaning from me, I will have you tortured and thrown to the lions.”

27. “What did you see, sire?” they asked.

28. “I saw a beam of light more brilliant than the sun and the moon. In this beam I saw a nation descending from and ascending into heaven.<sup>10</sup> Then a man, among the most beautiful of that nation, stood in the light, and the people were saying to him, ‘May God grant you victory, and through you may He revive the earth.’ This was my dream.”

29. “Give us a day and a night,” they said; and he granted their request. But when they were with Terah, they said, “The king’s dream indicates a child, born of those closest to him, who will inherit all the earth and whose name will be revered to the skies from east to west.” Terah accompanied them to give the king their interpretation of the dream, which was, “He will come to you with neither weapons nor army.”

30. Nimrod smiled and said, “If the matter be thus, then it will be simple.”

31. “The child will come from the lineage of those closest to you,” said the interpreters.

32. “There is no one closer to me than my son Cush, and there is no one I honor more than my vizier Terah,” said Nimrod, who thereupon ordered his son Cush’s throat cut and every woman with child watched, so that all male children born were to be killed, while the females were to be left alone. Thus it was until, in the course of seven years, he had slaughtered one hundred thousand babes.<sup>11</sup> Then he called the astrologers and told them to see if his enemy had been killed or not.

33. “Sire,” they said, “his mother has not yet conceived him.” Confident in this knowledge, he had the slaughter ceased for a time, but later resumed; and he had so many babes slain in their mothers’ arms that all creatures set up a great clamor to God.

34. Then God informed the angels of the birth of Abraham, the Friend of God, and they heralded it with great glorification.

## **Chapter 50. The Story of Abraham**

35. Now Terah went to his wife and informed her of what had happened.

36. “I will tell you of something stranger still,” she said, “for I ceased to be fertile a long time ago, but today I menstruated and do not know what is wrong.”

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10. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

37. "Keep this matter concealed," he said, "and do not let news of it reach the king!" And she remained thus until she had again become pure.

38. Then Terah heard a voice saying, "Your wife's youth has been restored to her that she may produce the brilliant light which is in your seed." Thereupon an angel appeared and said, "O Terah, return and give up the trust which is in your seed." He returned to his house but dared not approach his wife. The next morning, however, there was a dazzling light shining from his face.

39. "Do you not see this light?" he asked his wife.

40. "Yes," she said, "and I, who was a barren old woman, have become a fertile girl."

41. Terah made sacrifices of animals, food and drink to the idols,<sup>12</sup> thinking that they ate and drank. During the night devils came to devour the food, but they were frightened away by angels. The next day Terah was grieved to find the food still there and thought the idols were angry with him. Standing before the idols, he worshipped them to placate them. As he was slow in returning home, his wife came to the temple to find him. Overcome with desire, he lay with her in the temple itself, and she conceived Abraham. Thereupon the Kaaba<sup>13</sup> fell down prostrate and spoke, saying, "There is no god but God alone who hath no partner." The idols were all toppled<sup>14</sup> and the beasts beat the ground with their tails at the conception of Abraham; and his star rose over the extremities of the earth and shone like the sun and the moon together. Nimrod, seeing the star, asked the astrologers about it; and they said, "Sire, this star indicates that the child at whose hand will come your destruction has been conceived by its mother." Thereupon Nimrod had so many children killed that their number cannot be reckoned;<sup>15</sup> but Abraham continued to increase in beauty and light in his mother's womb until four months had passed, when his mother had a vision of a fire reaching from beneath her skirt to the heights of heaven and spreading throughout the world.

42. When nine months had passed with Abraham in his mother's womb, Nimrod had a terrifying dream and awoke in fright. Calling for his astrologers, he said, "Last night I saw a smokeless fire descend from heaven, approach the door of my palace and say, 'Nimrod, say with me, "There is no god but God; Abraham is the apostle of God!"'<sup>16</sup> Otherwise I will burn you up.' Then it came near me and scorched me."<sup>17</sup>

12. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

13. The Ka'ba is the sacred shrine at Mecca, which Muḥammad converted to the worship of Allāh. According to Muslim tradition, the structure was first built by Adam, under divine guidance, and then rebuilt by Abraham and his son Ishmael. By Muḥammad's time, a number of idols were worshiped there, which the Prophet removed.

14. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

15. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

16. This is a variation on the *Shahāda*, the Muslim profession of faith, "There is no god but God (Allāh) and Muḥammad is the apostle of God."

17. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

43. "This dream indicates a boy at whose hand will come your destruction," said the astrologers. "Make certain you slay him the moment he is born." Therefore Nimrod and the people of his realm strove to seek out all children and kill them.<sup>18</sup>

44. When they came to Terah's house they asked his wife, "Have you conceived a child?"

45. "I have not been with child at all," she answered. God blinded them to Abraham, who would move to the other side of his mother whenever they touched her. As it was not apparent to them that she was with child, they left her.

46. When her birth pains commenced, an angel came and said, "Come with me to the Cave of Light, where Idris and Noah were born."<sup>19</sup> There she found carpets, pillows and birthing implements, and God eased her pain.

47. She gave birth to Abraham on Friday night,<sup>20</sup> the tenth of the month of Muharram. When Abraham was delivered, he stood erect and cried out at the top of his voice, "There is no god but God alone who hath no partner!" And his voice carried to the East and the West. Then Gabriel cut the umbilical cord, immersed him in the waters of the rivers of al-Ridwan and clothed him in a white garment.<sup>21</sup> When he rubbed his mother's breast it flowed with milk and honey. When he sucked his fingers, his thumb flowed with honey, his index finger with wine, his middle finger with milk, his ring finger with cream and his little finger with water.

48. Abraham's mother returned home, her mind at ease concerning her child. On the third day she left her house in secret, headed for the cave. When she saw lions and wild beasts at the entrance to the cave, she became anxious and thought her child had surely perished. Entering the cave, however, she found him on a silk-brocade carpet and his eyes painted with kohl. Realizing that he was protected by his Lord, she returned home. Subsequently she visited him once every three days.

49. When four years had passed, Gabriel brought him a garment from Paradise<sup>22</sup> and gave him the Nectar of Unity to drink so that he would never associate anything with God.

50. "Now go forth from the cave, victorious," said Gabriel, who preceded him with a golden staff.

51. God hath said: *And thus did we show unto Abraham the kingdom of heaven and the earth,*<sup>23</sup> *that he might become one of those who firmly believe. And when the night overshadowed him, he saw a star, and said, This is my Lord; but when it set, he said, I like not gods which set.*

18. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

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

20. Friday is the Muslim holy day, when all males are expected to assemble at the mosque for prayer. According to tradition, Adam was also born on Friday in the month of Muḥarram.

21. The purification by water and dressing in a white robe are part of the Muslim Hajj, or pilgrimage to the sacred Ka'ba at Mecca. Al-Ridwān is the name of the angel who stands guard at the gate of paradise.

22. In Jewish and Muslim tradition, it was Gabriel who brought a garment from paradise to Joseph when he was sold into Egypt.

23. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18.

And when he saw the moon rising, he said, *This is my Lord; but when he saw it set, he said, Verily if my Lord direct me not, I shall become one of the people who go astray. And when he saw the sun rising, he said, This is my Lord, this is the greatest; but when it set, he said, O my people, verily I am clear of that which ye associate<sup>24</sup> with God: I direct my face unto him who hath created the heavens and the earth;<sup>25</sup> I am orthodox, and am not one of the idolators.<sup>26</sup>* Then he began to repeat over his heart, his tongue, and all parts of his body the Profession of Sincerity, which is, "There is no god but God alone who hath no partner." And God commanded the wind to bear the Great Profession to the ears of all creatures, which were thereby occasioned bewilderment and fright; and Nimrod was terrified.

52. God then caused an angel to descend to Abraham<sup>27</sup> and say, "Rise up, O Abraham, and go to your father and mother. Fear not! and remember your Lord morning and evening!"

53. Gabriel and Abraham stood together before the door of a house, and Gabriel said, "Abraham, this is your parents' house. Enter therein and greet them." So saying, Gabriel left and ascended into heaven.

54. Abraham sought permission to enter and was invited in by his father. When he entered, Terah saw his beauty; and Usha came and embraced him, saying, "By the might of Nimrod, it is my son!"

55. "Mother," said Abraham, "do not swear by the might of Nimrod, for might and majesty belong to God, who created me, shaped me, raised me, preserved me and guided me aright."

56. Terah was thunderstruck by his words and exclaimed, "My son, have you a lord other than Nimrod, who possesses the kingdom of the earth in its breadth and length?"

57. "Father," said Abraham, "my Lord, who created heaven and earth, has no partner!"

58. News of Abraham reached Terah's relatives, who began to argue against him and threaten him with Nimrod's punishment; but he vied with them and made mention of the greatness of his Lord.

59. "Mother," Abraham asked one day, "am I more handsome or is Nimrod?"

60. "You are," my son. "He is black, cross-eyed and flat-nosed."<sup>28</sup>

61. "If he were the creator, then he would not look like that, would he?" asked Abraham.

62. "Abraham," said his father, "do not speak ill of our king and god, for it is he who created you and me."

63. Abraham grew angry and exclaimed, "May you be wretched, old man!"

64. Terah rose and went to Nimrod, bowed before him and said, "Sire, the child you feared is my son—my son, that is, inasmuch as he was born in my house, and quite without

24. In the Qur'an, the verb *associate* refers to placing anything on a level equal with God. Doing so is an act tantamount to polytheism and is the most grievous sin in Islam.

25. Cf. Abraham 2:12; 4–5.

26. Citing Qur'an 6:75–79. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

27. Cf. Abraham 1:15; 2:13.

28. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

my knowledge. Now he has come to me as a youth, but he claims to have a lord other than you."<sup>29</sup>

65. Nimrod, trembling with fear, asked, "How long has he been with you?"

66. "For three months," said Terah.

67. "Bring him to me!" said Nimrod to his aides, who seized Abraham and brought him before Nimrod.

68. Nimrod had decorated his palace and assembly halls in a marvelous manner, and Abraham turned to the left and to the right and said, "O God, make me victorious over them!" Then, turning to the people, he said, "My people, *what do ye worship* other than God?"

69. *They answered, "We worship idols."*

70. "Do they hear you, when ye invoke them?" asked Abraham. "Or do they either profit you, or hurt you?"

71. *They answered, "But we found our fathers do the same."*<sup>30</sup>

72. Abraham described God and, turning to his father, said, "And forgive my father, for that he hath been one of those who go astray."<sup>31</sup>

73. Then Nimrod approached him and said, "Abraham, follow my religion and worship me, for it is I who created you and have given you substance."

74. "You lie!" said Abraham. "My creator and my sustainer is God, other than whom there is no god!"

75. The people were speechless, but slowly a liking for Abraham crept into their hearts.

76. Nimrod said to Terah, "This child of yours is young and does not know what he is saying. Take him and show him kindness. Perhaps he will recover his senses."

77. So Terah took him by the hand and said, "My son, since you are in my debt, I want you to vend idols as your brother does."

78. "But how can I sell what I despise?" asked Abraham. Nonetheless he was given a large and a small idol to sell. He would go out with two boys to carry the idols and would say, "Who will buy that which neither harms nor benefits?" And no one would take them from him. Then he would immerse the idols in water and say, "Drink!" and pull the ropes attached to their legs to draw them out of the water. The people would stare, but no one dared to say anything to him.

79. When an old man came asking him to sell one of the idols to him, Abraham said, "Old man, I have been sitting here scoffing at them. They are not to be worshipped." So the old man went to his brother Aaron,<sup>32</sup> from whom he bought an idol. As he was carrying it on his back, it fell and broke; so he came back to Aaron and said, "You sold me a broken god."

29. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 30.

30. Citing Qur'an 26:70–74. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

31. Citing Qur'an 26:86. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.

32. The Arabic name Harūn corresponds to the biblical Aaron (Hebrew 'Ahārōn), but in this case clearly represents the name of Abraham's brother Haran. It would have been better to translate it as Haran.

80. "What are you going to do with the broken god?" asked Abraham. They went to Terah, who said, "Take it and worship it. I give you permission to do so."

81. Then an old woman came to Abraham and asked him to sell her an idol. He took out the two idols for her and said, "Take the big one. There is more of it for firewood and kindling."

82. "I don't want it for kindling," she said. "I want it to worship. I had a god, but it was stolen in a bundle of clothing."

83. "A god cannot be stolen," said Abraham. "Were it really a god, it would have protected itself and your clothing too. If, however, you worship the Lord of heaven and earth, He will restore your clothing."

84. "When I see my bundle I will believe," she said. So Abraham prayed to his Lord, and suddenly the bundle, brought by Gabriel, appeared before him.

85. "Here is your bundle," Abraham told her, "and inside is your idol." The old woman took the bundle, broke the idol with a stone and believed in Abraham's God.<sup>33</sup> After this she went about the city of Cuthah-rabba saying, "O people, worship God, who created you and has given you substance."

86. When news of the old woman reached Nimrod, he ordered her hands and feet to be cut off.<sup>34</sup> When it was done, Abraham prayed her to be patient; and God sent down the angels to her with a green tabernacle. "Woman," said the angels, "rise and enter this tabernacle." They gave her a draught from Paradise to drink, and God restored her hands and feet and also her youth and beauty. Then she entered the tabernacle and rose into the air until she stood above Nimrod and said, "I am she to whom you did what you did. Woe unto you, Nimrod! My lot is Paradise, but yours is Hell!"

87. Then more than a thousand of the people of Cuthah-rabba believed in Abraham. Nimrod ordered them to be rounded up and thrown to the lions, but none were eaten. Then they were thrown to the dogs, but they would not devour the people either.<sup>35</sup>

88. When Abraham had completed his fortieth year, Gabriel descended to him<sup>36</sup> and said, "Your Lord has sent you to Nimrod the Accursed. Fight him and fear him not, for I shall protect you and shall give you victory over him."

89. Abraham stood at Nimrod's gate and shouted at the top of his voice, "O people! Say that there is no god but God and that I, Abraham, am God's apostle." Nimrod was terrified and, trembling with fright, called for his viziers and patriarchs, whom he seated in the assembly halls; he also summoned his army with their weapons and instruments of war and drew up his lions and elephants in ranks on his right and left. Then Abraham mentioned God, and the lions, elephants, beasts and dogs became humble and submissive before him. Again he cried out, "O people! Confess that there is no god but God, creator of every thing!"

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33. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

34. Cf. Abraham 1:10–11.

35. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

36. Cf. Abraham 1:15; 2:13.

90. When one of the viziers asked him who he was, he said, "I am Abraham, son of Terah, apostle of the Lord of the Universe. I call you to worship Him."

91. "Who is your Lord?" they asked.

92. "He who created all people."

93. "My kingdom is greater than His!" said Nimrod.

94. "You lie!" said Abraham. "All kingdoms and dominion belong to the Lord of the Universe."

95. With that, Nimrod's throne shook and said, "You do lie, Nimrod, enemy of God. It is God who has created all creation."

96. There was in Nimrod's palace a cock that now approached and said, "Nimrod, Abraham is the apostle of the Lord of the Universe, and what he says is the truth." And it too followed Abraham.

97. Next came a cow of great beauty that said, "Enemy of God, were I given leave by my Lord, I would gore you so that afterwards you would never be able to eat again!" Nimrod ordered the cow to be slain, but God restored it to life and caused two wings to grow from it; and the cow flew into the air.

98. Abraham turned and saw a slave-girl in the palace. She was nursing Nimrod's small daughter. Suddenly the girl leapt from her mother's lap, faced Nimrod and said, "Father, this is God's prophet Abraham." And Nimrod ordered her cut to pieces.

99. "One of my tokens of prophecy," said Abraham, "is the power to call these lions, elephants and dogs and to have dominion over them. I can command your throne to topple you. I can command your crown to fly from your head, and I can command your palace to fall in on top of you. Verily God is not incapable of anything; He is capable of all things."

100. "What do you know of His power?" asked Nimrod.

101. "My Lord is he who giveth life, and killeth,"<sup>37</sup> said Abraham.

102. "I give life and I kill," said Nimrod.<sup>38</sup>

103. "How can you do that?" asked Abraham.

104. "I set free from prison men sentenced to death, and I kill men not sentenced to die."

105. "My Lord does not give life or cause death thus," said Abraham. "He quickens the dead and He causes death to the living yet kills them not. But, O Nimrod, *God bringeth the sun from the east, now do thou bring it from the west.*" Whereupon Nimrod was confounded. Then Abraham called upon his Lord and said, "O Lord, show me how thou wilt raise the dead."

106. God said, "Dost thou not yet believe?"

107. He answered, "Yea, but I ask that my heart may rest at ease."

108. God said, "Take therefore four birds."<sup>39</sup>

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37. Citing Qur'an 2:258. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:7.

38. Citing Qur'an 2:258.

39. Citing Qur'an 2:260.

109. Abraham took a white cock, a black raven, a green dove and a peacock, killed them, cut off their heads, mixed up the blood and feathers and scattered their flesh on four mountain tops.<sup>40</sup> He then called them, and the heads went out of his hands, each to its own body, saying, "There is no god but God; Abraham is God's apostle to Nimrod and his people."

110. Nimrod then ordered Abraham to be bound and thrown into prison deep beneath the earth, and the guards put him in the remotest place. The angels, however, brought him food and drink from Paradise, and when he rose for prayer at night the light that encompassed him shone up to the heavens.

111. Abraham told the prisoners the story of Paradise and Hell. Once a man came and said, "Abraham, I am an Arab and the son of a king. We were four brothers, but the king grew angry with us and imprisoned me here and my brothers in the east, in the west and in the Yemen. Can your Lord reunite us?" Abraham performed the ablutions, rose and prayed two *rakʿas*<sup>41</sup> and called upon God. Suddenly the two brothers from the east and west fell from the air in front of their brother, whereupon everyone in the prison marveled. When the news reached Nimrod, he called for the brothers and asked, "Who brought you together with your brother and loosened your chains?"

112. "Our God did this through the prayer of Abraham," they answered.

113. Nimrod called for his sorcerers and said, "I want you to bring the other brother from the Yemen."

114. "Sire," they said, "we are not capable of such a task."

115. Then Nimrod said to Abraham, "Bring me the brother who is in the Yemen the same way you brought these two." Abraham prayed to his Lord, but God told him that the brother had died and now lay in his grave. When Abraham told them, they did not believe him.

116. "Pray to your Lord to bring us his grave!" said Nimrod.

117. Abraham prayed, and God commanded the angel entrusted with the earth to cleave the ground before Abraham, and the grave opened beneath their feet.

118. "This is the grave of your brother," he said to them.

119. "If what you say be true," they said, "pray your Lord to bring him back to life so that we can see him and speak to him." Abraham prayed, and suddenly the grave was split open and the man stepped forth, blazing in flame, and said, "This is the retribution of him who worshiped idols and was ungrateful to his Lord." . . .

120. Then God took away the rain from them, and Nimrod was left in dire straits. He had all the available grain and food gathered up and stored in underground warehouses, estimating that he had enough for his people.<sup>42</sup>

121. Abraham went outside the city to a sand dune and called his Lord to turn the sand into food for the faithful.<sup>43</sup> God granted his prayer and made it food of Paradise,

40. Cf. Genesis 15:9–11.

41. The term refers to prostrations or bowings in prayer.

42. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5.

43. Cf. Abraham 2:17.

from which the believers took as much as they wanted; and the infidels took from Nimrod until his supply was exhausted, whereupon the people began to incline to Abraham.<sup>44</sup>

122. One day, while Nimrod was standing at the gate of his palace, Abraham came near carrying a bag of wheat he had brought from the sand dune.

123. "Abraham," called Nimrod, "what have you there?"

124. "Food," answered Abraham. "My Lord has provided sustenance for me and for all who believe in Him and in me." Nimrod ordered him to open the bag; and, putting in his hand, he drew out red sand. Then Abraham put in his hand and drew out grains of wheat the size of pistachio nuts. On each grain was written, "A gift from the Magnificent to Abraham the Friend."

125. "You have corrupted my people," said Nimrod. "Go from my land!"

126. "I have more right to this city than you," said Abraham, "for it has been the land of my fathers and forefathers from all time. Your father Canaan came and settled here by force." And Abraham departed to his house.

127. Each year the people of Cuthah-rabba had a festival during which they went far out of the city and worshipped for several days. Afterwards they would return, and Nimrod would parade with the lords of the realm in magnificent array. When that festival approached and they were about to leave the city, they said to Abraham, "Are you not coming with us to the festival?"

128. "*Verily I shall be sick,*" said Abraham (meaning because of their idolatry). *And they turned their backs and departed from him*<sup>45</sup> to their festival so only the infirm and children were left in the city. Abraham entered the idol-temple, where the people had put tables of food before the idols.

129. "Why don't you eat, see or speak?" Abraham asked the idols. Then, taking an axe, *he turned upon them, and struck them with his right hand,*<sup>46</sup> breaking the arm of one, the leg of another, the head of yet another—until he had shattered them into pieces, as God hath said: *He brake them all in pieces, except the biggest of them*<sup>47</sup> around the neck of which he hung the axe, mashed its face into the food that was before it and returned home.

130. When the festival was over and the people returned, they entered the temple and saw what Abraham had done to their idols. *They said, "Who hath done this to our gods? He is certainly an impious person."* And certain of them answered, "We heard a young man speak reproachfully of them: he is named Abraham."

131. *They said, "Bring him therefore before the people, that they may bear witness against him."* When he was brought before the assembly, they said unto him, "Hast thou done this to our gods, O Abraham?"

132. *He answered, "Nay, that biggest of them hath done it: but ask them, if they can speak."*

133. *And they said, "Verily thou knowest that these speak not."*

44. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

45. Citing Qur'an 37:89–90.

46. Citing Qur'an 37:93.

47. Citing Qur'an 21:58. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

134. Abraham answered, "Do ye therefore worship, besides God, that which cannot profit you at all, neither can it hurt you? Fie on you: and upon that which ye worship beside God!"<sup>48</sup>

135. The people said, "O king, burn him as he has burned our hearts." Now Nimrod had an iron furnace;<sup>49</sup> and, whenever he grew angry at any of his subjects, he would order it to be lit, and the subject would be cast into it alive to be melted like lead. He ordered this furnace to be lit, and Abraham was thrown in.<sup>50</sup> As the fire did him no harm, he was taken out again. Then Nimrod ordered a great pit dug, and so much wood brought in by beasts that the animals themselves refused to carry the wood, all except the mule (as punishment for which God caused it to be sterile).

136. Wood was gathered for four years by men, women, children and slaves. Then they set torch to it. The flames lept up, and the smoke rose to a height of four hundred cubits so that when even a bird flew over it, it was burnt and fell dead. However, they could discover no device whereby they could get Abraham into the fire. Iblis appeared to them in the guise of an old man and asked, "Why are you so perplexed?" They told him why, and he said to them, "Construct a catapult," which he taught them how to do. When it was ready, they put Abraham naked into the pan of the catapult, whereupon the sky and the earth and the angels set up a great noise, saying, "Our God, here is thy servant and apostle about to be cast into the fire!"

137. "If he calls upon you for aid," said God, "then do you help him. If he calls upon me, verily I am the succorer of those who seek aid."

138. Abraham prayed to his Lord to give him victory over his enemy,<sup>51</sup> and the angels encompassed the pan of the catapult so that when they tried to lift him they could not.<sup>52</sup>

139. "If you want him to rise up," said Iblis to them, "then bring ten women, strip them naked and expose their private parts." This they did, and the angels left the catapult,<sup>53</sup> whereupon they hurled him forty cubits into the air, where Gabriel met him<sup>54</sup> and said, "Abraham, have you any request?"

140. "From you, no," said Abraham. "God is my keeper: how excellent is his guardianship!"

141. Then God said, "*O fire, be thou cold, and a preservation unto Abraham*"<sup>55</sup> (Ibn Abbas said this means "cold" from the heat of the fire and "preservation" from the cold).

48. Citing Qur'an 21:59–63, 65–67.

49. A furnace made of iron seems unlikely. A smelter or kiln made of bricks or at least lined with bricks may be meant. Abraham lived long before the Iron Age, and bricks withstand much higher temperatures than iron.

50. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15.

51. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

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

53. Iblis gives this counsel in order to disperse the morally sensitive angels, who are preventing the use of the catapult. Cf. Al-Rabghūzī, p. 155 par. 35.

54. Ibid.

55. Citing Qur'an 21:69. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

142. The fire therefore became cool and its heat vanished. Gabriel brought a golden throne and clothed Abraham with garments from Paradise.<sup>56</sup>

143. Nimrod saw in the midst of the fire a man seated on a throne and clad in green clothes, and on his right and left two men of extreme beauty and around about him a great multitude. "How many have you cast into the fire?" asked Nimrod. "One or a hundred thousand?"

144. "Only Abraham," they replied.

145. "Then who are those people around him?" asked Nimrod, and they were astonished.

146. "Go to him," said Nimrod, "and make him swear to you by God that he will come out to you." They made him swear, and he came out, wading through the fire, which did not burn him at all.

147. "Your magic is indeed marvelous," said Nimrod.

148. "It is not magic," replied Abraham. "It is the might of God!"

149. "Then I will go up into the heavens and kill this God of yours," said Nimrod, who then ordered a cube-shaped ark built, with two doors, one opening to the sky and the other to the earth. He also ordered four eagles to be starved for three days. He took two iron rods and nailed them to the sides of the ark; on the end of each rod he hung a piece of meat and fastened the eagles by their middles to the rods. Taking a bow and a quiver of arrows, he climbed into the ark and closed the doors. When the eagles raised their heads, saw the meat and realized what it was, they flew upwards, carrying the ark with them, and rose high, high into the air. Then Nimrod told his vizier to open the door and see how the earth appeared. Opening it, he said, "I see it as though it were but a village." Then he opened the door that gave to the sky and cried, "It looks just as it did when we were on the ground." He closed the door, and the eagles rose higher and higher until they grew tired and were about to drop with the ark, at which point an angel in the sky met the ark and said, "Woe unto you, Nimrod! Whither do you think you are going?"

150. "My destination is Abraham's God, with whom I am going to do battle. How much distance remains between Him and me?"

151. "Between the earth and the heaven of the world the distance takes five hundred years to traverse, and the canopy of heaven is of a like distance. There are seven heavens, and the height of each is like the height of the heaven of the world." When the vizier heard that, he fell down to the earth in a swoon, and Nimrod was left by himself in the ark. Then he took the bow and, placing an arrow in it, said, "If I cannot reach you, O God of Abraham, this arrow will!" And he shot the arrow into the air (and it is said that it returned to him smeared with blood), whereupon he exclaimed, "I have killed the God of Abraham!"

152. Now Gabriel struck the ark with one of his wings and cast it into the sea, from which the waves churned it up and left it on the shore. Nimrod emerged from the ark and found that his beard and hair had turned white.

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56. We have noted earlier the tradition that Gabriel brought Abraham a garment from paradise and other similar traditions that have the angel bringing such a garment to Joseph when he was sold into Egypt.

153. From there he wandered from town to town until he came to Cuthah-rabba, which he entered by night. The next morning the people came to him but did not recognize him at first because of his white hair.

154. When the news of Nimrod's return reached Abraham, he went to Nimrod and said, "How did you find the might of my Lord?"

155. "I killed your Lord," said Nimrod.

156. "My Lord is too magnificent for you even to engage in battle with Him," said Abraham, "but do you think it is within your power to fight me tomorrow?" Nimrod assented and gathered his armies, while Abraham went out into the desert with seventy of his companions. Then God sent gnats down on Nimrod's army and the whole world was filled with them. They caused the death of so many people that the rest went into their houses, lit fires and locked their doors, all of which they did to no avail.

157. A gnat fell on Nimrod and came to rest on his beard. He was about to kill it when it entered one of his nostrils and crawled up to his brain and began to gnaw at his flesh, marrow and blood, praising God. Forty days passed during which Nimrod could not sleep, eat or drink, so he had an iron bar made with which he ordered his aides to strike his head, for every time they struck him the gnat would be still.

158. Those who struck his head were of only the highest rank; but, after forty more days had passed, one of the viziers, a man of enormous strength, struck his head so hard that his skull split in two, and the gnat emerged like a chick from an egg, saying, "There is no god but God; Abraham is the apostle of God and His Friend."

159. Nimrod died in a most horrible manner; and God visited earthquakes upon his people, and their city was pulled down around them.<sup>57</sup> God hastened their souls to Hell and made their everlasting abode miserable.

### Chapter 51. Abraham's Migration to the Sacred Land

160. Kaab al-Ahbar said: Then Abraham gathered together those of his companions who had believed in him and set out for Syria.<sup>58</sup> He traveled until he came to the city of Harran, where he dwelt for a time. There reigned a king named Harran, who believed in Abraham and gave him his daughter Sarah in marriage.

161. From there he went to Jordan, where there was a king named Zadok,<sup>59</sup> who summoned Abraham and asked who he was.

162. "I am Abraham, Friend of God," he said. Then the king asked who the woman was.

163. "This is my sister," said Abraham.

164. "Marry her to me!" commanded the king.

165. "She is forbidden to marry an infidel," he said, "for she is a believer."

57. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

58. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

59. I.e., Melchizedek, where *melchi* means "king" and *zedek* means "righteousness." Here, the Muslim tradition has confused the story of the righteous priest-king Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18–20) with that of the pharaoh (Genesis 12:14–20) or Abimelech (Genesis 20:2–18), who wanted to take Sarah to wife.

166. "If you do not give her to me in marriage," said the king, "I shall take her from you by force!" And he ordered Sarah brought to him. Abraham prayed to God, and when the king stretched out his hand toward her it withered and stuck to his neck.

167. "This is your just retribution," said Sarah, "because you were wrathful toward the Friend of God and his wife."

168. "Are you his wife?" asked Zadok.

169. "Yes," she answered.

170. "Then I am sorry for what I have done," he said, "and am repentful. Ask Abraham to pray to his Lord to forgive me." Abraham prayed to his Lord and was told that the king would not be set free unless he submit his kingdom to Abraham and depart. When told this, the king agreed and gave his land to Abraham.<sup>60</sup>

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60. The story explains how Abraham inherited the land of Canaan, where Melchizedek lived. In attributing to Melchizedek actions that the Bible and the Book of Abraham attribute to the pharaoh, this story may reflect the scene in Facsimile 3 (see fig. 1), in which Abraham is allowed to sit on the throne of Egypt.

## EXTRACTS FROM AL-NISABURI

Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Manṣūr ibn Khalaf al-Nisābūrī (5th century A.H./11th century A.D.) authored a book entitled *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (Stories of the Prophets) in Persian, patterned after Arabic books of the same title. While the text was written in Persian, quotes from the Qurʾan were in Arabic out of respect for the sacred book. The English translation used here was specially prepared for this volume by Glen M. Cooper from al-Nisābūrī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (Tehran: n.p., 1961), 43–62. Passages translated from Arabic have been italicized. We have numbered the paragraphs for reference purposes.

### Fourteenth Story: Ibrāhīm [Abraham], on him may there be peace

1. The word of Him, may He be exalted: *“Mention Ibrāhīm in the Book. Verily, he was a prophet who spoke the Truth.”*<sup>1</sup> And the father of Ibrāhīm was Āzar<sup>2</sup> the son of Nākhur, who was among the posterity of Sām the son of Nūh.<sup>3</sup> He was an idol-maker by profession, and he was in charge of the Shrine of the Idols,<sup>4</sup> and he was esteemed among those close to Nemrūd.<sup>5</sup>

2. His story was [as follows]: there was a prophecy about Nemrūd to the effect that within two or three years, a child who would be weaned from its mother<sup>6</sup> would be instrumental in the downfall of the king. Nemrūd commanded that every child who was weaned from its mother should be killed.<sup>7</sup> For three years he did thus.

3. When Ibrāhīm was weaned from his mother, his mother approached Āzar, saying: *“A child has been born to us.”* He replied: *“If he is a child, send him to the place of the tiger,<sup>8</sup> and destroy him, since pleasing Nemrūd is more important to me than this child.”* His mother took [Ibrāhīm] to the mountain, and she sought a place that was narrow and

1. Citing Qurʾan 19:41.

2. Biblical Terah.

3. Nākhur, Sām, and Nūh are biblical Nahor, Shem, and Noah.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

5. Biblical Nimrod.

6. Meaning that the child was at the age of weaning. Therefore, not all children were slain, but only those at this age.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11. Cf. also the stories of Moses and Jesus in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

8. “Place of the tiger” probably means the jungle or forest. This is a euphemism for abandoning the child.

dark, and she washed him and gave him milk and placed him there. He said, "O Lord, if she leaves, I will not see." Then she left. The King<sup>9</sup> [God], may He be exalted, appointed someone to come several times a day and to give him milk until he was satisfied and then leave. The King, may He be exalted, nourished him in that cave and cared for him with His own power.

4. When one month passed, his mother secretly entered the cave in order to see how he was. When she saw him refreshed and cleaned, she was filled with joy, and she took him away and gave him milk and put him in the open, and she was powerless with astonishment. She kept this event a secret until Ibrāhīm became three years old. And the King, may He be exalted, daily nurtured him in that cave. Every month, and every few days his mother would come and see [him], until he was ten years old, when that [previous] situation, and that era, and the time of killing children had passed. Then his mother came and took Ibrāhīm away and brought him to the city, and she informed his father of his condition.

5. According to other traditions, he remained thus in the cave until he reached eighteen years [of age]. The King, may He be exalted, nourished him, and up to that time he did not know that he must come out of the cave. Then [one day] when he was outside at the time of evening prayer, he saw a star. And a story has come down with a report that when he became twelve years old, his mother approached him. Ibrāhīm asked, "O Mother, who is my Lord?" She replied, "I am." Ibrāhīm asked, "Who is your Lord?" She replied, "Your father." Ibrāhīm asked, "My father?" She replied, "Yes." Ibrāhīm asked, "Who is my father's Lord?" She replied, "Nemrūd." Ibrāhīm asked, "Who is Nemrūd's Lord?" She replied, "He has no Lord because he is Lord of lords." Ibrāhīm said, "O Mother, I have found you to be among the ignorant. How is this possible?"

6. Then his mother came and reported to his father and said, "I have hidden our son for some years," and she described his situation. His father went and saw Ibrāhīm, rejoiced, and wanted to bring him to his city. Just as he had asked his mother, Ibrāhīm asked, "Who is my Lord?" His father replied, "Your mother." Ibrāhīm asked, "Who is my mother's Lord?" His father replied, "I am." Ibrāhīm asked, "Who is your Lord?" His father replied, "Nemrūd." Ibrāhīm asked, "Who is Nemrūd's Lord?" His father replied in hushed tones, "He is the Lord of everyone." Ibrāhīm said, "I do not accept this."

7. Āzar said to Ibrāhīm's mother, "Leave this child in this place, since if he comes to our city, we will be thrown into serious trouble." They left him and went away, and he remained a few more years in the cave.

8. At length one day he pondered, "What am I doing here? Let me go and seek God Himself, and be occupied with His service, since He did not create me for idle talk and nonsense." He came out of the cave, and he saw the world and the condition of the sky, and he saw the earth. He said, "This is marvelous! And without a doubt there is a Creator Who has created me likewise."

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9. This text refers to God by many titles that might be easily confused with other characters in the story. When God is referred to, he is always given praise such as "may He be exalted." In other words, in this instance the "the King" is God.

9. Then as he sought and pondered until the afternoon prayer, he saw a star,<sup>10</sup> a light that came up over him. He prostrated himself and said, "It may be that this is my Creator." *The word of Him, may He be exalted: "And when the night covered him, he saw a star."*<sup>11</sup> When he saw that it revolved, he said, "I do not want that which has revolved. It seems to me that whatever causes the revolution must not itself revolve. I do not think this is the Lord."<sup>12</sup> He saw the moon, a brighter light, and likewise he said, "*And when he saw the moon rising,*"<sup>13</sup> he said, "This is He." When it revolved, he said, "No. If my Lord has not revealed a way, then I am among those who wander astray."

10. And in some accounts it has come down that when he saw the moon,<sup>14</sup> he prostrated himself until daylight. When he saw the light of day and it made the light of the moon vanish, he said, "This reveals a Lord." When he saw the sun which emerged, he said, "It may be that this is that which is greater." *The word of Him, may He be exalted: "This is the greatest."*<sup>15</sup> Then he prostrated himself until the time of its setting, and when the setting occurred, and the shadows fell, Ibrāhīm said, "This also revolves—I do not want this." Likewise he gave a report: "*Yea, I am free from what you are associating with God.*"<sup>16</sup> "He who created the heaven and the earth,<sup>17</sup> I consider to be beyond that. I am a pure Muslim,<sup>18</sup> and I am disgusted with polytheists."

In this place there is a question.

11. The first question is: Why did Ibrāhīm say that the stars and the moon and the sun were the Lord?

12. Answer: There is one report that the Truth, may He be exalted, gives in speculative theology itself, and it is not [a question of] how and why. On the other hand, while Ibrāhīm was seeking, he did not say it with belief, and while seeking, it was permissible to say anything and to return to God. Rational demonstration of the appearance [of the

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

11. Citing Qur'an 6:76.

12. The remarks and descriptions in the above passage presuppose a geocentric worldview as well as the influence of Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmology. According to this view, the stars, moon, sun, and the other planets move around the earth with uniform motion, carried by transparent, concentric orbs. These motions formed a hierarchy that ascended from the moon through the planets to the outermost sphere of the fixed stars and beyond, to the sphere of the Prime Mover. Each higher sphere was thought to convey motion to the lower spheres. The planets were thought to be divinities, and their modern names (Jupiter, Mars, Venus, etc.) preserve, via Graeco-Roman mythology, a distant memory of this ancient belief. Abraham, however, could not accept any of these heavenly bodies as God, who, properly speaking, must be the cause of all these motions, the Prime Mover, and not among the things that are moved.

13. Citing Qur'an 6:77.

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

15. Citing Qur'an 6:78.

16. Ibid. In the Qur'an, the verb *associate* refers to placing anything on a level equal with God. Doing so is an act tantamount to polytheism and is the most grievous sin in Islam.

17. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 4–5.

18. I.e., one who submits (to God).

created thing] was necessary, so that he found [the Creator]. Do you not see that when he knew the impropriety of calling created things a Lord, he repented and said: “*I have turned my face as a true believer to Him who brought forth the heavens and the earth*”?<sup>19</sup>

13. And another report states that when Ibrāhīm said this, he knew that there was one God, and in that epoch some of the people worshiped the stars, and some worshiped the moon, and some worshiped the sun.<sup>20</sup> Ibrāhīm was this one who spoke while on the path of denial; he spoke not while on the path of confession; he produced proofs for them that these things rotated from a cause, and who is worthy to be the cause of all, but God? Those things which have rotated, He has caused to rotate. Everything which rotates is subordinate [to the Cause of the action], and God does not deserve to be called weak.<sup>21</sup>

14. And on the path [of seeking Islam] an indicator and the signs of [the Creator] are that the Creator put evidence in the created, which Ibrāhīm thus said: “*That which was created is like this my Lord.*” The conclusive evidence for this is that the [word] *sun* is feminine, and if you say this is God, then you say that this feminine thing is my Lord.<sup>22</sup> This [above event] was a sign [that pointed] Ibrāhīm toward the Lord, may He be exalted, and [this was] evidence of His handiwork. Do you not see that he said: “*I turned my face*”?<sup>23</sup> And he also said: “*Verily, I am free from what you are associating with God.*”<sup>24</sup> Then he became assured that the chain of signs constituted an indicator that pointed toward the Lord, may He be exalted.

### **Fifteenth Story: Ibrāhīm, upon him be peace, comes to the city**

1. At that time, after he became seventeen years old, he arose and came with his mother to the city, and he entered a house, and he continued on good terms with his father. His father also commanded him that he should take the idols to the marketplace and sell them. Ibrāhīm took the idols to the marketplace and did the opposite, and he would say, “Is there no advantage in suffering a small loss? They [the people] always do what is unseemly, and so many among them are so stupid that they do not know that something which they sell cannot properly be God.”

2. And according to another tradition which has come down, Ibrāhīm brought the idols to the marketplace and sold them, and also his father had made a shrine for the idol among the idols.<sup>25</sup> And he was in that place, and whenever anyone came to worship, Ibrāhīm asked, “Why do you worship this which is unworthy of worship?”

19. Citing Qur’an 6:79.

20. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

21. These passages have affinities with the philosophy of Ibn Ṭufayl, as depicted in his treatise *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*. Very little is known about Ibn Ṭufayl, but he was born ca. A.H. 494–504 (the first decade of the twelfth century A.D.), and thus lived after al-Nisābūrī.

22. I.e., it is improper to identify the created thing strictly with the Creator because created things have accidental particulars such as gender, but God does not.

23. Citing Qur’an 6:79.

24. Citing Qur’an 6:78.

25. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

3. And some reports have come down that he appeared there for seven years. People came and said to his father, "Your son despises the idols, and he says they are unworthy of worship, and you are inviting everyone to this belief." His father came and said, "O Ibrāhīm, what is this thing which is said that you are saying, and why do you despise the idols, and how can you say this?" Ibrāhīm argued with his father, "You say this is the Truth; it is not." Thus the Truth, may He be exalted, said: "*Why do you worship what neither hears nor sees, nor which benefits you at all? O my father, knowledge has come to me which has not come to you.*"<sup>26</sup> He said to his father, "I have knowledge which has not reached you. Obey the command which states that you are to find the correct path." He said further: "*Do not serve the devil.*"<sup>27</sup> "O father, do not obey the command of the demon who is in rebellion against God." "O my father, I fear lest a punishment befall you."<sup>28</sup> "O my father, I fear lest a torment befall you, because you are a companion of the demon."<sup>29</sup>

4. His father said: "O Son, you despise these our gods. If you say that this is the reason you do not return [to serving them], I will stone you, or by our command they will stone you."<sup>30</sup> Oh, you are far from yourself!" The word of Him, may He be exalted: "*Are you avoiding my gods?*"<sup>31</sup> Ibrāhīm said: "O Father, may peace be on you, and in peace farewell, which is from God, may He be exalted. I will forgive you because he brought about the situation between me and you." "*And I will forsake you all, and what you pray to instead of God.*"<sup>32</sup> He said: "I am disgusted because of you and your idols. I do not want them in place of God. And I know no god except One, and I do not want to worship that which I consider wretched." Ibrāhīm argued much with his own father.

### **Sixteenth Story: Ibrāhīm decides to depart from his own father**

1. Then Ibrāhīm arose and went out from the midst of them and went to the mountain. And he spent seven years in the mountains of Pars,<sup>33</sup> so that then his mother and father found it difficult to bear, and [his father] said, "You have made my child a wanderer." And his father sent someone to search for him, so that he would be brought home again.

2. Three years passed. In the same manner, in every place that he reached he would defame the idols, until his father died; and he remained in the care of his father's brother, whose name was Hāzar,<sup>34</sup> who was the father of Lūṭ.<sup>35</sup>

26. Citing Qur'an 19:42–43.

27. Citing Qur'an 19:44.

28. Citing Qur'an 19:45.

29. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

30. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 30.

31. Citing Qur'an 19:46.

32. Citing Qur'an 19:48.

33. Pars is Persia.

34. In Arabic script, the names Hāzar and Hāran are very similar. An original Hāran was probably misread as Hāzar.

35. Biblical Lot (whose father is called Haran in the Bible).

3. Ibrāhīm reflected in his heart: "What shall I do to provoke the idols to anger, so that these people would know that these idols do nothing? And they do nothing which is appropriate." Thus the Truth, may He be exalted, said: "*By God, I will strategize against your idols.*"<sup>36</sup> Ibrāhīm said: "I worked a trick with your idols while you were detained at the festival."

4. They would conduct the festival from year to year, when they would bring out the idols to the field, and they would make offerings to them and worship them. And they would bring out many things to the idols. This was done in the time of the ancestors of Ibrāhīm<sup>37</sup> and of his contemporaries. At that time his father's brother Hāzar had custody of him.<sup>38</sup>

### Seventeenth Story: The breaking of the idols

1. Then Ibrāhīm decided upon the day when the people celebrated the festival out of doors. Ibrāhīm pretended to be sick on the way and, fastening something on his forehead, he returned to the road again and said, "I am sick." The word of Him, may He be exalted: "*And he said: 'Verily, I am ill.'*"<sup>39</sup>

2. Then Ibrāhīm returned and entered the Shrine of the Idols, and no one prevented him. He took a large ax and chopped to pieces every one of the idols,<sup>40</sup> except for the biggest idol, so that they would return from that religion [to the true God], and he put the ax with the big idol, and he himself went outside.

3. When the people returned from the festival, they entered the Shrine of the Idols, and they saw that the idols were broken. They said, "What is this thing which has been done to our gods?" The word of Him, may He be exalted: "*Who did this to our gods?*"<sup>41</sup> It was reported in the city, and the people gathered, and the leaders went to the palace of Nemrūd, where they reported the situation to be thus. Nemrūd commanded, "Seek the one who did it." The man who was accompanying Ibrāhīm at the time when he said, "I am unwell," that man said, "I saw the one who returned again from the road." They said that it was so. They said it was a youth, Ibrāhīm, whom they wanted. The word of Him, may He be exalted: "*They said, 'We heard a youth, who is called Ibrāhīm, mentioning them.'*"<sup>42</sup> The Truth, may He be exalted, gave a report about them that they said: "We heard that this youth never worshiped our idols." Nemrūd commanded, "Bring him!" The word of

36. Citing Qur'an 21:57.

37. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

38. The traditions have apparently become confused here. In 16:2, al-Nisābūrī names Hāzar as the father of Lūṭ, biblical Lot. In the Bible, Lot is the son of Abraham's brother Haran, and a number of nonbiblical traditions included in this volume make Haran the keeper of the shrine. This is the only text we have encountered that makes Terah's brother the keeper of the shrine and the father of Lot.

