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## Moses 1 and the Apocalypse of Abraham: Twin Sons of Different Mothers?

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# MOSES 1 AND THE APOCALYPSE OF ABRAHAM: TWIN SONS OF DIFFERENT MOTHERS?

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Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, David J. Larsen, and Stephen T. Whitlock

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In this article, we describe significant resemblances in narrative structure between the story of heavenly ascent given in Moses 1 and an ancient text of Jewish origin called the *Apocalypse of Abraham (ApAb)*.

As both “the earliest mystical writing of Judaeo-Christian civilization”<sup>1</sup> and a foundational text for Islamic scripture,<sup>2</sup> *ApAb* plays a prominent — and in some respects unique — role in its genre. Notably, *ApAb* is “the only Jewish text to discuss foreordination, Satan’s rebellion, and premortal existence.”<sup>3</sup> Adding inestimably to the value of the text itself is the singular series of six beautiful color illustrations within the *Codex Sylvester*, “the oldest and the only independent manuscript containing the full text of *ApAb*.”<sup>4</sup> Photographs of the original illustrations are published here for the first time. Besides their intrinsic merit as works of ancient

religious art, these illustrations shed light on how medieval Christians in the East understood the older Jewish text in their day.

Because studies comparing ancient manuscripts with modern scripture are bound to be controversial, we will begin with a somewhat lengthy section addressing questions about our purpose and methodology. Why did we undertake this study in the first place, and how did we carry it out? (Section 1). Following this prologue, we will provide a brief overview of the genre of “heavenly ascent” from which both *ApAb* and Moses 1 are drawn. We will describe how accounts of “heavenly ascent” are different from but related to the experience of “ritual ascent” as experienced in temples (Section 2). Then, we will show that each major element (and nearly all of the secondary elements) of the two-part narrative structure of heavenly ascent in Moses 1 is mirrored in *ApAb* and, importantly, almost always in the same sequence (Section 3). Finally, we will close this article by addressing the significance of the witness of ancient manuscripts such as *ApAb* for the Book of Moses as a whole (Section 4).

## 1. Purpose and Methodology

In this section, we will address three questions:

- What can we learn by comparing ancient texts with modern scripture?
- Why should it matter whether the accounts in modern scripture have a basis in history?
- Can comparative research be conducted in a methodologically sound manner?

### What Can We Learn by Comparing Ancient Texts with Modern Scripture?

**How does this study differ from other comparative approaches?** There are a variety of comparative approaches that can be used to understand the texts and translations of modern scripture. For example, in the present study, our primary interest is in comparing Moses 1 with ancient sources *unknown* to Joseph Smith in support of arguments that the Prophet translated through a process dependent on divine revelation. On the other hand, some comparative studies seek to identify instances where Joseph Smith might have drawn on the Bible and other resources *known* to him as translation aids.<sup>5</sup> Yet other studies analyze intertextuality between the Bible and modern scripture with the goal of recognizing

and understanding the interplay of these texts, while generally setting aside questions about the translation process.<sup>6</sup>

It is evident that these different realms of comparative study should not be pursued in isolation. Rather, it seems important that those of us who happen to have a predilection by disposition or training for ancient studies, history, or literary methods actively immerse ourselves in ongoing research in those fields that are not as natural to us, allowing us to carefully weigh and incorporate the respective contributions of each line of inquiry as we jointly try to form a more comprehensive picture of modern scripture and how it came to be. Such a stance requires resisting the temptation to take the narrower and easier path that is bounded by personal inclination or professional discipline because of what J. J. M. Roberts, an eminent scholar of ancient studies, called “a loss of nerve, a decision to settle for a more controllable albeit more restricted vision.”<sup>7</sup> We agree with Roberts that:

scholars must continue to be conversant with fields outside their own discipline. To some extent one must depend on experts in these related fields, but unless one has some firsthand acquaintance with the texts and physical remains with which these related fields deal, one will hardly be able to choose which expert’s judgment to follow. There is no substitute for knowledge of the primary sources.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, as Roberts argues, the demanding requirements of broad scholarship prompted some more narrowly focused biblical scholars to retreat from comparative research just as it began to fully bloom. Subsequent analysis of this retreat revealed that:

many of the biblical scholars involved no longer controlled the primary sources for the extra biblical evidence. This lack of firsthand acquaintance with the non-biblical material is a growing problem in the field. It is partly a reflex of the growing complexity of the broader field of ancient Near Eastern studies: no one can master the whole field any longer.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, the challenge of mastering the required fields to undertake competent comparative research is in some respects even more daunting for students of Latter-day Saint scripture than it is for biblical studies. Scholars of modern scripture aspiring to comparative study need to not only master the Bible and relevant texts and contexts from the ancient world but ideally also must be fully conversant with Latter-day Saint scripture and doctrine as well as primary sources

relating to the nineteenth-century history of the Church and its wider setting. Moreover, they must wrestle with the fact that modern scripture is only available in English translation, making direct comparisons to the languages of ancient texts impossible.

To the degree we lack familiarity with each of these allied fields, there are important matters to which we will remain blind. For example, to the extent we have failed to master nineteenth-century Church history and sources we will not discover connections and influences among events proximal to the translation process. Likewise, without expertise in writings and backgrounds of the ancient world we will miss significant distal evidence of revealed history and truth that has been restored in modern scripture. No less important, if we have never learned to read, analyze, and compare the literary features of texts in a careful manner, we will remain blithely ignorant of significant details that sometimes provide unique clues to understanding.

Despite our immediate focus on comparing Moses 1 to ancient texts, we hope it will be apparent to readers that the present study has benefitted from the valuable work of historians and literary specialists. For example, our study of the history of translation process has led us to believe that Joseph Smith was not entirely bound to a character-by-character, word-by-word reproduction of source texts in his translations.<sup>10</sup> He understood that the primary intent of modern revelation is to give divine guidance to latter-day readers, not to provide precise matches to texts from other times. We also have come to see his involvement in the production of scripture as an exhausting personal effort that is better described in terms of active, immersive spiritual engagement than as passive reception and recital. Most importantly, as we seek to contribute to a comprehensive picture of the translation process, we have come to consider significant patterns of resemblance to ancient manuscripts that the Prophet could not have known and of unexpected conformance to conditions imposed by an archaic setting as potential indicators of antiquity that are best explained when the essential element of divine revelation is acknowledged.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Why should Moses 1 be compared with a work of pseudepigrapha?**

While we take the Book of Moses to be a work of scripture informed by authentic history, *ApAb*, our primary comparative text, is universally classed as a work of pseudepigrapha.

The term “pseudepigrapha,” which goes back to the second century, literally means “with false superscription.” In modern times it refers to Jewish or Christian writings, generally composed between 200 BCE and

200 CE, that are typically attributed to prominent Old Testament figures but that almost certainly did not originate with them.<sup>12</sup> For example, the text of *ApAb* as we have it today, though written in the first person as if Abraham were the author, was not composed by Abraham himself. (However, most scholars would acknowledge the possibility that there are ideas, themes, and stories in the account whose origins predate 200 BCE.)

Some scholars, having concluded from their study that Joseph Smith created modern scripture from a combination of textual borrowings and his own imagination, apply the term “pseudepigrapha”<sup>13</sup> (as well as the gentler term “midrash”<sup>14</sup>) to the Book of Abraham and the Book of Moses.<sup>15</sup> Thus, after studying a previous essay comparing the Book of Moses with pseudepigraphal texts, one reader asked, “Just to make sure I understand this correctly: The evidence of the Book of Moses not being pseudepigrapha is that [it] is very similar to pseudepigrapha?”<sup>16</sup> To answer this question properly, it needs to be restated: “Should it count as evidence that Joseph Smith did *not* simply invent the Book of Moses if we find that it resembles documents that are thought to have been invented but that are also known to be ancient?” The answer to this question is, we think, a qualified “yes.”

Of course, the only possible gold standard for a comparative study of Moses 1 would be a similar account of heavenly ascent known to have come directly from the hand of Moses himself. However, because we possess no such manuscript, we are obliged to make the most of what we have. Either we engage with the imperfect collection of extant comparative cohorts as best we can, or we do nothing at all.