39. Citing Qur'an 37:89.

40. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

41. Citing Qur'an 21:59.

42. Citing Qur'an 21:60.

Him, may He be exalted: *“Bring him before the eyes of the people.”*<sup>43</sup> He said, *“Bring him before the eyes of the people, so that they might see him give testimony until he is forced to confess.”*

4. Nemrūd was judge,<sup>44</sup> although he was a rejector of Truth, and he remained judge over that kingdom for a very long time. *And it was said, “The king continues to be just with the unbelievers, and unjust with the believers.”* Do you not see that he said, *“I will show no anger nor render punishment unless he confess or he offer witnesses. Then I will condemn him.”* One person came and gave testimony. He said, *“I will not condemn him by the testimony of one person.”*

5. Then they asked Ibrāhīm, *“Did you do this?”* *“Did you do this to our gods, O Ibrāhīm?”* He said, *“No, the big one did this.”*<sup>45</sup> Ibrāhīm said, *“No, the biggest of [the idols] did it. Ask him to tell you.”*

6. Question: Ibrāhīm was a prophet; why was it permissible for him to speak the contrary of what the prophets have said?<sup>46</sup>

7. Answer: Ibrāhīm said he was not at the time on the true path; he said he was on the path of disputation and of being called to Islam.<sup>47</sup> Do you not see that he said, *“Ask it to speak”?* And with regard to that, he wanted them to know that the idols do nothing at all, and none of them is either beneficial or harmful. Do you not see that they remained completely in the depths? Thus he said, the words of Him, may He be exalted: *“Then they were confounded.”*<sup>48</sup> They returned to themselves and put their heads down and said, *“You know that they do not speak.”*

8. The report has come down that when Ibrāhīm said this, more people thought in their hearts that he was speaking the truth, and he spoke thus, *“And they returned to themselves.”*<sup>49</sup> They returned to themselves and they spoke with one another, *“You are the oppressors of yourselves, who want an idol for a god.”* Then Ibrāhīm said, *“Do you serve someone other than God, who is neither useful to you nor harms you? Curse you!”*<sup>50</sup> He said, *“You worship in place of God that which is neither of benefit nor of harm. A curse on you and on what you worship!”* Because of his words in this sentence we know that he was on the path of argument and proof. He said, *“I have not done a greater [deed] than they did.”*

9. In a report it has come down that when Ibrāhīm had said this, more people converted. When Nemrūd saw that, he was afraid of them, that the people would turn to

43. Citing Qurʾan 21:61.

44. I.e., he sat in judgment over the people as their ruler.

45. Citing Qurʾan 21:62–63.

46. I.e., to lie.

47. I.e., submission (to God).

48. Citing Qurʾan 21:65. The literal translation of this expression is *“Then they turned upside down on their heads.”*

49. Citing Qurʾan 21:64.

50. Citing Qurʾan 21:66–67.

Ibrāhīm. He said in one speech, “Did he say, ‘turn from your own religion?’ Burn him so that you know that he has no power and that his God is no help.” Thus the Truth, may He be exalted, has given a report: “*They said: ‘Burn him!’*”<sup>51</sup> He said, “Burn him, and render help to your gods if you are [practicing] this religion.”

### **Eighteenth Story: The casting of Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him, into the fire**

1. According to a report that has come down, Nemrūd commanded, “Go and bring wood to burn Ibrāhīm, whom I want to make suffer the pain of the fire because he has cut your gods to pieces.” And they said, “It was to kindle fire for that purpose, that Ibrāhīm had said to Nemrūd that the ‘punishment of my God is with the fire.’” Nemrūd said, “Will I also make you suffer in the fire, so that it will come about that He helps you?”

2. Then they went and brought wood, and they stacked it up, and they put oil on it. And they were saying thus: “Four months’ worth of wood have been made into a pile,” and Ibrāhīm was confined. Then they brought him out from the prison to throw him into the fire, but they were unable to go near the fire on account of its heat, since the heat of the fire extended to three *farsangs*.<sup>52</sup> They were powerless. Iblīs,<sup>53</sup> who had brought enmity to mankind, taught them how to build the catapult. They built a catapult and bound Ibrāhīm head to knee,<sup>54</sup> placed him on the catapult, and hurled him into the fire.<sup>55</sup>

3. When he was securely in the midst of the fire, the King, may He be exalted, made the fire cool for him.<sup>56</sup> *The word of Him, may He be exalted: “O fire, be cool and be a haven for Ibrāhīm.”*<sup>57</sup> “O fire, be cool for Ibrāhīm, be cool as a refuge.” And if it was thus, you could not say that Ibrāhīm had no endurance for the cold.

4. Then in the midst of the fire He prepared a visible couch, so that Ibrāhīm could sit there. He prepared a visible pool of water before him and spread narcissus and flowers all around his couch and caused priestly robes of Heaven<sup>58</sup> to be brought in order to clothe him.<sup>59</sup> No one was able to go there for three days.

5. Nemrūd said to his counselors, “Has the youth Ibrāhīm expired? I fear that he remains alive.” The counselors replied, “If he were a mountain, he would have been annihilated in that fire.” Nemrūd said, “I want to see him so that I can be sure.”

6. Then they built a high place, which had the appearance of a mountain. Nemrūd ascended that place and looked, and he saw Ibrāhīm in the midst of the fire sitting on a

51. Citing Qurʾan 21:68.

52. One *farsang* = 30 *stadia*; 1 *stadion* = 606.75 feet, so 3 *farsangs* = 54,607.5 feet, or about 10 ½ miles.

53. Iblīs, or Lucifer, is one of the most common Arabic names for the devil. This Arabic word is probably ultimately derived from Greek *diabolos*, “accuser,” from which come our words *devil* and *diabolical*.

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

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

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

57. Citing Qurʾan 21:69.

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

59. In both Jewish and Islamic tradition, God sent an angel to deliver a garment from paradise to Joseph when he was sold into Egypt.

couch on the bank of a stream, and narcissus was growing all around a pool, and he was clothed in robes. Nemrūd said, "O Ibrāhīm, how did you bring this about, that this fire has not burned you?" Ibrāhīm said, "God, may He be exalted, watched over me, and all of this He did by His favors." He said, "*How wonderful is the Lord, your Lord!*" Oh, the goodness of God, who is your Lord! If I convert, will He accept me?" Ibrāhīm replied, "Yes. And He will increase your kingdom and lengthen your life." Nemrūd said, "When you come out, I will convert to your Lord, who thus retaliated against the gods they serve, and I will hold you dear."

7. Then Ibrāhīm came out of the midst of the fire to safety, and the couch and pool of water became invisible and went to their own place in Heaven.

8. When Nemrūd returned to his counselors and viziers, he said, "Ibrāhīm desires that I treat [him] kindly and that I join with his Lord, whom I saw thus take revenge, and convert." And the viziers and counselors were afraid that when Ibrāhīm approached Nemrūd, Nemrūd would do his bidding, and they would be out of work. They said to Nemrūd, "You have been lord for some years. Are you going to be a slave now?" They held him back from following Ibrāhīm and said, "This was because of a moment of weakness."

9. It was the bad vizier who did thus, who killed the kings to hell, and he had no fear.<sup>60</sup>

10. He spoke thus: "Did I see what I was doing?" They said, "This is sorcery which he has done." Ibrāhīm's uncle said, "Know that our ancestors divined from the fire, and if veneration of it was among our family, then the fire could not consume him. It was because of this that it did not consume Ibrāhīm, not on account of some sorcery."

### **Nineteenth Story: Ibrāhīm with his paternal uncle Hāzar**

1. Nemrūd said, "O Hāzar, how do I destroy him? I fear that this kingdom is ruined for us." Hāzar replied, "Let his treatment be my responsibility. Know that we have never worshiped smoke, which we consider repugnant, and it is our enemy. We shall destroy him by the smoke." Nemrūd said, "Everything must be from what belongs to them, and that thing must be done."

2. Hāzar was the father of the prophet Lūṭ, and Lūṭ was fourteen years old at that time. Hāzar commanded that a big hole be dug, and in that place they kindled a fire. Hāzar filled the hole with straw and bound Ibrāhīm,<sup>61</sup> and they threw him into that place, and they lit the fire in the straw.<sup>62</sup> The Truth, may He be exalted, sent a wind to carry away the fire by bits, and it cast fire in Hāzar's beard, and Hāzar's beard was completely consumed,<sup>63</sup> and people were heard to argue, "O Hāzar, your family worshiped the fire, how is it that the fire burned you?" After he was thus consumed and the people waited, a wind came in and carried away those ashes and cast them in the eyes of the people. Everyone who had brought wood became blind by the power of the Truth, may

60. This sentence does not seem to make much sense. The literal translation is given here.

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

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

63. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

He be exalted. And Ibrāhīm found refuge from the smoke of the fire. The people were all defeated.

3. And it is said that at that time, Sārah approached Ibrāhīm, and Sārah was the daughter of Nemrūd's vizier. In that era no one was more beautiful than she. She said, "O Ibrāhīm, this your Lord does mighty work, and it is my wish to convert to Him. Will He accept me?" He said, "Yes." She became a Muslim and said, "I will become a Muslim under this condition, that you marry me, since I want no one else." But her father, Nemrūd's vizier, had died. Ibrāhīm said, "It is fitting that the first person to become a Muslim should be Sārah."

4. Question: What was the point of the Truth, may He be exalted, saying to the fire, "Be cold!" without a mediating cause?

5. Answer: The point of that is that when Ibrāhīm removed the mediating cause between himself and the Truth, the King, may He be exalted, also removed the mediating cause, neither commanding the wind to be cold, nor the water, nor the couch, so that the people would know that everyone whom Ibrāhīm favored, the Truth would also favor.

6. At that time the Truth, may He be exalted, commanded, "Let the call to Islam be obvious. Call Nemrūd to me, and if he does not hearken, I will send punishment."

### Twentieth Story: Ibrāhīm calls Nemrūd to Islam

1. Then Ibrāhīm, upon whom may there be peace, approached Nemrūd and said, "Believe, and say, 'God is One.'" Nemrūd replied, "I do not believe. Who is your god, and what does he do, and what power does he have?" Ibrāhīm answered, "My God is He who makes the dead live and the living dead."<sup>64</sup> Nemrūd said, "I also am able to do this." The word of Him, may He be exalted: "*Hast thou not considered him who argued with Ibrāhīm about his Lord?*"<sup>65</sup> Do you not see, O Muḥammad, that Ibrāhīm disputed, and he produced proof: "My God makes the dead live, and the living He causes to die"?

2. Nemrūd answered: "I will do that also." In an account it has come down thus, that Ibrāhīm said to Nemrūd, "Demonstrate how you make the dead live and cause the living to die." Nemrūd commanded that two persons be brought out from the prison: he killed one and set the other free.<sup>66</sup>

3. Ibrāhīm offered another proof. He said, "My Lord has made the sun to rise from the east many years. Make it rise just once from the west." Nemrūd issued the command. He knew he could not do it. The word of Him, may He be exalted: "*Then the rejector of Truth was speechless.*"<sup>67</sup>

4. The scholars have said that Ibrāhīm was the one who said to Nemrūd to make the dead live, that it was not thus: "If you are able, make this slain person live." But he was

64. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:7.

65. Citing Qur'an 2:258.

66. Nemrūd brought both men out of prison, a living death, and then killed one and freed the other.

67. Citing Qur'an 2:258.

compelled to dispute with the ignorant ones. Thus [the Truth, may He be exalted], said, *“And when the ignorant address them, they say: ‘Peace.’”*<sup>68</sup>

5. When Nemrūd commanded, he said, “I have disputed with you many times; I wanted to punish you. You brought out punishment on yourself. I am not equal with you,<sup>69</sup> but I will fight against your God, and vice versa. If you say that He is the god of the sky, I am the god of the earth, and the army is mine, and the earth is mine. And the inhabitants of the earth are mightier. I myself shall go to battle against your God.” Ibrāhīm arose and went out and said, “I found you exceptionally ignorant.”

6. Then Nemrūd commanded that a chest be made with four corners, its clasps out of gold, and the house of its creator out of pearl. Then he commanded that four strong vultures be brought, and for seven nights and days they were starved. Then he commanded that four delectable animal carcasses be hung underneath the four corners, and long planks were erected, and these four vultures were fastened under the four corners so that they could look at the meat, and they chased the scent of the meat.<sup>70</sup> The chest lifted off, and Nemrūd sat in the chest with the vizier with an arrow and a bow.

7. When the chest was airborne and the vultures had flown so high that the world appeared to their eyes as a clod of dirt, Nemrūd said, “He has waited to fight until I arrived at this place.” When they had gone further he said, “Look! What do you see?” The vizier said, “I see the world as if it were covered with smoke; [I see] neither stone nor river.” Nemrūd said, “Now we have reached the place where we are in control, so that the God of Ibrāhīm cannot deceive us.” He put the arrow in the bow and shot it. After an hour the arrow returned and fell into the chest.

8. In this place there are two traditions. Kalbī reports that the Truth, may He be exalted, sent [the angel] Jibrīl<sup>71</sup> to carry that arrow to the sea, and he struck a fish<sup>72</sup> in the belly so that the arrow became covered with blood, then he threw it into the chest. The Truth, may He be exalted, knows that [Nemrūd] was lost, and in a lost state. And it is said that with his own strength [Nemrūd] covered it with blood, and it fell into his chest. The fish was not guilty because the arrow of an unbeliever had been shot into its belly without guilt. And it has been said about this that he covered the arrow with fish blood so that killing a fish has become forbidden, and for that reason a knife is removed from a fish. And some have said that the arrow returned and entered Nemrūd’s head. He concealed it and did not reveal it. When he returned he found the people in another frame of mind. He said, “I have slain the god of the sky.”

9. And in an account it has come down thus: that a group of 500,000 people had had a change of heart and had been converted to Ibrāhīm because of Nemrūd’s [deed]. When

68. Citing Qur’an 25:63.

69. I.e., “you are not my equal” is the English idiom.

70. The vultures flew after the meat and thus carried the whole contraption into the air.

71. The angel Gabriel in Judeo-Christian tradition.

72. The Persian may have a pun here. “Fish” is *māhī*, and “moon” is *māh*. In some ancient cultures the moon was thought to be the god of the night sky.

Nemrūd said, "I have slain the god of the sky," and the arrow covered with blood appeared, they thought that he spoke the truth, and they all became rejectors of Truth.

10. Then Ibrāhīm approached Nemrūd and said, "Become a Muslim, because you know that in saying and doing that thing, you are lying." He replied, "If I am lying, I was not before his army, and I did not slay him, and he did not bring an army out before me, then say, 'Send it!'" Ibrāhīm counseled him and said, "Believe! You do not believe." The angel Jibrīl came and said, "O Ibrāhīm, say to Nemrūd, 'Assemble an army because my Lord will send an army.'"

11. Ibrāhīm spoke to Nemrūd. Nemrūd said, "If He sends every kind He wants, they will be mine." Jibrīl came and said, "O Ibrāhīm, say: 'He will send the weakest army, and that is a mosquito.'" Nemrūd said, "Is his army a mosquito?" He said, "Come!" He said, "It is a weak army; I have no fear. Now, by our command, whatever mosquito there is should be killed." In forty days it happened that the Truth, may He be glorified and exalted, sent the mosquito so that Nemrūd with his army would be all destroyed.

### **Twenty-first Story: Nemrūd is destroyed, may he be cursed**

1. Then Nemrūd commanded the army and the people to kill three thousand mosquitoes every day. The more they killed, however, the more they multiplied until they became so numerous that no one was able to eat and sleep, and on every one of them a thousand mosquitoes had come. Everyone was surprised and helpless, and they were destroyed. Nemrūd also was helpless. He commanded that a house of copper be built and that a door be built, which had no hole large enough for a person to pass through, from its base to its top. At that time the Truth, may He be exalted, commanded a mosquito to enter into that hole. In one jump, because of the narrowness of the gap, it came, and you could see it sitting on the head of Nemrūd. Nemrūd wanted to strike it so that it would leave. "Look, a mosquito is going into him!" Nemrūd wanted to make it go out, but it entered his brain. The Truth, may He be exalted, kept the mosquito alive in his brain so that it ate his brain for thirteen nights and days. Then Nemrūd became weak. He said, "What am I going to do?" He commanded that bugles be made, and they were sounded at his head so that their sound would enter into his head, and the mosquito would stop eating for one hour on account of the noise of the bugles, so that he would be stable for one hour.

2. The first person in the world who used the bugle was Nemrūd. For this reason we remember that his soothing was by means of it. Then when forty days had passed and the mosquito became larger and the suffering of Nemrūd became greater, he commanded that a club be made and that his head be struck ten more days. Then the limit of his strength was reached.

3. When he was helpless and no remedy was found, he commanded a servant and his retinue, "Come to my assistance, and strike my head with a whip, so that it will soothe me." They did thus until his pains lessened, so that sometimes when he was less stable, he commanded his officers, his retinue, and his own servants to wail at him and to slap him until he found rest.

4. And the point of that was that the Truth, may He be exalted, showed contempt for him, so that those who bowed before him were all struck, in order that the people would know that to worship the creature<sup>73</sup> was despicable, and also so that they would know that the Lord was truly mighty and powerful.

5. Forty more days passed, and the mosquito in his brain became bigger. After that, he commanded his officer to strike him on the head with a mace, and Nemrūd himself positioned his head so that he would receive no harm from the wound.

6. Several times this happened. The people were all helpless because of his misfortune. They said, "What can we do to be delivered from him?" The people said to his general, who was strong, "Deliver us from him, for we are helpless." He said, "What will we do?" After a day passed, the general struck his head with the mace, and his head broke into pieces, and several mosquitoes emerged, flying like doves. In that hour Nemrūd died.<sup>74</sup>

7. It is said that his entire army was destroyed by the same cause and that their agony was the same as his. And it is said that when Ibrāhīm and his people departed from those regions, the mosquitoes diminished in number, and it is said that thousands [of people] went with him. This was the destruction of Nemrūd.

8. After Ibrāhīm had left that city, and they had escaped from the group that had been helpless, they went from place to place, and Ibrāhīm and his people stopped in the open, so that Muslims were established there.

9. After that another king from the family of Nemrūd reigned, in another city of the province of Pars.<sup>75</sup> This king was a youth, and he avoided Nemrūd's rejection of the Truth, but he desired women. In every place where he had heard a report about a beautiful-faced woman, he had her brought to him. Ibrāhīm perceived that he was famous on account of his wife and children; in particular, Sārah was fair of face.

10. According to a report that has come down, the Truth, may He be glorified and exalted, created beauty in 1,000 parts, 999 of which He gave to Ḥawā,<sup>76</sup> and 1 to the rest of mankind, which he made into another 1,000 parts, 999 of which He gave to Sārah, and 1 to the rest of mankind. Then that one part He made into [another] 1,000 parts, 999 of which He gave to Yusūf,<sup>77</sup> and 1 to the rest of mankind.

11. For this reason Ibrāhīm was afraid for Sārah, who was fair of face. He said, "It is uncalled-for that the king should be so unjust to desire Sārah, since no one gainsays kings." He made the call to Islām; he said, "By God, I am afraid of this king." The Truth, may He

73. I.e., to worship the creature instead of the Creator.

74. The story, often repeated in the Arabic texts, may derive from the Talmudic account of the gnat that entered the nose of the Roman emperor Titus and picked at his brain for seven years, following his desecration of the temple at Jerusalem (Babylonian Talmud *Gittin* 56b).

75. The province of Fars (Pars) was the ruling province of the ancient Persian Empire, and its dialect (Farsi) became the national language of Iran.

76. Biblical Eve.

77. Biblical Joseph. In Islamic tradition, he is known for his great beauty. See Qur'an 12 for one Islamic version of his story.

be exalted, commanded, “O Ibrāhīm, if you are afraid, then emigrate.” Ibrāhīm prepared to depart; accordingly, the Truth, may He be exalted, gave the report: *And he said: “Verily, I am an emigrant for the sake of my Lord.”*<sup>78</sup> I desire to depart to the service of my own Lord.”

### **Twenty-second Story: Ibrāhīm leaves for Syria and what happens to him on the way**

1. Then Ibrāhīm arose and went out of that country, and he brought Sārah. And it is said that he built a chest and put Sārah in it. Then he locked the chest and departed with the multitude of Muslims who were with him,<sup>79</sup> and a multitude of his kinfolk were also with him.

2. They were gone on the road for three days and reached the border. There were road watchmen of that kingdom on the way, who said to him, “What is in this chest?” Ibrāhīm said, “May the Truth bless you, and let us pass.” They said, “Because we don’t know what you have in this chest, we will not let you pass, nor those with you.” Such was the practice of the road watchmen, to be obdurate and offensive. Although Ibrāhīm said, “It is of no value,” nevertheless they opened the lid of the chest and saw Sārah with perfect beauty, the like of which they had never before seen. They said, “Our king seeks such people in the world whom you possess and have concealed.”

3. The point of this was that the Truth, may He be glorified and exalted, had determined that Hājar<sup>80</sup> was to be the mother of Ismā‘īl,<sup>81</sup> who was to come from the Chosen One [Ibrāhīm], on whom may there be peace. And the Truth, may He be exalted, also had sustained all the prophets and saints in their trials.

4. Then they grabbed Sārah and took her away. And a group of people was appointed over them. The Truth, may He be glorified and exalted, for the sake of his Friend [Ibrāhīm], caused him to know every mountain, desert, tree, and wall for a three-day journey. Whatever there was, he revealed it to Ibrāhīm so that Ibrāhīm, upon whom may there be peace, saw Sārah without a veil so that her going away and returning and speaking to him [the king], all of this, would be known to him.

5. Ibrāhīm was restrained. When Sārah was brought before the king, the king was astonished at the sight of her and said, “Never in the world have I beheld such beauty.” From that moment he desired Sārah and wanted to lay his hands on her. Sārah said, “Stay away from me. You will not touch me.” At that moment, the king’s member shriveled, and he became afraid and apologized, and he said, “Pray so that I will be potent.” She prayed that it would become functional again. On another occasion, Iblīs tempted him, and he desired Sārah again. So it happened that his member withered as it had the first time. The king was regretful. Three times it was thus. Finally he truly repented and said, “Your situation is known. I pardon you.” And he gave his blessings, and he also said,

78. Citing Qur’an 29:26. In the Qur’an, these are Lūṭ’s words. Ibrāhīm’s emigration is here a foreshadowing of the *Hijrah* (emigration) from Mecca to Medina by Muhammad in 632 A.D.

79. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

80. Biblical Hagar.

81. Biblical Ishmael.

“Who is my female slave with such beauty, who whenever I desire her I am thus, in this condition? I suspect that it is for the sake of your posterity. Now that I excuse you, you pardon me.”

6. Then Hājar was brought before the king, and he gave her to Sārah. And Hājar was among the descendants of a pious prophet, upon whom may there be peace.

7. After all this, they arose and went toward Syria. When Sārah came out, she wanted to tell her story. Ibrāhīm said to Sārah, “Whatever you wish.” He said, “I saw and also heard you speak.” Then Sārah said, “O Ibrāhīm, I give you Hājar, who belongs to me and who has suffered much sorrow. May you beget from her what is not from me.”

8. Then Ibrāhīm, upon whom may there be peace, went in to her. And Hājar was very fair of face, and Ibrāhīm was with Hājar, who thereafter conceived Ismā‘il, upon whom may there be peace.

EXTRACTS FROM  
AL-ZAMAKHSHARI

Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd al-Zamakhsharī (A.H. 467–538/A.D. 1075–1144) was born in Khwarizm in Persia, but he insisted on writing and teaching in Arabic. This theologian, philologist, and scholar produced a commentary on the Qurʾān, *Al-Kashshāf ḥaqāʾiq al-tanzīl*. A number of manuscripts of his commentary are extant: it remained popular among scholars, although his views were not considered mainstream among later Muslims. Baiḍāwī tried to replace Zamakhsharī’s work with his own orthodox commentary more than a century later. In the *Kashshāf*, Zamakhsharī concentrates on lexicographical information, pulling in many examples from old poetry. The Arabic text was first published in Calcutta, in A.D. 1856. It has never before been translated into English. Brian M. Hauglid made the translation here from Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ḥaqāʾiq al-tanzīl* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1966–68), 2:576, 578. Page references follow the sections translated.

It is related that Āzar<sup>1</sup> left with [Nimrūdh<sup>2</sup> and the people] the day of their feast. They began at the house of the idols. They entered it and bowed down before them and placed food there and left it with them [the idols]. They said, “May the Gods bless our food.” Then they left. But Ibrāhīm remained [behind], observing the idols. There were seventy chosen idols. A large idol was facing the door, and it was [made of] gold. In its two eyes were two gems, which illuminated the night. [Ibrāhīm] smashed all of them with an ax in his hand until none remained except the largest.<sup>3</sup> He attached the ax to its neck. Qatāda said that [Ibrāhīm] kept this concealed from his people. However, it is related that one man heard him. (2:576)

[After Ibrāhīm is found out:]

It is related that they [the people] planned to burn [Ibrāhīm’s] body. So they built a structure like the enclosure in Kūthā. They gathered the most well-known kinds of hard timber until the women would get sick. But they would say, “If god will heal me, then we can gather wood for Ibrāhīm.” Then they ignited such a huge fire that the birds would be burned in the air from its fire. Then they placed [Ibrāhīm] on a catapult, fettered and

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1. Biblical Terah.  
2. Biblical Nimrod.  
3. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

shackled,<sup>4</sup> and they propelled him into the fire.<sup>5</sup> Jibrīl<sup>6</sup> proclaimed, "O fire! Be thou cool and safe." It is related: Nothing of him was burned except his fetters. Jibrīl asked [Ibrāhīm] as he was thrown into [the fire], "Are you in need of anything?" [Ibrāhīm] answered, "As far as you are concerned, no!" [Jibrīl] said, "Ask your Lord. . . ." Nimrūdh was looking down upon him from the palace. Suddenly, [Ibrāhīm] was in a garden and angels were there with him, keeping him company.<sup>7</sup> [Nimrūdh] said, "I am close to your God!" So he sacrificed four thousand cattle and stayed away from Ibrāhīm. Ibrāhīm was sixteen years old at the time. (2:578)

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

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

6. The angel Gabriel in Judeo-Christian tradition.

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

## EXTRACTS FROM RAWANDI

The Persian Qutub al-Dīn Sa‘yud ibn Hibat Allāh Rāwandī died in A.H. 573/A.D. 1177. He was an Imāmī<sup>1</sup> scholar, Qur’an exegete, and theologian, and he also studied law. He used the works of Abū ‘Alī Ṭabarsī in his writings as well as those of Imad al-Dīn Ṭabarī and ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Baghḍaḍī. Rāwandī wrote a *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’* (Stories of the Prophets). Brian M. Hauglid translated these selections from what appears to be the first publication of the *Qiṣaṣ: Rāwandī, Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’* (Beirut: Mu‘asaset al-Mu‘fid, A.H. 1409 [A.D. 1989]), 103–7. We have numbered the paragraphs for reference purposes.

### Regarding the Prophethood of Ibrāhīm

1. Al-Sa‘īd Abū al-Barakāt Muḥammad b.<sup>2</sup> Ismā‘īl informed us on the authority of ‘Alī b. ‘Abd al-Ṣamad Sa‘d al-Nīshāburī—al-Sa‘īd Abū al-Barakāt al-Ḥūrī—Abū Ja‘far b. Bābwih—‘Abd Allāh—Ya‘qūb b. Yazīd—Muḥammad b. Abī ‘Amīr—Hishām b. Sālam—Abū Baṣīr—Abū ‘Abd Allāh said: Āzar, the uncle<sup>3</sup> of Ibrāhīm [Abraham], was an astrologer for Nimrūd.<sup>4</sup> And [Nimrūd] did not act except on his advice. [Nimrūd] said, “I saw in my night [dream?] a wonder.” [Nimrūd] asked, “What was it?” So [Āzar] said, “Indeed a child will be born in our land this [year], by whose hands will be our destruction.” So the men were separated from the women. Tārakh<sup>5</sup> had [already] known the mother of Ibrāhīm, so she had become pregnant. [Nimrūd] sent midwives to watch over the women, so that there would not be anything in the womb without them knowing about it. They watched over the mother of Ibrāhīm. But God had mandated that what was in the womb would appear. They said, “We cannot see anything in her” [i.e., she did not show]. When labor began she went into one of the caves. She placed [Ibrāhīm] in it and breast-fed him. She placed a stone at the opening of the cave. And God put

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1. An Imāmī recognizes the “twelve holy imāms,” religious leaders whose teachings are considered infallible in the “Twelver” branch of Shī‘ism.
  2. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read “son of.”
  3. Here Rāwandī uses the word ‘*amm*, meaning paternal uncle, instead of ‘*ab*, father. This is likely a corruption of the manuscript or a typographical error. Later in the text, Rāwandī does refer to Āzar as the father (‘*ab*) of Abraham.
  4. Biblical Nimrod.
  5. Biblical Terah.

his sustenance in [Ibrāhīm's] thumb. So he began sucking it and milk flowed. [Ibrāhīm] began to grow in a day as if he grew in a week. And he grew in a week as if he grew in a month. [Ibrāhīm] lived as God willed him to live.

2. Then Ibrāhīm left the cave. He saw the planet Venus [*al-Zuhara*] and people worshipping it. He said, "Is this"—by way of denial—"my Lord?" It did not take long before the moon ascended and people also worshiped it. [Ibrāhīm] also said—by way of denial—"Is this my Lord?" That is an argument against them that would be an attestation of monotheism [*tawḥīd*]. The comparison [i.e., of God to Venus or the moon] was refuted.<sup>6</sup> God said: *That was our argument we gave to Ibrāhīm [to use] against his people.*<sup>7</sup>

3. On the authority of Ibn Awrama—al-Ḥusain b. 'Alī reported to us—'Umar—Abān—Ḥajar—Abū 'Abd Allāh said: Ibrāhīm took issue and objected to their gods. He was eventually brought to Nimrūd and argued with him. Ibrāhīm said, "My Lord is the One Who causes to live and die."<sup>8</sup> During one of their feasts, [Ibrāhīm] went to see their gods. They said, "No one has ventured against them (i.e., the gods) except the young man who doesn't believe in them or recognize them." They could not find a punishment for him greater than the fire. So they told Nimrūd, and he had firewood gathered for [Ibrāhīm] and ignited it. Then he had [Ibrāhīm] placed in the catapult to throw him into the fire.<sup>9</sup> Truly, Iblīs<sup>10</sup> directed the making of the catapult for Ibrāhīm.

4. On the authority of Ibn Bābwih—his father—Sa'd b. 'Abd Allāh—Ya'qūb b. Yazīd reported to us—Ibn Abī Amīr—Abān b. 'Uthmān—Abū 'Abd Allāh said: My father informed me—my grandfather—the Prophet—Jibrīl<sup>11</sup> said: "When Nimrūd took Ibrāhīm to cast him into the fire, I said, 'O God! [Ibrāhīm] worships You and he is Your friend. There is not anyone in Your land who worships You except him.' God said, '[Ibrāhīm] is My servant. I will take him when I wish.'" When Ibrāhīm was thrown into the fire, Jibrīl met him in the air while [Ibrāhīm] was falling into the fire.<sup>12</sup> Jibrīl asked, "O Ibrāhīm! Do you need anything?" [Ibrāhīm] said, "Not from you!" [Ibrāhīm] exclaimed, "O God! O the One God! O the Everlasting God! *Thou Who art neither begotten nor begetteth. There is not an equal to Him!*<sup>13</sup> Save me from the fire with Thy compassion."<sup>14</sup> So God directed the fire, "*Be cool and safe upon Ibrāhīm!*"<sup>15</sup>

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

7. Citing Qur'an 6:83.

8. The text makes reference here to the Qur'an. Although a verse is not identified, this phrase does bear resemblance to 2:260 where Abraham says, "My Lord! Show me how thou givest life to the dead." Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:7.

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

10. Iblīs, or Lucifer, is one of the most common Arabic names for the devil. This Arabic word is probably ultimately derived from Greek *diabolos*, "accuser," from which come our words *devil* and *diabolical*.

11. The angel Gabriel in Judeo-Christian tradition.

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

13. Citing Qur'an 112:3–4.

14. Cf. Abraham 1:15. Citing Qur'an 112:3–4.

15. Citing Qur'an 21:69. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

5. On the authority of Ibn Bābwih—Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Mājilwih informed us—his uncle, Muḥammad b. Abī-al-Qāsim—Aḥmad b. Abī ‘Abd Allāh—Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Naṣr—Abān b. ‘Uthmān—Muḥammad b. Marwān—Abū Ja‘far said: Ibrāhīm was called at the time (he said) “O God! O the One God! O the Everlasting God! *Thou Who art neither begotten nor begettest. There is not an equal to Him!*”<sup>16</sup> Then [Ibrāhīm] said, “I place my trust in God. You have done your duty.”

6. [Abū Ja‘far] said: When God said to the fire, “be thou cool and safe upon Ibrāhīm,” at that time fire could not be made upon the face of the earth. No one used fire for three days. [Abū Ja‘far] said: Jibrīl came down to talk with [Ibrāhīm] in the midst of the fire.<sup>17</sup> Nimrūd said: “Anyone who adopts a god, let him adopt the likes of the God of Ibrāhīm.” A great one among their mighty said, “I demanded of the fire not to burn him.” [Abū Ja‘far] said: A flame of the fire came out and burned him. Nimrūd was on a balcony overlooking the fire.<sup>18</sup>

7. After three days Nimrūd said to Āzar, “Come up with us and see!” So Āzar went up. Ibrāhīm was in a green garden, and a sheikh was with him conversing with him. Nimrūd turned to Āzar and said, “Your son, at this time, bestows honor upon God.” The Arabs call the uncle [i.e., Āzar] a “father” [to Ibrāhīm]. God said in the story of Ya‘qūb: *They worship your God and the God of your fathers Ibrāhīm, Ismā‘īl, and Ishaq.*<sup>19</sup> Ismā‘īl was the uncle of Ya‘qūb and he [i.e., Ismā‘īl] called him [i.e., Ya‘qūb] “father” in this verse.

8. Al-Ustādh Abū al-Qāsim b. Kamaḥ informed us on the authority of the Sheikh Ja‘far al-Dūrīstī—Sheikh al-Mafīd—Abū Ja‘far b. Bābwih—Muḥammad b. Bukrān al-Nikāsh informed us—Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Sa‘d al-Kūfī—‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Fadāl—his father—Al-Ridā said: When Nūḥ was about to drown, God took pity on us and saved him. So God drove the flood back from Nūḥ. When Ibrāhīm was thrown into the fire,<sup>20</sup> God took pity on us and saved him and made the fire cool and safe [upon Ibrāhīm].<sup>21</sup> Indeed when Mūsā<sup>22</sup> parted the sea, God took pity on us and made it dry. Indeed, when the Jews wanted to kill ‘Isā,<sup>23</sup> God took pity on us and saved him, and ‘Isā ascended to God.

9. On the authority of Ibn Bābwih—Muḥammad b. Mūsā b. Mutawakkil—‘Abd Allāh b. Ja‘far al-Ḥamīrī—Aḥmad b. Muḥammad—al-Ḥasan b. Maḥbūb—Ibrāhīm b. Abī Ribāb al-Kurḥī—Abū ‘Abd Allāh [who] said: Ibrāhīm was born in Kūthā and he was of their people. The mother of Ibrāhīm and the mother of Lūṭ were sisters. [Ibrāhīm] married Sāra, the daughter to Lāḥij. [Sāra] is the daughter of [Ibrāhīm’s] aunt. [Sāra] owned much cattle and was well off. She gave all that she owned to Ibrāhīm, who looked after

16. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

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

18. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

19. Citing Qur’an 2:133.

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

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

22. Biblical Moses.

23. Biblical Jesus.

it and expanded it. He increased the livestock and crops until there was not in the land of Kūthā a man in a more splendid condition than himself.

10. When Ibrāhīm smashed the idols of Nimrūd,<sup>24</sup> [Nimrūd] ordered him to be bound<sup>25</sup> and he made an enclosure for Abraham in which was firewood, and Nimrūd ignited a fire. Then he had Abraham thrown [into the fire] to burn him.<sup>26</sup> They withdrew from the fire for three days until it abated. When they looked down upon the enclosure, they found Ibrāhīm unharmed and untied from his shackles.<sup>27</sup> They informed Nimrūd and he ordered them to banish Ibrāhīm from his country. Indeed [they said], “If he remained in your country, he would corrupt your religion and harm your gods.” So they expelled Ibrāhīm and Lūṭ<sup>28</sup> to Syria.

11. Ibrāhīm left with Lūṭ and Sāra. He said: “*I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me!*”<sup>29</sup> [i.e., to Jerusalem]. Ibrāhīm carried his livestock and his property with him. He made a coffer for Sāra and carried her in it. He progressed until he had gotten out of the jurisdiction of Nimrūd, and he arrived at the domain of a Coptic [Egyptian] man who would allow passage with a tithe. He obstructed Abraham and said to him: “Open this coffer so that you can give me its tithe!” He insisted that [Ibrāhīm] open it. So Ibrāhīm opened it. When Sāra appeared, and she was known for her beauty, he asked, “Who is she?” Ibrāhīm answered, “My wife, the daughter of my aunt.” He asked, “Who told you to confine her in this coffer?” Ibrāhīm answered, “My jealousy should anyone see her.”

12. Messengers were sent to the king informing him of the report of Ibrāhīm. The king sent out for [Ibrāhīm] and the coffer. When Ibrāhīm entered into the king, the king said to him, “Open the coffer so that I may look into it.” [Ibrāhīm] said, “Truly, my wife, the daughter of my aunt is in it, and I refuse to open it with all that is with me!” But the king insisted that he open it. So [Ibrāhīm] opened it. When the king saw Sāra, he did not contain his sexual foolishness and extended his hand to her. Ibrāhīm exclaimed, “O God! Restrain his hand from my wife!” His hand did not reach her and did not come back to him. The king asked, “Is your God the One Who did this?” [Ibrāhīm] answered, “Yes! Indeed my God is jealous, He detests that which is forbidden! He is the One who intervened between you and her!” The king said, “Call your Lord to return my hand to me! Indeed, if He responds, I will not object to your having her.” Ibrāhīm said: “O God! Return his hand to him. Let it be restrained from my wife!” Then God returned his hand to him.

[The king tries again but is thwarted again and recognizes the greatness of Ibrāhīm and his God].

24. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

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

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

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

28. Biblical Lot.

29. Citing Qurʾan 37:99.

## EXTRACTS FROM IBN AL-JAWZI

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Abū al-Farash ibn al-Jawzī (ca. A.H. 510–597 / A.D. 1126–1200) lived in Baghdad. He was a preacher and was very active politically, one of the most influential and successful Hanbalis (followers of Hanbalism, a school of thought that claimed to recognize only the Qurʾan and the sayings and actions of the Prophet as authoritative). He may have written over one thousand works, including the *Zād al-masīr fī-ʿilm al-tafsīr* (The Commencement of Progression in the Science of [Qurʾanic] Exegesis). Brian M. Hauglid translated these extracts from the Arabic: Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr fī-ʿilm al-tafsīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1994), 3:55–56 and 5:269–70. We have added paragraph numbers for reference purposes.

### Points concerning the beginning of the story of Ibrāhīm

1. Abū Šallaḥ related on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās who said: Ibrāhīm [Abraham] was born in the time of Nimrūdh.<sup>1</sup> Nimrūdh had priests who said to him, “There will be born this year a child who will defile the god of the people of the land. He will summon the people to turn away from their religion, and he will destroy the people of your house by his hand.” So [Nimrūdh] separated the women from the men. But Āzar entered into his house and knew his wife, and she conceived. The priests said to Nimrūdh, “Indeed, the boy was conceived this night.” [Nimrūdh] declared, “Each one born a boy should be killed.”<sup>2</sup> When labor pains began for the mother of Ibrāhīm, she fled, a fugitive. Then she placed [Ibrāhīm] in a dried-out riverbed, and she wrapped him in a rag. Then she placed him in alfalfa weeds, and she told his father. He came to [Ibrāhīm] and dug a hole for him and barricaded it with a stone. [Ibrāhīm’s] mother would visit frequently and breast-feed him until [Ibrāhīm] became a young man and could speak. [Ibrāhīm] said to his mother, “Who is my Lord?” She responded, “I am.” He said, “Who is your Lord?” She said, “Your father.” [Ibrāhīm] asked, “Who is my father’s Lord?” She said, “Be silent!” So [Ibrāhīm] was silent. She returned to her husband and said, “Indeed, the boy who we have talked about changing the religion of the people of the land is your son!” So [Ibrāhīm’s] father went to him and they had the same conversation [he had had with his

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1. Biblical Nimrod.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

mother]. When the night descended upon [Ibrāhīm] he drew close to the opening of the cave. He looked, and he saw a star<sup>3</sup> [Qur'an 6:75–79 discussed in commentary]. (3:55–56)

### Points related to the story [of Ibrāhīm]

2. Qur'anic commentators relate that the people imprisoned Ibrāhīm in a house. They built for themselves a fence around its wall, measuring sixty cubits to the foot of a high mountain. The king shouted, "Gather firewood for Ibrāhīm! Do not allow the young nor the old to fail to show up. Those who fail to appear will be thrown into the fire!" So they gathered firewood for forty nights until the women would say, "If I succeed in this, I will gather wood for Ibrāhīm's fire" and until the firewood was almost equal with the wall blocking the doors of the garden. They dropped the fire into the wood. Its flames arose until the birds passing over it would be burned by the intensity of its heat. Then they built a high building and built a catapult over it. Then they raised Ibrāhīm to the top of the building. Ibrāhīm lifted up his head to the heavens and said, "O God! You are One in the heavens and I am one on the earth. There is not anyone on the earth who worships You except me. God has considered me and He is the excellent Trustee!"<sup>4</sup> Then the heavens, the earth, the mountains, and the angels said, "Our Lord, Ibrāhīm burns in You. Allow us to rescue him." God said, "I know. If [Ibrāhīm] calls upon you, send rain upon him." The people cast [Ibrāhīm] into the fire when he was sixteen years old.<sup>5</sup> Others say he was twenty-six years old. [Ibrāhīm] said, "God has considered me, and He is the excellent Trustee!" Then Jibrīl<sup>6</sup> met [Ibrāhīm] and said to him, O Ibrāhīm, are you in need?" Ibrāhīm replied, "Not from you!" Jibrīl said, "Ask your Lord." [Ibrāhīm] said, "God has considered my asking; He knows my condition." Then God said, "O Fire! Be thou cool and safe upon Ibrāhīm."<sup>7</sup> All fire was extinguished, and [all fire] obeyed upon the face of the earth and no longer remained, thinking that God meant it to be cool and safe. Al-Suddī claimed that Jibrīl is the one who summoned the fire to be cool and safe. Ibn 'Abbās said: If the coldness of the fire had not remained safe upon Ibrāhīm, he would have died of the cold. Al-Suddī said: The angels took hold of the arms of Ibrāhīm and they sat him upon the earth, and then a spring of fresh water appeared and real flowers and certain types of flowers [also appeared]. Ka'b and Wahb said: The fire did not burn Ibrāhīm but only his fetters. [Ibrāhīm] stayed on that spot for seven days. Others say forty or fifty days. Then Jibrīl descended with a garment from heaven and a velvetlike carpet from heaven. Jibrīl placed the garment upon [Ibrāhīm]<sup>8</sup> and sat him upon the carpet, and [Jibrīl] sat talking with him. And Āzar came to Nimrūdh and said: "Allow me

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

4. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

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

6. The angel Gabriel in Judeo-Christian tradition.

7. Citing Qur'an 21:69.

8. In both Jewish and Muslim tradition, God sent an angel to deliver a garment from paradise to Joseph when he was sold into Egypt.

to bury the bones of Ibrāhīm." So [Āzar] left with the people. [Nimrūdh or Āzar] ordered that the wall be breached. But Ibrāhīm was in the garden, [mocking], and his clothes were moist. The garment was on him, the carpet was under him, and the angel was beside him. Nimrūdh called to him, "O Ibrāhīm! Your God is the One Who has imparted his great power. Are you able to leave?" [Ibrāhīm] said, "Yes." So Ibrāhīm stood up and walked until he had left. Nimrūdh asked, "Who is the one I saw with you?" [Ibrāhīm] answered, "An angel whom my Lord sent me to keep me company."<sup>9</sup> Nimrūdh said, "I am closer to your God when I see His power." [Ibrāhīm] said, "God will not receive you [as long as you are] of your religion." Nimrūdh said, "O Ibrāhīm! I am not able to leave my kingdom. But I will make a sacrifice for Him." Then [Nimrūdh] killed a sacrifice and stayed away from Ibrāhīm. (5:269–70)

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

EXTRACTS FROM  
**IBN AL-ATHIR**

The historian ‘Izz al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn al-Athīr (A.H. 555–630/A.D. 1160–1233) was born into an illustrious family near present-day Mosul in Iraq; his brothers are noted for their literary criticism and lexicography. He was a historian and often visited Baghdad for study, as an envoy, or on pilgrimage. He served as a soldier under Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin) during the Crusades. At the end of his life, he lived at Aleppo. His *Al-Kāmil fī-al-taʾrīkh* (A Complete History), a history of the world from the creation to the year A.H. 628 (A.D. 1231), is the best of Arabic annalistic historiography. Because of his well-balanced selection, clear presentation, and flashes of insight, his works were much loved and therefore well preserved, although he often omitted his sources. Brian M. Hauglid translated these selections from Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī-al-taʾrīkh* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir and Dār Bayrūt, A.H. 1385 [A.D. 1965]), 1:94–100. The paragraphs have been numbered for reference purposes.

**An account of Ibrāhīm the Friend and those who were in his time from the kingdoms of the non-Arabs.**

1. Ibrāhīm [Abraham] is the son of Tārakh b.<sup>1</sup> Nākhūr b. Sārūg b. Argū b. Fāllag b. Gābir b. Shāllakh b. Qīnān b. Arphakshadh b. Sām<sup>2</sup> b. Nūḥ. It has been disputed as to where [Ibrāhīm] was born and lived. Some say he had been born in Sūs in the land of al-Ahwāz. Others say he was born in Bābal. Some say in Kūthā and others say in Ḥar-rān, but his father moved him. The people of knowledge generally say that his birth was in the time of Nimrūd<sup>3</sup> b. Kūsh. The people of information say that Nimrūd was a governor of Lāzdahāq; there are those who assert that Nūḥ sent him [there]. As far as a

1. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read “son of.”

2. See Genesis 11:10–26 for the Judeo-Christian version of this genealogy: Abraham, Terah, Nahor, Serug, Reu (Argū), Peleg (Fāllag), Eber, Salah, Arphaxad, and Shem. Note that Canaan (Cainan) is missing from the Hebrew (and KJV) text of Genesis 10:24 (and from 1 Chronicles 1:18, which is dependent on the Genesis passage). His name is, however, included in the genealogical listing in the Septuagint and the Samaritan, Syriac, and other Bibles and is also found in the genealogy of Christ in Luke 3:36. A number of early church fathers referred to Cainan’s absence from the Hebrew record as evidence that the Jews had tampered with the Bible text.

3. Biblical Nimrod.

majority of the predecessors of the *ʿulamāʾ*<sup>4</sup> are concerned, they say that he [Nimrūd] was a king himself.

2. Ibn Ishāq said: His kingdom comprised the east and west of Bābal. [Ibn Ishāq] said: It is said: There were only three kings of the earth: Nimrūd, Dhū al-Qarnayn,<sup>5</sup> and Sulaymān b. Dāūd. Others add to the list Bukhtanaṣr [Nebuchadnezzar], but we don't believe this saying.

3. When God desired to send Ibrāhīm as an argument against his people and a messenger to his servants, there had been no prophets between [Ibrāhīm] and Nūḥ excepting Hūd and Ṣāliḥ.<sup>6</sup> When the time of Ibrāhīm approached, the astrologers of Nimrūd came to him and said, "Truly, we have found a boy who will be born in your city. It is maintained that he is Ibrāhīm who will become separated from your religion and smash your idols<sup>7</sup> in a certain month and a certain year." When the year in which the astrologers mentioned had come, Nimrūd kept [all] the pregnant [women] near him except the mother of Ibrāhīm. Indeed, he did not know of her pregnancy because she did not show. So [Nimrūd] slaughtered each boy who had been born in that time.<sup>8</sup> When labor began for the mother of Ibrāhīm, she went out at night to a nearby cave. She gave birth to Ibrāhīm and she put his affairs in order [what would be right for the newborn], then she blocked the cave and quickly returned to her home. She inspected him to see what he was doing, and he had grown in a day what other [children] would take a month [to grow]. She found him alive, sucking his fingers, into which God had put his nourishment.

4. Āzar<sup>9</sup> had asked the mother of Ibrāhīm about her pregnancy. She answered, "I gave birth to a boy, but he died." So he believed her. [Others] say: Rather, Āzar knew of the birth of Ibrāhīm, and he concealed him until the king forgot to mention the matter. Āzar said, "Indeed I have a son! I have hidden him. Would you all fear for him from the king if I brought him out?" They [said], "No!" So he left, and he brought him out of the cave. When [Ibrāhīm] saw the animals and the creatures (before that he had seen only his father and mother) he began to ask his father about what he was looking at. His father said, "This is a camel, or a cow," etc. [Ibrāhīm] asked, "These creatures must have a God!" [Ibrāhīm] went out after the setting of the sun, and he raised his head to the heavens. All of a sudden there was a star, and it was Jupiter. He said, "This is my Lord." It did not take long before it set. [Ibrāhīm] said, "I love not those that set." He had gone outside at the end of the month, and that is why he saw the stars before the moon.<sup>10</sup>

4. The sages.

5. Literally "he of the two horns," referring to the depiction on some Greek coins of Alexander the Great with horns.

6. Hūd and Ṣāliḥ are two pre-Islamic prophets mentioned in the Qurʾān. For a discussion of Hūd as Lehi and of Ṣāliḥ, see William J. Hamblin, "Pre-Islamic Prophets," in *Mormons and Muslims*, ed. Spencer J. Palmer (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1983), 85–104.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

9. Biblical Terah.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3. Abraham sees the stars before he sees the new moon.

5. It is said: It has been speculated that [Ibrāhīm] was fifteen months [years] old. Ibrāhīm said to his mother, "Let me out to see." So she went out with him at evening, and he saw the stars and he reflected on the creation of the heavens and the earth, and Ibrāhīm spoke concerning the star that approached. *When he saw the moon rising in splendour, he said: "This is my Lord." But when the moon set, he said: "Unless my Lord guide me, I shall surely be among those who go astray."*<sup>11</sup> When daylight came and the sun arose, [Ibrāhīm] saw a light greater than all of what he had seen and said, *"This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all)."* *But when the sun set, he said: "O my people! I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to Allāh."*<sup>12</sup> Then Ibrāhīm returned to his father, knowing his Lord, and was free from the religion of his people but did not summon them at that time. [Ibrāhīm's] mother informed [Āzar] that she had kept [Ibrāhīm's] situation secret, so [Āzar] was happy about that.

6. Āzar used to make the idols that the people would worship,<sup>13</sup> and he gave them to Ibrāhīm to sell. Ibrāhīm would say, "Who would buy what does not harm or benefit?" Therefore, the people would not buy any from him. [Ibrāhīm] would take the idols and set off to a river and point their heads towards it and say, "Drink!" [Ibrāhīm] would mock his people until this mockery would spread among his people. But the news of him didn't reach Nimrūd. When Ibrāhīm began to call his people to leave [their religion], he commanded them to worship God the Highest, calling [also] his father to monotheism, but he would not face [the truth]. While [Ibrāhīm] called upon his people they asked, "Whom do you worship?" [Ibrāhīm] answered, "The Lord Omniscient." They said, "Nimrūd?" [Ibrāhīm] said, "On the contrary, I worship the One Who created me." Then [Ibrāhīm's] instruction [meaning] was clear. Nimrūd was informed that Ibrāhīm wanted his people to discern the weakness of the idols that they worshiped, for them to show him proof, and [Ibrāhīm] persisted in the argument. [Ibrāhīm] began to anticipate an opportunity in which he could renounce, in order to do something with their idols. [Ibrāhīm] looked at the stars and said, "I am sick!" in order to force the people to flee from him when they heard it. Indeed, Ibrāhīm wanted them to leave in order to seize their idols. They had a feast that all of them would attend. When they left, according to this writing, [Ibrāhīm] did not go with them to the feast, but he went to their idols. As he was saying, *"By God, I will plan against your idols!"*<sup>14</sup> the people who were behind the crowd heard him. But [Ibrāhīm] returned to the idols. The idols were in a great hall in which each of them was next to the other, with each idol being smaller than the next until they reached the door of the hall. When the people would place food between the hands of their gods, they would say, "We will leave the gods so when we return, the food will be eaten." When Ibrāhīm saw the food between their hands, he asked, *"Will you not*

11. Citing Qur'an 6:77, translation by Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur-ān: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary* (Saudi Arabia: King Fahd Complex, 1992).

12. Citing Qur'an 6:78, translation by Yusuf Ali. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1-18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:5-6.

14. Citing Qur'an 21:57.

eat?" When no one answered him he asked, "What is the matter with you that you don't speak?" Then [Ibrāhīm] turned upon them, striking them with his right hand.<sup>15</sup> He shattered them with an ax in his hand until only the largest of them remained.<sup>16</sup> [Ibrāhīm] placed the ax between his [the largest idol's] hands and left.

7. When [Ibrāhīm's] people returned and saw what had happened to their idols, they were frightened because of it, and they were very distressed and asked, "Who has done this to our gods? He must be one of the unjust." They [others] said, "We heard a youth speak of them. He is said to be [Ibrāhīm]."<sup>17</sup> [Ibrāhīm] addressed them, reviling and denouncing them. "We did not hear that from anyone other than him, so we think he is the one who did this." This information reached Nimrūd and the noble among his people and they said, "Bring [Ibrāhīm] before the eyes of the people."<sup>18</sup> Perhaps they will witness what we do with him." It is said: They witnessed against [Ibrāhīm]. They hated to take hold of him without evidence. When [Ibrāhīm] was brought forth and the people had assembled at the place of their king, Nimrūd, they said, "Are you the one who did this with our gods, O [Ibrāhīm]?" He said, "No! the biggest of the idols did this; ask them, if they are able to speak."<sup>19</sup> He [the biggest idol] became angry that they [the people] worshiped the smallest while he is the biggest, so he smashed them." The people desisted and turned from [Ibrāhīm] while among themselves they accused [Ibrāhīm] of smashing the idols. But they said, "We indeed treated [Ibrāhīm] unjustly. We saw only what [Ibrāhīm] had said." Then they said, "We knew that the idols could not harm or benefit or hit: *Thou knowest full well that these idols do not speak,*<sup>20</sup> that is, cannot speak. We have inquired of the maker of this idol concerning the fact that it cannot hit, and we speak the truth." God has said: *Then were they confounded with shame,*<sup>21</sup> concerning the argument Ibrāhīm had brought against them. So Ibrāhīm said to them concerning their statement "these idols do not speak": "Do you then worship other than Allāh, things that can neither be of any good to you nor do you harm? Shame upon you, and upon the things that you worship other than Allāh! Have you no sense?"<sup>22</sup>

8. Then Nimrūd said to Ibrāhīm, "Tell me of the God whom you worship and call [others] to worship. Who is He?" [Ibrāhīm] said, "My Lord is He who gives life and death."<sup>23</sup> Nimrūd said, "I give life and death." Ibrāhīm said, "How is that?" [Nimrūd] said, "I can take two men, both of them worthy of death. I sentence one to die, and it is done. I forgive the other and he lives." Ibrāhīm said, "It is Allāh that causes the sun to rise from the east, do you then cause it to rise from the west."<sup>24</sup> At that, Nimrūd did not answer [Ibrāhīm].

15. Citing Qurʾan 37:91–93.

16. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

17. Citing Qurʾan 21:59–60.

18. Citing Qurʾan 21:61.

19. Citing Qurʾan 21:62–63.

20. Citing Qurʾan 21:65.

21. Ibid.

22. Citing Qurʾan 21:66–67.

23. Citing Qurʾan 2:258. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:7.

24. Citing Qurʾan 2:258.

Then [Nimrūd] and his companions resolved to kill Ibrāhīm. They said, “Burn [Ibrāhīm] and protect your gods.”<sup>25</sup>

9. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar said: An Arab man from Persia suggested that [Ibrāhīm] be burned. It was asked him: Do Persians have Arabs? He said: Yes, the Kurds are Arabs. It is said: His name was Hayzan. He will be denounced because of it [i.e., the suggestion]. And it will reverberate until the day of judgment.

10. Nimrūd commanded the gathering of firewood from the wooded areas, inciting the women to vow to acquire the required amount of firewood for Ibrāhīm’s fire. Then they desired to throw [Ibrāhīm] into [the fire] to offer him up. So they ignited the fire in such a way that the birds that would fly over it would be burned from its intense heat. When they assembled to cast [Ibrāhīm] into the fire,<sup>26</sup> the heavens and the earth and all that is in them [i.e., the creations], excepting the humans and jinn,<sup>27</sup> cried to God in one voice, “Our Lord! Ibrāhīm, who is the only one on Your earth who worships You, will be burned. Permit us to help him!” God the Highest said, “If [Ibrāhīm] asks of help from you, then you may assist him. If he calls only upon Me, then We<sup>28</sup> will help him.” When they raised [Ibrāhīm] to the top of the building, he lifted his head to the heavens and said, “O God! You are One in the heavens and You are One in the earth. God can protect me for He is an excellent Trustee.” Then Jabrāʾīl<sup>29</sup> appeared to [Ibrāhīm] as he put forth faith and said, “Do you need anything, O Ibrāhīm?” [Ibrāhīm] said, “Not from you!” Then they cast him into the fire, and God called to the fire, saying, “O fire! Be cool and safe upon Ibrāhīm.”<sup>30</sup> It is said: Jabrāʾīl called to the fire. If the coldness of the fire were not followed by safety, Ibrāhīm would have died from the intensity of the cold. At that time fire [i.e., other fires] was extinguished, thinking God meant it [i.e., them]. God sent the angel of shade in the form of Ibrāhīm to sit in the fire next to [Ibrāhīm] to keep him company.<sup>31</sup>

11. Nimrūd remained for a few days not doubting that the fire had consumed Ibrāhīm. So he looked as if he watched the fire while it was burning furiously, and Ibrāhīm was sitting next to a man in his likeness. Nimrūd said to his people, “I saw Ibrāhīm alive and I thought I saw a likeness of him. Build me a lofty edifice so I can look down over the fire.” So they built it, and he looked from it and saw Ibrāhīm sitting next to a man in the form of [Ibrāhīm]. Nimrūd called to him, “O Ibrāhīm! Indeed your God is great, the One Who has imparted His power and His glory to intervene between you and what I see. Are you able to come out of the fire?” [Ibrāhīm] said, “Yes.” [Nimrūd] said, “Do you

25. Citing Qurʾan 21:68.

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

27. Jinn are spirit beings, created from fire (unlike man, who is created from the earth). They can be good but are mostly mischievous or evil. They will also be judged at the last day.

28. The Qurʾan always uses the royal plural (we, our, us) when God is speaking. Although this is not a quote from the Qurʾan, the author has followed the same convention.

29. The angel Gabriel in Judeo-Christian tradition. The spelling here differs from that found in other Arabic texts included in this volume.

30. Citing Qurʾan 21:69.

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

fear that if you rise it will harm you?" [Ibrāhīm] said, "No." Ibrāhīm rose up and left the fire. When he had come out, [Nimrūd] said to him, "O Ibrāhīm! Who was the man I saw with you in your likeness?" [Ibrāhīm] said, "That was the angel of shade whom God sent to me to keep me company."<sup>32</sup> Nimrūd said, "I was very close to your God when I saw His power and glory and what He had done for you when you refused any worship except Him."

12. Ibrāhīm said, "God will not accept anything from you as long as you maintain anything from your religion." [Nimrūd] said, "O Ibrāhīm! I cannot leave my kingdom." [Nimrūd] sacrificed four thousand cattle and stayed away from Ibrāhīm, and God kept him away from [Ibrāhīm]. Some of the leading personalities among [Nimrūd's] people believed Ibrāhīm when they saw what God had done with [Ibrāhīm] but feared Nimrūd and his followers. Lūṭ, the son of Hārān, believed [Ibrāhīm]. He is the son of the brother of Ibrāhīm. There was also a third brother called Nākhūr son of Tārakh. He is the father of Batwīl,<sup>33</sup> and Batwīl is the father of Lāban, and he is the father of Rabaqā, the wife of Ishāq, son of Ibrāhīm; [Rabaqā] is the mother of Ya'qūb.<sup>34</sup> Lāban is the father of Liyā and Rāḥīl,<sup>35</sup> the wives of Ya'qūb. Sāra also believed Ibrāhīm. She is the daughter of [Ibrāhīm's] uncle. Sāra is the daughter of Hārān, the [great?] uncle of Ibrāhīm. It is said: the daughter of the king of Ḥarrān believed in God with Ibrāhīm.

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32. Ibid.

33. Biblical Bethuel.

34. Biblical Rebekah and Jacob.

35. Biblical Leah and Rachel.

AN EXTRACT FROM  
AL-BAIDAWI

‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī Abū al-Khayr Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Baiḍāwī (d. A.H. 685 or 692/A.D. 1286 or 1293) was the *qāḍī* (judge) of Shiraz (in Iran); he followed the Shafi‘i school of Islamic law. He wrote on a wide variety of subjects, although he based his work almost entirely on other authors. His book, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta’wīl* (The Lights of Revelation and the Secrets of Interpretation), largely a condensed and amended version of Zamakhsharī’s *Kashshāf*, contains an account of Abraham which expands on that of Zamakhsharī. The book has been very popular in the Muslim world and so has been preserved in many editions; possibly the earliest European edition of the Arabic text is H. O. Fleischer’s edition of 1846–48. This English translation, by Brian M. Hauglid, is published here for the first time; it is translated from al-Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta’wīl* (n.p., 1899–1902), 2:432–35, 4:258–59. We have numbered the paragraphs for reference purposes.

**From volume 2**

1. The people of Qur’ānic commentary, historiography, and biography say that Ibrāhīm [Abraham] was born in the time of Nimrūd, the son of Kan’ān, the king.<sup>1</sup> Nimrūd was the first to place the crown upon his [own] head. And he called upon the people to worship him.

2. He had priests and astrologers who said to him, “There will be born in your land this year a boy who will change the religion of the people of the earth. Your destruction and the end of your kingdom will be by his hand.” It is said that they [the priests and astrologers] found this [prophecy] in the books of the prophets.

3. Al-Suddī said: Nimrūd had seen in his dream a star. It ascended and became brighter than the sun and the moon until there was no light left in either of them. [Nimrūd] was very terrified of this dream, so he called the priests and asked them about the dream. They said, “It [the star] represents a young boy who will be born in your

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1. According to Genesis 10:6–8, Nimrod was the son of Cush, brother of Canaan and son of Ham. Note also the Canaanite ancestry of Pharaoh and the Egyptians in Abraham 1:21–22, despite the fact that the Egyptians descended from another of Ham’s sons, Mizraim, whose name is the Hebrew name for Egypt.

domain this year. Your ruin and the end of your kingdom and the destruction of the people of your religion will be by his hand.”

4. So [Nimrūd] commanded the slaughter of each boy born in that year in his domain.<sup>2</sup> He commanded that the women be separated from the men, and he placed over ten women one man to guard them. When the women menstruated, [Nimrūd] freed them to be among the other women and among their husbands because they could not have intercourse during the monthly period. When they were clean of their menstruation, they were prevented from being among them.

5. They say Āzar returned to find his wife. She was clean of her menstruation. So he knew her, and she became pregnant with Ibrāhīm. Muḥammad b.<sup>3</sup> Isḥāq said: Nimrūd called forth each pregnant woman in the village and kept them near him except for the mother of Ibrāhīm. [Nimrūd] did not know of her pregnancy because she was a young girl. He did not know of the conception in her womb.

6. Al-Suddī said: Nimrūd brought the men out to battle to separate them [the troops] from the women, fearing the birth of that child. He remained there for however long God intended; then a need became evident to him concerning the city. But he did not trust any of his people [to be] over [the need] except Āzar. So [Nimrūd] sent for him. [Āzar] approached him, and [Nimrūd] said, “I have a need for you [and it is] more preferable that I entrust you with it. I do not send you forth without trusting you. So I decree that you do not go near your family.” Āzar said, “I will religiously obey the command.”

7. So [Nimrūd] entrusted him with the task. [Āzar] entered the city and took care of the king’s need. Then [Āzar] said, “If I went into my family, then I could see them.” Whereupon he went into the mother of Ibrāhīm and looked at her and could not restrain [himself], so he knew her, and she became pregnant immediately with Ibrāhīm.

8. Ibn ‘Abbās said: When the mother of Ibrāhīm became pregnant the priests said to Nimrūd that “the young boy whom we informed you about was conceived tonight.” So Nimrūd ordered the slaughter of the boys.<sup>4</sup>

9. When the mother of Ibrāhīm came close to the time of delivery, the labor pains began. So she fled, fearing that [Nimrūd] would suddenly overtake her and kill her child. They say she placed him in a dried-out riverbed. Then she wrapped him in cloth and placed him in alfalfa. Then she went back home and informed her husband that she had given birth and that the child was in a place, etc. So [Ibrāhīm’s] father went to him and took him from that place and dug a hole in the ground for him in the riverbed. Then [Ibrāhīm’s father] hid him in it and barricaded it with a stone, fearing predatory animals. [Ibrāhīm’s] mother would visit frequently and breast-feed him.

10. Muḥammad b. Isḥāq said: When the mother of Ibrāhīm suffered labor pains, she went at night into a cave which was close by. And so she gave birth to Ibrāhīm in the cave. She put [Ibrāhīm’s] affairs in order, what would be suitable for an infant, and she

2. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

3. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read “son of.”

4. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

barricaded the door of the cave. She returned home, but she visited [Ibrāhīm] frequently in order to see how he was doing, and she would find him alive, sucking his thumb.

11. Abū Rūḩa said: The mother of Ibrāhīm said, "I went to inspect his fingers and found him sucking water out of one finger, milk from another, butter from another, honey from another, and dates from another."

12. Muḩammad b. Iṣḩaq said: Āzar asked the mother of Ibrāhīm what had happened with her pregnancy, and she said she gave birth to a boy but he died. [Āzar] believed her and was silent about it.

13. Ibrāhīm grew in one day as if it were a month and one month as if it were a year. He remained in the cave for fifteen months until he said, "Let me out!" So [Ibrāhīm's mother] brought him out at night, and [Ibrāhīm] observed and pondered on the creation of the heavens and the earth.<sup>5</sup> He said, "The One Who created me, blessed me, fed me, and gave me drink is my Lord; He is the only One Who is God."

14. [Ibrāhīm] looked up to the heavens and saw a star. He said, "This is my Lord!" Then he followed it, watching it closely until it set. When it set [Ibrāhīm] said, "I do not like what sets." When he saw the moon shine, he said, "This is my Lord!" He followed it, watching it closely until it set. Then he saw the sun ascend, and [Ibrāhīm] said thus and thus, etc.<sup>6</sup>

15. [Ibrāhīm's mother] returned with [Ibrāhīm] to his father Āzar; she stood up and faced [Āzar?], and [Ibrāhīm] learned of his Lord and was freed from the religion of his people. But [he] did not yet preach to them. When [Ibrāhīm's] mother returned with him, she informed [Āzar] that [Ibrāhīm] was his son. She also told [Āzar] what she had done with [Ibrāhīm]. [Āzar] rejoiced exceedingly, and it is said [Ibrāhīm] remained in the cave seven years; others say thirteen years, and still others say seventeen years.

16. They say: When Ibrāhīm became a young man while in the cave, he asked his mother, "Who is my Lord?" She replied, "I am!" [Ibrāhīm] asked, "Who is your Lord?" His mother answered, "Your father!" [Ibrāhīm] inquired, "Who is my father's Lord?" She exclaimed, "Be silent!"

17. Then [Ibrāhīm's mother] returned to her husband. She said, "I have seen the boy, of whom we have [heard] related, who will change the religion of the world. Indeed he is your son!" She told [Āzar] what [Ibrāhīm] had said. So [Ibrāhīm's] father, Āzar, went to him. Upon his arrival, [Ibrāhīm] asked, "Who is my Lord?" [Āzar] said, "Your mother!" [Ibrāhīm] said, "Who is the Lord of my mother?" [Āzar] answered, "I am!" [Ibrāhīm] asked, "Who is your Lord?" [Āzar] said, "Nimrūd!" [Ibrāhīm] said, "Who is Nimrūd's Lord?" [Āzar] slapped [Ibrāhīm] very hard and said, "Be silent!"

18. When the night descended upon [Ibrāhīm], he approached the opening of the cave. He looked through a gap in the stone [i.e., between the stone and the wall of the opening of the cave], and he saw a star.<sup>7</sup> He said, "This is my Lord!"

5. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; 4–5; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

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

7. Ibid.

19. It is said: [Ibrāhīm] exclaimed to his parents, “Let me out!” So they took [Ibrāhīm] out of the cave at sunset. Ibrāhīm looked at the camels, horses, and sheep. [Ibrāhīm] asked his father, “What are these?” [Āzar] answered, “camels, horses, and sheep.” Ibrāhīm said, “It is inevitable that these belong to a God who is my Lord, for He created them.”

20. When Jupiter had ascended, and some say that it was Venus, it was the last night of the month. Therefore the moon was late in rising. [Ibrāhīm] saw the star before the moon.<sup>8</sup> The saying of God, *when the night descended upon [Ibrāhīm]*,<sup>9</sup> means [God] veiled [Ibrāhīm] with darkness. [Ibrāhīm] saw a star and declared, “This is my Lord!”

21. The *ʿulamā* [sages] differ concerning the time of this revelation and the time of the event. Had [Ibrāhīm] reached majority before or after the event? One of the opinions say this event took place before [Ibrāhīm] matured, the proof being that he hadn’t yet received his call [been anointed as a prophet]. Whatever he had said at this time, he cannot be held responsible for. He cannot be judged for it, as that can only be done after reaching majority. It is said that Ibrāhīm did not leave the cave while he was young. And he saw wondrous things concerning the heavens. He saw wondrous things concerning the earth.<sup>10</sup>

#### From volume 4

1. When Nimrūd and his people gathered to burn Abraham, they imprisoned him in a house.<sup>11</sup> They built a building like the enclosure in a village called Kūʿī. So they gathered [hard?]wood for [Ibrāhīm]. All types of wood were gathered for a month. When a man would get sick, he would say, “I will not be restored to health if I do not gather firewood for Abraham.”

2. Women would make a wish and say that if the wish came true [they] would gather wood for the fire of Ibrāhīm. Women would spin yarn and buy the firewood with their yarn, crediting their belief. The men would be ordered to purchase the firewood for Ibrāhīm with their money.

3. When they gathered together what they desired, they ignited a flame on each part of the firewood. The fire grew and grew so that birds passing over it were burned from the intensity of its heat. The people burned it most intensely for seven days.

4. When they wanted to throw Ibrāhīm [into it], they did not know how to throw him. It is said that Iblīs<sup>12</sup> came and taught them how to construct a catapult. So they constructed it. Then they returned to Ibrāhīm and bound him and hoisted the catapult on top of the building and placed him upon it, bound and shackled.<sup>13</sup>

8. Ibid.

9. Citing Qurʾān 6:76.

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

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

12. Iblīs, or Lucifer, is one of the most common Arabic names for the devil. This Arabic word is probably ultimately derived from Greek *diabolos*, “accuser,” from which come our words *devil* and *diabolical*.

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

5. The heavens and the earth cried out. And those who are in both the heavens and the earth, such as the angels and all the creatures, excepting the humans and jinn,<sup>14</sup> unitedly cried out, saying, “O Lord! Ibrāhīm is Thy friend. He has been thrown into the fire. There is not one on Thine earth who worships Thee other than he. Permit us to rescue him!” God said, “He is My friend! I have no other friend than he. I am [Ibrāhīm’s] God, and he does not have any other God but Me. If he seeks aid from any of you, or summons you, then help him. I have allowed him to do that. And if he [does] not call anyone but Me, I know him best, and I am his Lord, so don’t interfere between us.”

6. When they desired to throw [Ibrāhīm] into the fire, the keeper of the water came to him, saying, “If you wish, I will put out the fire.” Then the keeper of the wind came to him, saying, “If you wish, I can extinguish the fire with wind.” Ibrāhīm said, “I do not need your help. May God be my keeper, and I could not ask for a better one.”

7. Abū b. Kaʿb related that when they fastened<sup>15</sup> Ibrāhīm to throw him into the fire, he said, “There is no God but Thee, glory to Thee. Thou hast all praise! Thou art the Ruler, there is no partner with Thee!”<sup>16</sup>

8. Then they propelled the catapult towards the fire, and Jibrīl<sup>17</sup> met him,<sup>18</sup> saying, “Oh Ibrāhīm, do you need anything?” [Ibrāhīm] said, “Not from you!” Jibrīl said, “So ask your Lord!” Then Ibrāhīm said, “I need not ask Him for anything as I am content with what He knows.” . . .

9. Indeed, God said: “O fire! Be thou cold and safe upon Ibrāhīm.”<sup>19</sup> Ibn ʿAbbās said that if he had not said “safety,” Ibrāhīm would have died from the coldness of it. And some of the traditions [say] that at that time no fire remained on the earth; they were all extinguished. There was no use of fire that day in all the world. And if he had not said “upon Ibrāhīm,” the cold would have remained forever. The angels perceived the burning of Ibrāhīm, and they restrained the fire upon the earth.

10. Then sweet water was set down, and an [*ajar*, plant?] and narcissus plant appeared. Kaʿb said the fire did not burn Ibrāhīm except his shackles. They say Ibrāhīm was in that place for seven days. Al-Minhāl b. ʿUmarū reported that Ibrāhīm said, “There were never happier days for me than the days I was in the fire.”

11. God sent the angel of shade in the form of Ibrāhīm, and he sat next to Ibrāhīm, keeping him company. They say God sent Jibrīl with a garment from the silken wares of heaven and a velvetlike carpet.<sup>20</sup> [Jibrīl] clothed [Ibrāhīm] with the garment,<sup>21</sup> and he sat

14. Jinn are spirit beings, created from fire (unlike man, who is created from the earth). They can be good but are mostly mischievous or evil. They will also be judged at the last day.

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

16. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

17. The angel Gabriel in Judeo-Christian tradition.

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

19. Citing Qurʾan 21:69.

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

21. In both Jewish and Muslim tradition, God sent an angel to deliver a garment from paradise to Joseph when he was sold into Egypt.

him upon the carpet, and [Jibrīl] sat down and talked with [Ibrāhīm]. Jibrīl said, "O Ibrāhīm! Don't you know that the fire will not injure my dearest [one]?"

12. Then Nimrūd looked down from the tower he had and saw Ibrāhīm sitting in a garden. And the angel sat next to him, and around [Ibrāhīm] a fire was burning the firewood. [Nimrūd] called out to him, "O great Ibrāhīm! Your God is the One Who imparts His power that is around you and the fire. O Ibrāhīm! Are you able to leave the fire?" [Ibrāhīm] said, "Yes." [Nimrūd] asked, "Do you fear that if you rise, the fire will hurt you?" [Ibrāhīm] answered, "No!" So he said, "Then get up and leave." Then Ibrāhīm arose and walked around until he left the fire.

13. When Nimrūd came to him, he said, "O Ibrāhīm! Who was the man I saw with you, like you in form, sitting next to you?" [Ibrāhīm] answered, "That was the angel of shade, which my Lord had sent me to keep me company in the fire."<sup>22</sup> Nimrūd said, "O Ibrāhīm! I was very close to your God when I saw His power and glory with what He did for you when you refused neither His worship nor His unity. I will sacrifice four thousand cattle." Ibrāhīm said, "God will not accept what you give while you are still in your religion, until you leave it and come to my religion." [Nimrūd] said, "I am not able to leave my kingdom. But I will sacrifice them to Him." So Nimrūd sacrificed them. And [Nimrūd] stayed away from Ibrāhīm, but God kept him from [Ibrāhīm].

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

## EXTRACTS FROM ABU AL-FIDA

Abū al-Fidā Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAlī ibn Maḥmūd ibn ʿUmar ibn Shāhanshāh ibn Ayyūb al-Mālik al-Muʿayyad ʿImād al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, commonly referred to as Abulfeda (A.H. 672–732/A.D. 1273–1331), was a Syrian prince, historian, and geographer who took an active part in the campaigns against the Crusaders. He traveled extensively in Syria and Egypt and made a pilgrimage to Mecca. His history, *Kitāb al-mukhtaṣar fī-akhbār al-bashar* (An Abridged History of Mankind, also known as *Mukhtaṣar taʾrīkh al-bashar*), was very popular during his time. Eighteenth-century European orientalisks used this work extensively, but although they translated parts of another work by Abulfeda, they did not do the same with this one. The early part of the text (that including the story of Abraham) is based mostly on Ibn al-Athīr’s work, which is also included in this collection. The complete Arabic text was first published in Istanbul in 1869–70. Brian M. Hauglid prepared the English translation of these extracts from Abū al-Fidā, *Kitāb al-mukhtaṣar fī-akhbār al-bashar* (Dār al-Bahār and Dār al-Fakhr, A.H. 1375 [A.D. 1956]), 1:22–23. We have numbered the paragraphs to facilitate indexing.

1. Ibrāhīm [Abraham] is the son of Tārah, who is Āzar b.<sup>1</sup> Naḥūr b. Sārūg b. Raʿū b. Fāllig b. ʿĀbir b. Shāllaḥ b. Arphakhshad b. Sām b. Nūḥ.<sup>2</sup> Qīnān b. Arphakhshad was eliminated from the list [column] of kingship. The reason is said to be that he was a sorcerer, so they eliminated it [his name] from the account.<sup>3</sup> They said Shāllaḥ b. Arphakhshad is in fact Shāllaḥ b. Qīnān b. Arphakhshad. Be advised of this.

2. Ibrāhīm was born in al-Ahwāz, it is said, in Bābal,<sup>4</sup> which is in Iraq. Āzar, the father of Ibrāhīm, was manufacturing idols,<sup>5</sup> and Ibrāhīm was given them to sell. Ibrāhīm would

1. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read “son of.”

2. For this genealogy in the Judeo-Christian tradition, see Genesis 11:10–25: biblical Abraham, Terah, Nahor, Serug, Reu, Peleg, Eber, Salah, Arphaxad, and Shem (and Noah).

3. This Qīnān is Cainan, who is missing from the Hebrew (and KJV) text of Genesis 10:24 (and from 1 Chronicles 1:18, which is dependent on the Genesis passage). His name is, however, included in the genealogical listing in the Septuagint and the Samaritan, Syriac, and other Bibles and is also found in the genealogy of Christ in Luke 3:36. A number of early church fathers referred to Cainan’s absence from the Hebrew record as evidence that the Jews had tampered with the Bible text.

4. Biblical Babel or Babylon.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6, 16–17, 27.

say, “Who will buy what does not harm nor benefit?” Then God, the Highest, commanded Ibrāhīm to call his people to monotheism [*tawhīd*]; he [first] called his father, but he did not answer the call,<sup>6</sup> so he called his people. When his [Ibrāhīm’s] news became widespread, it reached Nimrūd b. Lūsh [Cūsh?],<sup>7</sup> who was the king of that country. Nimrūd was a governor over the land of Iraq and that which is attached to it, according to al-Ḍaḥḥāk. But it is said that Nimrūd was a separate, independent king. Nimrūd took Ibrāhīm and threw him into a large fire,<sup>8</sup> but the fire was cold and safe upon him.<sup>9</sup> Ibrāhīm left the fire after a few days. Thereupon men from among [Ibrāhīm’s] people believed him, despite the fear of Nimrūd. Sāra, his wife, believed in him, and she is the daughter of his uncle Hārān.

3. Then Ibrāhīm, and those who believed with him,<sup>10</sup> and his father, despite his apostasy, separated from their people, and they emigrated to Ḥarrān and resided there for a time. Ibrāhīm traveled to Egypt, and the pharaoh was the ruler. It is related his name was Sinān b. ‘Alwān, but others say it was Ṭūlis.<sup>11</sup> The beauty of Sāra was mentioned to the pharaoh. He brought Sāra to him, and he asked Ibrāhīm about her, and he said, “This is my sister,” meaning in the context of Islam.<sup>12</sup> The aforementioned pharaoh took an interest in her, and God paralyzed his hands and his feet. When he withdrew from her, God, the Exalted, released him. Then he [again] took an interest in her, but the same thing happened to him. So he let Sāra go, and he said, “It does not appear to me that [Sāra] should serve herself.” So he gave Hājar the Egyptian<sup>13</sup> to her. [Sāra] took [Hājar], and she returned to Ibrāhīm. Then Ibrāhīm traveled from Egypt to Syria.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:27; 2:5.

7. The Arabic text has what appears to be a printing error of Lūsh (لوش) for Cūsh (كوش).

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

9. Cf. Qur’an 21:69.

10. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

12. I.e., submission (to God).

13. The text here uses the term *Coptic*, rather than the usual Arabic word for Egyptian.

## EXTRACTS FROM AL-RABGHUZI

Naşir al-Dīn ibn Burhān al-Dīn al-Rabghūzī was a Turkish judge who lived in Khwarizm in western Turkistan. At the instigation of a young Mongol prince converted to Islam, he compiled his version of a *Qiṣaṣ al-anbīyāʾ* (Stories of the Prophets), commonly called the *Qiṣaṣ-i Rabghūzī*, completing it in A.H. 710/A.D. 1310. The book was popular during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries A.D. and was revived in the eighteenth century. The oldest manuscripts date to the end of the fifteenth century. The first publication of the text was a facsimile edition printed in Copenhagen in 1948, and the English translation used here is taken from manuscript folios 37–47 of the Turkish text, found in H. E. Boeschoten, J. O’Kane, and M. Vandamme, trans., *Al-Rabghūzī: The Stories of the Prophets* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 2:92–116. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs. We have also eliminated the original italics, except where they are used to cite the Qur’an.

### **The story of Abraham the Friend of God, peace be upon him, and of Nimrod, the cursed<sup>1</sup>**

1. He is the one who was afflicted by the calamity of Nimrod the rejected; who tasted the poison of: “*Burn him and help your gods*”;<sup>2</sup> who prayed: “*God’s knowing my situation exempts me from asking*”; who renounced his wealth, his sons and his daughters, saying: “*I have submitted to the Lord of all men*”;<sup>3</sup> who was praised with: “*God chose Abraham to be His friend*”;<sup>4</sup> who was honoured by: “*Fire, be cool for Abraham and keep him safe*”;<sup>5</sup> the prophet Abraham—*peace be upon him!*

2. Abraham, who was born in a house, sucked his finger and dwelled in the mountains. Abraham, who understood the stars,<sup>6</sup> wondered at the moon and rejected the sun.<sup>7</sup>

3. One day he spoke: “Oh mother, tell me who is my god?” “It’s me,” she replied. And Abraham asked: “Then who is your god?” “Your father there,” she said. He asked: “Who is my father’s god?” “Nimrod,” she replied. And Abraham asked: “And who is his god?”

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1. We have removed the small capitals and italics used in this and subsequent headings in this extract.

2. Citing Qur’an 21:68.

3. Citing Qur’an 2:131.

4. Citing Qur’an 4:125.

5. Citing Qur’an 21:69.

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

7. Paragraphs 2 through 6 were in verse; we have printed them as prose.

4. Our Lord removed the veils from the seven spheres of heaven and earth for him. So Abraham saw everything from the dust on earth to the high Throne of heaven.<sup>8</sup>

5. For the people Abraham established, until the Day of Judgement, the custom of entertaining guests, slaughtering oxen, camels and sheep. When about to sacrifice his son, Abraham received on earth the substitute ram from Gabriel, which had been fattened by grazing in heaven.

6. Abraham heaved the axe and hewed the idol<sup>9</sup> on which the fox had urinated. Though hungry himself, he offered a meal of meat; he made himself a name and extinguished the fire.

7. Abraham b.<sup>10</sup> Tārakh b. Nākhūr b. Sārūgh b. Arghū b. Fāligh b. ʿĀbir b. Shālikh b. Canaan b. Arfakhshad b. Shem b. Noah<sup>11</sup>—*peace be upon him!*

8. Ibrāhīm or Abrahām or Ibrāhām, all these [variants in different] languages are correct. That is, if we cry out: “*Ab raḥīm!*”, it means “compassionate father.”<sup>12</sup>

9. Abraham lived in the time of Nimrod b. Kūsh b. Qainān<sup>13</sup> b. Ham b. Noah. And Nimrod held sway over the entire world.

10. It has been related: There have been four persons who ruled the entire world, two of them true believers and two unbelievers. The true believers were the prophet Solomon and Alexander (Dhū l-Qarnain);<sup>14</sup> the unbelievers were Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar.

11. Nimrod had a dream: A ram came, butted the throne and overturned it. The next morning Nimrod assembled the soothsayers, astrologers and seers and asked them for an interpretation. They told him: “During this year a boy will be born. Your empire will go to ruin at his hands.” After hearing this, Nimrod watched over the pregnant women, and every time a woman gave birth to a boy, Nimrod had the boy put to death.<sup>15</sup> If a girl was born he spared her.

8. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

10. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read as “son of.”

11. For the Judeo-Christian version of this genealogy, see Genesis 11:10–25: Terah, Nahor, Serug, Reu, Peleg, Eber, Salah, Arphaxad, and Shem (and Noah). Note that Canaan (Cainan) is missing from the Hebrew (and KJV) text of Genesis 10:24 (and from 1 Chronicles 1:18, which is dependent on the Genesis passage). His name is, however, included in the genealogical listing in the Septuagint and the Samaritan, Syriac, and other Bibles, and is also found in the genealogy of Christ in Luke 3:36. A number of early church fathers referred to Cainan’s absence from the Hebrew record as evidence that the Jews had tampered with the Bible text.

12. The Hebrew name means “father of a multitude.” The author’s mistake derives from his confusion of the Arabic letters *h* and *ḥ*. The former is the one used in the name Abraham, the latter in the word meaning “compassionate.”

13. According to Genesis 10:6, Cush was the son of Ham. Apparently, the author has followed some of the Muslim traditions that make Cush the son of Canaan the son of Ham. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

14. This is the usual title applied to Alexander the Great. It means “he of the two horns,” perhaps based on the fact that Alexander’s kingdom, Greece, was represented in Daniel’s vision as a goat with a single horn that defeated a ram (Persia) with two long horns (see Daniel 8:2–8).

15. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

12. Nimrod had a favourite, a sculptor of idols called Āzar. His real name was Tārakh, but because he worshipped the idols so much,<sup>16</sup> they called him Āzar.<sup>17</sup> When Āzar's wife had conceived Abraham, Āzar kept her hidden from the people. When the appointed month and day arrived, she went to a lonely place and gave birth in secret. She named the child Abraham. Out of fear of Nimrod, she carried the child away, hid him in a mountain cave and nourished him with milk. She thought: "Instead of Nimrod killing him before my eyes, let the wild beasts devour him without me seeing it." The Lord Almighty sent Gabriel, who came and placed Abraham's finger in his mouth. In the finger God created milk, and Abraham sucked this. In one day Abraham grew as much as other boys grow in a month. On certain days Abraham's mother would come and give him milk.

13. When Abraham was seven years old, his father came and brought him home. One day Abraham asked his mother: "I did not exist, but then I came into being. Who is my god?" His mother replied: "It is I." Again he asked: "And who is your god?", and she replied: "Your father, because if you ask why, he is better than I am." Again Abraham asked: "Who is my father's god?" She said: "Nimrod; because if you ask why, he is a better man than your father." Again he asked: "Who is the god of Nimrod?" His mother replied in a loud voice: "Hush! Do not talk like this. Nimrod is the god of us all." His mother related this conversation to his father. His father said: "Take him away from here and leave him in the same mountains, lest he should bring calamity upon us." His mother brought him to the same cave and left him there. Abraham pondered: "Certainly the God Who created me did not create me like this without a Lord to worship. But I do not know whom to worship or how." When he had spent the day pondering this thought, evening descended. Abraham came out of the cave and beheld Venus, which was very bright. He thought: "Could my God be like this, could that be Him?" *In His words, He is exalted: "When night drew its shadow over him, he saw a star. 'That,' he said, 'is surely my God.'"*<sup>18</sup> In other words: He said jokingly: "Is such a thing my Lord?"

14. When the star Venus had set, he thought: "Whatever rises and then sets, whatever changes, is not worthy to be God. Any such [gods] I do not like." *In His words, He is exalted: "I will not worship gods that fade."*<sup>19</sup> Then the moon rose and was bigger than that star. Abraham thought: "Could this be my God?" *In His words, He is exalted: "When he beheld the rising moon, he said: 'That is my God.'"*<sup>20</sup> But when the moon set, he thought: "Apparently this as well rises and sets. If my God doesn't send me down the right road, I will be one of those who are lost." *In His words, He is exalted: "He said: 'If my Lord does not guide me, I shall surely go astray.'"*<sup>21</sup>

15. He spent that night pondering this thought. At the crack of dawn the darkness departed and the world became bright. Then the sun rose, which was bigger than the star

16. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

17. Translators' note: "I.e. a pseudo-etymology based on *azr*, 'to go astray.'"

18. Citing Qur'an 6:76.

19. Ibid.

20. Citing Qur'an 6:77.

21. Ibid.

and the moon. He thought: "Could God be like this? This one is bigger." *In His words, He is exalted: "Then when he beheld the shining sun, he said: 'That must be my God: it is larger than the other two.'"*<sup>22</sup> Until midday he was engaged in this thought. After the sun had reached its zenith, it started downwards.