**Can imperfect documents provide reliable evidence?** In light of our cultural and conceptual distance from the milieu of Moses, we are fortunate that imperfect documents from antiquity may nevertheless provide keys for understanding that “mysterious other world,”<sup>17</sup> even when existing manuscripts were written much later and, not infrequently, have come to us in a form that is riddled with the ridiculous.<sup>18</sup> C.S. Lewis once addressed the potential of ancient sources, even those of poor quality, to inform modern scholars in surprising ways. He illustrated his point by saying, “I would give a great deal to hear any ancient Athenian, even a stupid one, talking about Greek tragedy. He would know in his bones so much that we seek in vain. At any moment some chance phrase might, unknown to him, show us where modern scholarship had been on the wrong track for years.”<sup>19</sup>

In a few instances, our experiences in comparing Moses 1 to *ApAb* have revealed the truth of Lewis’ claim. For example, as we looked



carefully at Moses 1:27, a seemingly gratuitous and initially inexplicable phrase stood out: “as the voice was still speaking.”<sup>20</sup> Surprisingly, we found that *ApAb* repeated similar phrases in analogous contexts.<sup>21</sup> This discovery provided a welcome clue to a possible meaning of this enigmatic phrase in both Moses 1 and *ApAb* — a finding we will describe in more detail below.

**What kinds of claims can and cannot be made as a result of the study?** Of course, in using *ApAb* as the primary basis of comparison, we make no claim that its story of heavenly ascent has come to us in a pristine state, nor that the text must derive from an experience going back to Abraham himself. Neither would we feel obligated to affirm that the description of the heavenly ascent described in Moses 1 is a verbatim transcript of an ancient document originally authored *in toto* by Moses himself — indeed the chapter itself gives us reason to doubt this is so.<sup>22</sup> What is of interest, however, is that the major elements of the two separate accounts of heavenly ascent seem to draw on a common well of ritual and experience in a manner that belies the apparent fact that they were independently produced in timeframes that are separated by millennia.<sup>23</sup>

### **Why Should It Matter Whether the Accounts in Modern Scripture Have a Basis in History?**

**In what way has skepticism about the historicity of scripture created resistance to comparative studies?** Some scholars have come to the conclusion that there is little of genuine value that can be gleaned by comparing modern scripture to writings from antiquity. In part, this is because comparative studies sometimes have been conducted carelessly (see more on this below). However, a more important reason for the reluctance of some to embrace the comparative method is that they may see little or nothing of historical value in either the scriptural productions of Joseph Smith or in ancient traditions preserved inside and outside the Bible. If both the Moses of modern scripture and the Moses of ancient Near East tradition are largely, if not exclusively, literary rather than historical figures, why would a detailed comparison of their stories reveal anything real about the material past?<sup>24</sup> Old Testament scholar John Walton has summarized this aspect of the reasoning behind the tendency to devalue comparative research in the biblical context:

Resistance to comparative studies continues in some critical circles, especially those more focused on the biblical text simply as the literary output of an ancient culture. One result of this approach to the text is the conviction that there are

no real historical events behind the text to reconstruct. The current form of the text is viewed as the result of a long history of redactional activity that does not represent any specific time period or series of events. Historical criticism is therefore seen as fruitless, and literary criticism is in no need of comparative enlightenment.<sup>25</sup>

**Why is the historical basis of modern scripture important to Latter-day Saints?** While imperfections in the Bible will not greatly disturb or surprise most Latter-day Saints, their belief that the principal events and characters described in modern scripture have a basis in history and revelation is of great consequence to their faith. How so?

- First, Joseph Smith claimed to have met and conversed with many of these characters, including Moses;<sup>26</sup>
- Second, many ancient figures mentioned in modern scripture are presented at face value as historical characters in historical settings;
- Finally, and most importantly, some of these individuals are recorded as having personally transmitted priesthood authority and keys to Joseph Smith.

For these reasons, those who believe that Joseph Smith met, conversed with, wrote about, spoke about, and was given authority by divinely sent personages who formerly lived on earth also embrace by implication the idea that authentic history sits behind the records of the Prophet's visions, teachings, translations, and revelations.