16. It has been related: He saw the worshippers of the sun. He said: "I shall stay far from them." *In His words, He is exalted: "I deny the gods you serve besides Him."*<sup>23</sup> They said: "If you do not worship these, whom do you worship?" He replied: "I have turned my face to that lofty Person Who has created the seven layers of the earth and the seven spheres of heaven."<sup>24</sup> I am a believer who follows the right road. I am not one of those who says He has partners." *In His words, He is exalted: "I will turn my face to Him Who has created the heavens and the earth, and live a righteous life."*<sup>25</sup> I am no idolater."<sup>26</sup>

17. When Abraham reached eight years of age, he came to the town of his father. He entered his father's house. His father was carving an idol.<sup>27</sup> He told Abraham: "Bring this idol to the market and sell it." Abraham took the idol from his father and fastened a rope around its neck. He threw it into the water and smeared it with mud. He brought it into the market and said: "Who will buy this? It cannot see, it cannot hear, nor can it give advantage to anyone."

18. It has been related: One day, while carrying an idol, he felt the need to ease himself. He put down the idol and went off. When he came back, it appeared that a fox had defiled the idol by urinating abundantly on top of its head. Seeing this, Abraham was pleased and he recited in a loud voice:

19. Is he a god on whose head foxes urinate?<sup>28</sup> Surely he on whom foxes have urinated is contemptible. I dissociate myself from idols and all idolatry and I believe in God Who is victorious. Can it be that a fox urinates on a god's head? Just think of it! His eyes don't see, he is blind; and dumb is his tongue. I'm far from all these others; I'm a servant of the Lord God. I have put on the belt of obedience and follow His orders completely.

20. His father made Abraham, peace be upon him, a guardian over the idols for seven years. Abraham asked the worshippers: "Why do you worship these?" They reported these words to his father. His father rebuked him. Abraham said to his father: "Why do you worship this thing which cannot see and cannot hear?"<sup>29</sup> And again he said: "Oh father, knowledge thereof was granted to me, not to you. Listen to what I say; I will guide you on the right road." *In His words, He is exalted: "Father, the truth has been revealed to me about many mysteries: therefore follow me, that I may guide you along an even path."*<sup>30</sup> Abraham

22. Citing Qur'an 6:78.

23. Ibid.

24. Cf. Abraham 3:1-18.

25. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

26. Citing Qur'an 6:79.

27. Cf. Abraham 1:16-17, 27.

28. Again, paragraph 19 was in verse.

29. Cf. Abraham 1:16-17, 27.

30. Citing Qur'an 19:43.

said: "Oh father, do not serve Satan. Satan has committed many sins against the Merciful One." *In His words, He is exalted: "Father, do not worship Satan: for he has rebelled against the Lord of Mercy."*<sup>31</sup> His father replied: "Oh Abraham, do you not acknowledge my gods? If you do not refrain from these actions, I will stone you to death. Go away to a place some distance from me." *In His words, He is exalted: "Desist from this folly or you shall be stoned to death. Be gone from my house this instant!"*<sup>32</sup> Abraham said: "Goodbye, father. In a short time after I have gone, I will ask the Lord to pardon you because the Lord knows the situation I am in." *In His words, He is exalted: "'Peace be with you,' said Abraham, 'I shall implore my Lord to forgive you: for to me He has been gracious.'"*<sup>33</sup>

21. Abraham left the town and went into the wilderness. He served the Lord Almighty. Abraham's father died and the idols devolved upon Hārān, his father's brother, and Hārān was the father of the prophet Lot.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, Abraham was forever saying: "In some way or other, I will play a trick on these idols." *In His words, He is exalted: "I will overthrow your idols as soon as you have turned your backs."*<sup>35</sup> When the date drew near on which their holiday occurred, they would slaughter animals, prepare a meal from the meat, and bringing it to their false idols, set it down in front of them. Then they would go to the place where the festival took place and stay there until noon. Upon returning they would pick up the meat, carry it away and eat it together with their sons and daughters, thinking: "The blessing of our idols has alighted on this food."

22. Now when their holiday arrived, they said to Abraham: "Let us go together." Abraham replied: "I have had recourse to astrology. It looks as if difficulties lie ahead of me. I cannot go outside." At that time astrology was prevalent and people held it in high esteem. They left Abraham and went their way. Abraham took an axe and entered the house of the idols. He cut off the head and arms of the idols and chopped them up and crushed them.<sup>36</sup> There was a big idol; Abraham lifted up the axe and laid it over this idol's shoulder. To the other idols he said mockingly: "Why don't you eat the food in front of you?" And again he asked: "Why don't you speak?" *In His words, He is exalted: "He said: 'Will you not eat your offerings? Why do you not speak?'"*<sup>37</sup> When it was noon, the unbelievers returned. They saw that the arms and legs of the idols were smashed and their heads chopped off. Nimrod and his clan entered the house of the idols. He asked: "Who has done this to our gods?" *In His words, He is exalted, which inform us of this: "'Who has done this to our deities?', they asked. 'He must surely be a wicked man.'"*<sup>38</sup> They said: "There is a young man called Abraham who may have done this." *In His words, He is exalted:*

31. Citing Qur'an 19:44.

32. Citing Qur'an 19:46.

33. Citing Qur'an 19:47.

34. Haran, the father of Lot, was the son of Terah, not his brother (Genesis 11:31). Since Haran died before his father (Genesis 11:28; Abraham 2:1), the chronology presented here is not possible.

35. Citing Qur'an 21:57.

36. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

37. Citing Qur'an 37:91-92.

38. Citing Qur'an 21:59.

"Others replied: 'We have heard a youth called Abraham speak of them.'"<sup>39</sup> Nimrod replied: "Bring him here and have the people testify before his sight." *In His words, He is exalted: "Bring him here in sight of all the people, that they may act as witnesses."*<sup>40</sup>

23. Lesson: Even though he was an unbeliever, Nimrod did not pass judgement upon Abraham on the strength of rumours, and so his reign did not come to an end.

24. Religious scholars have related: The authority of an unbeliever who practices justice will persist; the authority of a true believer who perpetrates injustice will not. As has been said: "Power remains when justice is combined with unbelief, but it does not persist when injustice is combined with belief."

25. A point of instruction: Although he was an unbeliever, Nimrod did not listen to rumours. He said: "Let the people assemble; if they give evidence, we will arrest him." Today if a person passes judgement upon someone on the basis of lies, that person is a worse man than Nimrod.

26. They brought Abraham, and asked him: "Have you done this to our gods?" *In His words, He is exalted: "Abraham, was it you who did this to our deities?"*<sup>41</sup> Abraham said: "This one has done it; he is the greatest of them. Ask him! Let him say who has done it, if he can talk."

27. Religious scholars have related: [Read]: "No, [the Lord] has done it," then pause and start [again] with the words: "He is the greatest of them."<sup>42</sup> Abraham did not pause and hid the true meaning of his words from them. They did not understand the meaning and thought he was saying the biggest of them had done it. Abraham said: "Ask him; if he can talk, he will tell you." *In His words, He is exalted: "Ask them, if they can speak."*<sup>43</sup> They said: "These idols do not speak; how are we to ask him?" Abraham said: "So they cannot speak? Why do you worship useless objects?" *In His words, He is exalted, which inform us about them and Abraham: "Would you then worship, instead of God, that which can neither help nor harm you?"*<sup>44</sup>

28. Thus they knew that none other than Abraham had done this. They discussed how to punish Abraham. But Abraham revealed his prophethood and said: "Believe in the One God and do not worship idols. Recognize me as the messenger of God." They said: "Would you turn us away from the faith of our fathers and introduce us to another religion?" Abraham replied: "Your ancestors all adhered to a vain faith. I am summoning you to the right path."<sup>45</sup>

39. Citing Qur'an 21:60.

40. Citing Qur'an 21:61.

41. Citing Qur'an 21:62.

42. Citing Qur'an 21:63. The translators' note reads: "The usual interpretation of this verse would be: 'No! The biggest/greatest one of them has done it.' The interpretation presented exempts Abraham from having lied."

43. Citing Qur'an 21:63.

44. Citing Qur'an 21:66.

45. Cf. Abraham 1:5-6.

29. It has been related: At that time there was famine in all the countries. There was no food to be found.<sup>46</sup> Nimrod was selling food to all peoples. One day Abraham came to Nimrod to buy food. Nimrod said: "Prostrate yourself before me, then I will give you food." Abraham said: "I prostrate myself before the God Who brings the dead to life, and causes the living to die."<sup>47</sup> *In His words, He is exalted, which inform us about him: "Abraham said: 'My Lord is He Who has power to give life and to cause death.'"*<sup>48</sup> Nimrod said: "I, too, can bring the dead to life and make the living die." *In His words, He is exalted: "He said: 'I, too, have power to give life and to cause death.'"*<sup>49</sup> Abraham asked: "How do you bring them to life?" Nimrod had two evildoers brought from the dungeon. One of them he had killed, the other one he freed. He said: "There, I have brought the dead to life and killed the living." Abraham understood that unbelievers are stupid. He said: "To set free an evildoer does not amount to bringing him to life. You would have to bring to life the very one you have killed." But he did not wish to dispute with a stupid unbeliever. Thinking: "Let me silence him with one remark," he said: "My God is the One Who every day causes the sun to rise in the east. Just for one day make it rise in the west." *In His words, He is exalted: "God brings up the sun from the east. Bring it up yourself from the west."*<sup>50</sup> Upon hearing these words, Nimrod was dumbfounded. *In His words, He is exalted: "The unbeliever was confounded."*<sup>51</sup> The miracle Abraham was referring to is this: Until God, He is mighty and glorious, has caused the sun to rise from the west at the end of time, the Day of Judgement will not arrive.

30. They heard these words from Abraham; and many unbelievers took them to heart, saying: "These idols are futile; they are good for nothing. Abraham speaks the truth; we are not on the right path."<sup>52</sup> *In His words, He is exalted: "Thereupon they turned their thoughts to their own folly and said to each other: 'Verily, you are wrongdoers.'"*<sup>53</sup> When Nimrod, may he be damned, came to know what his people were thinking, he feared that they would break away from him and turn to Abraham. He declared: "Seize him and throw him into the fire. Give your gods assistance." *In His words, He is exalted: "They cried: 'Burn him and avenge your gods, if you must punish him!'"*<sup>54</sup> They decided to throw Abraham into the fire.

31. Nimrod said: "According to Abraham, his god possesses a Hell. He will scorch my skin with fire. Today I will burn Abraham with fire."<sup>55</sup> Let me see who is going to save

46. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5.

47. Citing Qur'an 2:258. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:7.

48. Citing Qur'an 2:258.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

53. Citing Qur'an 21:64.

54. Citing Qur'an 21:68.

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

him." He had his entire army collect firewood for four months. Whatever pack-animal they loaded it on would not carry it. They loaded it on a camel; it would not get up. Neither an ass nor a horse would accept it. They loaded the wood on a mule which did accept it. Abraham beheld this and cursed the mule. It is said that for this reason they produce no offspring. Today, if we put a load on a mule, it will not stand still if we do not beat it and curse it. At night they did not let the old widows sleep, but ordered them to turn their spinning-wheels; during the day they sold the products and [bought and] piled up firewood in order that Nimrod should be pleased with them.

32. It has been related: They heaped up firewood on the ground over a distance of one parasang,<sup>56</sup> and closed its circumference with a wall of morocco leather which they smeared with mineral oil and sulphur. Then they lit the fire.

33. Two years before they had bound Abraham with heavy fetters,<sup>57</sup> and they had been keeping him in his house. The fire burned for ten days and gathered strength. They said: "Throw Abraham into the fire now." Measured in their cubits the height of the fire was twenty cubits. The one who brought fire and lit the heap of firewood was Abraham's uncle Hārān. The prophet Lot was his son. Now a swallow brought water in its beak and poured it on the fire. Abraham exclaimed: "Oh swallow, how can the water in your beak affect the fire?"<sup>58</sup> Abraham blessed the swallow. A lizard came and blew on the fire. Abraham cursed the lizard.

34. The fire burned for forty days and forty nights. No one could come any nearer to it than four parasangs. Whenever a bird flew over it in the air, its wings were burnt and it fell down. Nimrod erected a tower out of iron and copper and mounted it. They said: "How are we going to throw Abraham into the fire?" Satan came and taught them how to construct a catapult. Before this a catapult had not existed in the world. They chained Abraham's hands and feet with seventy *batman* of iron<sup>59</sup> and put him in the catapult. They said: "Oh Abraham, aren't you afraid?" Abraham replied: "How should one in whose heart the fire of God resides be afraid of the fire of men!" He said: "How will he who has the fire of the Lord inside him fear the fire of creation?" They said: "People have lit a big fire and smeared the walls around it with mineral oil and sulphur." Abraham said: "The fire in my heart is stronger than your fire because in my heart is the fire of the Lord, while your fire is just the fire of this world." He said: "The fire inside me is hotter than your fire because my fire is a fire from the Lord, while yours is a fire of this world." Again they said: "Ask your god to save you." Abraham said: "What part of me is He supposed to save?" They said: "Your self." Abraham said: "The self is a wicked thing pursuing evil. It is perfectly appropriate for the wicked fire." They said: "Ask for your soul (*jān*) [to be rescued]." He replied: "The soul is a loan; a loan must return to its owner." They

56. One *farsang* = 30 *stades*; 1 *stadion* = 606.75 feet, so 3 *farsangs* = 54,607.5 feet, or about 10 ½ miles.

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

58. The translators note an addition in MS C: "The swallow replied: 'If the water which I brought doesn't affect it, the intensity of my faith will.'"

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

said: "Ask for your heart to be rescued." Abraham answered: "The heart belongs to God. He will do with it whatever He pleases."

35. Thereupon they placed him in the catapult. No matter how many people assembled, they were not able to draw it back because angels had come who were holding the catapult down.<sup>60</sup> The unbelievers asked him mockingly: "Oh Abraham, whither are you going?" He answered: "To my Lord Who has created me; He will show me the road." *In His words, He is exalted: "I will take refuge with my Lord; He will guide me."*<sup>61</sup> Satan knew that the angels were holding down the catapult. He came in the appearance of a nice, clean man and told the unbelievers: "You do not know how to draw it back. However, there is a trick to this. Fetch women of bad morals. If the men fornicate with them, then the catapult will go off." Indeed when they did this, the angels dispersed. Thereupon they drew back the catapult and shot Abraham into the air.

36. Question: How did Satan know how to construct a catapult? Answer: Satan had seen the catapult in Hell. In Hell they throw the sinners into a pit of fire; the torments of that pit are seventy times worse than the torments of Hell.

37. It has come down in tradition: The Prophet, peace be upon him, has said: "From my community six kinds of persons will be thrown into that pit in Hell on the Day of Judgement. First, those who say in front of rulers: 'This man<sup>62</sup> is so virtuous'; second, those who confiscate a young orphan's wealth and consume it; third, those who execute the business of oppressors; fourth, those who speak to their parents with a bad tongue;<sup>63</sup> fifth, the homosexuals who commit unclean acts; sixth, those who earn money in a manner which pleases God, but who spend the money in a bad way. God save us from that!"

38. When they had catapulted Abraham into the air, he said: "God is sufficient unto me; what an excellent Protector He is, what an excellent Lord and what an excellent Helper!" The angels of the seven spheres of heaven all cried out, saying: "Oh God, these days the only person on earth who professes Your existence and Your Oneness is Abraham. And him You throw in the fire. O Lord, is this how You treat Your friends?" The Word came: "Oh angels, continue to look on! In this matter I have a hidden mystery. You do not know about it." That moment Gabriel arrived<sup>64</sup> and hovering in the air level with the fire, he said: "Oh Abraham, do you want something?" "Are you in need of anything?"

39. The lesson: If Abraham had said: "I have no wish," this would have meant: "I am without a wish"; but a human being cannot be without a wish. If he had said: "I have a wish," this would have meant: "I have a wish to express to Gabriel." The answer which Abraham gave was: "As for you, I have none." "To you, at least, I have none to express." Gabriel said: "If you do not have a request to make to me, you must have one to make

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

61. Citing Qur'an 37:99.

62. Translators' note: "I.e. the ruler."

63. Translators' note: "Ms.B: '. . . fourth, the step-fathers and step-mothers . . .'; ms.C: '. . . the step-mothers . . . (!)"

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

to the Lord. Ask Him!" Abraham said: "God's knowing my situation exempts me from asking." "Oh Gabriel, it is certain that He already knows what I want. What need is there to ask?"<sup>65</sup> When Abraham had attached his heart to the Lord, He is honoured and glorified, the words came: "Oh fire, become cool; keep Abraham safe." *In His words, He is exalted: "We<sup>66</sup> said: 'Fire, be cool to Abraham and keep him safe.'*"<sup>67</sup>

40. Religious scholars have related, God's mercy be upon them: If He had only said "cool" and had not added the word "safe," the fire would have destroyed Abraham with its cold, and no one would have seen food cooked over fire up until the Day of Judgment. The meaning is this: "Cool off and stay like that where Abraham is; this will ensure that fire is of benefit to others."

41. It has been related: In Abraham's breast there was the fire of his love for the Lord. That moment the fire of love came into action in order to burn down the fire of Nimrod. The fire of love was told: "Become cool and keep Abraham safe." If God had not said this, the fire of Abraham's love would not have spared Nimrod, nor would it have burned down Nimrod's fire entirely.

42. Then it was ordained: "Oh Gabriel, catch my slave!" Gabriel arrived bearing a prayer-rug from Paradise and spread it out in the middle of the fire.<sup>68</sup> Abraham sat down on that rug, and the fire burned away Abraham's fetters.<sup>69</sup> Then Abraham stood up to perform ritual prayer on the rug.

43. It has been related: Nimrod said to Imkân: "Ascend this tower and see to what extent Abraham is burned and has turned to ashes." Imkân said: "Oh king, if all the mountains of the world were in this fire, they would burn. How could Abraham be spared?" Then Imkân ascended the tower and spoke again: "Oh king, there are three persons sitting before him. Twenty beds of spring flowers are blossoming around him and springs are streaming and a date-palm has sprouted." After he came down from the tower Imkân told Nimrod of this. Nimrod was astonished and ascended the tower himself. He saw that it was just as Imkân had reported and he said: "Oh Abraham, you were alone; who are these persons?" At the command of the Lord, He is mighty and glorious, the fire was able to speak, declaring: "Oh Nimrod, one of the persons is me. I have changed my countenance, and I am apologizing to Abraham for your stupidity." The fire said: "Oh Abraham, what harm can Nimrod possibly do to someone whom the Lord, He is mighty and glorious, protects?" Nimrod heard this and was very frightened and grieved. For seven days and nights the earth trembled; it was an earthquake.<sup>70</sup> Nimrod assembled the wise men and doctors, and asked: "What kind of earthquake is this?" They said: "The earth is trembling because the fire is so hot." Nimrod said: "Extinguish

65. Contrast Abraham 1:15.

66. The Qur'an always uses the royal plural (we, our, us) when God is speaking.

67. Citing Qur'an 21:69.

68. In parallel Muslim accounts, Gabriel brings a garment from paradise.

69. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; 2:13; Facsimile 1, figures 1 and 3.

70. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

it." They began transporting water and throwing it on the fire. Many people came to see Abraham. At the Lord's command a wind blew the ashes into their faces and all these people went away. When it was night, Abraham came out of the fire and went home.

44. It has been related: Nimrod had twelve thousand storehouses; four thousand of them were completely full of flour to be sold in case it should become scarce. Abraham prayed; the valleys and caves in those lands filled with flour. Abraham had it announced: "Come and take flour." Throughout all the lands hunger was stilled and no one cared for Nimrod's grain.<sup>71</sup>

45. One day Abraham went to Nimrod and said: "Oh Nimrod, I ask you to become a true believer; repeat: 'There is no god but God and you are Abraham, the messenger of God.'" Nimrod replied: "Give me time to take counsel." Abraham gave him time. Nimrod took counsel: "I am going to make peace with Abraham. What do you say?" His companions and lords thought: "If he makes peace with Abraham, Abraham will wield power over him, and our glory and standing will cease; we will be the servants of Abraham." They told Nimrod: "For so many years you have said: 'I am a god.' Are you now going to say: 'I am a servant.'? Will you be Abraham's servant? Are you going to make us his servants?" Nimrod said: "I have beheld great works come forth from him. We have to make peace with his god." Hārān said: "Don't you know why the fire didn't burn him? It was because our fathers worshipped fire. And he, too, is from our stock. Fire does not burn us, or those of our stock."

46. This story contains lessons; the lesson is this: The mule carried firewood; its capacity to reproduce ceased. The sparrow transported twigs; therefore all boys catch it, pluck out its feathers, roast it in the fire and eat it. The lizard blew on the fire; therefore it is killed wherever it is found. The swallow carried water and thus found mercy. What they contributed to Nimrod's fire did not make it bigger, but they made manifest their enmity. Likewise, the swallow's water did not extinguish the fire, but [the gesture] made manifest the swallow's friendship. Until the Day of Judgement its good name shall endure. Virtue brought with it profit.

47. Again Nimrod went to Hārān and asked: "How can we get rid of Abraham?" Hārān assembled the people and spoke thus: "Exert yourselves to the outmost and let us dig a pit. In the pit we will produce smoke and smoke will kill a man." Nimrod said: "Here is money. Take whatever you need and finish this job." Hārān assembled the people, and where the fire had been they dug a pit with a wide opening and a narrow lower part. He filled the pit with straw and dried dung. The whole people looked on. Hārān brought fire and cast it upon the straw. At the Lord's command a wind arose and snatching up flames from the fire, flung them down on Hārān's head. Hārān caught fire and started to burn. The people exclaimed: "Oh Hārān, did you not say: 'Fire cannot burn us.'?" Hārān was unable to say anything; that very instant he burned to ashes.<sup>72</sup> Again a wind came and lifted up ashes from the fire Nimrod had lit. And it scattered the

71. Cf. Abraham 2:17.

72. Cf. Abraham 2:1.

ashes into the eyes of the people who had brought firewood; they all went blind. Abraham remained safe.<sup>73</sup> Those who were left ran away.

48. Then Sarah, God be pleased with her, came before Abraham. Sarah was Hārān's daughter. Some have related: She was the daughter of a great lord from among Nimrod's retainers. Sarah said: "Oh Abraham, your God is very powerful. Will He receive me?" Abraham replied: "He will set you on the right path and make Paradise your abode." Sarah was extremely beautiful; she said: "Oh Abraham, I will become a true believer on the one condition that you will take me for your wife." Abraham replied: "I do not possess the wealth to offer you a marriage portion." Sarah said: "My marriage gift will be this: In all matters concerning the Holy Law you will do whatever I say." Abraham agreed to what Sarah requested.

49. It has come down in another tradition: Nimrod saw Abraham from the tower. In the fire flowers were blossoming; the fire had become red flowers in the midst of green and yellow plants. A spring had appeared and a palm-tree had sprung up. Nimrod asked: "Oh Abraham, does the fire not burn you?" Abraham replied: "No." Again Nimrod asked: "Who has made the fire cool where you are?" He answered: "The One Who has put me in the fire." Nimrod said: "Why, your god is a good god,"<sup>74</sup> and he felt inclined to convert to the true faith. But those in his presence did not agree. After that they began to talk about how they were going to destroy Abraham with smoke. Lot, peace be upon him, came and informed Abraham. They fled from the city in darkness at night. Nimrod had put guards on the road and told them: "If you come upon anyone who speaks Hebrew, arrest him." That night, through God's omnipotence, all languages were confounded and the languages changed.

50. It has been related: "*And that night all languages were mixed up. And therefore it was called Babel.*"<sup>75</sup> Seventy-two different languages came into existence. Eighteen languages were taken up by the progeny of Ham, the Indians. Eighteen languages were adopted by the progeny of Shem, the Arabs and Persians. And thirty-six languages went to the progeny of Japheth, the Turks. As Abraham and Lot walked past the guards, the latter asked them: "Who are you?" They answered: "We two are Abraham and Lot." The guards were annoyed and said: "We are on the look-out for them, and you are making fun of us by saying you are Abraham and Lot." The Lord Almighty protected them both from these guards. And so they went to another country and settled down there.

51. When Nimrod's wrath had subsided, a command came from the Lord, He is mighty and glorious: "Oh Abraham, go and invite Nimrod to the faith." Abraham went to Nimrod and said: "Oh Nimrod, do not worship idols. Convert! Say there is only one God and recognize me as his messenger." Thereupon Nimrod said: "Is there another god besides me?" Abraham replied: "Indeed there is! The One Who has created you and has

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

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

75. Paraphrase of Qur'an 2:102.

given you your empire. He is the God of heaven and earth." Nimrod said: "Before now I didn't know this, or I would have engaged in combat with him."

52. And he began preparing himself to do battle with the "God of heaven and earth."<sup>76</sup>

### On Nimrod's ascension to heaven

53. They fed young eagles. When the eagles were fully grown, Nimrod had a box made with two doors, one door on top and one underneath. And the box had eight legs, four on top and four below. Nimrod had the eagles chained to the legs on top.<sup>77</sup> Then he took his breastplate and his helmet, his bow and arrow, and he entered the box with a companion. When the birds saw the meat above them, they tried to catch it and flew off raising the box into the air. They traveled for one day and one night. Nimrod said: "Open the door on top. What do you see?" The companion opened it and said: "It looks as it usually does." Nimrod said: "Open the door below. What do you see?" He said: "I see the earth in one piece." Again they traveled for one day and one night. Nimrod said: "Open the door on top. What do you see?" He opened it and said: "The sky looks exactly as it does from earth." Nimrod said: "We must go further," and they traveled for one more day and night. When Nimrod had the door on top opened and asked: "What is there to see?" The companion said: "All that can be seen is fog. There is nothing else in sight." He had him open the door below and asked: "What is there to see?" "Just fog," was the companion's reply. Nimrod said: "Now we have arrived." And he took his arrow and shot it. Gabriel received the command: "Take his arrow, plunge it into a fish and smear it with the fish's blood. Then throw it back into the box." That is why fish are not killed by having their throat cut.

54. It has also been related: And there was a bird in the air. Gabriel immediately smeared the arrow with its blood and then he threw it back in the box.

55. Some have related: The arrow came down and hit Nimrod on the head. Nimrod was smeared with blood, but hid what had happened from his comrade.

56. Nimrod said: "I have killed the god of heaven," and he took the pieces of meat from above and fastened them underneath. On the way down a wind blew into the box and made a terrific howl. All people were afraid of that howl, as the Lord has declared *in His words, He is exalted: "They have plotted, but their plot is in God's hands."*<sup>78</sup> They landed and said: "We have killed the god of heaven."

57. It has been related: A hundred thousand men from amongst the people of Nimrod had turned away from him and were well-disposed to Abraham. When Nimrod arrived and, showing the bloody arrow, said: "I have killed the god of heaven," they took this to be the truth and became unbelievers once again. *In His words, He is exalted: "But He leaves*

76. Translators' note: "Ms.C: '. . . had I known before now, I would have engaged in combat with him. I am the god of the earth; I will fight with the god of heaven.' And he began preparing himself."

77. Translator's note: "ILM is more explicit here: 'Nimrod fastened meat on the poles on top and chained the eagles underneath the poles.'"

78. Citing Qur'an 14:46.

in error whom He will and He gives guidance to whom He pleases.”<sup>79</sup> Abraham received the command: “Go and tell Nimrod: ‘If you are willing to fight, organize an army.’” Abraham went to convey God’s message. Nimrod sent agents to his lands. An army assembled, too great to be counted or measured. From head to foot they were covered with steel. A command of the Lord, He is mighty and glorious, was issued to the army of mosquitoes. All mosquitoes came forward; there were so many of them that they hid the face of the sun. They clung to Nimrod’s soldiers and ate their armour, their clothes, their horses and their spears utterly and completely. They tore them to pieces.

58. Nimrod, the cursed, fled and went into his palace. The height of the palace was five hundred cubits; the circumference of its walls was three thousand five hundred cubits. He went inside, bolted the gates and filled up the windows. He left one hole for his breath to escape through. The Lord, He is exalted, inspired a weak and lame mosquito with one leg, one wing and one eye; it entered through the hole and settled on Nimrod’s cheek. The mosquito sucked on his cheek, flew close to his mouth and entered his nose. It reached his brain and began to eat it. It fed for forty days and nights.<sup>80</sup>

59. According to Kaʿb al-Aḥbār: The Lord, He is exalted, granted Nimrod, the cursed, a reign of four hundred years. Thereafter the mosquito entered his nose. It stayed there for another four hundred years. When someone came in to see him, Nimrod would cry out for help and make the person hit him. If this didn’t make Nimrod quiet, he had himself beaten with fists. And if he still didn’t stay quiet, they started slapping him on the back of the neck.

60. The divine wisdom: Nimrod was afflicted with these tortures because he claimed to be a god and for four hundred years made the people prostrate before him. To make it clear to people that a person who received so many blows on the back of his neck was clearly not fit to be a god, Nimrod’s pains did not end with this; they began to beat him with maces. He grew weak and his pains increased. Meanwhile, his people endured suffering. When it was the turn of one of Nimrod’s important companions to beat him with the mace, the man thought: “I will go tomorrow and deliver all the people.” He arrived the next day, and when he went to wield the mace, he raised his hand very high and then struck a mighty blow. Nimrod’s head was split asunder. The mosquito had by now become the size of a dove; it flew away. Gabriel, peace be upon him, lifted up the palace with his wings and cast it down to the earth. The palace was turned upside down. *In His words, He is exalted: “But God smote their edifice at its foundations and its roof fell down upon their heads.”*<sup>81</sup> Nimrod died and went to Hell.<sup>82</sup> Then a person named Dhū l-ʿArsh<sup>83</sup> ascended the throne as king.

79. Citing Qurʾan 16:93.

80. The story, often repeated in the Muslim texts, may derive from the Talmudic account of the gnat that entered the nose of Titus and picked at his brain for seven years, following his desecration of the temple in Jerusalem (Babylonian Talmud *Gittin* 56b).

81. Citing Qurʾan 16:26.

82. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

83. Dhū al-ʿArsh means “possessor of the throne.”

### The story of Abraham, peace be upon him, and king Dhū l-ʿArsh

61. Abraham, peace be upon him, gave all Nimrod’s goods, his gold and silver, his cattle and livestock, to the poor as pious gifts. Then they departed from that land, that is, Abraham and Lot, together with Sarah and two true believers.<sup>84</sup> Abraham, peace be upon him, prayed and asked: “My God, how far am I to go?” It was ordained: “Go wherever you wish.”

62. King Dhū l-ʿArsh was a young man and very taken with women; wherever a beautiful woman was to be found, he would have her brought to him. This Dhū l-ʿArsh b. Ṣarūq al-Ḥimyarī also stationed guards at the roads to collect the tithe. Fifteen men encountered Abraham and they demanded the tithe from him. Abraham said: “We do not have enough wealth for you to demand the tithe. But we have children; take as many as you want.” They counted his children. It appeared that there were nine of them. They said: “If there were ten, we would take one of them. From these nine nothing is due to us. But let us see what is inside this chest.” Sarah was inside the chest.

63. The following has come down as a tradition from the Prophet, peace be upon him: “The watcher in ambush is the worst thing created by God on earth.” This means: “Among the things created by God, He is mighty and glorious, nothing is worse than those who guard the roads and confiscate goods.”

64. As much as Abraham and Lot tried, it was of no avail. The guards opened the chest and saw Sarah. She was very beautiful. The guards said: “Our king likes women such as this one. Where are you abducting her?” They brought Abraham to the town and made him dismount. Then they went to the king and told him of this. Without having seen her, he fell in love with Sarah—on the basis of hearsay. He told the chamberlain: “Quick, bring this man before me!” The chamberlain brought Abraham to the king. The king looked at Abraham; he was good-looking and handsome. The king honoured Abraham and seated him at his side.<sup>85</sup> The king asked: “What is your name?” Abraham said: “My name is ʿAbdallāh.”<sup>86</sup> The king said: “What is in the chest?” Abraham was afraid, thinking: “If I say she is my wife, they will kill me because he desires her.” He said: “She is my sister.” He said this in the sense that a true believer is a brother or sister to a fellow true believer. *In His words, He is exalted: “The believers are a band of brothers.”*<sup>87</sup> The king said: “Oh ʿAbdallāh, today I am king of Egypt; my wealth is enormous. If you give me your sister,” he said, “I will share my dominion with you.”<sup>88</sup> Abraham grew sad and lowered his head. The king said: “Oh ʿAbdallāh, why do you not speak?” Abraham replied: “My sister is of age; you must ask her consent.” The king said: “You go and ask her consent.”

84. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

85. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3, figure 1.

86. Translators’ note: “This common name literally means ‘servant of God,’ i.e. Abraham is not really lying in giving this as his name.”

87. Citing Qurʾan 49:10.

88. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3, figure 1.

65. Abraham rose and went to Sarah, filled with sorrow. Sarah asked: "What has happened to you to make you sad?" He told her all that had been said. Sarah began to weep, saying: "Oh Abraham, why did you not tell the truth? What a distressing situation you have put yourself in, as well as me!" While they were conversing thus, the king grew impatient and dispatched two hundred men together with the chamberlain, saying: "Go and bring me that man along with his sister." They brought Abraham and Sarah. Sarah entered, her head covered with a linen veil. The king seated Abraham on a throne,<sup>89</sup> and Sarah sat down close to him. The king said: "Oh 'Abdallāh, my wealth and my possessions are boundless. I will grant you half of them. Give me your sister." Abraham replied: "My sister is sitting over there. Let her speak." The king said to Sarah: "I have a thousand female slaves; they are of princely lineage. All of them I will give to you; let them serve your brother. But you become mine." Sarah wept and did not utter a word. The king became angry and said: "Oh Abraham, she does not speak because she feels ashamed in front of you." He took Abraham by the hand and removed him. Abraham was told to sit down at the foot of a wall.

66. The prophet Abraham was very jealous. While his mind was occupied with Sarah, Gabriel came and covered the space between Abraham and Sarah with his wings. Abraham saw Sarah and his heart was at rest. As much as the king spoke to Sarah, she would not answer. She covered her face with her hands and wept. The king lost patience. He rose to his feet, approached Sarah and became impertinent, uncovering her face. Abraham said: "My God, show your power to this unbeliever." The king's two arms withered all the way up to his neck. The king said: "Oh Sarah, pray that my arms be cured. I will grant you permission to leave." Sarah prayed and his two arms were cured. He tried once again; his two arms withered. When Sarah prayed once again, they were cured again. They withered a third time. The earth shook; an earthquake took place.<sup>90</sup>

67. The king said: "What kind of calamity is this that you have brought down on me?" Sarah said: "It doesn't come from me: This is because you are an unbeliever, and because you have used force." The king said: "I have not used force on you." Sarah said: "You have not used force on me, but you have done so against the Lord's messenger." The king asked: "Against which messenger have I used force?" Sarah answered: "You have used force against the prophet Abraham, the one at whose hands Nimrod was destroyed." The king said: "I have not once seen Abraham. How have I used force against him?" Sarah said: "Abraham is my husband and you have separated me from him. That is why this calamity and distress have befallen you." The king said: "This distress has befallen you and me because he said you are his sister. If he had told me you're his wife, I wouldn't have had anything to do with you." Sarah replied: "Since you are tyrannical, powerful and an unbeliever, he was unable to say so. If he had said: 'She is my wife,' you would have killed him." The king said: "I have never taken anything from anybody by force." He told the chamberlain: "Go and bring that man." When Abraham was brought,

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89. Ibid.

90. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

the king rose and threw himself at Abraham's feet. The king asked: "Are you that Abraham at whose hands Nimrod was destroyed?" Abraham replied: "Yes, I am."

68. The king said: "Describe your god." Abraham replied: "My God is the One Who has created the seven spheres of heaven and the seven layers of earth. His magnificence extends higher than any outer limit and He wields power beneath the earth. He has always existed and He will always exist. He has no comrade, no companion, no equal, no peer and no partner. He was not born from anyone; no one has been born from Him. He does not resemble created beings. He has done as He pleased, and He will do as He pleases. He causes the living to die and brings the dead to life.<sup>91</sup> He Himself will never die. Everything is in His power; He is the Lord of all things." *"He gives life and takes life; He is living, he never dies. What is good comes by His hand; and He has power over everything."*<sup>92</sup> Dhū l-ʿArsh said: "For seventy years I have been worshipping the star of Venus. All that time I have been thinking: Who is keeping this huge sky in its place without pillars? Who is keeping the brown earth in place above the waters? Who causes the stars to rise and to set? Who brings forth the day; who brings the night? Apparently all these works are executed by your god. My arms and my neck are paralyzed; what am I to do?" Gabriel arrived and delivered the message: "Tell Dhū l-ʿArsh if he gives you all his wealth and possessions, all his gold and silver, I will cure his arms and his neck." Abraham, peace be upon him, passed on the Lord's command. Now Dhū l-ʿArsh had a slave-girl named Hagar. She was a daughter of the king of the Maghreb, a descendant of the prophet Salih. Dhū l-ʿArsh had killed her father and carried her off in captivity. He had made her the mistress of all the female slaves. She knew everything about his wealth and possessions. The king told Hagar: "Give the keys of my treasury to Abraham." She handed over all the keys. Abraham prayed and the king's arms and his neck once again became healthy. Dhū l-ʿArsh converted there and then.<sup>93</sup> Uttering the words: "There is no god but God, and I bear witness that you are Abraham, the messenger of God," he became a true believer. Abraham said: "Oh king, I have accepted this wealth you have given me. But I bestow it upon you once again." Hagar took all of it back.

69. Abraham stayed for one week in the country of the king of Ḥarrān and there he taught the faith and true religion.<sup>94</sup> On the eightieth [*sic*] day Gabriel arrived bearing the message: "Oh Abraham, the Lord has declared: 'This country is not yours; depart hence!'" Abraham informed the king that such a command had reached him. The king said: "Stay with me, and I will grant you the kingship over Egypt;<sup>95</sup> I will be your servant." Abraham replied: "I have no need of worldly possessions." The king told Hagar: "From the treasury bring a crown, a golden belt and a hundred thousand gold-pieces." Hagar brought these things and placed them in front of Abraham, saying: "Accept this!" Gabriel came

91. Citing Qur'an 2:258. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:7.

92. Paraphrase of Qur'an 2:260, 3:27, and 67:1.

93. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

94. Ibid.

95. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3, figure 1.

and told him to accept them. The king also gave Abraham one hundred thousand female camels, a hundred thousand horses, a hundred thousand oxen, one hundred thousand cows, a hundred thousand sheep and four hundred slave-girls, all adorned with gold. The king said: "Oh Sarah, this crown represents seven years' taxes from Egypt. It is worthy of you." Gabriel came and told Abraham: "Tell Sarah to accept this." The king said: "These four hundred slave-girls are all daughters of kings. I give them to you; accept them!" Sarah said: "I myself am a weak slave of the Lord, He is mighty and glorious. Why then should I need slave-girls? However, just give me Hagar." The king issued an order: They brought ten thousand pieces of gold and a thousand sheep, two hundred camels and two hundred oxen. He offered it all to Sarah, along with Hagar. Gabriel came and said: "Oh Abraham, tell Sarah to accept this." Sarah accepted.

70. Thereupon Abraham, peace be upon him, took the cattle and camels and went to the land of Ḥarrān. Wherever they arrived, the land was covered for a distance of one parasang by cattle and livestock. Abraham came to Jordan and saw six thousand households of tents; all of them had cattle and livestock with them. Abraham told Lot: "Dismount here." He dismounted and pitched the tents. Abraham had a pit dug; from it sweet water welled up. The people said: "This man is going to spoil our pasture with a lot of cattle and livestock. Let us send him away so that this well will be for us."

71. While they were talking thus, Dhū l-ʿArsh, on his way to Egypt, happened to arrive at that place with his army. Three men came and brought Abraham to the king. But when the king saw Abraham from afar, he stood up. As he was stepping down from his throne to go and meet Abraham, Abraham gestured to him with his hand to sit down. Those other men bowed and said to the king: "This man comes day and night with his cattle and livestock spoiling our pasture and our watering-place. Make him go away from here." The king said: "What have you to say?" Abraham said: "I am a stranger; if they tell me to go away, I will go." The king said: "Is it alright if I give a ruling on your dispute?" They said: "Yes, it is." The king said: "You bring ten sheep and cook them; we will eat them. And let Abraham, too, bring ten sheep and cook them; we will eat those as well. Let us see which one from among you will present food that renders us satiated. Moreover, bring the sheep which have been eaten back to life. This place along with its water will belong to whoever brings the sheep back to life!" These people were distressed by what the king said. They brought ten emaciated sheep and slaughtered them. They cooked a meal and brought it into the tent; the king and his soldiers ate it. Each one of them received a piece of mutton. Then Abraham brought his meal. Three thousand men partook of it; all were satiated. But the stew made from those sheep remained undiminished. Abraham then got up and threw the hides of the sheep over the remains. He prayed, and all the sheep came back to life. The king bestowed the region on Abraham. Then the king excused himself and mounted his horse.

## EXCERPTS FROM IBN KATHIR

Born in Bosra, ‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Umar ibn Kathīr (A.H. 700?–774/A.D. 1300?–1373) was a Syrian *‘ālim* (a learned religious authority) who died in Damascus. His father-in-law, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī, was one of Syria’s most famous collectors of Muslim traditions. Ibn Kathīr wrote many books, including a catalogue of the first collectors of Muslim traditions, a collection of *ḥadīth* arranged alphabetically by name of the original Companion (of the Prophet Muḥammad) who transmitted them, and a commentary on the *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, extracts of which also appear in this collection. For his history of Islam, he drew on other authors included in this volume: Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn al-Athīr, and al-Ṭabarī. The selections included here come from his *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’* (Stories of the Prophets). Brian M. Hauglid translated these extracts from the original Arabic of Ibn Kathīr, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’* (Cairo: Dār al-‘Ulūm al-‘Arabiyya, A.H. 1418 [A.D. 1998]), 139–51. We have numbered the paragraphs for ease of reference. We have also elided many of the long quotes from the Qur’an that Ibn Kathir intersperses with his narrative.

1. Ibrāhīm [Abraham] is the son of Tārakh b.<sup>1</sup> Nāḥūr b. Sārūg b. Rāgū b. Fāllagh b. ‘Ābir b. Shāllah b. Arphakhshadh b. Sām b. Nūḥ.<sup>2</sup>

2. This is a version of the People of the Book [i.e., Jews] from their book [i.e., Torah]. I learned about their lives by their Indian names just as they recorded it. We have already transmitted the words according to the [oath] of Nūḥ. I have no need to repeat it [i.e., the story].

3. The Ḥāfiẓ<sup>3</sup> b. ‘Asākir related in a biography of Ibrāhīm the Friend from his history on the authority of Ishaq b. Bishr al-Kāhalī, author of the *Kitāb al-Mubtadā’* [Book of the Beginning], that the mother of Ibrāhīm is called Amīla.<sup>4</sup> A long report of her delivery of Ibrāhīm is mentioned. Al-Kalbī said: She is called Būnā bt.<sup>5</sup> Karbitā b. Karthī b. Arphakhshadh

1. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read “son of.”

2. For the Judeo-Christian version of this genealogy, See Genesis 11:10–26: Abraham, Terah, Nahor, Serug, Reu, Peleg, Eber, Salah, Arphaxad, Shem, and Noah.

3. An Arabic title referring to one who has memorized the Qur’an.

4. See Ibn Bishr, fol. 161B, line 9, in this volume.

5. Abbreviation for *bint*, meaning “daughter of.”

b. Sām b. Nūḥ. Ibn ʿAsākir, who incorrectly bases his authority on ʿIkrima, said: Ibrāhīm was surnamed Abū al-Ḍifān.<sup>6</sup>

4. They say: When Tārakh was seventy-five years old Ibrāhīm was born to him. Nāḥūr and Hārān (were also born to him). Lūṭ<sup>7</sup> was born to Hārān.

5. In their opinion Ibrāhīm is the middle [son]. Hārān died during the life of Tārakh in the land in which he was born, the land of the al-Kaldāniyīn,<sup>8</sup> meaning the land of Bābal.<sup>9</sup>

6. This is the well-known truth according to the people of biography, history, and of reports (*ḥadīth*). And according to the truth of the Ḥāfiẓ Ibn ʿAsākir, who adheres to what was related on the authority of Ṭarīq Hishām b. ʿUmāra—al-Walīd—Saʿīd b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz—Makḥūl—Ibn ʿAbbās who said: Ibrāhīm was born in al-Ghūta of Dimashq,<sup>10</sup> in a village Ibn ʿAbbās calls Burza, and in a mountain called Qāsyūn. Moreover he said: The truth is that Ibrāhīm was born in Bābal. This place was related to him because he prayed in it when he came together with Lūṭ.

7. They say: Ibrāhīm married Sāra the niece of Hārān; that is, the daughter of Hārān’s brother.

8. They say: Sāra was infertile, not able to give birth.

9. They say: Tārakh departed with a daughter of Ibrāhīm and Ibrāhīm’s wife, Sāra, and the son of Ibrāhīm’s brother, Lūṭ the son of Hārān. Tārakh left with them from the land of the al-Kaldāniyīn to the land of al-Kanʿāniyīn.<sup>11</sup> They camped at Ḥarrān, and Tārakh died there at 250 years old. This indicates that Ibrāhīm was not born in Ḥarrān. Rather, his birth was in the land of the al-Kaldāniyīn, meaning the land of Bābal and lands under its control.

10. They departed, intending for the land of al-Kaldāniyīn, meaning the country of Bait al-Muqaddas.<sup>12</sup> They settled in Ḥarrān, called the land of al-Kushdāniyīn at that time. It is also the land of Jazīra<sup>13</sup> and al-Shām [Syria]. They [i.e., the people of this land] worshiped the seven stars. Those who lived in the city of Dimashq were of this religion. They faced the North Pole and worshiped the seven stars with all kinds of performances and sayings. For this reason, there was at each gate of the seven ancient gates of Dimashq a temple to each star. They performed festivals and sacrifices to them.

6. I.e., father of the guest. This title likely refers to Abraham’s entertaining an angelic guest in Qurʾan 11:69–76, 15:51–56, and 51:24–30.

7. Biblical Lot.

8. Biblical Chaldees.

9. Babel, which the KJV generally renders Babylon.

10. The fertile oasis on the south side of Damascus (Dimashq).

11. Biblical Canaan.

12. Jerusalem. The Arabic term means “holy house.”

13. The Arabic term *jazīra* generally means “island” but is also used of any land encircled by rivers. According to the Bible, Abraham was born in a land of this description.

11. Therefore, the people of Ḥarrān worshiped the stars and the idols.<sup>14</sup> Each one who was on the face of the earth was an apostate, except Ibrāhīm, his wife, and the son of his brother, Lūṭ.

12. Ibrāhīm, the Friend, is the one for whom God removed the evils and thwarted the error. Indeed, God bestowed His integrity (upon Ibrāhīm) in his youth and sent him as a messenger, and chose him as a friend in his old age. God said: *We<sup>15</sup> bestowed aforesaid / On Abraham his rectitude / Of conduct, and well were We / Acquainted with him.*<sup>16</sup> This means Ibrāhīm was worthy of that [i.e., God's favor]. . . .<sup>17</sup> Then God recorded Ibrāhīm's debate with his father and with his people, just as we will recount it, if God wills.

13. First: Ibrāhīm's call to his father. His father was one who worshiped idols<sup>18</sup> because he was more deserving of the people in sincere devotion to the idols. . . .<sup>19</sup>

14. God has related the discussions and dispute that took place between Ibrāhīm and his father and how Ibrāhīm called his father to the truth in a kind manner and [with] most beautiful counsel. Ibrāhīm made known to his father the wrongs of worshiping idols that cannot hear the prayer of [their] worshipers nor see at all. So how can it [idol worship] take the place of anything or do any good in the way of blessing and assisting? Then Ibrāhīm spoke to him, showing that God had given him guidance and beneficial knowledge even though he was younger in age than his father. . . .<sup>20</sup>

15. Bukhārī said: . . . Ibrāhīm will meet his father Āzar on the day of judgment and upon his face there will be dust, and so Ibrāhīm will say to him, "Didn't I tell you not to disobey me?" His father will say to him, "Today I will not disobey you!" But Ibrāhīm will say, "O God! Indeed, you promised me that you would not disgrace me on the day of judgment. Is my shame of greater extent than my father's?" God will say, "I have forbidden paradise to the unbelievers." Then He will say, "O Ibrāhīm, what is under your legs?" He will look [and] he [Āzar] will be a defiled [sacrificial] lamb. He will be taken by his feet and thrown into the fire. . . .

16. God said: *Lo! Abraham said / To his father Āzar: / "Takest thou idols for gods?" / For I see thee / And thy people / In manifest error.*<sup>21</sup> This [verse] points out that the name of the father of Ibrāhīm is Āzar, [according to] the [collectors] of lineage of the people. And among

14. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

15. The Qur'an always uses the royal plural (we, our, us) when God is speaking.

16. Citing Qur'an 21:51, translation by Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur-ān: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary* (Saudi Arabia: King Fahd Complex, 1992). All citations of the Qur'an in this text will be from Ali's translation; we have therefore preserved his versification of the text.

17. Ibn Kathir cites Qur'an 29:16–27 here.

18. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

19. Ibn Kathir cites Qur'an 19:41–48 here.

20. A rather lengthy argument takes place here between Abraham and his father. Several Qur'anic verses dealing with Terah are cited as well as a *hadīth* report from Bukhārī indicating that Abraham's father would be cast into hell.

21. Citing Qur'an 6:74.

them is Ibn ʿAbbās, [who] points out that the name of his father is Tārah. The People of the Book say Tārakh [is spelled] with the *khaf*. It is said: [His name] is surnamed after an idol that he used to worship, [and] its name was Āzar.<sup>22</sup> . . .

17. As for the people of Bābal,<sup>23</sup> they would worship idols. These are the ones whom [Abraham] observed worshiping them [idols],<sup>24</sup> so he broke them [the idols] in front of them [the people], and he treated them [the idols] with contempt and exposed their uselessness. . . .<sup>25</sup>

18. [The people of Babel] held a feast once each year on the outskirts of the country. His father invited him to go with him, but [Abraham] said, "I am sick!" Just as God said: *Then did he cast / A glance at the Stars, / And he said "I am indeed sick! . . ."*<sup>26</sup>

19. When they left for their feast, [Abraham] remained in their country. *Then he did turn to their gods,*<sup>27</sup> meaning he went to them hurriedly in disguise. He found the idols in a great hall. They [the people] had placed between their hands all types of food and drink. So he said to them in a manner of mockery and scorn, *"Will ye not eat / (Of the offerings before you)? / What is the matter / With you that ye / Speak not?" / Then did he turn / Upon them, striking (them) / With the right hand.*<sup>28</sup> But they were stronger and more powerful, so he smashed them with a carpenter's ax in his hand just as God said: *So he broke them to pieces,*<sup>29</sup> meaning fragments; he smashed all of them<sup>30</sup> *but the biggest of them, / That they might turn / (And address themselves) to it.*<sup>31</sup> It is said he placed the carpenter's ax in the hand of the big one, indicating that [the big one] was jealous that the small [idols] were being worshiped with him!

20. When they returned from their feast, they found what had become of their idol[s]. *They said: "Who has / Done this to our gods? / He must indeed be / One of the unjust ones."*<sup>32</sup> . . .

21. When they gathered and came to him just as they [the storytellers] mentioned, [they said], *"Art thou / The one that did this / With our gods, O Abraham?" / He said: "Nay, this / Was done by this / The biggest one!"*<sup>33</sup> . . .

22. They refrained from the argument and the dispute when they were stopped and defeated. No argument remained for them to utilize their power and authority in order to help what they had against him except from their foolishness and their terrorizing. So God outwitted them. His word, religion, and proof are highest. So God said: *They [the*

22. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

23. Biblical Babel and Babylon.

24. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

25. Several more suras of the Qur'an related to Abraham's dispute about the idols are cited here.

26. Citing Qur'an 37:88–89.

27. Citing Qur'an 37:91.

28. Citing Qur'an 37:91–93.

29. Citing Qur'an 21:58.

30. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

31. Citing Qur'an 21:58.

32. Citing Qur'an 21:59.

33. Citing Qur'an 21:62–63.

people] said, "Burn him / And protect your gods / If ye do (anything at all)!" / We said, "O Fire! / Be thou cool, / And (a means of) safety / For Abraham!" / Then they planned / Against him: but We / Made them the Greater losers.<sup>34</sup> . . .

23. They began to gather firewood from all the places they could. They spent time gathering [wood] for him up to the point that if a woman got sick, she would vow [that] if she would get well, she would carry wood to burn Ibrāhīm. Then they set out for a large hole and put the firewood into it, and they ignited the fire. It flared up, and a flame arose the likes of which had never been seen.

24. Then they placed Ibrāhīm in a catapult, which a Kurdish man named Hayzan made for them. He was the first to build catapults. So God made the ground swallow him up. The reverberating of it will last up to the day of judgment.

25. Then they began to shackle him and tie his hands<sup>35</sup> while he was saying, "There is no God but You (Lord of the World); to you belongs the praise and the dominion. You have no partners."

26. When they placed him, shackled, in the catapult, they threw him into the fire.<sup>36</sup> He said, "God protect me! He is excellent in trust!" Bukhārī has related on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās that [Abraham] said: "God protect me! He is excellent in trust!" Ibrāhīm said it when he was thrown into the fire. . . . Abū Yaʿlī said: Abū Hishām al-Rifāʿī—Iṣḥāq b. Prophet (Muḥammad) said: When Ibrāhīm was thrown into the fire he said, "O God! You are One in the heavens, and I am One in the earth—Your servant!"<sup>37</sup>

27. Some of the predecessors have reported that Jibrīl<sup>38</sup> appeared to him [Ibrāhīm]<sup>39</sup> in the air. He said, "(O Ibrāhīm!) are you in need?" He said, "As far as you are concerned, no!"

28. It is related on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās and Saʿīd b. Jubayr that he [Ibrāhīm] said, "The angel of the rain asked: 'When can I be commanded to send the rain?' But God's will was quicker." . . .

29. Al-Ḍaḥḥāk said: It is related that Jibrīl was with [Ibrāhīm], wiping the sweat from his face; nothing of it lasted except [Ibrāhīm].

30. Al-Suddī said: The angel of shade was also with him. Ibrāhīm ended up in an incline of the hole, and it was in a green garden. The people watching had no power to come [to him], and [Ibrāhīm] could not come out to them. . . .

31. Al-Minhāl b. ʿUmarū said: I was told that Ibrāhīm remained there for forty or fifty days and that he [Ibrāhīm] said, "I never had better days and nights than when I was in [the fire]. I desire that all my living and life could be like when I was in [the fire]."

34. Citing Qurʾan 21:68–70.

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

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

37. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

38. The angel Gabriel in Judeo-Christian tradition.

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

## OTHER MUSLIM TRADITIONS ABOUT THE PROPHET ABRAHAM

These traditions are included because they vary from some of the other Muslim stories about Abraham given earlier or provide additional information. They are drawn from Jan Knappert, *Islamic Legends: Histories of the Heroes, Saints and Prophets of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), a book that records many current oral traditions and other stories that are not part of the received canon. Page numbers from Knappert's book are indicated in parentheses, and for reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

### A Turkish Story about Noah

1. The first ruler of Egypt after the Great Flood was called Mişraim, the name which the Children of Israel later used for the kingdom of Egypt. Mişraim was the son of Baisar, son of Ham<sup>1</sup> the youngest son of Noah, the one who was destined to become the father of all Africans. Noah, the prophet of God, ruled with great wisdom and lived to see his great-great-grandchildren. He married Mişraim to Filemon's daughter. Filemon<sup>2</sup> was the upper-priest or supreme pontiff of Egypt, and his daughter gave birth to a prince whom she called Filemon after her father. The learned priest Filemon taught Mişraim to read the script of the ancient Egyptians and revealed to him the whereabouts of the immense treasures in the ruined monuments of the kings who lived before them. Noah appointed Mişraim king of Egypt,<sup>3</sup> and the new king built a new capital where the old city had been destroyed by the flood. The new capital was to be called Menfi or Manfeh, which in the Greek language is known as Memphis.<sup>4</sup> . . . (44–45)

2. When the king died, golden statues were placed near each of the doors leading to the chamber where the dead king was entombed, and protective curses were written on the front of every statue, so they guarded the entrances against evildoers. The king reposed in a sarcophagus covered with emeralds, with an inscription reading: "Here lies

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1. According to Genesis 10:6, Mizraim was the son of Ham, not his grandson. The Bible mentions no Baisar as a son of Ham. Mizraim is also the Hebrew name for Egypt.
  2. In form, the name is identical to Philemon of the New Testament.
  3. Cf. Abraham 1:26.
  4. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27. The Egyptians believed that the mound inside the temple at Memphis was the first piece of land to appear out of the floodwaters, for which see Abraham 1:24–25.

Miṣraim, son of Baiṣar, son of Ham, king of Egypt who never worshipped idols,<sup>5</sup> never knew illness and lived healthily till his end." . . . Miṣraim became the first king for whom a pyramid was built.

3. He was succeeded by his son Koftim who lived during the days of the building of the great tower of Babel, when the Lord confounded the language of humanity. So it was in king Koftim's time that the people of Egypt began to speak Koptic.<sup>6</sup> (46)

[Regarding the time of Koftim's grandson Budasheer:]

4. In the same period the crows multiplied in Egypt to an alarming extent. There were crows everywhere: in the gardens, in the stables and sheds, in the courtyards and even in the houses. Where there are many crows, there it is that people throw away edible food because they have more than enough to eat. Crows eat our leftovers so their numbers are a measure of human prosperity.<sup>7</sup> (50)

[Budasheer's son was Adim]

5. King Adim was succeeded by his son Sheddāt who was the inventor of the sciences. He first ordered his scribes to write down all the names of the kings of Egypt, with the years of their reigns. To this end he studied the course of the stars and had maps of their orbits drawn so that their times of appearance could be calculated.<sup>8</sup> (52)

### The Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim)<sup>9</sup>

1. Many centuries ago there lived in Mesopotamia a mighty king, who was so pleased with himself that he ordered all his subjects to worship him. He believed that he was god himself and so he made the people come and stand before him, bow down, throw themselves on the floor in deep subjection, and pray to him for his favours.

2. Of course this foolish behaviour displeased God who decided that this king, whom the Bible calls Nimrod and the Koran Namrūd, must fall.

3. God always warns the sinners that their punishment is imminent, so that those who are wise enough to understand, will repent in time. One night king Namrūd had a

5. The fact that Noah blessed the first pharaoh (Abraham 1:26) may suggest that, unlike his successors, he was not an idolator.

6. The term *Coptic* means "Egyptian," and *Copt* derives from the same Egyptian name for the land as the Greek form *Egypt*. Coptic is the latest form of the Egyptian language, written in the borrowed Greek alphabet with a few Egyptian demotic symbols added for sounds not used in Greek. It remains today the liturgical language of the Christian church of Egypt, known as the Coptic Church.

7. We have included the story of the crows in Egypt because crows also play a role in the Abraham story in *Jubilees* 11:19–24, cited earlier. In the *Jubilees* account, the crows are responsible for the famine in Ur of the Chaldees—a famine noted in Abraham 1:29; 2:1, 17—while in the Muslim tradition crows are a sign of plenty in Egypt.

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

9. Note that the spelling of Abraham's name is somewhat inconsistent in this text. At first Knappert uses the Arabic spelling but then reverts to the English version.

dream in which he saw himself as the sun shining over the entire world until it set and a star rose whose splendour outshone the sun. The next morning the king called his dream-readers and diviners who interpreted this vision thus: "One day soon a boy will be born in your kingdom who will rob you of the faith and respect of your people." The enraged king at once commanded his soldiers to kill all the boys that would be born in the country from that day on.<sup>10</sup> Of course the king's rage was caused by fear, and fear is a bad counsellor. No kingdom can survive without boys to take over the work from their fathers in due course of time, nor would it help the king to avert God's decree that he would die.

4. Death cannot be avoided any more than birth. The star that would rob king Namrūd of his glory was to be the Prophet Abraham whom the Koran calls Nabii Ibrāhīm.<sup>11</sup> While his mother was pregnant of him, she remained as slim as she had always been; this was the way in which God hid His future prophet from the eyes of the king's officers. When she felt that her labours were beginning she fled to the mountains where she found refuge in a cave. There, the angel Jibrīl<sup>12</sup> found her and delivered her of a son, whom he called Ibrāhīm as God wished. In daytime, his mother had to leave him in that cave to go and find food for herself, visiting him only at night to give him the breast. But he did not really need her feeding since the five fingers of his right hand contained delicious liquids, a different one each: milk, honey, ghee, sugar-water and date juice, which he could suck at will.

5. Young Ibrāhīm soon grew up to become an eloquent speaker. One day in a small town he entered the temple and kicked the statue in it, so that it fell over and broke into a thousand fragments.<sup>13</sup> The people were dumb with fright and awe, but nothing happened to young Ibrāhīm since the statue was no god, it had no power. Of course the king heard of this sacrilege from his spies, so he decided to invite the young rascal to his palace. When the handsome youngster arrived, all the courtiers were much surprised by his eloquence. "Do you not worship any gods?" asked the king, whereupon the Prophet Abraham answered: "Sire, I saw some ignorant people worshipping fire, until the rain extinguished it. Some tribes worship the rain, others the clouds that bring the rain, others again the wind that carries the clouds, or the stars, the moon or the sun. I worship only the One God who made the sun, the earth, the waters and the stars, the moon and the fire."<sup>14</sup> "Very well," spoke the king, "If your God has such great power, can you bring my father back to life?" When Abraham said that his God could do anything, the king led the way to the royal cemetery. Here, Abraham knelt down in prayer and lo . . .<sup>15</sup> the tomb opened and there rose up the old king, sand still clinging to his shroud but his eyes

10. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

11. Meaning "the prophet Abraham."

12. The angel Gabriel in Judeo-Christian tradition.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

14. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

15. The ellipsis points are part of the translation.

looking fiercely at his son, whom he addressed in a hollow but recognizable voice: "Peace be upon you; listen to this young man and follow his advice for he is the chosen prophet of the One God. Do not heed the priests and their useless idols<sup>16</sup> and do not worship yourself." After these words, the old king quietly lay down in his tomb again, whereupon the lid closed over his head by itself, in spite of its weight. The king and his court could only stare, their faces white with fright. But men forget unpleasant lessons easily, and soon the king said he wanted to see another sign. Without speaking, Abraham took four birds from the king's aviary, cut them in pieces and kept only the four heads in his hand. Then he called each bird by its name: "Cock! Raven! Dove! Peacock!" At once every bone, every piece of flesh, every feather flew up from the ground where they all lay in a heap, and found its place in the body of the birds that were forming again in Abraham's hand, and not a feather was in the wrong place. Soon the birds jumped out of Abraham's hand and resumed pecking their food. Again, Abraham preached to the king and his court about the power of the One God, but they would not listen. Namrūd decided that Abraham's presence would be a menace to his throne, since Abraham challenged the power of the people's gods, and the king wanted to be one of the people's gods. If there is only one God, then the kings owe their power to him, and have to worship him together with the people.

6. A huge pile of firewood was erected on the city square, and Abraham was tied to a pole in the middle. Then the wood was lit and soon the whole pyre was a blazing sea of flames. The king ordered that it must be kept burning for a week. An angel descended from Heaven with a sharp knife and quickly cut the ropes that tied Abraham,<sup>17</sup> but he would not go away. "My Lord placed me here, He will take me away." "Shall I bring the rain, and extinguish the fire?" proposed the angel, but Abraham answered: "There is no need for that either. The fire harms only those whom God wishes to punish." That was true, of course. The angel vanished, he had been sent by God to test Abraham's faith.

7. Then the angel of the winds appeared, offering to blow the fire away, but Abraham said there was no need for his kindly offered services. Jibril appeared subsequently, asking if he could deliver a message to God? "No need for that," replied Abraham, "He knows my condition." That was true too, so Jibril flew away to report that Abraham had passed the test. When Abraham's robe caught fire, God commanded: "Fire, be cold." At once, Abraham shivered, so the fire became a little warmer and was quite pleasant to feel. God commanded the branches and logs around Abraham to sprout, grow twigs, leaves, flowers and fruits, so that Abraham was soon sitting in a shaded bower where colourful flowers spread cool fragrance and sweet fruits offered themselves to the thirsty prisoner. Many years later, when he was an old man, Abraham used to say: "Those seven days in the midst of the fire were the finest of my life." God created a well in the middle of the fire which bubbled fresh water from Paradise. The heavenly fragrance reached the princess, the king Namrūd's daughter, whose name was Sarah. She asked her father if

16. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

17. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

she could go and look at Abraham in the fire, but the king could see no benefit in looking at someone who had long since turned into ashes. However, Sarah was used to getting her way, so she went up to the fire and peered through the flames. What did she see? There was Abraham sitting comfortably in the middle of an orchard! "Does the fire not hurt you?" she asked him. "No, because the fire is hot only if God wants it to be." "Can I come in there and sit with you?" "Yes, if you trust in God, He will protect you. Just repeat after me: 'Whoever has God's name in his heart and on his tongue will be unharmed.'" She repeated these words, and found that she could walk through the fire. Inside, she sat down with him, eating the sweet fruits, drinking the fresh water from Abraham's own well, and listening to his wise words. At the end of the day she went back to the palace and told her father of her wonderful experiences. For the first time in her life the king was angry with her, so much, that he ordered his executioner to torture her in the dungeon.<sup>18</sup> Of course, God, who had already decided that she should become Abraham's wife, sent an angel to rescue her. The angel lifted her up, and flew away with her through the thick walls of the dungeon, as if they did not exist, and out over the city in the clear night sky towards the mountains. There stood a lonely house where the angel put her down on her own feet. Who should come out of the house to greet her but the Prophet Abraham? His seven days in the fire had passed peacefully and the angel had flown with him to his house before the king had time to think of any further trials. The angel joined Abraham and Sarah in marriage.

8. Soon, however, king Namrūd heard of the treacherous behaviour of his daughter and sent an army so numerous that from his house Abraham could see nothing but armed men, as far as the eye could reach. The angel Jibrīl reappeared and asked Abraham: "What is the smallest creature?" Abraham answered: "The mosquito." "Very well," said the angel, "God will send an army of mosquitoes to help you."

9. He did. Jibrīl was sent to the mosquito king to give him the necessary instructions. The mosquito king summoned all his midges and mosquitoes and told them where to attack. They swooped down on the army in thick clouds, so that the ranks broke and the soldiers ran. They were stung even in their eyes so that they could not see where they were going, so they all perished, as they ran into rivers and swamps. One very large mosquito penetrated into king Namrūd's private bedroom, though doors and windows were locked. It crept up the king's nose and into his brain where it sucked all his blood so that he died.<sup>19</sup>

10. The mosquito emerged from the king's head, full of his blood, as big as a bean, and flew away, saying: "God makes the small overcome the big."<sup>20</sup> Forgotten by his people,

18. Cf. Abraham 1:10–11.

19. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

20. The story, often repeated in the Muslim texts, may derive from the Talmudic account of the gnat that entered the nose of Titus and picked at his brain for seven years, following his desecration of the temple in Jerusalem (Babylonian Talmud *Gittin* 56b).

king Namrūd lay dead in his castle, which fell to ruin in the course of the passing centuries. Still today, the local people point out the Burj-e-Namrūd, the “Tower of Namrūd.”

11. When Mesopotamia, or Chaldea as it was sometimes called, was won for Islām,<sup>21</sup> Abraham received an order from God to go and convert the people of Palestine.<sup>22</sup> Abraham packed his luggage, but because his wife was so beautiful, he feared she might be stolen, so he put her also in a suitcase, a very large one. Unfortunately, the customs officer at the frontier insisted on opening this heavy piece of luggage, even when Abraham offered him its weight in pure gold, or perhaps because of this suspect generosity. When he saw Sarah, the officer decided to report this to the king, hoping perhaps for promotion. Indeed, the king ought to have rewarded such rare honesty. Instead, he took her into his inner room. When Abraham arrived, he looked doubtfully at the solid walls of the royal castle, until God suddenly made the heavy stones into pure glass. Abraham saw that the king was sitting on his sofa with Sarah at his side, and that he drew her close to him. Alas! The king’s hand withered and the king enquired whether any of his men knew of a doctor who could cure his hand, and at that moment Abraham called at the gate, saying that he was a physician, that he knew what ailed the king and that he could heal the hand. He was immediately admitted to the king’s inner room, where he insisted that his fee should be the woman whom the king had just received from the customs officer. Seeing that Abraham knew things that other people did not know, the king agreed, and Abraham cured his hand. The king was so pleased that he gave Abraham not only Sarah but also Hagar, a slave girl. Hagar bore Abraham a son whom the Arabs call Isma‘il and who became the father of all the Arabs. He had the luminous disc of divine light on his forehead, for God had decreed that he would be the first prophet of the Arabian nation. So, He commanded Abraham to take his second wife Hagar and her son south into the desert of Arabia. (72–78)

### The Legend of Yusuf, or Joseph

This comes from a Swahili poem that was possibly written by Muhammad b.<sup>23</sup> Abu Bakari Kijuma, who died ca. 1945 (abridgment of the Swahili version).

[Regarding when Joseph was cast into the well by his brothers:]

Gabriel was sent from heaven with a new *kanzu*,<sup>24</sup> the same that was worn by Abraham when he was put in the oven.<sup>25</sup> (89)

21. The Muslims believe that Islam (which means “submission,” i.e., to God’s will) was the religion of the ancient patriarchs.

22. Cf. Abraham 2:15.

23. Abbreviation for Arabic *ibn* or *bin*, to be read “son of.”

24. I.e., garment.

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



# OTHER TRADITIONS ABOUT THE EARLY LIFE OF ABRAHAM

SECTION 5





## EXTRACTS FROM THE ASATIR

The *Asatir* (secrets, mysteries), or the *Secrets of Moses*, is a Samaritan midrashic text that combines biblical and traditional stories about the history of the earth, from the time of Adam to the death of Moses. The original editor, Moses Gaster, believed that the book was compiled no later than 250–200 B.C. He obtained an ancient Samaritan version (in Aramaic) but also knew of Arabic translations and was able to make a fairly accurate copy of the original. We use the first translation into English: Moses Gaster, trans., *The Asatir: The Samaritan Book of the "Secrets of Moses"* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1927), 242–56, versos. The chapter and verse divisions are Gaster's. The Samaritans also provided Gaster with a copy of an undated *pitron* or commentary on the *Asatir*, written in Arabic, the English translation of which is on pages 223–35, rectos, of Gaster's book. We include the commentary version of the *Asatir* in the right-hand column. We have removed the diacritics because they do not follow current usage.

### Chapter 5

16. And he [Nimrod]<sup>1</sup> did unto Arpachshad<sup>2</sup> just as Pharaoh did afterwards to the Hebrews, for he saw in the Book of Signs that there would come from Arphachshad a mighty man who would smite all the worshippers and destroy all the idols.<sup>3</sup>

And Nimrod did unto Arpachshad just as Pharaoh did unto the Hebrews. For at that time they had seen in the Book of Signs which had been handed down to them, that there would arise a man who would smite everyone who worshipped idols, and he would destroy them.

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1. Our addition.  
2. Biblical Arphaxad.  
3. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

17. And he gathered all the wise men that were among Japhet<sup>4</sup> and Ham, and he asked them that they should inform him when this one would be born.

18. [So they told him] within forty days the mother will be pregnant with him.

19. And Nimrod commanded that the sons of Arphachshad should not be allowed to approach their wives for forty days.

20. And he commanded that they should imprison the men in one place and the women in another place.

21. And after thirty days a sign was seen in the land of Shinear,<sup>5</sup> a pillar of fire.

22. And all the men were frightened with a great fear and they prayed in the houses of worship and they dwelt outside in the open field for three days and three nights.

23. And Terah went and approached his wife.

24. And when he had approached her, the sign was removed and they said: "The child will be born."

25. And Nimrod commanded that each man should return to his place.

And he gathered together all the wise men from the children of Ham and the children of Japhet. And he asked of them, that they should tell him of the day of the birth of that man; and they told him that within forty days his mother would become pregnant with him. Then the Nimrod commanded that every man of all the sons of Arpachshad should keep himself separated from his wife for the number of forty days. And they imprisoned all the men in one place and the women in another place separately.

And it came to pass after thirty of the above mentioned days that the Lord revealed a sign in the land of Shinear, and it was a pillar of fire which came down from heaven to earth. And all the inhabitants thereof were frightened with a great fear, and they made prayers in the house of their worship unto the idols, and they went out unto a field outside the town and they remained there three days, and the name (of God)—may He be exalted—gave them work and they forgot the imprisoned ones. And in that time the master Terah went by a vision of the Lord and slept with his wife, and she conceived. And when Terah had slept with his wife, he returned to the prison and the sign was lifted.

And when the wizards saw that the sign had been lifted, they said: "The child hath reached the womb of its mother"; and they told Nimrod so. And he said, "Bring out all the prisoners unto their places." And they did so, and every man went to his place as he had commanded.

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4. Biblical Japheth.

5. Biblical Shinar, where the tower of Babel was built.

26. And after that Abraham was born with mighty glory.

27. And Nimrod took him and threw him into the fire<sup>6</sup> because he has [*sic*] said “The world has a God.”<sup>7</sup>

28. And when Haran was wroth with Abraham and said he was a wizard the fire came out and consumed him “and Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in Ur Kasdim.”<sup>9</sup> After seven years he (Nimrod) died.

After this was born our master Abraham—on whom be peace—by the might of the All-powerful. And it came to pass when he grew up that Nimrod took him and placed him under his command, and he was among those who stood before him, to wait on him. And after that, he took him and cast him into the fire, but the fire could not burn our master Abraham, for God protected him, for the sake of the master of the flesh who was to come out of his loins, and also for his great righteousness. Behold what God said unto him, “I am the Lord, who brought you out from Ur (furnace) Kasdim.”<sup>8</sup>

When he saw that the fire had no power over him, Haran said, “He is a great wizard and his witchcraft prevents the fire from burning him.” Then the fire came out and consumed Haran. See what is said about him in the Holy Law, “And Haran died before the face of his father Terah in the land of his birth, Ur Kasdim!” And when Nimrod and his company saw that the fire had come forth and had consumed Haran, the fear of God came upon them, and they were frightened lest it should come out upon them and consume them also. And the Nimrod commanded that the master Abraham should come out—Praised be He, Who performeth signs and wonders, the One Who keepeth the Covenant and the mercy to those who love Him!

6. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3. In another place, the *Pitron*, speaking of Terah’s imprisonment by Nimrod, also speaks of “his son Abraham, whom they threw into the fire.” Gaster, *The Asatir*, 221.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:11–12.

8. Citing Genesis 11:28. The Hebrew term is rendered “Ur of the Chaldees” in the KJV, but is understood in Jewish tradition to be “the fire of the Chaldeans.” Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

9. Cf. Abraham 2:1.

**Chapter 6**

1. With him came to an end the Kingdom of Ham: with a Nimrod it began and with a Nimrod it came to an end.

2. And from the first Nimrod to the second Nimrod there were one thousand and twenty years.

3. The first Nimrod was from Kush<sup>10</sup> and the second Nimrod was from the Kaftorim.

4. And when Nimrod had died Terah started to go into the land of Canaan to establish his kingdom.

5. His son Nahor dwelt with Kedar Laomer<sup>13</sup> and Tidal king of Goyim<sup>14</sup> and they robbed him of his kingdom.

6. And Kedar Laomer went on plundering and they sent and imprisoned Terah in Haran.

7. Then Abraham came out to meet Kedar Laomer in Ur Kasdim.

8. There God called him and he came to the land of Canaan and they dwelt in the plain of Glory and he built up the altar of Adam and Noah.

And it came to pass seven years after this occurrence that the Nimrod died and with him was completed the number of the kings, who reigned from the children of Ham. Through a Nimrod it began and through a Nimrod it came to an end, and from the first Nimrod to the second Nimrod were 1,020 years. The first Nimrod was from Kush and the second Nimrod was from the Kaftorites.<sup>11</sup>

And it came to pass after the death of Nimrod that Terah went out to go into the land of Canaan, which was outside the kingdom of Nimrod, for he was afraid lest other Nimrodim<sup>12</sup> would appear and do unto him as had done the above mentioned Nimrod. And his son Nahor dwelt with Kedar Laomer and Tidhal, King of Goyim. And it came to pass when they heard of the going out of Terah, they sent men against him to prevent him from going away, and Kedar Laomer went to plunder and kept Terah prisoner in Haran.

And Abraham went out to meet Kedar Laomer in Ur Kasdim and to prostrate himself before him [with the request] that they should release his father, Terah, from the prison. There God called him and commanded him to go out from Haran. And he came unto the land of Canaan, and Lot the son of his brother with him, and they dwelt in Elon Moreh. And now behold, O my brother, how great was the obedience of our master Abraham to his God, for he

10. Biblical Cush.

11. Biblical Caphtorim, associated with Mizraim, eponymous ancestor of the Egyptians in Genesis 10:13–14.

12. I.e., “Nimrods” (plural form).

13. Biblical Chedorlaomer. In Jewish tradition, this is another name for Nimrod.

14. Biblical Tidal, king of nations. The Hebrew term *goyim* means “nations” or “peoples.”

went from his land, and from his birthplace, and he forsook his father in the house of prison, for he was afraid to rebel against the command of God.

(Happy are those who are beloved of God, and woe unto them who hate God!) And from this thing it is known that Terah died and Abraham, his son, was not with him, and it is said that his son Nahor buried him. And this is proved by his saying—may He be exalted—“And Terah died in Haran.” And do not consider his saying, “And Terah died in Haran,” before the saying, “Get thee from thy land, from thy birthplace,” because the history begins with the second section concerning Abraham, in order that it should be set down without interruption. And there are a large number of similar statements (i.e., not in chronological order) in the Torah. And therein is no contradiction according [to]<sup>15</sup> the men of knowledge and understanding.

And Abraham dwelt in Elon Moreh, being shown thither by God—may He be exalted!—for He said unto him; “Go unto the land which I will show thee.” And the ‘Showing’ meant that he should reach Elon Moreh, for he knew that this was the place to be sought for. And he rebuilt the altar of his forefathers Adam and Noah. And after that he went up Mount Garizim to the East of Bethel. And he bowed down and prostrated himself there before God. And he worshipped and went down.

And it came to pass after these things that there was a famine in the land of Canaan, and Abraham and Lot, the son of his brother, journeyed with him from Elon Moreh, and they went down to Egypt.

9. And afterwards he went up Mount Garizim to the east of Bethel.

10. And then he started going down to Egypt.

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15. Our insertion.

11. And when he reached the boundaries of Egypt, shakings seized all the idols and trembling fell upon all the dwellers in houses of worship.<sup>16</sup>

12. For Abraham dwelt in Rifon (field?) close to Tks (border?) of Egypt which is called Alrif,<sup>17</sup> and they came to a palmgrove in the valley.

13. And there they (the Egyptians) saw Sarah and the women praised her to their husbands and the men to Pharaoh and she was taken to the house of Pharaoh. And to Abraham he did good for her sake.

14. And when Sarah was staying in the palace of Pharaoh, many wonders were seen.

15. And the princes began to be plagued privily and openly and Pharaoh became like a stone as one who has been smitten by sorcery.

16. And they said "Let there not be left out any magician or sorcerer."

17. And all the magicians and soothsayers gathered together and they were in great tribulation.

And when they reached the boundary of Egypt, there was a great shaking in all the houses of worship which were in Egypt. And all the dwellers of the houses of worship were frightened.

And Abraham encamped in a place called Hrif. And it was in those many days that the women of Egypt went out into the field to the place Hrif. And they found Sarai the wife of Abraham, and they saw that she was of a beautiful face and of a beautiful countenance. And it came to pass that when they returned from the field in the evening, they praised her before their husbands, until the word reached the minister of Pharaoh, who praised her unto him. And it came to pass when he (Pharaoh) heard the report about her, that he brought her into his house and he took her. And Abraham went with her but he could not do anything. And Pharaoh gave him many gifts and was kind to him for the sake of Sarai and Abraham went out from Pharaoh with a broken heart and a weeping eye. And he prayed unto God to save his wife Sarah from the hand of Pharaoh; and God hearkened to his prayer, and God plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues. And the plague was on the privy parts and Pharaoh was like a stone.

And he called all the wizards of Egypt and its wise men and he gathered them together and there was among them a wizard

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16. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

17. Perhaps modern Al-Arish, on what was known biblically as "the river of Egypt." Date palms are still found in the region.

18. And there was among them a sorcerer called Turts who had learned the Book of Signs in Hanohiah.

19. And he was wroth and said "He who worships the God of the whole world is here, and all this distress is for his sake."

20. And when Abraham heard mention of the God of the whole world, then he quickly turned with prayers as towards heaven.

21. Then they were freed (from the plague) and the whole palace was lit up by the sight of the glory of the face of Sarah and there (fell) upon them great fear.

22. Then it became known that Sarah was the wife of Abraham, and Pharaoh's tongue was set free and he began to speak and Abraham proclaimed and prayed for the loosening of the bonds.

23. And this is the first proclamation (of faith) for Abraham said: "O, Lord! God of heaven and Earth, all merciful, be merciful."

24. And the house(hold) of Pharaoh began to be healed and all the houses of

and his name was Turts, who had studied in the Book of Signs. He had learned that book in from [*sic*] Enoch, the son of Kain, and he strengthened himself in Hanohia and said, "There is in this place a woman, who is a faithful one, believing in God, and all these visitations [are]<sup>18</sup> for her sake."

And when our master Abraham—on whom be peace—heard what had happened to Pharaoh and to his house, he rose up and lifted up his face unto heaven and praised God, and he thanked Him and he sanctified Him for all the good He had done him, in that He had preserved unto him Sarai his wife from defilement.

Then it became true and known unto them that this had come through the evil deeds which had been done by Pharaoh. And no man could look on Sarah and no one could see her face. On her face the light was shining strongly. This is proved by his saying, "And they were freed (i.e. from the plague) and they saw that the whole palace was lit up from the appearance of the face of Sarah, and there was great fear." And thereby it became known that Sarah was the wife of Abraham. And Pharaoh begged relief of him, and gave back his wife Sarah, and he went away in rejoicing and in peace, with the innocence of his wife. And he stood before God and prayed for Pharaoh and for his house. This is the first prayer which our master Abraham prayed. And this is the whole of what he said in his prayer, "O Lord, the God of Heaven and the God of the earth, All Merciful, be merciful." And God healed Pharaoh and his house, and then Pharaoh believed in the truth of the faith of Abraham, since

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18. We have replaced the word *one* here.

worship were destroyed and the objects of worship in them fell down and could not be raised up.<sup>19</sup>

25. And the magician Turts went up from there to Hebron.

26. And Pharaoh appointed men, and he sent him (Abraham) away and his wife and Lot who was with him.

his prayer was received and his God was the God of Gods and the Lord of Lords, and He performed wonders for Abraham's sake. And he knew that his prayer before the idols had not cured him from the plague which he had, but that only the prayer of Abraham to his God had cured him. At that time he commanded the destruction of the houses wherein the idols were, and the breaking of the idols and the destruction of all the pillars, and he commanded that those who worshipped them should be killed,<sup>20</sup> as there was no use for them, and whoever prostrated himself before them, became worthless in this world and a sinner at the end of days. And all this is made evident from his word in the Asatir. "And all the houses of worship were destroyed and all those things (i.e., the idols) before which people prostrated themselves fell down and could not be raised up."

And the wizard Turts went up from there, when he saw what Pharaoh had done to the houses of worship and to the idols and to the pillars; for he could not stay in Egypt any longer. And he went up thence and he went to Hebron.

And afterwards Pharaoh commanded men from among his people and he said unto them that they should go with Abraham and lead him to the place which he would choose. They were not to forsake him and anyone who would do anything to him or to his wife should surely die. And they did as Pharaoh commanded them and they came with him and with Lot, his brother's son, with their flocks and with everything which they possessed, until they

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19. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

20. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

27. And they came to the place of the first altar and they raised it up again. And he brought thankofferings and praise offerings.

reached Elon Moreh, the place of the first altar. And Abraham built up the above mentioned altar, and he brought up sacrifices unto God, who had saved him from the hand of the Egyptians. And Abraham and Lot dwelt in the land of Canaan one year.

## EXTRACTS FROM VETTIUS VALENS

Vettius Valens (A.D. 102–52) of Antioch wrote a nine-book treatise on astrology (which at the time was identical with astronomy). His treatise is the major collection of extant Greek horoscopes other than individual papyri containing such. Heavily used during the Middle Ages, his work has survived in many manuscripts. The text was first published in 1532. Like Firmicus Maternus (below), Vettius Valens attributes some of his information to books Abraham wrote. This previously unpublished translation from the Greek was made by John Gee, from *Vettii Valentis Antiocheni anthologiarum libri novem*, ed. David Pingree (Leipzig: Teubner, 1986), 91, 92.

### *Anthologiae 2.28.3*

The most wonderful Abraham showed us in his books about this subject,<sup>1</sup> clarifying the explanations of others and his own, discovering and testing other things, especially concerning the beginnings of journeys abroad, which have these features [i.e., when is the most auspicious time to begin a journey abroad].

### *Anthologiae 2.29.1–6*

The lot concerning a foreign place is calculated from Saturn to Mars, and the like by horoscope. On the one hand, these visible objects make the beginning [of the journey] propitious; on the other hand, some times and seasons, journeyings abroad will be of such beginnings that the pattern declared by Abraham makes clear. We have augmented the things which have been preserved from him down to me. Let no one who chances upon our writings censure us if we make no mention of the labors and traditions of others as some have—we witness before men [that they have]. Now, we come to the matter at hand.

When separating the times of activities, according to Abraham, which are divided from the fate [spirit]—for he divides it so—wherever the lot of the fate [spirit] falls upon the birth,<sup>2</sup> look at the lord [spirit] of the zodiacal sign where the lot is found, how many years the smallest circle takes, and divide these into the twelve zodiacal signs, who making the beginning of the division from that same spirit according to the following zodia-

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:31.

2. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.

cal signs. Then when its circle is complete, look again at the lord of the spirit of the following zodiacal sign, how many years the circle takes, and divide that likewise; and the fortune lies in the following if it has a year of life.<sup>3</sup>

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

## EXTRACTS FROM FIRMICUS MATERNUS

Firmicus Maternus (fl. A.D. 334–37) was born to an aristocratic family in Syracuse. He wrote the longest astrological/astronomical treatise in Latin known. Later he converted to Christianity and wrote a treatise advocating the eradication of all other religions. Here we quote his astrological treatise because he claims to base his information on Abraham's writings. This previously unpublished translation from the Latin was made by John Gee from *Iulii Firmici Materni Matheseos libri VIII*, ed. W. Kroll and F. Skutsch (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1968), 1:196, 238, 239, 242; 2:287–93. All angle brackets (<>) are in the edited Latin text.

### ***Mathesis 4 Proem 5***

Everything therefore which Mercury passed down to Aesculapius<sup>1</sup> which Petosiris and Nechepso explained and which Abraham, Orpheus, and Critodemus wrote,<sup>2</sup> and all the others who knew this art, being equally surveyed, collected and compared for various contrary statements, in these books we reveal the divine science<sup>3</sup> to all Romans.

### ***Mathesis 4.17.2***

Next, everything which we will explain, when we come to the interpretation of the barbaric sphere;<sup>4</sup> all these therefore that divine Abraham and most wise Achilles tried to discover by most reliable reasoning.

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1. Mercury is a translation of the Greek Hermes, which is in turn a translation of the Egyptian Thoth, the Egyptian god of knowledge and source of all learning. Aesculapius is a translation from Greek Asklepios, which in turn refers to the Egyptian Imhotep/Imouthes. Imhotep was a Third Dynasty Egyptian physician and official and the architect of the Step Pyramid at Saqqara. In later Egyptian times, Imhotep was deified and worshiped. Greeks who settled in Egypt adopted the Egyptian religion (though they used Greek names for the Egyptian deities) and in turn passed it on to the Romans. Astronomical and Hermetic texts often refer back to this story of the origin of their science.
  2. Cf. Abraham 1:31.
  3. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.
  4. Ibid.

**Mathesis 4.17.5**

This place shows the native land [or the four sides of this place] with easy calculation. It is called, however, just as Abraham designated,<sup>5</sup> the place of the moon [i.e., the region of the sky where the moon predominates].<sup>6</sup>

**Mathesis 4.18.1**

We have described the place of fate [spirit]<sup>7</sup> by this method, which therefore we insert into this book, because Abraham showed by similar reasoning<sup>8</sup> that this is the place of the sun and was unequal, so that the place of the sun was separate from the locus of the moon. This place is described by this method: in the coming day, you distribute all the gathered parts of all the constellations [zodiacal signs]<sup>9</sup> from the region of the sun to the region of the moon, starting from the horoscope through the constellations in order, and in whichever constellation the last part falls, that shows you the region of the fate [spirit].

**Mathesis 8.3.5–8.4.14**

3.5 Therefore in order for me to show this<sup>10</sup> to you, not by argument but the thing itself, we have given that tractate excerpted from the books of Abraham,<sup>11</sup> so that this our discourse, which we have said, is indicated to you by an obvious interpretation.<sup>12</sup>

4.1. [The parts of Aries.]<sup>13</sup> Now I will take care to indicate to you which parts in which signs by the parts you seek. Then all thirty parts are divided through all the bodies of the signs. So that you therefore know where the first part should be and where the second,

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5. Cf. Abraham 1:31.

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

7. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:31.

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

10. “This” refers to the arrangement of the zodiac in the sky and the fact that the signs of the zodiac do not necessarily follow head to tail for the whole zodiac. Firmicus has just discussed the implications of this view for whether zodiacal signs three signs apart could “see” or “hear” each other, depending on whether or not the correct body part of the sign was in the sky at the same time as the other constellation.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:31.

12. The book of Abraham quoted by Firmicus Maternus divides the sky into 360 sections. This division matches the Egyptian calendar of 360 days. The Egyptians divided the circle of the sky into thirty-six decans that correspond to periods of 10 days each. The Egyptian decans are slightly different from the zodiac as they are located south of the zodiac in the sky, but like the zodiac, they are used for the measurement of time, as three decans cover approximately the same arc in the sky as one sign of the zodiac. See Otto Neugebauer and Richard A. Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts* (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1960–69), 1:95–107.

13. The Egyptians divided Aries into three decans: *chontare* (*ḥnt(w)-ḥr(w)*), *chonachre* (*ḥnt(w)-ḥrw*), and *siket* (*s; qd*); Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*, 3:168–70. All three of these are attested in Abraham’s day; *ibid.*, 1:3, 24.

and where others, all this I will show you briefly. First and second parts consist of the horns of Aries, third indeed and fourth and fifth, in the head; sixth indeed and seventh in the face; eighth indeed and ninth and tenth in the mouth; eleventh indeed and twelfth in the chest; thirteenth and fourteenth and fifteenth in all the neck; sixteenth and seventeenth in the heart, eighteenth and nineteenth in the right arm; twentieth and twenty-first and twenty-second <in the left arm>, in the belly indeed twenty-third and twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth; most recently the feet have the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh parts, and in kidneys indeed twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth; in the tail <it has> the thirtieth part. So thirty parts are divided through the whole body of Aries.<sup>14</sup>

4.2. [The parts of Taurus.]<sup>15</sup> The first and second parts in Taurus constitute the horns; the third indeed and fourth and fifth, in all the face, the sixth and seventh in the neck; the eighth and ninth and tenth in the front; the eleventh and twelfth in the heart; the thirteenth indeed and fourteenth in the forearm; the sixteenth and seventeenth are set in the forefeet of Taurus; the eighteenth indeed and nineteenth and twentieth are in the belly; twenty-first in the knee, twenty-second and twenty-third and twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth are located in the rear feet; twenty-sixth indeed and twenty-seventh are in the generative organs of Taurus. In the hip indeed twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth, in the tail indeed is found only the thirtieth part. So through all, the body of Taurus is divided into numbers of parts. But the Barbaric Sphere is made of another ordering of parts.<sup>16</sup>

4.3. [The parts of Gemini.]<sup>17</sup> The first and second parts constitute the head of those twins (Gemini), which are situated toward the eagle; the third indeed and fourth and fifth <are in the face of Gemini; sixth and seventh> are in the heart of Gemini; eighth and ninth and tenth in the chest; eleventh and twelfth in the hands; thirteenth and fourteenth and fifteenth in the feet. In Gemini indeed we find those parts situated in the south. But first we need to know that which this space which is between both twins, sixteenth and seventeenth. Parts eighteenth and nineteenth and twentieth of Gemini are located in the head of the southern twin; in the face, indeed twenty-first and twenty-second and twenty-third, under the belly indeed twenty-fourth, twenty-fifth, and twenty-sixth, in the knees however, twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth, in the feet only the thirtieth.<sup>18</sup>

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

15. The Egyptians divided Taurus into three decans: *choou* (*ḥꜣw*), *ero* (*ꜥrt*), and *rombromare* (*rmn ḥry*); Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*, 3:168–71. Of these, *choou* (*ḥꜣw*) “the thousands” and *rombromare* (*rmn ḥry*) “the upper arm (of Orion)” have translations; *ibid.*, 1:24–25. All three are attested in Abraham’s day; *ibid.*, 1:3, 24–25.

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

17. The Egyptians divided Gemini into three decans: *thosolk* (*ṯs ꜥrq*), *ouare* (*wꜥrt*), and *phouori* (*phꜣwy ḥry*); Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*, 3:168–71. The names have the following meanings: *thosolk* (*ṯs ꜥrq*) “the knot of the belt,” *ouare* (*wꜥrt*) “the leg (of Orion),” and *phouori* (*phꜣwy ḥry*) “the lower end”; *ibid.*, 1:24–25. The first two are attested in some form in Abraham’s day; *ibid.*, 1:3, 24–25.

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

4.4. The parts of Cancer are divided in this manner.<sup>19</sup> The first and second parts of Cancer are located in the head; the third and fourth and fifth in the neck, in the throat indeed sixth and seventh; indeed the three following we find in the eyes. This nebula of Cancer is that of which we frequently speak. Eleventh and twelfth are in the back; but the three following stretch from the stomach to the comb; the three following we find between the forearms of Cancer; but the seven following are located in the right feet of Cancer; but twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh are in the left feet of Cancer; in the last feet indeed are twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth; in the tail only the thirtieth.<sup>20</sup>

4.5. The parts of Leo are divided in this manner.<sup>21</sup> The first and second parts are located in the head of Leo; the three following are divided in all the face and in the nose; three others following are placed in the ears of Leo, in the heart indeed the same number, three in the arms, three in the feet, the two following in the belly, twentieth part indeed and twenty-first and twenty-second we find in the back, in the chest we look for twenty-third and twenty-fourth; the three following remain in the knees; twenty-eighth is in the generative organ of Leo, twenty-ninth in the kidneys; the thirtieth alone is found in the tail.<sup>22</sup>

4.6. The parts of Virgo are divided in this manner.<sup>23</sup> The first and second parts are located in the head of Virgo; the three following parts indeed in the face; sixth indeed and seventh in the hands, the three following indeed <in the spine; in the shoulders indeed eleventh and twelfth; the following> three in order in the chest; sixteenth indeed and seventeenth in the right breast; the three following indeed are located in the right foot; <. . .><sup>24</sup> twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh are located in the left foot, in the kidneys indeed the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth, in the generative organs of the body only the thirtieth.<sup>25</sup>

4.7. The parts of Libra are divided in this manner.<sup>26</sup> The first and second parts are located in the head; the third indeed and fourth and fifth in the left part of the balance; the sixth indeed and seventh are located in the right part of the balance; the eighth <and>

19. The Egyptians divided Cancer into three decans: *sothis* (*spdt*), *sit* (*št*), and *chnoumis* (*knmt*); Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*, 3:168–70. The names mean *sothis* (*spdt*) “Sirius” and *sit* (*št*) “the two tortoises”; *ibid.*, 1:25. All three are attested in Abraham’s day; *ibid.*, 1:3, 25.

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

21. The Egyptians divided Leo into three decans: *charchnoumis* (*ħry ħpd knmt*), *epe* (*ħst ħꜣw*), and *phoupe* (*phwy ħꜣw*); Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*, 3:168–70. All three are attested in Abraham’s day; *ibid.*, 1:3, 25.

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

23. The Egyptians divided Virgo into three decans: *tom* (*tmꜣt*), *ouestebkot* (*wšꜣt bkꜣt*), and *aphoso* (*ipsd*); Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*, 3:168–70. All three are attested in Abraham’s day; *ibid.*, 1:2, 24.

24. The manuscripts here omit the next six parts.

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

26. The Egyptians divided Libra into three decans: *souchoe* (*sbħs*), *ptechout* (*tpy-ħnt*), and *chontare* (*ħnt ħrt*); Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*, 3:168–70. All three are attested in Abraham’s day; *ibid.*, 1:2, 24.

ninth and tenth are located in [. . .];<sup>27</sup> the eleventh and twelfth parts are found in the left part of the yoke; and the three following we find in the right part of the yoke; the sixteenth and seventeenth in the heart of Libra; the four following in order are acknowledged in the right hand of Libra; in the chest are located the twenty-second and twenty-third; the three following are in its kidneys; the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth are spread to the ends of the feet. The rest until the thirtieth are located in the numbers. In this part, that is, in the ends, the earth is said to be brought together.<sup>28</sup>

4.8. The parts of Scorpio are divided in this manner.<sup>29</sup> The first and second parts are located in the head of Scorpio; the next three in the front; the sixth and seventh in the face; the two that follow are set in the back; after [. . .] the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth in the belly;<sup>30</sup> indeed in the right hand are located the three following in order; in the left two; in the right feet indeed the next two are set; in the left feet three; in its sting indeed which is extended toward the Big Dipper are located the last five parts.<sup>31</sup>

4.9. The parts of Sagittarius are divided through its whole body in this manner.<sup>32</sup> In the head of Sagittarius are located the first and second parts; the three following indeed are placed in order in the face; the two which follow the preceding parts are located in the ears of Sagittarius; the three following in order are set in the neck of Sagittarius; the two following indeed in the left hand; three others in the bow; in the feet two, and three others are located in the back; in the belly of the horse two; in the back two feet indeed until the hooves are located the three parts that follow; the twenty-sixth indeed and twenty-seventh are located in the generative organs of Sagittarius; the following two indeed are set in the right hand; only the thirtieth part is located in the tail.<sup>33</sup>

27. The manuscripts here omit the location.

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

29. The Egyptians divided Scorpio into three decans: *stochnene* (*spt ḥnwj*), *sesme* (*sšmw*), and *sisieme* (*s3 sšmw*); Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*, 3:168–70. Only the first two of these names is attested in Abraham's day; *ibid.*, 2:24. The names mean *sesme* (*sšmw*) "guides" and *sisieme* (*s3 sšmw*) "son of the guides"; *ibid.*, 1:24. There was a confusion during the Middle Kingdom between the decan *sšmw* "guides" and *šsmw* Shesmu, the god of the wine press and human sacrifice; *ibid.*, 2:24. See also Mark Ciccarello, "Shesmu the Letopolite," in *Studies in Honor of George R. Hughes*, ed. Janet H. Johnson and Edward F. Wente (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1976), 43–54; cf. Abraham 1:7–20, 30; Abraham Facsimile 1.

30. A lacuna occurs in all manuscripts here. One manuscript has part of the lacuna, which I have inserted here.

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

32. The Egyptians divided Sagittarius into three decans: *reouo* (*ḥry-ib wj3*), *sesme* (*sšmw*), and *komme* (*knmw*); Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*, 3:168–70. All three of these names are attested in Abraham's day; *ibid.*, 1:2, 24. The names mean *reouo* (*ḥry-ib wj3*) "dweller in the solar bark" and *sesme* (*sšmw*) "guides"; *ibid.*, 1:24. There was a confusion during the Middle Kingdom between the decan *sšmw* "guides" and *šsmw* Shesmu, the god of the wine press and human sacrifice; *ibid.*, 24. See also Ciccarello, "Shesmu the Letopolite," 43–54; cf. Abraham 1:7–20, 30, Facsimile 1.

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

4.10. The parts of Capricorn are divided through the whole body in this manner.<sup>34</sup> The first and second parts are located in the horns, the three following in the head; the sixth and seventh are set in the face; the three following in the order are constituted in the ear of Capricorn. In these parts, which are in the ear of Capricorn, if it [the ear] has the moon, it is possible for this to be adorned with the testimony of the benevolent, it makes the ears of men impure, and makes the lips of lustful women polluted. For if women have the moon in this part, they will all be possessed of an immodest life of impurity. The eleventh is located in the heart of Capricorn; the twelfth and thirteenth in the neck; in the shoulder the next two; in the right hand indeed are located the next three in order; the two which follow these in the back, three following in the belly; the four indeed which follow are set in both directions to hide; the last three in order are located in the tail, continuously to the last plume of Capricorn.<sup>35</sup>

4.11. The parts of Aquarius are divided through its whole body in this manner.<sup>36</sup> In its head the first and second parts are located; the three following in the face; the sixth and seventh in the back; the three which are after these in order are located in the chest; in the right hand indeed the eleventh and twelfth are set. The three which are after these are located in the water of Aquarius; sixteen and seventeen are set in the left hand; the two which follow these [. . .]<sup>37</sup> Two others are set in the belly; the three following are scattered through the end of the feet; another three in the kidneys; indeed the last three we find in the vessel of Aquarius.<sup>38</sup>

4.12–13. The parts of Pisces are divided through the whole body in this manner.<sup>39</sup> But we need to know that one fish (Piscis) lies to the south, the other to the north. The first and second parts are located in the ear of the southern fish; the third indeed and fourth and fifth are set in the head of that fish; in the throat two; the three which follow in

34. The Egyptians divided Capricorn into three decans: *smat* (*smd*), *sro* (*srt*), and *isro* (*s3 srt*); Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*, 3:168–70. All three names are attested in Abraham's day; *ibid.*, 1:2, 24. The names mean *sro* (*srt*) "ewe," and *isro* (*s3 srt*) "son of the sheep"; *ibid.*, 1:24. Of these, *sro* appears to the left of Abraham Facsimile 2, figure 6. For commentary, see Marie-Louise Ryhiner, "À propos de trigrammes panthéistes," *Revue d'Égyptologie* 29 (1977): 125–37, and F. Ll. Griffith and Herbert Thompson, *The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden* (London: Grevel, 1904–9), 1:22.

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

36. The Egyptians divided Aquarius into three decans: *ptiau* (*p3 tpy-ꜥ ʒḥwy*), *aeu* (*ʒḥwy*), and *ptebuou* (*p3 tpy-ꜥ b3wy*); Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*, 3:168–70. All the names or variations thereof appear in Abraham's day; *ibid.*, 1:2, 24. The names mean *ptiau* (*p3 tpy-ꜥ ʒḥwy*) "predecessor of the two spirits," *aeu* (*ʒḥwy*) "the two spirits," and *ptebuou* (*p3 tpy-ꜥ b3wy*) "predecessor of the two souls"; *ibid.*, 1:24–25. Of these, *aeu* (*ʒḥwy*) appears on the left in Abraham Facsimile 2, figure 18.

37. The manuscripts are missing this section.

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

39. The Egyptians divided Pisces into three decans: *biou* (*b3wy*), *chontare* (*ḥnt ḥrw*), and *ptibiou* (*p3 tpy ʒ3wy*); Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*, 3:168–70. All these names or variations thereof are attested in Abraham's day; *ibid.*, 1:2, 24. The names mean *biou* (*b3wy*) "the two souls," and *ptibiou* (*p3 tpy ʒ3wy*) "he who is over the scepter"; *ibid.*, 1:24–25. Of these, *biou* (*b3wy*) appears in Abraham Facsimile 2, figure 4.

order are located in the neck; the eleventh indeed and twelfth are found in the end of the spine; indeed, the following three in order are in the back of that fish. The sixteenth and seventeenth and eighteenth we find in the line of Pisces. In that indeed which lies on the north, the nineteenth is set in the head, the three following indeed in the chest; in the neck the three others which follow, in the tail the two latest are located. But the three last parts of Pisces which are between Aries and Pisces are always unseen, being obscured by fog. This is the reason one should have the sun or the moon in that part, without the testimony of benevolent stars, he will be afflicted with either perpetual blindness or bad eyesight.<sup>40</sup>

4.14. From these divisions and parts with the place of faults, and the health, you are able most manifestly and easily to find all of this.

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

## EXTRACTS FROM A FALASHA STORY

The Falasha of Ethiopia are a Jewish group whose origins are thought to predate the development of the oral law of rabbinic Judaism in the first centuries after Christ. They know nothing of this law and continue to live the law of Moses. In recent years, after official recognition by the chief rabbis of Israel, many Falasha have immigrated to the Holy Land. While it is unlikely that the Falasha could have heard tales of Abraham from other Jewish groups, they may have borrowed some from their Christian or Muslim neighbors. Consequently, we cannot know if the story below is indigenous to the Falasha. This story is from a Falasha text called *Tēḥzāza Saḥbat* (Commandment of the Sabbath). The date of the text is uncertain, but the text is probably not older than the fourteenth century; the translation we use is the first in English, made from the original Gēḥz by Wolf Leslau, *Falasha Anthology* (New Haven: Yale, 1951), 26–28. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. Then Thou didst appear to Abraham, and Thou didst love him until the end of the world, him and you [?], to bless him and to multiply his seed as the stars of the Heaven and as the sands on the sea(shore). From among his seed Thou hast established a covenant with Isaac who purified his body from the spot of sin; and with Jacob, His beloved. As God brought forth Noah [from the ark] with His advice and wisdom at the time of the flood, so He brought forth Abraham from the country of the Chaldeans.<sup>1</sup>

2. The wise of Canaan said (to Nimrod): “Behold, Terah will beget a son who will pervert and destroy the precepts of Canaan.” And while they divined, Terah begat a son and called him Abraham. He put him into a cavern of his house for seven years, and then he let him go out one night. Abraham saw the moon and the stars and said: “They shall be my masters, and I shall worship them.” The second night he saw the moon and worshiped it. When the moon set and it became dark Abraham said: “Neither the moon nor the stars are gods.” Terah again put him into the cave. His heart<sup>2</sup> was boiling, and he went out the third day at noon. He saw the sun, worshiped it, and said: “The sun will be my God, its light is the brightest.” But when the sun set it became dark and the sun disappeared. Abraham turned his face toward the east and said: “Be my God, Thou who

1. Cf. Abraham 1:19.

2. Translator’s note: “The text has ‘intelligence.’”

hast created everything, and I shall not worship another, but Him who has created the sun and the moon."<sup>3</sup>

3. Abraham saw all the idols which Terah had made.<sup>4</sup> He took an ax and clove the carved idols and broke them to pieces<sup>5</sup> and laid the ax on the neck of one of them. When Terah saw the broken idols he shouted and said: "Who [did] all this?" They said to him: "We know not." Terah said: "I know who did this," and he called Abraham and said to him: "Why hast thou broken my idols?" Abraham said: "It was not I but this great god who broke them because of jealousy. Behold, the ax is on his neck. And thou worshipest him!" Terah said: "This one cannot break (anything)." [Abraham said]: "Why then dost thou worship him? A man kills even his son or his father through submission to this idol and zeal for it."<sup>6</sup> Terah said: "Verily, I know that my son will abolish the religion of Canaan." He sent him to Nimrod,<sup>7</sup> the king of Canaan,<sup>8</sup> and he said to him: "This is how my son acts, he hates my idols and has broken them." Nimrod said to him: "Is it true, what he has said? Come, let us worship this idol." Abraham refused [and said]: "My God is in Heaven. It is He who has created the sun, the moon, the heavens, and the earth. He who appoints thee king is in Heaven." Nimrod said: "I shall ascend into Heaven and kill him whom thou callest thy God."<sup>9</sup> He took arrows and a bow, rode upon the vultures, put a piece of meat upon their heads so that he would not miss the way—this was a remedy—and they ascended straight before them. When he reached the clouds an eagle saw the meat above his head. Nimrod pierced the eagle above his head [with an arrow]. He then collected the arrows, descended to Abraham and said to him: "Behold the blood of God, I killed Him." Abraham said: "My God dies not. It is He who causes to die."<sup>10</sup> Nimrod said: "Will a rebellious son come from the seed of Terah?" They said: "We heard it."

4. Nimrod sent a thousand camels into the field to cleave trees, had a pit [?] dug on a hill [?], and the trees thrown upon it, and spread everything that the thousand [camels] carried and set it on fire. He said: "O Abraham, let us worship this idol, or perhaps thou dost not want to?" Abraham was obstinate and refused. Nimrod said to him: "I shall surely cast [thee] into the oven and burn thee in the flames." Abraham heeded it not and would not change his mind and worship the idol. He threw him into the flames.<sup>11</sup> God said to [Gabriel]: "Go down and hit the flames of fire."<sup>12</sup> And he became water that quenched

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

4. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 30.

8. According to Genesis 10:8, Nimrod was son of Canaan's brother Cush. But cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

9. The translator indicates that the story of Nimrod's attempt to kill God probably derives from Arabic sources.

10. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:39.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 11–12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

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

the fire [?] of the oven. From that day until today it is called Kaladewon.<sup>13</sup> (It recalls) what God had said to the children of Israel: "It is I who brought you forth<sup>14</sup> from Egypt."

5. He named him Abraham.<sup>15</sup> Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob. The children of Israel, from among the Chaldeans, drank that flame which became water and dried not up, nor ceased from then until now.

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13. Probably Chaldea.

14. Translator's note: "The text has 'who lets you come.'"

15. Probably a reference to Genesis 17:4.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE STORY OF QIQEL AND THE DEATH OF YAHYA

The Mandaeans are a sect located in southern Iraq and Iran; they are neither Jewish, Christian, nor Muslim. They call themselves the *Naṣurai* (Nazarenes) and claim that John the Baptist is the founder of their religion and that they are descendants of his disciples. The Mandaean account known as *The Story of Qiqel and the Death of Yahya* deals with the ascension of Qiqel and the death of John the Baptist (Yahya). In the account of Qiqel, Abraham appears as a Dervish (*darwish*) named Bahram. The story bears some resemblance to Christian, Jewish, and Muslim traditions about Abraham. The account used here is taken from E. S. Drower, who collected oral traditions and stories in her book *The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran* (1937; reprint, Leiden: Brill, 1962), 274–78. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. They [Qiqel and the as-yet-unnamed *darwish*]<sup>1</sup> saw many visions. They saw a vision of Liwet Qadeshta (Venus the Sacred); they saw the likeness of Shamish and Sin,<sup>2</sup> and the head of ʿUr which is lifted towards Awathur, and the *ʿuthri* [angels] who are with the stars.<sup>3</sup> They saw them in the clay room, from the openings.

2. And after that they rose and collected some of the Nasurai and Mandai who had been scattered in the district and they taught them. Ten men, ten pious men, they brought to be of their fellowship. And they made an image of him whom they had seen in the sky—of him at whom they had gazed through the opening. They made images of them all in stone,<sup>4</sup> of Nirigh,<sup>5</sup> of Bel,<sup>6</sup> of Liwet and Sin, and this last, of the moon, had seven heads branching out like a tree.<sup>7</sup> Of Shamish, the sun, they also made an image, but they

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1. This and the next bracketed material are our additions.

2. Shamash and Sin are the Mesopotamian gods of the sun and the moon.

3. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

5. Evidently the Mesopotamian god Nergal.

6. Bel or Marduk was the god of Babylon.

7. The seven-branched tree of life is known from ancient Mesopotamian iconography. It is related to the seven-branched “candlestick” or menorah of the tabernacle of Moses.

were unable to make it aright, for he is all light, many-eyed, of various appearances, of different forms which turn and wheel and radiate. But they made an image of a person sitting, of extreme beauty, like one form of Shamish. When one sees Shamish in this form, a sweet wind breathes upon one, and one swoons away because of its great loveliness. All the images which were made and worshipped later in that place had their origin in the images which these two made.<sup>8</sup>

3. The name of that *darwish* was Bahram, and he had a special secret knowledge which he imparted to his pupils. When they knew it, they might be thrown into fire, and they would not burn, and into water, and they would not drown, nor would a sword eat them, for, if a man drew a sword against them it was he who fell, not they. Such power came from them that it repulsed the sword. Their place was in the north—somewhere near Damascus, Jerusalem, and Egypt.<sup>9</sup> . . .

4. But of these *darawish*,<sup>10</sup> Bahram, Qiqel, and their brethren. Once a tribe, a people, came upon them and asked, “Who are ye?”

5. They replied, “We are darawish who have settled here.”

6. They said, “Darawish! What is your occupation?”

7. They answered, “We till the ground, and harvest and pray. That is all.” For they had no wives. They had become learned in the knowledge of those who travel in arks (i.e. the planets)<sup>11</sup> and had acquired knowledge of their speech, for all the stars talk in Mandaean. (Each star is far from the other and has a great world attached to it. But one star sees its fellows from afar off, perfectly, and they talk, one with another, through space.<sup>12</sup> . . .)

8. The strange tribe said to the darawish, “Teach us your knowledge, or we shall kill you!”

9. They denied the possession of knowledge.

10. The people and their leader rose and made a huge fire and said, “Bring them here and throw them on the fire!”

11. They threw them on the fire, but the darawish began to walk about in the fire and were not burnt. Then they threw more of them into the fire, but they did not burn: they walked in the fire.<sup>13</sup>

12. The leader gazed, and he thought he saw a light descending from the sky which turned about each one of them, so that the fire could not touch them; and a radiance shone about them. These men could not be killed for their power was from God. Qiqel smiled at their king from the midst of the fire.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

9. Abraham had lived in all three places.

10. Plural form of *darwish*.

11. In ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, the gods are depicted seated in celestial boats.

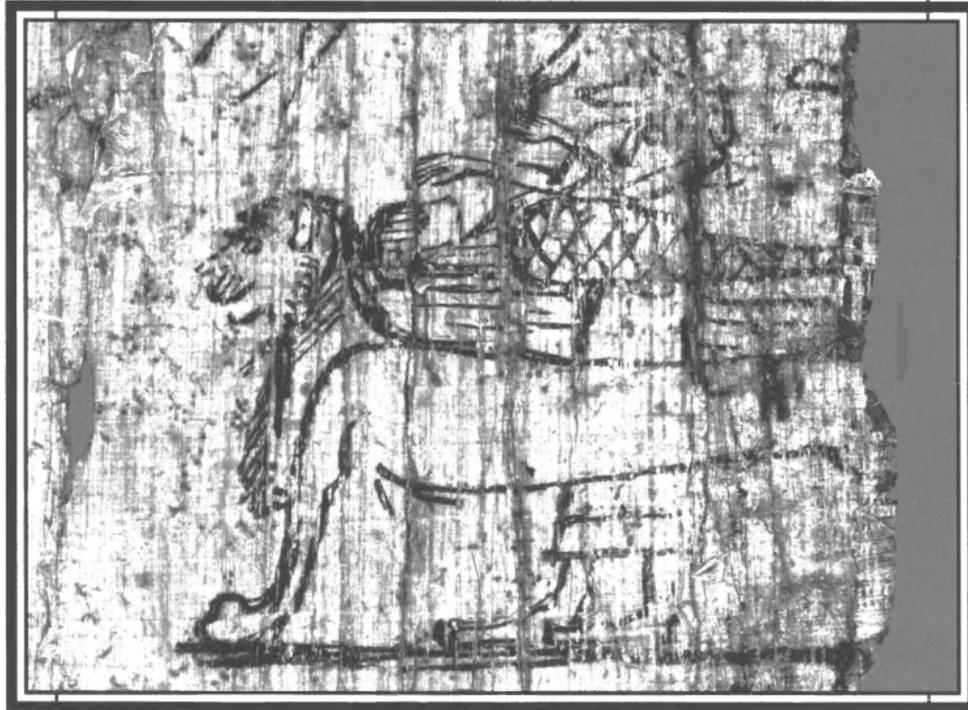
12. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18.

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



# APPENDICES

SECTION 6





## Appendix A

# EXCERPTS FROM THE THEBAN CACHE AND OTHER EGYPTIAN TEXTS

Jews began to settle in Egypt soon after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. (see Jeremiah 43). More Jews were brought into Egypt during the Persian period to serve as mercenaries, and they even built a temple at Elephantine. These immigrant Jews are the most likely source from which Egyptian priests learned about the Jewish religion. One group of thirteen papyri that comes from an Egyptian temple archive from Thebes shows the adoption of Jewish, and later, Christian practices. This group of papyri containing ritual and alchemical texts was found together and purchased by Giovanni d'Anastasi. Sold to various museums, the papyri have only recently been identified as an archive of an Egyptian priest living in the area of Thebes.<sup>1</sup> The cache has been reconstructed as containing the following documents (those quoted in this collection are marked with an asterisk):

P. Berol. inv. 5025 = PGM I

P. Berol. inv. 5026 = PGM II

\*P. Bibliothèque Nationale Suppl. Gr. 574 = PGM IV

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1. For an overview of the papyri and the issues surrounding them and the Book of Abraham, see John Gee, "Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7/1 (1995): 19–84. For similar, independent views of the papyri and the issues surrounding them, see Robert K. Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire: The Demotic Spells and their Religious Context," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, II.18.5 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 3333–79; William M. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.18.5 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 3380–684.

P. British Museum inv. 10588 = *PDM* Supplement

P. Holmiensis = *PGM* Va

\*P. Leiden I 384 = *PGM* XII

P. Leiden I 395 = *PGM* XIII

P. Leiden I 397

P. Leiden I 398

\*P. London 46 = *PGM* V

\*P. London Demotic 10070 + P. Leiden I 383 = *PGM* XIV = *PDM* xiv

P. Louvre E3229

Some background to the Egyptian practice of adopting Jewish religious figures and practices is found in the writings of the decidedly hostile Christian father Origen, who lived in Egypt much of his life. Writing in the early third century, Origen reported that “many of those who call upon the divine powers use ‘the God of Abraham’ in their speeches, even feigning friendship with God’s righteous one through the name because they mention the words ‘the God of Abraham’ although they have not learned who Abraham is. The same must be said about Isaac, and Jacob, and Israel; which names, although confessedly Hebrew, are frequently introduced by those Egyptians who profess to produce some wonderful result by means of their knowledge.”<sup>2</sup> Some of the texts that follow seem to bear out Origen’s claim, but others show more understanding of who Abraham was than Origen was willing to allow. The materials in the Theban Cache have close ties to documents influencing the Jewish *Sefer ha-Razim*. The following selections all mention Abraham in ways that are relevant to the Book of Abraham.

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2. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.22.

## EXCERPTS FROM P. BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE SUPPL. GR. 574 (PGM IV)

P. Bibliothèque Nationale Suppl. Gr. 574 (also known as PGM IV) is a lengthy codex of thirty-six sheets of papyrus written on both sides. Paleographically dated to the early fourth century A.D., the codex contains a series of Egyptian rituals, some of which (like this selection) have been borrowed from other religions and adapted for the ancient Egyptian religion. Selections are in Old Coptic (an early form of Egyptian written in Greek characters) and Greek. Part of the Theban Cache that was originally acquired by Giovanni d'Anastasi, the codex was sold at auction in 1857, after his death. It was first published by D. Charles Wessely in 1888. The following translations are by John Gee made especially for this collection from the Old Coptic and Greek based on D. Charles Wessely, *Les plus anciens monuments du Christianisme écrits sur papyrus*, *Patrologiae Orientalis* 4 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1906) 184–85, lines 1227–39, and Karl Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–31), 1:114, 138–40.

### PGM IV 1227–64

A genuine ritual which casts out demons:

Words recited<sup>3</sup> upon his head:

Throw olive twigs in front of him and while standing behind him say: “Hail God of Abraham; hail god of Isaac; hail god of Jacob, Jesus the Christ, the holy one of the Spirit, the son of the Father who is below (or above) the seven which are under the seven, Iaō Sabaōth [Lord of Hosts], may your power chastise<sup>4</sup> N until you cast out this unclean demon Satan which is in him. I adjure thee, demon whosoever thou art, by this god: Sabarbarbathiōth Sabarbarbathiouth, Sabarbarbathiōniēth Sabarbarbafai.<sup>5</sup> Come out, demon, for I shall bind thee with adamantite chains that cannot be loosed, and I shall deliver thee to the black chaos among those who are destroyed.”

Ritual:

Take seven olive twigs of which six are bound head and tail, one by one with the one the exorcist flays. Hide it!<sup>6</sup> What is done: The one casting out fastens around the individual a phylactery,<sup>7</sup> which the afflicted has put on after casting out the demon, upon a

3. The Greek λόγος λεγόμενος is the equivalent of Egyptian *dd-mdw*.

4. Although it is customary to take Old Coptic σωβε < Egyptian *sbi* “to proceed,” this fits neither the phonology nor the sense. I suggest σωβε < *sb3* “to instruct, beat.”

5. It is customary in texts of this sort to leave undeciphered (presumably Old Coptic) words in transliteration, a practice I have followed here.

6. Greek κρύβε is the equivalent of Egyptian *imn sp-2* in P. Joseph Smith XI 2/3 and is used in a similar context.

7. Several so-called “Books of Breathing” (*šyt n snsn*) alternate that title with *dm<sup>c</sup> n s3* “papyrus of protection” or “phylactery”; see Jan Quaegebeur, “P. Brux. Dem. E. 8258 une lettre de recommandation pour l’au-delà,” in *Studies in Egyptology Presented to Miriam Lichtheim*, ed. Sarah Israelit-Groll (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990), 2:776–95.

tin leaf this: “bōr phōr phorba phor phorba Bes Charin Baubō te Phōr bōrphorba phorbabor baphorba phabraiē phōrba pharba phōrphōr phorba bōphor phorba phorphor phorba bōborborba pamphorba phōrphōr phōrba guard so-and-so.” Also he has another phylactery, upon which is this sign: S.

**PGM IV 2145–2240**

**For an oracle:**<sup>8</sup>

On a laurel leaf, write in myrrh and the blood of someone who died violently<sup>9</sup> and set it [the leaf] under the lamella: “Abraham, thou art he who reveals all things beforehand.<sup>10</sup> May the spirit be equipped.”<sup>11</sup>

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8. The verbal form of the Greek term here, χρηματισμός, is used in Matthew 2:12.

9. For the angry dead who died violently, see Ritner, *Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 180–81.

10. Compare Abraham Facsimile 3.

11. Egyptian *my iry ṣr ʒh* > μαριαφραξ. For the desire to be an equipped spirit, see R. J. Demarée, *The ʒh ikr n R-Stelae: On Ancestor Worship* (Leiden: Terra, 1983), 200–278.

## EXCERPTS FROM P. LOND. 46 (PGM V)

P. Lond. 46 (also known as PGM V) is a lengthy roll of seven sheets of papyrus containing 489 lines of text. Paleographically dated to the early fourth century A.D., the codex contains a series of Egyptian rituals, some of which (like the first selection) have been borrowed from other religions and adapted for the ancient Egyptian religion. Selections are in Old Coptic (an early form of Egyptian written in Greek characters) and Greek. Giovanni d'Anastasi originally acquired the papyrus as part of the Theban Cache but sold it to the British Museum in 1839. Charles Wessely first published the papyrus in 1852. The following translations are those of John Gee, made especially for this collection from the Old Coptic and Greek based on Karl Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–31), 1:196–98.

## PGM V 459–89

**Another:**<sup>12</sup>

“I call upon thee who createdst earth and bones and all flesh and every spirit and who erected the sea and shook the heavens, who separated the light from the darkness, the great mind who lawfully administers the universe. Eternal eye, spirit of spirits, god of gods, the lord of the spirits, the fixed planet,<sup>13</sup> Jehovah,<sup>14</sup> obey my voice. I call upon thee, the leader of the gods, high-thundering Zeus, king Zeus, my lord,<sup>15</sup> lord Jehovah;<sup>16</sup> I am he who calls upon thee, O great God, in Syrian: ‘zaaleēriphphou,’ and thou canst not disobey my voice in Hebrew: ‘Ablanathanabra abrasiloa,’ for I am silthachōouch lailam blasalōth iaō ieō nebouth sabioth arbōth four-lettered Jehovah,<sup>17</sup> iaōth sabaōth patourē zagourē, blessed is my lord, the god of Abraham<sup>18</sup> barbarauō nausiph, high-minded one, eternally living one, who possesses the crown of all the world, son of the Opet who sails to the underworld, soul of souls,<sup>19</sup> Jehovah, dread of dread, god of gods, serpent of serpents,

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12. For this common Egyptian title, see Ritner, “Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire,” 3367; Richard Leipsius, *Das Todtenbuch der Ägypter nach dem hieroglyphischen Papyrus in Turin* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1842), 21–24.
  13. Cf. explanation to Abraham Facsimile 2, figure 5.
  14. A variant of the Egyptian pronunciation of Jehovah.
  15. These two words are in transliterated Hebrew.
  16. Another variant of the Egyptian pronunciation of Jehovah.
  17. Taking ἀβραθιαω for Hebrew ארבע-אותות יהוה.
  18. These words are in Hebrew.
  19. Some hypocephali identify Abraham Facsimile 2, figure 4, with this name. See Berlin 7792, BM EA 36188, Louvre AF 1936, Louvre N 3524, Philadelphia 29-86-436, Torino 16350 2322, Berlin 6900, Birch F, Boston MFA 02.766, BM EA 37330, Hermitage 2971, Louvre N 3526, Torino 16351 2321.

chthethōni is your name,<sup>20</sup> ōēa ē ēōa aōē iaō asial arapi olsō ethmourēsini sem lau lou lou is your name.”<sup>21</sup>

It loosens chains, makes invisible, sends dreams, and gains favor. (The usual, for what you want.)

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20. Egyptian *s3 ip.t sqd r dw3.t b3 b3.w ihw šfy šfy.t ntr ntr.w s3-t3 s3.w-t3 ? rn=k* > σιεφ σακτιετη βιου βιου ιαω σφη σφη νουσι νουσι σιετο σιετο χθεθωνι ριγγ. For the Egyptian vocalization of *sqd* as σακτι, see Jürgen Osing, *Hieratische Papyri aus Tebtunis I, The Carlsberg Papyri 2* (Copenhagen: The Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Near Eastern Studies, 1998), 1:54, 61, 91, 92.

21. Egyptian *rn=k* > ριγγ.

## EXCERPTS FROM P. LEIDEN I 384 (PGM XII)

P. Leiden I 384 (also known as PGM XII and PDM xii) is a lengthy roll, 360 cm long and cut into six pieces. One side of the papyrus contains a lengthy Demotic text paleographically dated to the second century A.D. called "The Myth of the Sun's Eye," thought to be the source of some of Aesop's fables. The other side of the papyrus contains several Egyptian rituals in Demotic, Greek, and Old Coptic (an early form of Egyptian written in Greek characters). Refusal by Greek specialists to acknowledge the integration of the Demotic and Greek material has resulted in the refusal even to number the columns or lines of Demotic text; thus separate column numbers for interspersed Greek and Demotic material have been used, resulting in different column numbers for the same column. Although several editions of the texts have been published, no satisfactory edition of the text exists. The selections here are in Demotic, Old Coptic, and Greek and illustrate well both the unity of the text in various languages and the bilingualism of the scribes and users of the text. The text is structured so that the instructions are in Demotic while the words spoken are in Greek and Old Coptic. The scribe of this text is the same as the scribe of P. Leiden I 383 + P. London 10070 (also included in this collection). Giovanni d'Anastasi originally acquired the papyrus as part of the Theban Cache but sold it to the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden in two batches; the first was sold in 1828, the second in 1830. Selections of the papyrus were published by C. J. C. Reuvens in 1830 but do not include the material cited here, which was first published by Leemans in 1885. John Gee made the following translation from the Demotic, Greek, and Old Coptic based on Janet H. Johnson, "The Demotic Magical Spells of Leiden I 384," *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* 56 (1975): 44, Plate XIII; Robert W. Daniel, *Two Greek Magical Papyri in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden*, *Papyrologica Coloniensia* 19 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991); and Karl Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–31), 2:86. The following text, part of a love ritual, entails a lion couch, a mummy, and Anubis and enjoins that they are to be linked with Abraham. The force of the charm is to make the female object of the ritual lose her virtue (cf. Abraham 1:11). The right-hand edge of the column is missing, resulting in several lacunae, and there is a crack that runs vertically the entire length of the papyrus on the left-hand side of the column of text with some loss of writing along the crack.

## PGM XII 474–95 + PDM xii.135–64

. . . you should bring<sup>22</sup> a sealed . . . of copper . . . this lion, this mummy(?), and this Anubis . . . while they seek . . . black scarab . . . put . . .<sup>23</sup>

22. The aorist tense used in the Demotic here has the sense of customary or habitual action and was typical in ritual instructions; see Janet H. Johnson, *The Demotic Verbal System* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1976), 137–40. The choice of English is an attempt to smooth the awkwardness of the passage.

23. What Janet H. Johnson, "The Demotic Magical Spells of Leiden I 384," *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* 56 (1975): 44, takes as the end of a sign making a line 5 in the text is actually the end of the tail of the lion couch.



“. . . Aidiō ōrich thambitō<sup>24</sup> Abraham who is upon<sup>25</sup> . . . anoienchibiōth bind them<sup>26</sup> and her whole soul, so-and-so [whom so-and-so bore] . . . the body of so-and-so [whom so-and-so bore], I conjure you by the . . . [and] incinerate her,<sup>27</sup> so-and-so, whom [so-and-so bore].”

[Write these] words and this image<sup>28</sup> on a new papyrus.

24. The papyrus has θαμβιτω which could possibly be for Greek θαμβεῖτω “let him be astonished.”

25. Or taking επι[. . .] as Old Coptic “to this [. . .].”

26. Egyptian *mr=w* > μουρου. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

27. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

28. This reconstructed line drawing (twice the original size) of the vignette is placed where the drawing occurs in the papyrus. A photograph of the original is found in the illustration section, following the appendices. The papyrus follows the pattern of the Book of the Dead: preliminary comments, vignette, text, terminal comments. The terminal comments here explain that the text and vignette go together.

EXCERPTS FROM P. LEIDEN I 383 + P. LONDON 10070  
(PDM xiv/PGM XIV)

P. Leiden I 383 (also known as *PGM XIV*, *PDM xiv*, *P. Mag.* and *P. Magical*) is a lengthy roll currently containing sixty-two columns of Egyptian rituals in Demotic, hieratic, Old Coptic, and Greek on both sides of the papyrus. Even so, the initial column is incomplete, so the roll could have been originally longer. The same scribe who wrote this papyrus wrote P. Leiden I 384 (also included in this collection), and his use of hieratic means that he could only have been an Egyptian priest. Giovanni d'Anastasi originally acquired the papyrus as part of the Theban Cache but sold it in two parts, the first to the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden in 1828, the second to the British Museum in 1857. C. J. C. Reuvens used selections from this papyrus (although not the material cited here) in 1830 as part of the decipherment of Demotic. Leemans published a partial copy of the Demotic portion of the manuscript at Leiden in 1839. The first full publication was the three-volume edition of F. Ll. Griffith and Herbert Thompson, published from 1904 to 1909. John Gee made the following translation from the Demotic and Old Coptic based on F. Ll. Griffith and Herbert Thompson, *The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden* (London: Grevel, 1904–9), 2: pl. VIII. The following text is at the end of a ritual for obtaining an oracle by means of a lamp, which takes place inside the temple sanctuary at dawn. The techniques are typical of Egyptian lamp oracles. The use of the names of Jehovah and Abraham are noteworthy, as is the funerary imagery of the spoken portions of the ritual. Bold is used to indicate rubrics (i.e., red ink) on the papyrus.

**PDM xiv 224–31 = P. Mag. 8/4–11**

You should speak with your mouth every time, and you should call out, “I am casting the fury against you, of the one who commands you, of him who swallows you. Cause the darkness to separate from the light before me. O god hohos, cause to be sealed, be satisfied, be satisfied, Jehovah. I never appear without causing awe, soul of souls,<sup>29</sup> Jehovah Ariaha, Ariaha, act for her, while they turn the face of the rebel, four-sided one, Ianian; we act while I initiate the four-sided one. Send me the god in whose hand is the command so that he may tell me the answer to everything about which I inquire here today. Come in this multitude,<sup>30</sup> O fury of Re! O creator who caused creation to come into being, Abraham, the pupil of the *wedjat*-eye,<sup>31</sup> fourfold creator, the great creator, who

29. This epithet is typically applied to Abraham Facsimile 2, figure 4 on hypocephali. See Berlin 7792, BM EA 36188, Louvre AF 1936, Louvre N 3524, Philadelphia 29-86-436, Torino 16350 2322, Berlin 6900, Birch F, Boston MFA 02.766, BM EA 37330, Hermitage 2971, Louvre N 3526, Torino 16351 2321.

30. The Demotic is written *py-ʒ-tʒ*; the Old Coptic gloss reading *πιατου* which could be equated with Coptic *πιατο*, “multitude.”

31. An epithet applied to a deity associated with hypocephali; see Gee, “Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob,” 76–79; cf. Abraham Facsimile 2.

caused creation to be created, great verdant creation. Your real name is Sh[...]noush. Cause an answer to be told me concerning everything about which I inquire here today. Come to me, soul of darkness, son of darkness! Tell me an answer about everything about which I inquire here today, in truth, without telling me a lie. (**Recite the words seven times.**)

## OTHER EGYPTIAN TEXTS

The following, though not part of the Theban Cache acquired by Anastasi, are similar in character and also mention Abraham.

### EXCERPTS FROM P. OSLO I 1

P. Oslo I 1 (also known as PGM XXXVI), is a lengthy roll of 244 cm containing twelve columns of text. Paleographically it dates to the fourth century A.D. It was acquired by Samson Eitrem in 1920 and published by him five years later. The association of Abraham with burning women “because of their virtue” has echoes both in the Book of Abraham (1:11) and in the following Egyptian ritual. John Gee provided this translation based on Karl Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–31), 2:173.

#### PGM XXXVI 295–311

##### **Abduction:**

Fire divination over unburnt sulfur, thus: Taking seven balls of unburnt sulfur, make a fire from vineyard wood. Say this saying for each ball and throw in the fire. This is the saying: “The heaven of heavens opened and the angels of god came down and destroyed the five cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar.<sup>1</sup> A woman who heard the sound turned into a pillar of salt. Thou art the sulfur, which God rained in the midst of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar. Thou art the sulfur that served God—likewise serve me toward So-and-so daughter to So-and-so, and do not allow her to rest nor to catch sleep, until having come she perform the mystery rite of Aphrodite.”<sup>2</sup> Throwing into the fire, say, “If I cast thee into the fire, I adjure thee by the

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1. The papyrus uses the Greek spellings of these words as found in the Septuagint.
  2. In a curious twist, the requirement of the Egyptian text is to punish the woman for *not* doing what Sodom and Gomorrah were punished for doing.

great pap<sup>3</sup> of the heaven,<sup>4</sup> Lord of Hosts, four-lettered Jehovah,<sup>5</sup> Zagourē, Pagourē and by the great Michael, Souriel, Gabriel, Sesengenbarpharangēs, Istraël, Abraham, lead this So-and-so to So-and-so.”

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3. This word is untranslated (not the English word *pap*).

4. Egyptian *t3 p.t* > ταφε.

5. Taking αββαθωω for Hebrew ארבע-אות יהוה.

## EXCERPTS FROM THE PRAYER OF JACOB (PGM XXIIb)

The *Prayer of Jacob* is known from a single papyrus, P. Berlin 13895 (also known as PGM XXIIb), which is paleographically dated to the fourth century A.D. and contains an Egyptian ritual for requesting oracular dreams by means of a lamp (cf. P. Leiden I 383 + P. London 10070 above). The papyrus was acquired in Cairo by W. Schubart in 1926 and was first published in 1831. A translation of the text was included in James H. Charlesworth's *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, but is included here because of its provenance and similarity with other Egyptian ritual compilations. The following translation by John Gee is based on the *editio princeps*, Karl Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–31), 2:148–49.

## PGM XXIIb 1–26

**The Prayer of Jacob:**<sup>6</sup> “Father of the patriarchs, father of all, father of the powers of the world, creator of all things, [. . .], creator of the angels and archangels, the creator of the saving names, I call upon thee, father of all the powers, father of the whole world, and of all the generations and the civilized and uncivilized world, to whom the cherubim are sent, of whom Abraham was blessed in giving the kingdom to him. Hearken to me, O God of all powers, O God of the angels and archangels, king [. . .] . . . leach . . . arōach tou spirit from<sup>7</sup> . . . ō . . . [yr]am<sup>8</sup> tou . . . boach ka . . . th . . . ra . . . chach marirok . . . yram . . . ithth sesoik, he who sits upon the [holy] Mount Sinai; . . . i . . . bo . . . athem . . . [he] who sits upon the sea; . . . ea . . . bl . . . d . . . k . . . e . . . thēs . . . parachthē . . . , he who sits upon the serpent gods; the [god who sit]s [upon the s]un, Jehovah; he who sit[s upon] . . . ta . . . ō . . . i . . . ch; he [who sits] upon the . . . the . . . ma . . . si, abriēl louēl . . . m . . . the bed of the che[r]u[b]i[m] . . . chire . . . oz . . . i . . . forever and ever, god of the fathers,<sup>8</sup> four-lettered Lord<sup>9</sup> [of Hosts], my lord,<sup>10</sup> star . . . [a]nd brileōnai my lord cha . . . aōth the Lord of all. I call upon thee who givest power against the chasms to those above and below, and those beneath the earth;<sup>11</sup> hear him who has this prayer, O Lord, God of the Hebrews, Epagaēl alamn, whose is the eternal power, elōēl souēl. Make straight the one who has this prayer, from the stock of Israel<sup>12</sup> and those favored of thee, O God of gods, who hath the secret name of Sabaoth, . . . i . . . ch, O god of gods, amen, amen, who begettest the snow, above the stars, over the worlds, who also progressest eternally, who

6. Although this is an Egyptian text, James Charlesworth has seen fit to include it among the Old Testament pseudepigrapha; see “Prayer of Jacob” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983–85), 2:715–23.

7. Egyptian *ꜥr-bnr* > αχ αβολ.

8. Taking αβαωθ for Hebrew אבות.

9. Taking αβραθιαωθ as a garbling of Hebrew ארבע-אותות יהוה.

10. Hebrew אדוני > αδωναι.

11. For similar sets of three-tiered worlds, compare Exodus 20:4, Philippians 2:10; Doctrine and Covenants 76; Abraham Facsimile 2.

12. This phrase is also used in Philippians 3:5; cf. Acts 13:26.

makest the fixed and wandering stars to impel all things by thy creation, fill me with wisdom. Strengthen me, lord; fill my heart with good, lord, like an earthly messenger,<sup>13</sup> like one who becomes immortal, like one who has accepted the gift that is from thee, amen, amen." Say seven times towards the north and east.<sup>14</sup> The prayer of Jacob.

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13. Or "terrestrial angel."

14. From Egypt, this would be the direction of Jerusalem.

## EXCERPTS FROM PSI I 29 (PGM XXXV)

PSI I 29 (also known as PGM XXXV) originally came from Oxyrhynchus and is paleographically dated to the fifth century A.D. It was first published in 1912. The following translation by John Gee is based on Karl Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–31), 2:160–62.

### PGM XXXV 1–30

I call upon thee, who sittest upon the Abyss, Buthath. I also call upon him who sits in the first heaven, Marmar. I call upon thee, who sittest in the second heaven, Raphael. I call upon thee, who sittest in the third heaven, Souriel. I call upon thee, who sittest in the fourth heaven, Iphiaph. I call upon thee, who sittest in the fifth heaven, Pitiel. I call upon thee, who sittest in the sixth heaven, Mouriatha.<sup>15</sup>

I call upon thee, who sittest upon the snow, Telze. I call upon thee, Edanoth, who art upon the sea. I call upon thee, Saesechel, who art upon the dragon. I call upon thee, Tabium, who art upon the rivers. I call upon thee, Bimadam. I call upon thee, Chadraoun, who sittest in the midst of Chadrallou, in the midst of the two Cherubim and Seraphim who sing to thee, the lord of all the hosts which are under heaven.

I adjure you all by the god of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that you obey my authority completely, everyone obeying perfectly, and that you remain with me and give me grace and power and victory and strength before all men, small and great, as also gladiators, soldiers and farmers, and women, and maidens, and children, and everyone, quickly, quickly, through the power of Jehovah, and the strength of Sabaoth, and the garments of Elohim, and the might of Adonai, and the crown of Adonai. Give me also grace and victory in the presence of everyone, as the good gift which thou gavest to Albanathanalba and Akramacharamari, and therefore I ask and also adjure you that you give grace and victory and power and spirit on behalf of me, the ruler who bears three crowns, quickly, quickly, for I adjure you, Lord of Hosts (repeated ten times).

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15. Compare Abraham 3:5–19; Abraham Facsimile 3.



## Appendix B

# THE SUFI PHILOSOPHERS AND KOLOB

In an unpublished 1991 paper entitled "'And I saw the Stars:' the Book of Abraham and Ancient Geocentric Astronomy," William J. Hamblin, Daniel C. Peterson, and John Gee drew upon the writings of a couple of Sufi philosophers who compared the heart (Arabic *qalb*) with the throne of God. The significance of the material is that the Arabic word for "heart," *qalb*, is one possible source for the term Kolob, which in Abraham 3:9 is said to be "set nigh unto the throne of God" (see also Abraham Facsimile 2, figure 1 and cf. Abraham 3:16). In this appendix, we reproduce the relevant Sufi text.

### Mullah Sadra

Mulla Sadra is the title by which the Sufi philosopher Sadr al-Din Muhammad al-Shirazi (d. 1641) is best known. The material used here is drawn from his *The Wisdom of the Throne*, using the English translation found in James Winston Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 223–24.

Paradise, likewise, has a universal Reality: It is the Spirit of the Universe and the locus of manifestation of the divine Name "the Merciful," as indicated in His saying—*May He be exalted!—That Day We shall gather the godfearing to the Merciful, as an honored company.*<sup>1</sup> And It has a universal image, which is the supreme *Throne where sits the Merciful.*<sup>2</sup> Its outward form, according to the tradition, is "the Earth of Paradise [which] is the Pedestal [of the Throne], and Its roof is the Throne of the Merciful." Paradise also has Its particular images, which are the hearts of the people of true faith, according to the tradition: "The heart of the man of true faith is the Throne of the Merciful," and "the heart of the man of true faith is the House of God." Finally, It has both universal and particular places where It is manifest and is witnessed (in the soul), which are the "levels" of Paradise and Its "gates."

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1. Citing Qur'an 19:85.

2. Citing Qur'an 20:5.



## Appendix C

# MS HUNTINGTON 388

The following is a transcribed Arabic extract from the MS Huntington 388, Ibn Bishr's *Al-Mubtada'*, which is housed in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Because this text has not yet been published in Arabic, we have felt it necessary to provide this transcription in order to make the text more accessible to the Arabist. In some instances, the script was difficult to read, creating the possibility that some errors may have occurred in this transcription. The folio numbers correspond as closely as possible to the translated portion contained in the Muslim section of this volume. We have no record of the provenance of this manuscript, its dating, or its dimensions. However, it was likely produced in the late Middle Ages.

### **Title**

*Al-Mubtada' al-dunyā wa-qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* (The Beginning of the World and the Stories of the Prophets)

### **Author**

Iṣḥāq Abū Ḥudhayfa ibn Bishr al-Qurashī (d. A.H. 205/A.D. 821)

### **General description:**

*Folia:* 200

*Lines:* 17

*Contents:*

1. Ff. 1a–2b: Table of Contents, Title Page, and Introduction
2. Ff. 2b–18a: Beginning of the Creation (Chapter 1)
3. Ff. 18a–30a: Description of Heaven and Hell (Chapter 2)
4. Ff. 30a–40b: Story of the Creation of the Earth (Chapter 3)
5. Ff. 41a–73a: Story of Adam and Eve (Chapters 4–8)
6. Ff. 73a–78a: Story of Cain and Abel (Chapter 9)

7. Ff. 78a–81b: The Speech of Adam (Chapter 10)
8. Ff. 81b–95b: Story of Enoch (Chapter 11)
9. Ff. 95b–99b: Story of Hārūt and Mārūt (Chapter 12)
10. Ff. 99b–114b: Story of Noah (Chapter 13)
11. F. 114b: Burial of Adam (Chapter 14)
12. Ff. 115a–115b: Story of the Berbers (Chapter 15)
13. Ff. 115b–116b: Story of Ham . . . Son of Iblis (Chapter 16)
14. Ff. 116b–140a: Story of ‘Ad and Hūd (Chapter 17)
15. Ff. 140a–151b: Story of Thamūd and Ṣāliḥ (Chapter 18)
16. Ff. 151b–157a: What the Poets Say (Chapter 19)
17. Ff. 157a–160b: Story of Nimrod Son of Canaan (Chapter 20)
18. Ff. 160b–168a: Story of Abraham (Chapter 21)
19. Ff. 168a–170b: What Happened to Abraham in the Fire
20. Ff. 170b–186b: Story of Dhū al-Qarnayn
21. Ff. 186b–190b: Abraham Travels to Palestine (Chapter 22)
22. Ff. 190b–191b: Announcement of Isaac (Chapter 23)
23. Ff. 191b–203b: Story of Lot (Chapter 24)
24. Ff. 203b–209b: Story of Building of the Ka‘ba (Chapter 25)
25. Ff. 209b–214a: Abraham’s Sacrifice of Isaac (Chapter 26)
26. Ff. 214a–216a: Death of Abraham (Chapter 27)
27. Ff. 216a–218b: Ishmael and Isaac (Chapter 28)
28. Ff. 219a–219b: Graffiti
29. F. 220a: Prayers and Blessings

شأن إبراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم وقصته فكان من قصة إبراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم ونمرود أن نمرود أن نمرود لما أحكم لمن في ملكه وساس الناس وادعوا له ووظفوا أنفسهم على ذلك أخبر نمرود أنه يولد في مملكتك مولود يمتازك في ملك ويكون سلب ملك على يديه قال فدعا خيار قومه ستة رهط لم يترك في الرئاسة والعظمة الشرف أحداً إلا إختار منهم أفضلهم فكانوا ستة وكان سادسهم أزر أبو إبراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم وهو تارح لم ولي كل منهم خصلة من تلك الخصال التي أسس أمر مملكته عليها وصمناها إياه وإرتهن رقبة بها ان هي ضاعت أو فسدت أو تغيرت وقال لهم أيها القوم أنكم خيار [folio 161A] قومي ورؤساهم وعظماؤهم وإني لم أزل منذ أسست أمر ملكي وأهل مملكتي وهممت بما هممت به فيهم أعزكم وأختاركم وأنظر في أموركم فلم يردادوا في رأي إلا قوة وفضلاً على من سواكم وقد دعاني ذلك إلى أن أستعين بكم وأشاوركم وإني قد بنيت لكم أمر الملك والناس على سبع خصال وقد وليت كل واحد منكم خصلة من تلك الخصال نفسه بها مرتته عندني ان هو لم يحكمها أو يحكم أمر أهلها فانطلقوا فاقتروا عليهم فما صار لكل رجل منكم في قرعته فهو وليها وولي أهلها ولنا له عليها وعلى أهلها عون ووريد أني سنت أمر الملك ووظفت الناس على أنه لا يعبد الا الهتي وعلى أنه لا سنة الا سنتي وعلى أنه لا أحداً أولى بنفسه وما له مني وعلى أنه لا أحد أخوف فيهم مني ولا أطوع عندهم مني وعلى أنهم يد واحدة على عددهم وعلى أنهم حولي وعبيدي أحكم فيهم برأي ومحبتي وبعد فقد بلغني أنه يولد في هذا الزمان مولود يكثرني ويخلصني ويرعب عن ملتي ويغلبني ويقهرني وأنا مبايعكم في هذه الخصلة وأنا أنتم جميع أهل مملكي كنفس واحدة في طلبه ومحاربتة وهلاكه فمن ظفر به [folio 161B] فله عندني ما أحتكم وما تمنى فانطلقوا فاقتروا ثم أعلموني ما صار في قرعة كل واحد منكم لكي أعرفه باسمه وأعرف ما صار اليه فلما اقتروا فصار في قرعة أبيه الالهة التي يعبدونها الناس فلا يعبد أحد من الناس صنماً لا الملك ولا غيره الا صنماً عليه طابع أزر أبو إبراهيم فأحكم ذلك وقوى عليه وصار أمينهم في أنفسهم على ذلك لا يعدلون به ولا ينهمونه ولا يرون منه خلفاً ان هو هلك قال وكان ذلك لطفاً من الله عزّ وجل لخليه إبراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم فلما حملت به امه وكانت تسمى أميلة فقالت لابيه أزر لوددت ان قد وضعت ما في بطني فكان غلاماً فحملته أنا وأنت حتى يضعه بين يدي الملك وهو يرى فيتولى دخله أنا وأنت فأشد يديه ورجليه وتشحطه أنت فان الملك اهل ذلك منا في احسانه البنا وايتمانه ايانا وتشريفه ورفته لنا ومتى ما يراك تفعل ذلك قدماه تردد عنده رقعة ومحبة وقربة ومنزلة وعليه كرامة وعنده أمانة ولنا تعظيماً وكان ذلك من أم إبراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم مكيدة وجبله وخديعة خدعت بها زوجها لما تأمل به في نفسها من كتمان إبراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم وبامن علمه إذا هي [folio 162A] ولدته واخفايه فصدقها أزر وامتتها وظن أن الأمر على ما قالت فلما حضر شهرها التي تلد فيه قالت لزوجها اني قد اشفقت من حملي هذا اشفاقاً لم اشفقه من حمل كان قبله وقد خشيت ان يكون فيه منيتي وقد وظنت فيه نفسي على الموت وقد أصبحت أنتظره ولست أدري متى يبعثني وأنا أرغب اليك لحق صحبتي اياك وبملى عليك وتعظيمي لحقك ان تنطلق الى الاله الأعظم الذي يعبده الملك وعظما قومه فتشفع لي بالسلامة واكل امن اليه وتغلف عليه حتى يبلغك اني قد سلمت وخلصت فان الرسل لسحري فيما بيني وبينك وفي حقك وحق حرماتك وصحبتك يسير وكانت ام إبراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم تريد حين تلده وزوجها غائب أن تحفر نفقاً تحت الأرض تغيبه فإذا رجع زوجها من اعتكافه اخبرته انه قد مات ودفن وكانت عنده أمينة مصدقة لا يتهمها ولا يكذبها فانطلق الرجل حيث أمرته فاعتكف اربعين ليلة وولد إبراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم ساعة مضى أبوه وكتمته أمه وتمكنت في أربعين ليلة من كل الذي أرادت من حاجتها لطفاً من الله عزّ وجل لابراهيم وكرامة ونجاة ممن [folio 162B] لداد به الكيد والعداوة وخرج الرسول من أمه الى أبيه لما تجد من الوجع والمشقة حتى إذا فرغت مما أرادت وانصرف اليها زوجها فاخبرته أنها ولدت غلاماً بها عاهة شديدة ثم مات واستحيت ان يطلع الناس على ما به فكتمته من أجل ذلك حتى قبرته فصدقها زوجها وجعلت تختلف الى ابراهيم فتدخل اليه بالعيش وكان جل ما يعيش به اللبن لانه كان لا يولد مولود ذكر إلا ذبح فكانت تستحلب له النساء اللاتي ذبحن أو لادهن فتجد من ذلك ما شات فتسقيه

اللبان النسا فعاش بذلك عيشاً حسناً وصلح عليه خمسة فلما بلغ الطعام فصلته من ذلك اللبن حدثنا اسمعيل بن عيسى عن اسحق قال اخبرني ابن جريح عن مجاهد عن ابن عباس رحمة الله أن ابراهيم كان يشب في اليوم كالجمعة وفي الجمعة كالشهر وفي الشهر كالسنة حدثنا اسمعيل بن عيسى قال قال اسحق وحدثني جوبير عن الضحاك ومقاتل بن سليمان عن سعيد بن جبيرة عن ابن عباس أنه قال كانت ام ابراهيم إذا ابطت على ابراهيم باللبن يمص ابهاميه فكان بسبيل منهما لبناً وعسلاً فكان الله عز وجل يغذيه بذلك ويقال من [folio 163A] هناك يمص الصبي ابهاميه الى اليوم وكان ابراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم سريع الشباب لما أراد الله فلما كان ابن ثلاث عشرة سنة وهو في السرب اخرجته امه منه ثم ابررتة فلم يشعر به أبوه حتى نظر اليه قاعداً في منه فلما رآه قال لامرأته من هذا الغلام الذي اخطاه الذبح فاني اعلم انه لم يولد الا بعد ما أمر الملك بذبح الولدان فكيف خفي فكان هذا الغلام على الطلبة والحفظة حتى بلغ مبلغه هذا فلما هم ان يببطس به قالت له امرأته على رسلك حتى اخبرك خبر هذا الغلام أعلم أنه ابنك الذي ولد لنا ليالي كنت معتكفاً فكتمته عنك في نفق تحت الأرض حتى بلغ هذا المبلغ فقال لها زوجها ما الذي حملك أن خنتني وخنت نفسك وخنت الملك وأنزلت بنا من البلا ما لا قبل لنا به بعد العافية والكرامة ورفع المنزلة على جميع قومنا قالت لا يهملك هذا فان عندي المخرج من ذلك وأنا ضامنة لك أن ترداد به عند الملك كرامة ورفعة وامانة وصحة وإنما فعلت الذي فعلت نظراً الى ولك ولابنك ولعامة الناس ما اضمرت في نفسي يوم كتمت هذا الغلام وقلت اكنمه حتى يكون رجلاً فإن كان هو عدواً للملك وبغيته للذي يطلب قدناه حتى تضعه [folio 163B] في يده ثم قلنا دونك ايها الملك عدوك فقد امكنك الله منه وقطع عنك الهم والحزن فارحم الناس في أولادهم فقد افنيت خولك وأهل مملكتك وان يكن بغيه الملك وعدوه فلم أذبح ابني باطلاً مع ما قد ذبح من الولدان قال لها أبوه ما أظنك إلا صادقة قد اصبت الراي فكيف لنا بان نعلم أهو عدو الملك أو غيره قالت نحبسه ونكتمه ونعرض عليه دين الملك وملته فان هو أجابنا الى ذلك كان رجلاً من الناس وليس عليه قتل وإن عصانا ولم يدخل في ملتنا علمنا علمه واسلمناه للقتل فلما قالت له هذا رضى به ورأى أنه الراي والقى الله في نفسه الرحمة والمحبة لإبراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم وزينه في عينه كان لا يعدل به أحداً من ولده وإذا ذكر أنه بصير الى القتل اشتد وجده عليه وبكى من رحمته وكانت أم ابراهيم واثقة بانه ان كان عدو القوم فليس أحد من أهل الأرض يطيقه ولا يقتله ورأت أنه متى ما ينصر عليهم يكن في ذلك نجاتها ونجاة من كل من ابراهيم سيل فشجعها ما كانت ترجوا لإبراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم من نصرة الله غلى خلاف نمرود ودينه ومعصيته وذلك أوثق الأمر في نفسها وكان نمرود يخبر [folio 164A] الناس قبل أن يولد ابراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه سيأتي نبي يغلبه ويظهر عليه ويرعب عن ملته ويخلع دينه وسلطانه فذلك الذي سبب لابراهيم وايها فيما ارتكبت من خلاف نمرود وأهل ملته في ابراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم وكان أبوه من شدة ما يجد به من الرحمة يكتمه جهده ويوصي بذلك أمه ويقول لها ادفعي بابنك ولا تعرضيه لشيء من أمر الملك يومه هذا فانه غلام حدث السن لم يجتمع له رأيه ولا عقله بعد فإذا بلغ السن واحبتك فحينئذ يفتشه عن دينه وذلك منه تربص ورجا أن يحدث حادث يكون فيه لابراهيم عاقبة أو مخرج لما يجد به أبوه من المحبة والرحمة والمفة والزينة التي وهبه الله بها في عينيه ثم خلع ابراهيم ذلك كله وبأيدهم في الله على سواء ولم يراقب شيئاً ولم يأخذه في الله هوداً ولم يخف في الله لومه لايم قال في الشمس والقمر والنجوم ما قال حدثنا اسمعيل قال اخبرنا اسحق قال اخبرني جوبير عن الضحاك وأخبرني عثمان بن عطا الحراساني وحدثني مقاتل بن سليمان عن جوبير عن الضحاك كل ذكروا في شأن ابراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم فيما قال في النجوم والقمر والشمس وذلك قول الله [folio 164B] تبارك وتعالى وكذلك نري ابراهيم ملكوت السموات والأرض وليكون من الموقنين فلما جن عليه الليل فيه تقديم وذلك ان روياء الكواكب وقبله فيها كان قبل أن يريه ملكوت السموات قالوا هاؤلاء لما جن على ابراهيم الليل وذلك أنه قال ذات يوم يا مته من خلقك قالت أبي قال فمن خلقني قالت أبوك قال فمن خلق أبي قالت الملك قال فمن خلق الملك قالت اسكت يا بني قال يا مته من أحسن أنا أو أبي قالت بل أنت قال فأبي أحسن وجهاً أبي أو الملك قالت أبوك قال يا مته لو كان الملك يطيق أن يخلق خلقاً لما خلق شيئاً أحسن منه

فكتمته أمه ولم تخبر أباه قال حين جن عليه الليل فطلعت الزهرة وذلك آخر الشهر من آخر شهر حزيران ان بلغه الروم فلم ير في السما نجما أنور منها فقال يا متاه أهدا ربي فسكنته يريد بذلك استهزأ بأمه فلما أفل قال لا أحب الأفلين قد غاب لهذا ينبغي أن يكون لهذا من هو فوقه رب حتى يجري بأمره فلما كان آخر الليل طلع القمر فرآه ظاهراً زاهداً نوره قال يا متاه هذا أضواً وأنور هذا ربي فلم يزل يراقبه حتى أفل يعني غاب قال لأن لم يهدني ربي لأكونن من القوم الضالين فلما طلعت الشمس [folio 165A] وبزغت قال هذا ربي هذا أكبر استهزأ فلما غابت قال اني برئ مما تشركون قاح بالاسلام وكاد أن يتكلم بالوحي وقد ضرب الله لذلك في القرآن مثلاً لنبيه صلى الله عليه وسلم قال تعالى الله نور السماوات والأرض مثل نوره كمشكاة فيها مصباح المصباح في زجاجة الزجاج كأنها كوكب دري يوقد من شجرة مباركة زيتونة لا شرقية ولا غربية فهذا مثل ضربه الله عز وجل لابراهيم ولمحمد ولعبد المطلب ولعبد الله انى محمد يقول الله عز وجل الله نور السماوات والأرض يعني هادي أهل السماوات وأهل الأرض مثل هداه كمشكاة والمشكاة الكوة بلغة الحكمة فشبّه عبد المطلب بالكوة فيها القنديل وهو الزجاج وشبهه عبد الله بالقنديل وهو الزجاجة ومحمد صلى الله عليه وسلم المصباح يضيء من بين اصلاهما كأنه كوكب دري يعني مضياً وهو المشتري يوقد من شجرة مباركة يعني أورث النبوة من ابراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم هو الشجرة المباركة يعني مسلمة زيتونة يعني حنيفة لا شرقية ولا غربية يعني لا يهودية ولا نصرانية يكاد زيتها يضيء يقول يكاد ابراهيم يتكلم بالوحي من قبل ان يوحا اليه [folio 165B] ولو لم يمسسه نار نور على نور فالنار ما هذا الله تبارك وتعالى به ابراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم والنور نبوته على نور نبوة محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم ولم يدر له النبوة لاضاً نوره مع نور الأنبياء يوم القيامة فلما ان قال ابراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم ما بلغ بذلك الملك وفشا قول ابراهيم وظهر حدثنا اسمعيل بن عيسى قال حدثنا اسحق واخبرني جوبير عن الضحاك عن ابن عباس أن أزر كان يصنع الأصنام التي يعبدها قومه ثم يعطيها ولده وفيهم ابراهيم فيبيعونها فيذهب بها ابراهيم عليه السلام فيقول من يشتري ما يضره ولا ينفعه فلا يشتريها منه أحد قال فاذا بارت عليه ذهب بها الى نهر له فصوت فيه رؤسها ثم يقول لها اشربي استهزأ بقومه وبما هم عليه من الضلالة كما استهزأ بهم في أمر الشمس والقمر حتى فشا عيبه بها واستهزؤه بها في قومه وأهل قريه من غير أن يكون ذلك بلغ نمرود ملك قومه ثم أنه بدا لابراهيم عليه السلام أن ينادى قومه بما هم عليه حدثنا اسمعيل قال حدثنا اسحق عن ابن جريح عن مجاهد ومقاتل قال كان يكون لهم عيد في السنة يعظمونه وينحتون بيوت [folio 166A] أصنامهم ويقربون لها القران ويضعون بين أيديها الأطعمة والأشربة ثم يخرجون الى عيدهم ولا يخلفون في مدينتهم أحداً ويخرج الملك والرجال والصبيان وكانوا ينظرون أن ينظروا الى الزهرة ويقولون من نظر اليها أصابه الطاعون فلما ان خرجوا وكانوا يخرجون بليل قالوا لابراهيم أخرج معنا فنظر الى السماء فقبض على يده فقالوا مالك قال نظرت الى الزهرة فاصابني الطاعون وهي أول كذبة وذلك قوله فنظر نظرة في النجوم فقال اني سقيم أي مطعون وكانوا ينظرون ويخافون أن يعدوا اليهم فتولوا عنه مدبرين وخلفوه فلما ان مضوا دخلوا بيت أصنامهم ومعه فأس فدنا منهم فقال كلوا ما بين أيديكم وما قربوا لكم ما لكم لا تاكلون فراغ عليهم ضرباً باليمين يعني قوله وتالله لأكيدن أصنامكم بعد أن تولوا مدبرين قال ضرباً باليمين قال فقطع ايديهم وأرجلهم وأذنانهم وذلك قوله عز وجل فجعلهم جذاً الا كبيراً لهم لعلمهم اليه يرجعون وجعل الفأس في يده وشدّ عليه قال فلما أن رجع القوم ورأوا ما بالهتهم نتفوا شعورهم وشقوا جيوبهم وقالوا من فعل هذا بالهتتا قالوا ما نعرف [folio 166B] أحداً يفعل هذا الا ابراهيم فانا سمعناه يذكرها بسوء قالوا فاتوا به على أعين الناس لعلمهم يشهدون أنه فاعله وقال بعض هاؤلاء لعلمهم يشهدون عقوبتكم لياه فبديهن الناس عن مثل هذا قال فبلغ ذلك الملك فأرسل الي ابراهيم فأتى به وبأبيه وبأمه وقال لهما ما حملا على أن كتمتاني أمر هذا الغلام حتى بلغ مبلغه هذا وقد كنتم أهل البيت ثقة لي في نفسي وأمنا من أماناي وكننت لا أخاف أن أوتي من قبلكم وكننت أحسن أنكم أنصح الناس لي وأسرعهم الى اهلاك عدوي فقال له أزر انما حملنا على ذلك حسن النظر لك ولأهل مملكتك أنك قد كنت ارتكبت منهم أمراً عظيماً فظيماً بذبح الولدان منذ أربعين سنة فلما حسينا الفنا حملنا الشفق عليك وعلى

أهل مملكتك انا جرينا لك الأمر بولدنا فقلنا أن أن كان عدوه وبعينه امكانه منه على علم فقتله وهو يعرفه واستراح منه وأراح أهل مملكته من البلادان لم يكن عدوه الذي ينبغي راى فيه رايه فان شاء احياه وان شاء قتله فدونك عدوك قد طفرت به وأمكنت منه ومن أحسن عندك [folio 167A] بلا أيها الملك وأعظم عليك منه منا لأنك في طلب عدوك منذ أربعين سنة لا نزداد فيه الا عما ولا يزداد مكانه عليك الا عتوا حتى اذا جحف ذلك بخولك وأهل مملكتك وكدت أن تغنيهم واشتد عليك هم ذلك وطلبه وانقطعت عنا تلك المونة كلها برأينا وحزنا وانا فاسنا وحسن النظر لك وللعامه فقال الملك لو كنتم ذبحتموه صغيراً لم يبلغ مكابرتنا وكانت هي الراحة منه قال أزر اما ان هذا الرأي لم يسقط علينا ولكن أخبرنا أيها الملك لو انا ذبحناه صغيراً أكنت مقصراً عند ذلك عن ذبح الولدان أم كنت تدري حين يذبح أهو عدوك الذي يطلب أم لا قال الملك ما كنت أري لو ذبح صغيراً أهو عدوي أو غيره فقال أزر وامرأته فما فعلنا احرم اذا وفضل فصدقهما لملك وراى رايهما وفرح الناس بالذي دخل عليهم من العافية في أولادهم فصاروا كلهم ضلعا مع أزر وامرأته وقالوا بأيها الملك ما تعلم أحد على وجه الأرض ولا نفسك الذي حبيك أعظم عندك غبا ولا أصوب في أمرك رايها ولا أحسن نظراً منهم اجعلهم خلفك على كل شئ خلف بابك ووقع ذلك في [folio 167B] نفسه ثم قالوا احرقوا ابراهيم حدثنا اسمعيل قال اخبرنا اسحق عن ابن جريح عن مجاهد أنه قال انهم قالوا ابنوا له بنيانا قال فبنوا له حيراً طول جداره في السماء ستون ذراعاً الى سفح جبل منيف صعب المراقى لا يرام ولا يرتقي وبطنوا الجدر الذي بنوا على الحير فلا يمسه شئ الا دلق عنه فاذن مؤذن الملك ايها الناس احتطبوا النار ابراهيم ولا يتخلف ذكر ولا انثى ولا عبد ولا شريف ولا وضيع ولا صعب من الدواب ولا ذلول الا حطب عليه فمن يخلف عن هذا القى في تلك النار فعملوا ذلك في أربعين ليلة حتى أن كانت المرأة من أهل مملكته تحلف بالهتها لئن انا طفرت بكذا وكذا لاحتطبن لنار ابراهيم حتى اذا كاد الحطب يساوي رأس الجدار وسدوا أبواب الحير بانحاس المذاب حدثنا اسمعيل قال اخبرنا اسحق عن جوبير عن الضحاك وعن مقاتل عن بريد بن اى حبيب ومحمد بن اسحق عن عبد الله بن اى سجع عن مجاهد قال لما ان قالوا لإبراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم يا ابراهيم أنت فعلت هذا بالهتنا قال ابراهيم بل فعله كبيرهم هذا وهي الكذبة الاخرى يقول فاسلوهم ان كانوا ينطقون قال فرجع القوم الى انفسهم فقالوا انكم انتم الظالمون ألا [folio 168A] ترون الفأس في يد الكبير يقول الله عز وجل ثم نكسوا على رؤسهم لقد علمت ما هاؤلاء ينطقون قال فكيف نسل من لا يتكلم فباح ابراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم وأمر على نفسه وقال افتعبدون من دون الله ما لا ينفعكم شيئاً ان عبدتموه ولا يضركم ان لم تعبدوها أف لكم يعني النار لكم ولما تعبدون من دون الله افلا تعقلون فقالوا عندك نحن نعجلك الى النار فلذلك قالوا احرقوه حدثنا اسمعيل قال اخبرنا اسحق عن سعيد ومقاتل بن سليمان قال فنقلوا الحطب على البغال واما سائر الدواب لم تنقل كلها حمل عليها تركت ما اخذ البغال فمن ثم أعقم الله نسلها واشعلوا النار في الحطب واشتد وهجه وحره حتى امتنع عليهم قربه فبنوا بنياناً واتخذوا منجنيقاً وأول من اتخذ نمرود وذلك ان ابليس جاءهم لما لم يستطيعوا ان يدنوا من النار قال انا ادلكم فاتخذ لهم المنجنيق وجئ بإبراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم فخلعوا ثيابه وشدوا قماطه ووضع في المنجنيق فبكت السماوات والأرض والجبال والشمس والقمر والعرش والكرسي والريح والملائكة تقول يا رب ابراهيم عبدك يحرق بالنار فأذن لنا بنصره فقالت النار وبكت فقالت [folio 168B] يا رب سخرتني لابن آدم وعبدك يحرق بي فاوحى الله تبارك وتعالى ان عبي اياي عبد وفي حبي أودي لئن دعاني اجبته وان استنصركم فانصروه فلما رمي استقبله جبريل عليه السلام بين المنجنيق والنار فقال السلام عليك يا ابراهيم أنا جبريل ألك حاجة قال اما اليك فلا حاجتي الى الله عز وجل فلما قذف في النار وكان سبقة اسرافيل فسلط النار على قماطه وقال الله عز وجل يا نار كونى برداً وسلاماً على ابراهيم فلو لم تحاط بالسلم لكن فيها من برد ودخل جبريل وأنبت الله حوله من البد روضة خضراء وبسط له بساطاً من دربوك الجنة وأتى بقميص من حلل الجنة جنة عدن فالبس وأجرى عليه الرزق غدوة وعشياً اسرافيل عن يمينه وجبريل عن يساره حتى رأى الملك الرويا ورأى الناس وأكثروا القول فيه حدثنا اسمعيل قال اخبرنا اسحق قال حدثني ادريس بن بنت وهب بن منبه ان ابراهيم مكث

في النار ثلاثة أيام حدثنا اسمعيل قال قال اسحق وحدثني جوبير عن الضحاك عن ابن عباس قال رأيت أم ابراهيم رؤيا كان ابراهيم جالس في تلك النار وحوله روضة خضراء قالت في منامها لزوجها ألا ترى كيف أفلح الله حج [folio 169A] ابني ابراهيم ولم تضره النار فلما انتبهت أخبرت زوجها حدثنا اسمعيل قال أخبرنا اسحق عن ابن داود الملى عن ابيه عن أبي سعيد الخدري قال رأى الملك كان ابراهيم خرج من النار عليه قميص أخضر وخرّ الملك له ساجدا فلما أصبح سره ان يحي أحد يطلب فيه فيأمره أن يخرج عظام ابراهيم من النار ولا يشك أن النار قد أحرقتة ثم رأى رؤيا أن أحييت أن يعلم أن ابراهيم على ما رأيت فإذا أصبحت فأين برجا وأطلع اليه ثم أطلع علي النار فأنظر فيها ففعل فلما رأى ابراهيم لم يملك نفسه أن سجد له تصديقا لرؤياه ثم أرسل الى ابويه ان يطلبوا له فيأذن لهما فيخرجانه قال فطلبوا ذلك فأذن لهما فلما فتحا باب الحير تقدم جبريل عليه السلم و ابراهيم على أثره فمضى فقال من يطلبه في النار آخرها هنا وقال آخرون أحدها هنا فعمى عليهم موضعه فخرج حتى جاوز كوبربا وتزوج سارة بنت قهر من ناخور بعد ذلك وبعد ما أهلك الله الملك وأمره بالا حلا عن بلاده وأمره أن يلحق بالأرض المقدسة وكان يوم تزوج وخرج الى الأرض المقدسة ابن ثمانين سنة وخرج معه هارون أخوه ولوط ابن هارون وهو ابن اخيه وذلك قوله تعالى فأمن له لوط [folio 169B] وقال اني مهاجر الي ربي فمضى مع ابراهيم وكان تزوج سارة على أن يريها غيره وكانت من أحسن نسا العالمين حدثنا سمعيل قال اخبرنا اسحق عن مقاتل بن سليمان عن الضحاك عن ابن عباس قال قسم الله الحسن عشرة أجزاء فجعل منها ثلاثة أجزاء في حوا وثلاثة أجزاء في سارة وثلاثة أجزاء في يوسف وجزأ في ساير الخلق فكانت سارة من أحسن نسا أهل الأرض وكانت من أشد نسانهم غيره قال فانطلق ابراهيم صلى الله عليه وسلم وهي معه وهرون ولوط فانطلقوا وهم أربعة حتى مروا بمصر وعلى مصر فرعون من الفراعنة الاولى وكان جبارا عنيدا يقال له صادق بن صادق وكانت سارة في حسنها وجمالها وما كان البسها الله عز وجل لا تعصي ابراهيم في شئ فذلك أكرمها الله فوصفت لفرعون فأرسل الملك الى ابراهيم فقال ما هذه المرأة التي معك قال هي أختي وهذه الكذبة الثالثة فتخوف ابراهيم على نفسه إن قال هي امرأتي ان يقتله عنها فأرسل الى ابراهيم يقول زينها ثم ارسل الي بها فقال ابراهيم لسارة فرجا ما تزين وقد أرسل الى الملك ما ارسل فاذا ذهبت اليه فقولني اني اخت ابراهيم والله [folio 170A] سيعصمك من شره فقامت فنزينت وهي واثقة بالله ان لا يضيعها قال فلما دخلت سارة على فرعون ونظر الى ما بها من الجمال والحسن ولم ير شيا مثلها قط خلا بها وفتح الله عز وجل لابراهيم الأبواب وتفرقت له الحيطان وهبكت له الستور فيما بينه وبينها حتى رأهما فلما قام الملك الى سارة أعمى الله عينيه وييس يديه ورجليه وبعث الله عز وجل اليه الملك الموكل بالأوجاع فضربت عليه عروقة كلها فكان يضطرب مثل الطير المذبوح فقال أيتها المرأة سلي ربك أن يفرج ما بي ويطلق عن عقالي ولك نصف مالي فاخرجني عن بلادي قال فدعت ربها فكشف الله ما به فاعطاها أجر وهي هاجر أم اسمعيل حدثنا اسمعيل قال اخبرنا اسحق عن مقاتل بن سليمان قال كان أبو هريرة يقول فتلك امكم يا معشر بنا السبايا يعني به العرب حدثنا اسمعيل عن اسحق عن محمد بن اسحق قال سمعت من حدثني عن عروة ابن الزبير ان هاجر كانت جارية من جرم فسببت فرفعت عند فرعون بمصر فمن ثم قال أبو هريرة فلك امكم يا بني السبايا وكانت جارية شعرا كحلا جعدا مفلجة الثنايا حسنا [folio 170B] عربية اللسان والحسن فاعطاها الف شاة ومائة بقرة برعاتها وأعطاهما خمسين بعيرا وخمسين حمارا قال فجأت سارة الى ابراهيم فقالت ابشر فقد صنع الله لك فقال ابراهيم لم يزل ربي بي حفيا قال فانطلق ابراهيم ونزل فلسطين ونزل هارون حران



# ILLUSTRATIONS

SECTION 7







Papyrus Leiden I 384. A lion couch scene with the name Abraham directly beneath it. The instructions to the text say to “[write these] words together with this picture,” indicating that the Egyptians thought the two were associated.



Mural from the Dura Europos synagogue depicting Abraham with the sun and moon. Some have interpreted this scene as Abraham turning his back on the heavenly bodies. In some of the extracts in this book, Abraham rejects astronomy, while in others, he teaches it to the Egyptians and the Phoenicians. In the Book of Abraham, God teaches the patriarch about the universe so that Abraham in turn can teach the same to the Egyptians.



From a 1741 Passover prayer book (Haggadah) produced in Germany. This illustration depicts Abraham destroying the town's idols, which have been made by his father, Terah. In the background townspeople worship at a smoldering altar. Many of the Muslim extrabiblical traditions tell the story thus: When Abraham's people went out to celebrate a festival to their gods, Abraham stayed behind and destroyed the idols in their temple. In the Jewish stories, Abraham destroys the idols that his father keeps. In both cases, when questioned, Abraham explains that the idols have quarreled and destroyed each other.



From a fourteenth-century Hebrew prayer book, the Catalán Haggadah, this scene depicts Abraham being saved from the fiery furnace by an angel. Nimrod watches from his throne. The extrabiblical traditions explain that Abraham was cast into the fire because he would not worship idols; in the Book of Abraham, the patriarch is almost sacrificed on an altar for the same reason.





This illustration is a seventeenth-century copy of an illumination from the Cotton Genesis, a late fifth-century Greek manuscript. In it, God extends his right hand to bless Abraham and instruct him to go to Haran. In the Bible, Abraham leaves for Haran with his father, while in the Book of Abraham, Abraham leaves and Terah later follows him. The extrabiblical traditions are somewhat divided on this point as well. In some, Abraham leaves without his father, and in others, they go together.



Sculpture of Abraham at the twelfth- to thirteenth-century Cathedral of Notre Dame at Chartres, north portal, central bay. The sculpture is of the Akedah, the sacrifice of Isaac, but Abraham's stance, with face lifted reverently toward the heavens, is representative of his entire life: he was a prophet who literally spoke with God. Abraham's relationship with God is borne out in the Bible, in the Book of Abraham, and in extrabiblical tradition.



In this Persian miniature (probably influenced by Buddhist iconography), Abraham sits tranquilly in the flames, which have turned to leaves and flowers around him. The serenity of his posture and gaze is reminiscent of a statement he makes in one Muslim tradition that “those seven days in the midst of the fire were the finest of my life” (p. 461). At the right, the devil and Nimrod look on in astonishment. The upper portion of the painting depicts the sacrifice of Ishmael.



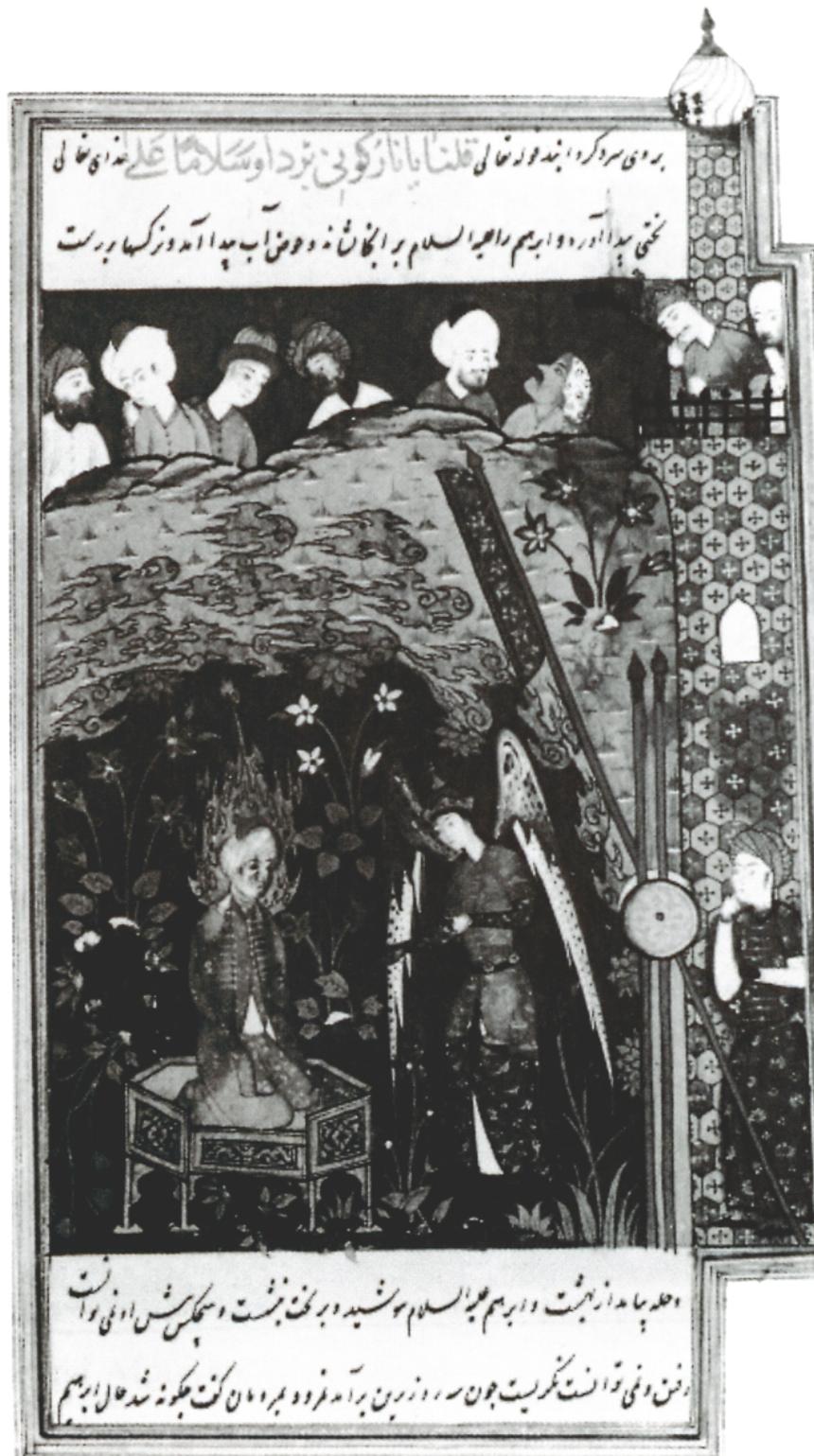
Kai Kāvūs and his flying machine. The national epic of Iran, the *Shanameh* (written in the tenth century), tells of Kai Kāvūs, a king of Iran who built a flying machine in order to subdue the heavens to his will. In several of the Muslim traditions about Abraham, Nimrod has the same machine built—with four eagles to bear him aloft—in order to fly to heaven and kill Abraham's God.



This miniature, from a late sixteenth-century Ottoman Turkish manuscript, portrays Abraham in an attitude of prayer. He has been catapulted into a raging fire that has been miraculously transformed into a verdant garden. Nimrod (at the top right with a feather in his turban) watches from a tower. The servants who worked the catapult also watch in amazement. Ibn Bishr, along with many other Muslim writers, notes that God first makes the fire cold, and then “[builds] from the cold around [Abraham] a green garden” (p. 323).



This early seventeenth-century Shiraz Persian miniature depicts Abraham sitting on a prayer rug after having been catapulted into the fire which has been transformed into a garden. Nimrod (at the top left with a feather in his turban) and his servants watch from a tower. In Muslim traditions, Gabriel brings a prayer rug or carpet from paradise; according to al-Rabghūzī, Abraham sits on the rug, and the “the fire burn[s] away Abraham’s fetters. Then Abraham [stands] up to perform ritual prayer on the rug” (p. 444).



Another sixteenth-century Persian miniature with Abraham on a throne platform, sitting in the midst of a fire that has been turned into a garden. In this depiction, Abraham sits quietly, hands in his lap, apparently conversing with an angel. In Ibn al-Athīr's history, "God sent the angel of shade in the form of Ibrāhīm to sit in the fire next to [Ibrāhīm] to keep him company" (p. 425).



This Persian miniature also shows Abraham in the fire, on a throne platform with the angel Gabriel at his side. Abraham has his hands raised in supplication toward heaven while Gabriel is reaching toward the patriarch. This scene depicts the oft-repeated Muslim tradition of a conversation that takes place between Abraham and Gabriel. After Abraham is catapulted into the fire, Gabriel meets him and asks, "O Ibrāhīm, are you in need?" Abraham answers, "From you, no! . . . God can protect me, for He is an excellent Trustee" (Al-Tha'labī, p. 365) God then turns the fire into a paradisiacal garden.



## UNIQUE ELEMENTS OF THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM SUPPORTED BY EXTRABIBLICAL TRADITIONS

The Book of Abraham contains information that is absent from the Genesis account of Abraham and, with a few exceptions, from other parts of the Bible. Many of these “unique” elements are supported in extrabiblical traditions included in this collection. These are indexed here by topic and subtopic. Some parallels are stronger than others, so the reader is advised to check each text before inferring support for the Book of Abraham. The texts below are listed alphabetically. The references include the name of the text and, if necessary, the paragraph numbers in the text, followed by the page numbers of the book. Note that each thematic element may or may not have texts from each section.

### Idolatry in Abraham’s Day

#### Abraham’s fathers worshiped idols

(Abraham 1:5–6)

*Abel and Other Pieces*, p. 287

Abū al-Fidā 2, pp. 433–34

Al-Kisāʿī 68–72, p. 388

Al-Masʿūdī, *Meadows* 4:2, p. 352

Al-Nīsābūrī 14:13; 16:4, pp. 400, 402

Al-Rabghūzī 28, p. 440

Al-Ṭabarī 220; 252–70:41, pp. 334, 343

Al-Ṭarafī 1, 53–55, pp. 370, 374–75

Anonymous Christian Chronicle 10,  
pp. 228–29

Armenian Paraphrase of Genesis: after

Genesis 11:30, version A, pp. 284–85

Bar Hebraeus 2, p. 274

*Book of Jasher* 9:6, 19; 11:45–46, pp. 138,  
139, 142

*Book of the Bee* 23, p. 272

*Book of the Cave of Treasures* 23a.1, pp. 189–90

*Book of the Rolls* 118b, pp. 207–8

*Catena Severi* 1, p. 241

*Conflict of Adam and Eve* III, 24:1–7, pp. 220–21

*Damascus Document*, p. 30

Epiphanius, *Panarion* 1.1: Anac. 1.3.1;

Proem 2.3.4, pp. 197, 198

*Hellenistic Synagogal Prayers* 12:61–62, p. 72

**Abraham's fathers worshiped idols**  
(continued)

Ibn al-Ṭayyib 7:1–2, p. 253  
Ibn Kathīr 11, p. 455  
Ishāq ibn Bishr 161B:3, p. 312  
John Chrysostom, p. 193  
*Jubilees* 11:4, 7, 16, pp. 14, 15  
Judith 5:7, p. 4  
*Kebra Nagast* 1, p. 277  
Maḥbūb of Menbidj (Agapius) 2, pp. 247–48  
Michael Glycas 1, p. 265  
Michael the Syrian 2.3.3, 2.5, p. 262  
*Midrash Rabbah* Numbers 2:12, p. 107  
*Qiqel and Yahya* 2, pp. 488–89  
Qur'an 21:53; 26:70–76, pp. 293, 295  
Symeon Logothetes 2, pp. 250–51  
*Syriac Commentary on Genesis* 7, p. 243  
*Targum Neofiti 1* Genesis 20:13, p. 69  
See also *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer* 26, pp. 45–46

**Idols were made of wood and stone**  
(Abraham 1:11)

Anonymous Christian Chronicle 10, pp. 228–29  
*Apocalypse of Abraham* 1:2; 25:1, pp. 52, 59  
*Book of Jasher* 9:6–8, 19; 11:32, 42–45, 47, pp. 138–39, 141, 142  
*Book of the Cave of Treasures* 23a.2, p. 190  
*Book of the Rolls* 119a, p. 208  
*Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 34:10, p. 132  
*Conflict of Adam and Eve* III, 24:1, p. 220  
Epiphanius, *Panarion* 1.1: Anac. 1.3.3; Proem 2.3.5, pp. 197, 198  
Hecataeus, p. 3  
*Kebra Nagast* 12–13, pp. 277–78  
*Qiqel and Yahya* 2, pp. 488–89

**Terah, Abraham's father, worshiped idols**  
(Abraham 1:16–17, 27)

Abū al-Fidā 2, pp. 433–34  
Al-Bukhārī 569, pp. 327–28  
Al-Kisā'ī 9, 41, pp. 382, 385  
Al-Nisābūrī 14:1; 15:2–3, pp. 397, 400–401  
Al-Rabghūzī 12, 17, 20, pp. 437–39

Al-Ṭabarī 224–25; 252–70:11, 18, 41; 346–47:1, pp. 334, 336–38, 343, 349  
Al-Ṭarafī 27–29, p. 372  
Al-Tha'labī 2:3, p. 361  
Al-Ya'qūbī 2, p. 330  
*Apocalypse of Abraham* 1:1; 25:1; 26:1, pp. 52, 59, 60  
Augustine, *City of God* 16.12, pp. 200–201  
*Book of Jasher* 9:7; 11:20–22, 29, 32–33, 42–48, 53, pp. 138, 140–42  
*Catena Severi* 5, p. 241  
*Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 33:1, 5, pp. 129, 130  
*Conflict of Adam and Eve* III, 24:9; IV, 1:2, pp. 221, 222  
Epiphanius, *Panarion* 1.1: Anac. 1.3.3; Proem 2.3.5, pp. 197, 198  
Falasha Story 3, p. 486  
George Hamartolos, pp. 237–38  
George Syncellus 1, 5, pp. 224, 225  
Ibn al-Athīr 6, pp. 423–24  
Ibn Ishāq 7, p. 305  
Ibn Kathīr 13, 16, pp. 455–56  
Ishāq ibn Bishr 165B:7–8, p. 318  
Jacob of Edessa 4, p. 212  
John Malalas, p. 206  
*Jubilees* 11:16, p. 15  
Ka'b al-Aḥbār 10, p. 300  
*Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 38:13, p. 91; Numbers 19:1; 29:33, p. 111  
*Pesikta Rabbati* 33:3a–b, pp. 80–81  
Qur'an 6:74; 19:42; 26:86; 60:4, pp. 292, 293, 295, 296  
*Revelation of Moses*, p. 180  
*Story of Abraham . . . with Nimrod* 14, p. 168  
Symeon Logothetes 2, pp. 250–51  
*Tanna debe Eliyahu* 2, 5, pp. 74–75  
*Targum Neofiti 1* Deuteronomy 6:4, p. 70  
Zohar: Genesis 78b, pp. 157–58

**Terah, after repenting, returned to his idols**  
(Abraham 2:5)

Abū al-Fidā 2, pp. 433–34  
Al-Kisā'ī 72, p. 388  
Al-Ṭabarī 252–70:41; 325–26:1, pp. 343, 349

Al-Thaʿlabī 2:3, p. 361  
*Apocalypse of Abraham* 26:3, p. 60  
*Book of Jasher* 12:68, p. 149  
*Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 35:1, p. 133  
 Ibn al-Ṭayyib 7:6, pp. 254–55  
 Qurʾan 60:4, p. 296  
*Tanna debe Eliyahu* 8, p. 76  
 Zohar: Genesis 77b, 78b, pp. 155–56, 157–58

**Abraham connected to Egyptian idols  
 (Abraham 1:6–7, 13, 17, 20, 29; 2:13; 3:20;  
 Facsimile 1, figures 4–9)**

Bar Hebraeus 4, pp. 274–75  
*Kebrā Nagast* 82, pp. 279–80  
 Michael Glycas 1, p. 265

## Sacrifice of Abraham and Others

**Children were sacrificed  
 (Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11)**

Al-Baiḍāwī 2:4, 8, p. 428  
 Al-Birūnī 2, p. 369  
 Al-Kisāʿī 32, 41, 43, 98, pp. 384, 385, 386, 390  
 Al-Maqdisī 48, p. 355  
 Al-Masʿūdī, *Meadows* 3:1, pp. 351–52  
 Al-Nīsābūrī 14:2, p. 397  
 Al-Rabghūzī 11, p. 436  
 Al-Ṭabarī 204–5:1; 206, pp. 332–33  
 Al-Thaʿlabī 1:2–3, pp. 358–59  
 Anonymous Christian Chronicle 10, pp. 228–29  
*Apocalypse of Abraham* 25:2–3, p. 60  
 Bakhayla Mikāʿel (Zōsīmās) 16b.2, p. 282  
*Book of Jasher* 8:34, p. 138  
*Book of the Cave of Treasures* 23b.2, pp. 190–91  
*Book of the Rolls* 120a, pp. 208–9  
*Conflict of Adam and Eve* III, 24:15–17; 25:1, 8,  
 pp. 221–22  
 Falasha Story 3, p. 486  
 Ibn al-Athīr 3, p. 422  
 Ibn Ishāq 3, p. 304  
 Ishāq ibn Bishr 162B:6; 163A:6; 166A:1;  
 166B:10–11; 167A:8–9, pp. 313, 314, 319,  
 320, 321  
*Kebrā Nagast* 12, p. 277  
 Petrus Comestor, pp. 267–68  
 Philo of Alexandria, *De Abrahamo* 188, p. 41  
 Pseudo-Philo 4:16, p. 21  
 Other Muslim Traditions: Prophet Abraham 3,  
 pp. 459–60  
*Story of Abraham . . . with Nimrod* 3, 5, p. 165

**Those who would not worship idols were  
 killed (Abraham 1:11)**

Al-Kisāʿī 85–87, 98, pp. 389, 390  
 Alcuin, *Interrogationes et responsiones in  
 Genesim* 152, p. 217  
 Anonymous Christian Chronicle 6, 27,  
 pp. 228, 230–31  
*Asatir* 5:27, p. 469  
 Bede, *Commentarium in Pentateuchem*, p. 214  
 Bede (?), *Quaestiones super Genesim*,  
 pp. 214–15  
*Commentarium in Genesim*, p. 205  
*Expositio super septem visiones*, commenting  
 on Rev. 6:4, p. 218  
 Falasha Story 4, pp. 486–87  
 Freculphus Lexoviensis, pp. 234–35  
 Jerome, *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim*  
 11:28, pp. 194–96  
*Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 44:7, p. 98  
 Other Muslim Traditions: Prophet Abraham 7,  
 p. 461  
 Rabanus Maurus, *Commentaria in Genesim*,  
 pp. 232–33  
 Rupertus Tuitensis, *Commentarium in Joannem* 4,  
 pp. 257–58

**Abraham was brought to be killed or sacri-  
 ficed because he would not worship idols  
 (Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3)**

Abū al-Fidā 2, pp. 433–44  
 Al-Baiḍāwī 4:8, p. 431

**Abraham was brought to be killed or sacrificed (continued)**

- Al-Bukhārī 579, p. 329  
 Al-Kisāʿī 135, p. 393  
 Al-Maqdisī 53–54, pp. 355–56  
 Al-Masʿūdī, *Meadows* 4:2, p. 352; *News* 1, p. 353  
 Al-Nisābūrī 18:2; 19:2, pp. 404, 405–6  
 Al-Rabghūzī 31–43, 47, pp. 441–44, 445–46  
 Al-Ṭabarī 252–70:4, 27–37; 316–17:1–2; 318–24:1–2; 346–47:1–2, pp. 335, 340–42, 345, 346, 349–50  
 Al-Ṭarafi 88–93, pp. 377–78  
 Al-Thaʿlabī 2:10, 12, pp. 364–65, 366  
 Al-Yaʿqūbī 3, p. 331  
 Al-Zamakhsharī 2:578, pp. 412–13  
 Alcuin, *Interrogationes et responsiones in Genesim* 152, p. 217  
 Angelomus Luxoviensis, *Commentarium in Genesim*, pp. 239–40  
 Anonymous Christian Chronicle 6, p. 228  
*Asatir* 5:27, p. 469  
 Augustine, *City of God* 16:15; *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*, pp. 202–3, 204  
 Babylonian Talmud ʿErubin 53a, pp. 119–20; *Pesahim* 118a, p. 120; *Sanhedrin* 93a, pp. 121–22; ʿAbodah Zarah 3a, p. 122  
*Book of Jasher* 12:6, 23, pp. 144, 145  
 Bede, *Hexaameron* 3–4, pp. 213–14  
 Bede (?), *Quaestiones super Genesim*, 214–15  
*Catena Severi* 8, p. 242  
*Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 33:4–5; 34:12, pp. 130, 132  
*Commentarium in Genesim*, p. 205  
*De computo*, p. 226  
*Expositio super septem visiones*, commenting on Rev. 1:13, p. 218  
 Falasha Story 4, pp. 486–87  
 Freculphus Lexoviensis, pp. 234–35  
*Glossa ordinaria*, p. 236  
 Herveus Burgidolensis, p. 260  
 Hugh of St. Victor, p. 259  
 Ibn al-Athīr 10, p. 425  
 Ibn al-Jawzī 2, pp. 419–20  
 Ibn Ishāq 13, p. 307  
 Ibn Kathīr 26, p. 457  
 Ioannes Zonaras, p. 261  
 Ishāq ibn Bishr 168A:17; 168B:5–6, p. 323  
 Jacob of Edessa 8, p. 212  
 Jerome, *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim*, commenting on Genesis 11:28; 12:4, pp. 194–96  
 Judith 8:27, p. 5  
 Kaʿb al-Aḥbār 11, p. 300  
*Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 34:9; 38:13; 39:3; 42:3, 7; 44:4, 7; 48:1, pp. 90, 91, 92, 96, 97, 98, 100; Exodus 44:5; 49:2, p. 104; Leviticus 11:7; 36:4, pp. 105, 106–7; Numbers 2:12; 12:8, pp. 107, 110; Deuteronomy 9:4, p. 112; Ruth Proem 7:1, p. 112; Ecclesiastes 4:8.1, p. 114; Esther Proem 11; 6:2, pp. 114, 115; Song of Songs 1:13.1; 2:5.1; 3:6.2; 3:11.1; 8:8.2, pp. 115, 116–17, 118  
 Nicophorus Gregoras, p. 276  
 Other Muslim Traditions: Yusuf, p. 463  
*Pesikta Rabbati* 33:4a, p. 81  
 Petrus Comestor, pp. 267–68  
 Pseudo-Philo 6:16, p. 24  
*Qiqel and Yahya* 11, p. 489  
 Qurʾan 21:68; 37:97, pp. 294, 296  
 Rabanus Maurus, pp. 232–33  
 Rashi, regarding Genesis 11:28, p. 125  
 Rāwandī 3, 8, 10, pp. 415, 416, 417  
 Rupertus Tuitensis, *Commentarium in Joannem* 4, pp. 257–58  
*Story of Abraham . . . with Nimrod* 25, 29, pp. 172, 173  
*Study (Midrash) of Abraham Our Father* 3, p. 179  
*Tanna debe Eliyahu* 1–3, 6, pp. 74–75, 76  
*Targum Jonathan* Genesis 11:28; 14:1; 16:5, pp. 66, 67  
*Targum Rishon of Esther* 5:14, p. 71  
 Zohar: Genesis 77b, pp. 155–56; Leviticus 57a, pp. 162–63

**Terah was behind the attempt to kill Abraham (Abraham 1:7, 30)**

- Al-Nisābūrī 15:4, p. 401  
*Book of Jasher* 11:51, p. 143

Falasha Story 3, p. 486  
 Ishāq ibn Bishr 163B:8, p. 315  
 Qurʾan 19:46; 26:86; 60:4, pp. 293, 295, 296  
 Rashi, regarding Genesis 11:28, p. 125  
*Story of Abraham . . . with Nimrod* 8, pp. 166–67

**Abraham was fastened or bound  
 (Abraham 1:15; Facsimile 1, figure 2)**

Al-Baiḍāwī 4:4, 7, pp. 430, 431  
 Al-Nisābūrī 18:2; 19:2, pp. 404, 405–6  
 Al-Rabghūzī 33–34, p. 442  
 Al-Ṭarafī 109, p. 379  
 Al-Thaʿlabī 2:10–11, pp. 364–66  
 Al-Zamakhsharī 2:578, pp. 412–13  
*Book of Jasher* 12:23, p. 145  
*Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 33:4, p. 130  
 Ibn Kathīr 25, p. 457  
 Ishāq ibn Bishr 168A:14; 168B:6, pp. 322, 323  
 Philo the Epic Poet, p. 6  
 Rāwandī 10, p. 417  
*Story of Abraham . . . with Nimrod* 29, p. 173  
*Study (Midrash) of Abraham Our Father* 3, p. 179  
*Tanna debe Eliyahu* 4, p. 75

**When his life was in danger, Abraham  
 prayed (Abraham 1:15)**

Al-Baiḍāwī 4:7, p. 431  
 Al-Kisāʿī 138, p. 393  
 Al-Ṭabarī 252–70:31, p. 341  
 Al-Ṭarafī 90–93, pp. 377–78  
 Al-Thaʿlabī 2:10–11, pp. 364–66  
 Ibn al-Jawzī 2, pp. 419–20  
 Ibn Kathīr 26, p. 457  
 Philo the Epic Poet, p. 6  
 Rāwandī 4–5, pp. 415–16  
*Story of Abraham . . . with Nimrod* 11, 29,  
 pp. 167, 173  
*Contrast al-Rabghūzī* 39, pp. 443–44

**An angel came to rescue Abraham  
 (Abraham 1:15; 2:13; Facsimile 1, figure 1)**

Al-Baiḍāwī 4:8, 11, pp. 431–32  
 Al-Kisāʿī 52, 88, 138–39, 142, pp. 387, 389,  
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Al-Rabghūzī 35, 38, 42, pp. 443, 444  
 Al-Ṭabarī 252–70:31, 33–34, pp. 341–42  
 Al-Ṭarafī 93–96, p. 378  
 Al-Thaʿlabī 2:10, pp. 364–65  
 Al-Zamakhsharī 2:578, pp. 412–13  
 Babylonian Talmud *Pesahim* 118a, p. 120  
*Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 34:13; 35:3, pp. 133, 134  
 Falasha Story 4, pp. 486–87  
 Ibn al-Athīr 10–11, pp. 425–26  
 Ibn al-Jawzī 2, pp. 419–20  
 Ibn Ishāq 13–14, pp. 307–8  
 Ibn Kathīr 27–30, p. 457  
 Ishāq ibn Bishr 168B:3–4, 8, 11, p. 323  
 Kaʿb al-Aḥbār 13, p. 301  
*Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 44:13, p. 99; Exodus  
 18:5, p. 103; Song of Songs 1:12.1; 3:11.1,  
 pp. 116–17  
 Other Muslim Traditions: Prophet Abraham 6,  
 p. 461  
 Rāwandī 4, 6, pp. 415, 416  
*Story of Abraham . . . with Nimrod* 32, p. 174  
*Study (Midrash) of Abraham Our Father* 4, p. 179

**God rescued Abraham from death  
 (Abraham 1:16; 3:20)**

Al-Kisāʿī 139–41, p. 393  
 Al-Maqdisī 53–54, pp. 355–56  
 Al-Masʿūdī, *Meadows* 4:2, p. 352; *News* 1,  
 p. 353  
 Al-Nisābūrī 18:3, p. 404  
 Al-Rabghūzī 49, p. 446  
 Al-Ṭarafī 112, p. 379  
 Al-Yaʿqūbī 3, p. 331  
 Alcuin, *Interrogationes et responsiones in  
 Genesim*, p. 217  
 Angelomus Luxoviensis, *Commentarium in  
 Genesim on Genesis* 12:4, pp. 239–40  
*Asatir* 5:27, p. 469  
 Babylonian Talmud *Pesahim* 118a, p. 120  
 Bede, *Hexaemeron* 3, 4, pp. 213–14  
 Bede (?), *Quaestiones super Genesim*, pp. 214–15  
*Book of Jasher* 12:24, 38, pp. 145, 146  
*Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 33:6; 34:13, pp. 130, 133  
*Commentarium in Genesim*, p. 205  
*Ethiopic Story of Joseph*, p. 281

**God rescued Abraham from death  
(continued)**

- Freculphus Lexoviensis, pp. 234–35  
*Glossa ordinaria*, p. 236  
 Ishāq ibn Bishr 168B:6–7, p. 323  
 Jerome, *Commentarium in Isaiam; Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* on Genesis 11:28; 12:4; Vulgate Ezra, pp. 194–96  
*Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 63:2, p. 102; Exodus 15:12; 18:5; 23:4, p. 103; Numbers 12:8, p. 110; Deuteronomy 2:27, p. 111; Song of Songs 3:11.1, p. 117  
*Pesikta Rabbati* 33:4a, p. 81  
 Philo the Epic Poet, p. 6  
*Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer* 26, pp. 45–46  
 Pseudo-Philo 6:9; 23:5; 32:1, pp. 22, 24–25  
 Rabanus Maurus, pp. 232–33  
 Rāwandī 4, 8, pp. 415, 416  
 Rupertus Tuitensis, *Commentarium in Joannem* 4, pp. 257–58  
*Story of Abraham* 8, p. 177  
*Story of Abraham . . . with Nimrod* 11, 32, p. 167, 174  
*Study (Midrash) of Abraham Our Father* 4, p. 179  
*Targum Jonathan* Genesis 15:7, p. 67  
*Targum Neofiti 1* Genesis 15:7, p. 69

**The altar (furnace) and the idols were destroyed (Abraham 1:20)**

- Al-Bīrūnī 2, p. 369  
 Al-Kisāʿī 41, 129, pp. 385, 392  
 Al-Masʿūdī, *News* 1, p. 353  
 Al-Nisābūrī 17:2, p. 402  
 Al-Rabghūzī 6, 22, 43, 66, pp. 436, 439–40, 450  
 Al-Ṭabarī 252–70:6, 19–20; 318–24:6, 9, pp. 335–36, 338–39, 347–48  
 Al-Ṭarafī 60, 70, pp. 375, 376  
 Al-Thaʿlabī 2:3, 6, pp. 361, 362–63  
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 Al-Zamakhsharī 2:576, p. 412  
 Anonymous Christian Chronicle 8, 23, pp. 228, 230  
*Apocalypse of Abraham* 8:6, p. 57

- Asatir* 5:16; 6:11, 24, pp. 467, 472, 473–74  
 Bar Hebraeus 1, 7, pp. 274, 275  
*Book of Jasher* 11:33–36, p. 141  
*Book of the Bee* 23, 30, pp. 272, 273  
*Book of the Cave of Treasures* 23b.1; 24a.1, pp. 190, 191  
*Book of the Rolls* 119b, 120a, pp. 208–9  
*Catena Severi* 6–7, p. 242  
*Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 34:9, 11, p. 132  
*Conflict of Adam and Eve* III, 24:8; 25:2, p. 221  
 Falasha Story 3, p. 486  
 George Hamartolos, pp. 237–38  
 George Syncellus 3, 5, pp. 224, 225  
 Ibn al-Athīr 3, 6, pp. 422, 423–24  
 Ibn Ishāq 2, 7, pp. 304, 305  
 Ibn Kathīr 17, 19, p. 456  
 Ishāq ibn Bishr 165B:11; 166A:13–14, 17, pp. 318, 319  
 Jacob of Edessa 6–7, p. 212  
 John Malalas, p. 206  
*Jubilees* 12:12, p. 17  
*Kebrā Nagast* 13, pp. 277–78  
 Michael the Syrian 2.3.4, 2.6.6, 3.1.1, pp. 262, 263  
 Other Muslim Traditions: Prophet Abraham 5, pp. 460–61  
 Philaster of Brescia, p. 199  
 Pseudo-Philo 6:18, p. 24  
 Qurʾan 21:57–58, p. 294  
 Rashi, regarding Genesis 11:28, p. 125  
 Rāwandī 10, p. 417  
*Study (Midrash) of Abraham Our Father* 1, p. 178  
*Story of Abraham* 5, p. 176  
*Story of Abraham . . . with Nimrod* 23, p. 171  
 Symeon Logothetes 2, pp. 250–51

**The priest (or leader) was smitten and died (Abraham 1:20, 29)**

- Al-Kisāʿī 42, 159, pp. 385, 395  
 Al-Masʿūdī, *News* 1, p. 353  
 Al-Nisābūrī 19:2, pp. 405–6  
 Al-Rabghūzī 60, p. 448  
 Al-Ṭabarī 252–70:29; 318–24:2, pp. 340, 342  
 Al-Ṭarafī 99, p. 378

Anonymous Christian Chronicle 8, p. 228  
*Apocalypse of Abraham* 25:6, p. 60  
*Asatir* 6:24, pp. 473–74  
 Bar Hebraeus 1, 7, pp. 274, 275  
*Catena Severi* 6–7, p. 242  
 George Hamartolos, pp. 237–38  
 George Syncellus 3, 5, pp. 224, 225  
 Jacob of Edessa 6–7, p. 212  
*Jubilees* 12:14; 22:22, pp. 17, 20

Michael the Syrian 2.3.4, 2.6.6, pp. 262, 263  
 Other Muslim Traditions: Prophet Abraham 5, 9, pp. 460–61, 462  
 Pseudo-Philo 6:9, 17 pp. 22, 24  
 Qurʾan 37:98, p. 296  
 Rāwandī 6, p. 416  
*Story of Abraham . . . with Nimrod* 28, p. 173  
 Symeon Logothetes 2, pp. 250–51

## Priesthood

### **Abraham was heir to the priesthood of his fathers (Abraham 1:2–3, 18)**

Ibn al-Ṭayyib 7:6, pp. 254–55  
*Midrash Rabbah* Leviticus 25:6, p. 105;  
 Numbers 4:8, p. 109  
*Mishnah Aboth* 5:2, p. 62

### **Abraham held the priesthood (Abraham 1:2; 2:9, 11; Facsimile 2, figure 3; Facsimile 3, figure 1)**

Al-Nisābūrī 18:4, p. 404  
 Babylonian Talmud *Nedarim* 32b, pp. 120–21  
 Georgius Cedrenus 1, pp. 269–70  
*Kebra Nagast* 105, p. 280  
*Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 46:5; 55:6, pp. 100, 101;  
 Leviticus 25:6, p. 105; Numbers 4:8; 10:1,  
 p. 109; Song of Songs 5:15.1, p. 117  
*Pesikta Rabbati* 40:6a, p. 81  
 Philo of Alexandria, *De Abrahamo* 98, p. 41

### **Abraham was linked to Noah (Abraham 1:19; Facsimile 2, figure 3)**

Al-Kisāʾī 46, p. 386  
 Al-Ṭabarī 252–70:6, pp. 335–36  
 Augustine, *City of God* 16.12, p. 200  
*Book of Jasher* 9:5–6, 10–11, 19; 12:61, pp. 138,  
 139, 148  
*Book of the Bee* 30, p. 273  
 Ibn al-Ṭayyib 7:3, p. 253

*Jubilees* 21:10, p. 19  
 Qurʾan 37:83, p. 296

### **Believers are the seed of Abraham and are blessed through him (Abraham 2:10–11)**

Armenian Paraphrase of Genesis: after  
 Genesis 11:30, versions A and B,  
 pp. 284–85  
*Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 14:6, pp. 89–90  
 Qurʾan 14:36, p. 293

### **Abraham sought God earnestly (Abraham 2:12)**

Al-Kisāʾī 51, pp. 386–87  
 Al-Masʿūdī, *Meadows* 4:1, p. 352  
 Al-Rabghūzī 16, p. 438  
 Al-Ṭabarī 252–70:8–10, p. 336  
 Al-Thaʿlabī 2:10, pp. 364–65  
*Apocalypse of Abraham* 7:12; 8:3, pp. 56, 57  
 Armenian Paraphrase of Genesis: after  
 Genesis 11:30, versions A and B,  
 pp. 284–85  
 Augustine, *City of God* 10.32, p. 200  
*Book of Jasher* 11:14, p. 140  
*Clementine Recognitions* 33, p. 186  
 Falasha Story 2, pp. 485–86  
 George Hamartolos, pp. 237–38  
 Gregory of Nyssa, pp. 187–88  
 Ibn Ishāq 5–6, pp. 304–5

**Abraham sought God earnestly (continued)**

*Jubilees* 11:17, p. 15  
*Kebra Nagast* 14, pp. 278–79  
*Medieval Testament of Naphtali* 10:2, p. 128  
 Michael the Syrian 2.6.2, p. 263  
 Other Muslim Traditions: Prophet Abraham 5, pp. 460–61  
*Pesikta Rabbati* 33:3a, p. 80  
 Philo of Alexandria, *De Abrahamo* 68, p. 39  
*Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer* 26, pp. 45–46  
 Zohar: Genesis 76b, 86a, pp. 155, 160–61

**Abraham made converts in Haran (Abraham 2:15)**

*ʿAbot de Rabbi Nathan* 12, version A, pp. 63–64, col. 1  
 Abū al-Fidā 3, p. 434  
 Al-Kisāʿī 85, 121, 160, pp. 389, 391–92, 395  
 Al-Nisābūrī 22:1, p. 410  
 Al-Rabghūzī 30, 61, 68–69, pp. 441, 449, 451–52  
 Al-Ṭabarī 252–70:41, p. 343

Al-Thaʿlabī 3:1, p. 367  
*Book of Jasher* 12:41–43; 13:2, 10, 21, 24, pp. 147, 149, 150, 151  
*Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 34:13, p. 133  
*Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 39:14, 16; 48:2; 84:4, pp. 93–94, 100, 102; Numbers 14:11, p. 110; Esther 6:2, p. 115; Song of Songs 1:3.3, p. 115  
 Other Muslim Traditions: Prophet Abraham 11, p. 463  
*Pesikta Rabbati* 43:6, p. 83  
 Qurʾan 14:36, p. 293  
 Rashi, regarding Genesis 12:5, p. 126  
*Story of Abraham . . . with Nimrod* 33, p. 174  
*Study (Midrash) of Abraham Our Father* 5, p. 179  
*Targum Jonathan* Genesis 12:5, p. 66  
*Targum Neofiti 1* Genesis 12:5, p. 69  
*Targum Onqelos* Genesis 12:5, p. 73  
 Zohar: Genesis 78b, 79a–b, 86b, 88b, pp. 157–58, 161; Exodus 129a, 147b, p. 162  
 Compare *Sefer Yetzirah* Gra-Ari 6:7, pp. 86–87

**Revelation****Abraham possessed the Urim and Thummim, by means of which he received revelation from God (Abraham 3:1, 4)**

Babylonian Talmud *Baba Bathra* 16b, p. 123  
*Bahir* 190, 192, pp. 50–51  
 Compare George Hamartolos, pp. 237–38

**Abraham was knowledgeable about astronomy, which he learned from ancient records and from God (Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3)**

*4 Ezra* 3:14, p. 61  
 Al-Baiḍāwī 2:2, 13–14, 18, 20–21, pp. 427, 429–30  
 Al-Kisāʿī 51, pp. 386–87  
 Al-Maqdisī 53–54, pp. 355–56  
 Al-Nisābūrī 14:9–10, p. 399  
 Al-Rabghūzī 4, 16, pp. 436, 438

Al-Ṭabarī 252–70:8–9, 16–17; 316–17:1–5, pp. 336, 338, 345  
 Al-Ṭarafi 31–32, 42–43, 52, pp. 373, 374  
 Al-Thaʿlabī 2:1–2, pp. 360–61  
 Al-Yaʿqūbī 1, p. 330  
 Alcuin, *Epistola* 83, p. 216  
 Anonymous Christian Chronicle 7, p. 228  
*Apocalypse of Abraham* 19:3–9, p. 57  
 Armenian Paraphrase of Genesis: after Genesis 11:30, versions A and B, pp. 284–85  
 Babylonian Talmud *Shabbath* 156a–b, p. 119; *Yoma* 28b, p. 120  
*Book of Jasher* 9:17–18, p. 139  
*Book of the Cave of Treasures* 25a.1, p. 192  
*Book of the Rolls* 122a, pp. 209–10  
*Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 35:4, p. 134  
*Clementine Recognitions* 32, pp. 185–86

*De computo*, p. 226  
 Eupolemus 3–4, p. 8  
 Falasha Story 2, pp. 485–86  
 Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 4 Proem 5; 4.17.2,  
     5; 4.18.1; 8.3.5–8.4.14, pp. 478–84  
 George Hamartolos, pp. 237–38  
 George Syncellus 4, pp. 225  
 Gregory of Nyssa, pp. 187–88  
 Ibn al-Athīr 4–5, pp. 422–23  
 Ibn al-Jawzī 1, pp. 418–19  
 Ibn Ishāq 4–5, 7, pp. 304–5  
 Ishāq ibn Bishr 164A:13, 17; 164B:1–4, p. 316  
 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1.7.1–2; 1.8.2,  
     pp. 47–48, 49  
*Jubilees* 11:8; 12:17, pp. 15, 17  
*Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 44:12; 48:6; 53:4,  
     pp. 99, 100, 101; Exodus 38:6, p. 104;  
     Numbers 2:12, 14, pp. 107–8  
 Orphica 27–29, pp. 12–13  
 Other Muslim Traditions: Turkish 5, p. 459  
*Pesikta Rabbati* 11:4a; 43:1, pp. 78, 82  
 Philo of Alexandria, *De Mutatione Nominum*  
     67, 72, p. 36; *De Somniis* 53–54, p. 37;  
     *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin*  
     3.42–43, pp. 42–43  
 Pseudo-Philo 18:5, p. 24  
*Qiqel and Yahya* 1, 7, pp. 488, 489  
 Qurʾan 6:75, p. 292  
 Rāwandī 2, p. 415  
*Sefer Yetzirah* Gra-Ari 6:7; Short 6:4; Long 6:8,  
     pp. 86–87  
*Sibyline Oracles* 3.218–28, p. 11  
 Symeon Logothetes 1–2, pp. 249–50  
 Vettius Valens, *Anthologiae* 2.29.1–6,  
     pp. 476–77  
 Zohar: Genesis 80a, 86a, pp. 158, 160–61  
 Contrast Zohar: Numbers 148a, p. 163

### **Abraham taught astronomy to the Egyptians (Abraham Facsimile 3)**

Anonymous Work, p. 10  
 Artapanus, p. 7  
 Eupolemus 8, p. 8–9  
 George Syncellus 5, pp. 225

Ioannes Zonaras, p. 261  
 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1.8.2, p. 49  
 Zohar: Genesis 83a, p. 160  
 Contrast *Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 35:4, p. 134;  
     Maḥbūb of Menbidj (Agapius) 4, p. 248

### **Earth has four quarters (Abraham Facsimile 2, figure 6)**

*Book of Jasher* 8:2, 10; 12:9, pp. 135, 136, 144  
*Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 34:1, pp. 130–31  
*Story of Abraham* 1, p. 175  
 Zohar: Genesis 78a, pp. 156–57

### **Abraham knew about the creation (Abraham 1:31; 4–5)**

Al-Nīsābūrī 14:10, p. 399  
 Al-Ṭarafī 53–54, pp. 374–75  
 Al-Thaʿlabī 2:1, pp. 360–61  
*Apocalypse of Abraham* 7:10–11; 19:9; 21:1–6,  
     pp. 56, 57, 58  
*Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 34:3, p. 131  
*Clementine Recognitions* 33, p. 186  
 Ibn Ishāq 4, p. 304  
 Ioannes Zonaras, p. 261  
*Jubilees* 12:19, p. 17

### **There was advance planning for the creation (Abraham 4:31–5:5; Moses 3:4–5)**

*Apocalypse of Abraham* 22:2, p. 59

### **The elements of the earth obeyed God (Abraham 4:9–12, 18, 21, 24–25, 31)**

*Apocalypse of Abraham* 19:9, p. 57

### **Abraham saw the premortal spirits (Abraham 3:21–24)**

Al-Kisāʿī 28, p. 384  
 Al-Ṭabarī 216, p. 333  
 Al-Ṭarafī 32, p. 373  
*Apocalypse of Abraham* 19:6–7; 21:7–22:5, pp. 57,  
     58–59  
*Book of Jasher* 12:38, p. 146  
*Clementine Recognitions* 33, p. 186

**Abraham saw the premortal spirits  
(continued)**

Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 4.18.1, p. 479  
 Medieval *Testament of Naphtali* 9:5, p. 127  
*Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 14:6, pp. 89–90;  
 Ecclesiastes 3:11.2, p. 113  
 Philo of Alexandria, *De Cherubim* 4, p. 35  
*Sefer Yetzirah* Long 6:8; Saadia 8:5, pp. 87–88  
 Symeon Logothetes 2, pp. 250–51  
 Vettius Valens, *Anthologiae* 2.29.1–6, pp. 476–77

**The Lord instructed Abraham to say that  
Sarah was his sister (Abraham 2:22–25)**

Bakhayla Mikâ'êl (Zôsîmâs) 17b.1, p. 283  
*Genesis Apocryphon* XIX, 14–21, pp. 26–27  
 Ishâq ibn Bishr 169B:17–170A:1, p. 325  
 Zohar: Genesis 81b, 82a, p. 159  
*Contrast Zohar*: Genesis 82a, p. 159; see al-  
 Ṭarafî 115, pp. 379–80

**Ancient Records****Abraham possessed records from the  
fathers (Abraham 1:28, 31)**

Al-Mas'ūdî, *Meadows* 4:5, p. 353; *News* 2,  
 p. 353  
 Al-Ṭabarî 350, p. 350  
 Al-Tha'labî 1:2, p. 358  
*Book of Noah*, versions B and C, p. 124  
 Eupolemus 8, pp. 8–9  
*Genesis Apocryphon* XIX, 25, p. 27  
 Ibn al-Ṭayyib 7:3, p. 253  
*Jubilees* 11:16; 12:27; 21:10, pp. 15, 18, 19  
*Midrash Rabbah* 39:10, p. 93  
 Zohar: Genesis 55b, p. 154

**Abraham left a record of his own  
(Abraham 1:31)**

Babylonian Talmud *ʿAbodah Zarah* 14b, 25a,  
 pp. 122, 123  
 Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 4 Proem 5;  
 4.17.5; 4.18.1; 8.3.5, pp. 478, 479  
*Jubilees* 39:6, p. 20  
 Qur'an 87:19–20, p. 297  
*Sefer Yetzirah* Gra-Ari 6:7; Short 6:4; Long 6:8,  
 pp. 86–87  
 Vettius Valens, *Anthologiae* 2.28.3, p. 476

**Pharaoh and the Founding of Egypt****The founding of Egypt (Abraham 1:21–27)**

Al-Kisâ'î 59–60, p. 387  
 Al-Mas'ūdî, *Meadows* 3:1, pp. 351–52  
 Al-Rabghūzî 9, p. 436  
 Al-Ṭabarî 215; 216; 252–70:5, 42, pp. 333, 335,  
 343  
 Al-Tha'labî 1:1; 3:1, pp. 357–58, 367  
 Anonymous Christian Chronicle 16, p. 229  
*Armenian Question*, p. 286  
 Artapanus, p. 7  
*Book of the Cave of Treasures* 22b.2, p. 189  
*Book of the Rolls* 118b, pp. 207–8  
*Conflict of Adam and Eve* III, 23:4–8, pp. 219–20

*Genesis Apocryphon* XIX, 13, p. 26  
 Ibn al-Ṭayyib 6:2, p. 253  
 Maḥbūb of Menbidj (Agapius) 3, p. 248  
 Other Muslim Traditions: Turkish 1, p. 458  
*Targum Jonathan* Genesis 16:1, 5, p. 67  
 Zohar: Genesis 73a, pp. 154–55  
*Contrast* Abū al-Fidā 3, p. 433; al-Ṭabarî  
 325–26:1, p. 349

**Pharaoh was a descendant of Ham but also  
of Canaan (Abraham 1:21–22, 24–25, 27)**

Al-Baiḍāwî 2:1, p. 427  
 Al-Ṭarafî 4, 35, pp. 371, 373

Al-Thaʿlabī 1:1, pp. 357–58  
 Eupolemus 9, p. 9  
*Jubilees* 22:20–21, p. 20  
*Pesikta Rabbati* 21:22, p. 80  
*Story of Abraham . . . with Nimrod* 7, p. 166

**The first pharaoh, a good man, was blessed by Noah (Abraham 1:26)**

Ibn al-Ṭayyib 6:1–2, pp. 252–53  
 Other Muslim Traditions: Turkish 1–2, pp. 458–59

**Abraham was allowed to sit on a king’s throne (Abraham Facsimile 3, figure 1)**

Al-Kisāʿī 170, p. 396  
 Al-Rabghūzī 64–65, 69, pp. 449–50, 451–52  
 Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 108b, p. 122  
*Book of Jasher* 15:22, p. 153  
*Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 42:5; 55:6, pp. 97, 101;  
 Deuteronomy 2:33, p. 112; Ecclesiastes 4:14.1, p. 114  
*Tanna debe Eliyahu* 8–9, p. 76

## Famine in Chaldea

**There was a famine in Abraham’s homeland (Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5)**

Al-Kisāʿī 120, p. 391  
 Al-Rabghūzī 29, 44, pp. 441, 445  
 Anonymous Christian Chronicle 26, p. 230  
 Bar Hebraeus 6, p. 275  
*Catena Severi* 2, p. 241  
 Jacob of Edessa 2, p. 211  
*Jubilees* 11:11–13, p. 15  
 Michael the Syrian 2.6.2, p. 263  
*Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 25:3; 40:3; 64:2, pp. 90, 94, 102

Other Muslim Traditions: Turkish 4, p. 459  
 Philo of Alexandria, *De Abrahamo* 91, p. 40

**Abraham prayed that God would end the famine in Chaldea (Abraham 2:17)**

Al-Kisāʿī 121, pp. 391–92  
 Al-Rabghūzī 44, p. 445  
*Catena Severi* 3–4, p. 241  
 Jacob of Edessa 3, pp. 211–12  
*Jubilees* 11:18–24, pp. 15–16

**Haran died in the famine (Abraham 2:1)**

Al-Rabghūzī 21, 47, pp. 439, 445–46

## Other

**Abraham was sixty-two years of age when he left Haran, not seventy-five as Genesis says (Abraham 2:14)**

Al-Masʿūdī, *News* 2, p. 353  
 Babylonian Talmud *ʿAbodah Zarah* 9a, p. 122  
 Genesis Commentary: 4QcommGen A, p. 31  
 Georgius Cedrenus 3, p. 270  
*Pesikta Rabbati* 42:3a, pp. 81–82  
 Saʿīd ibn Batrīq (Eutychius) 3, p. 246  
*Contrast* Ishāq ibn Bishr 169A:16, p. 324

**Abraham became like God (Doctrine and Covenants 132:29, 37, 49)**

Armenian Paraphrase of Genesis: after Genesis 11:30, version A, pp. 284–85  
*Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 43:7; 44:4, pp. 97–98;  
 Numbers 14:2, p. 110; Song of Songs 1:3.3, pp. 115–16



## Index B

# CITATIONS

This is a book about Abraham; thus, references to Genesis 11 and 12 and to the Book of Abraham are ubiquitous. Furthermore, Index A, "Unique Elements of the Book of Abraham Supported by Extrabiblical Traditions," indexes most of the references to the Book of Abraham that are found throughout this volume. To avoid redundancy, we have only kept those scripture citations to the Book of Abraham that do not show up in Index A. We have also removed most of the citations of Genesis 11 and 12.

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## Index C

# SUBJECT

As with the citation index, we chose to rely on the work already done in Index A, “Unique Elements of the Book of Abraham Supported by Extrabiblical Traditions,” instead of repeating the elements that have been thoroughly indexed there. Thus, an entry that receives significant attention in Index A will have, instead of a listing of pages, a reference to that index.

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