### **Can Comparative Research Be Conducted in a Methodologically Sound Manner?**

**Why has the popularity of comparative research varied over time?** Recent decades have seen a relative decline of interest in comparative studies among Latter-day Saints. In part this is due to the recognition that such research has not always been conducted with adequate attention to needed methodological controls. Such carelessness may lead to unreasonable or excessive claims. The up and down trajectory in comparative study of Latter-day Saint scripture is somewhat analogous to the initial waxing and later waning of comparative research in biblical studies, as described by J. J. M. Roberts:

The tendency has been to overstress the importance of the background material in the first flush of discovery, and then, when

the flaws in the early interpretations have become obvious, to swing to the other extreme of largely ignoring the comparative material.<sup>27</sup>

### **How can common pitfalls in comparative research be avoided?**

To remedy flaws common in comparative analysis, several scholars have offered useful compendia of the pitfalls of the comparative approach, along with helpful guidelines.<sup>28</sup> Though studies that compare English translations of modern scripture to texts in ancient languages do not lend themselves to every technique employed in formal vocabulary studies, several types of controls can still be applied. As a starting point when comparing Moses 1 and *ApAb*, we have tried to address the following questions:

- **Could common factors in the environments of the authors of the accounts being compared account for their similarities?** We have not yet encountered significant, specific resemblances to Moses 1 as a whole in the writings of the biblical commentators and visionaries of Joseph Smith's time. Nor have we found evidence that the Prophet had access to relevant ancient accounts from which he could have borrowed significantly — other than the Bible itself. With respect to the Bible, a common explanation for Joseph Smith's account of Moses's heavenly ascent is that it was inspired by the story of Jesus's encounter with Satan in Matthew 4. However, as it turns out, Matthew's account is a relatively unfruitful source of comparison. Although Moses 1 and Matthew 4 share some general elements of one particular type scene tradition out of which both texts may have grown,<sup>29</sup> the specific resemblances are weak and limited to a small fraction of the Moses 1 narrative.
- **Are the resemblances densely or sparsely distributed?**<sup>30</sup> "Shotgun" approaches, where the text of primary interest is analyzed in relation to a much larger comparative text, almost inevitably pick up similarities in wording scattered sparsely throughout the longer text. To minimize this problem in the present study, we have limited the primary thrust of our comparison to two relatively short documents: our target of interest (Moses 1) and a cohort of reasonably comparable length (the heavenly ascent chapters of *ApAb*).
- **Are the accounts similar in genre and setting?** When commonality in genre and setting at the general level

(similar in spirit to what Nicholas Frederick calls “shared context”<sup>31</sup>) undergirds the accounts being compared, it strengthens the argument for additional, more specific resemblances. In the case of the heavenly ascents of Moses 1 and *ApAb*, the genres and settings of the two texts are highly similar.<sup>32</sup>

- **How much of the entire narrative is spanned by the resemblances?<sup>33</sup> How strong are the resemblances?** When comparing two accounts, it is important to avoid the tendency to highlight only a few points of narrative overlap with the primary text of interest.<sup>34</sup> The results of comparative studies are most convincing when strong evidence of common themes and narrative elements can be found across a large proportion of the text of primary interest.
- **To what extent do similar elements follow the same sequence?<sup>35</sup>** In the present study we do not merely consider the *number* of overlaps in narrative structure, but also commonalities in their *sequence*. A high correlation in the sequence of major narrative elements of the text of primary interest and its comparative cohort is a powerful form of evidence.
- **To what extent are both similarities and differences discussed?** Some studies rely on “cherry picking,” selecting only a small fraction of the most convincing similarities for comparison with the text of primary interest while ignoring or downplaying contradictory indications. In our study, we try to identify not only commonalities in narrative elements but also some of the more important differences in perspective within those elements. For example, although the heavenly ascents of Moses 1 and *ApAb* are similar in that they culminate in the presence of God, we highlight and attempt to account for the fact that Moses sees God “face to face” whereas *ApAb* insists that Abraham *will not* (and, presumably, *cannot*) see Him. We also employ Frederick’s criterion of “dissimilarity,”<sup>36</sup> making note of significant instances where Moses 1 and *ApAb* uniquely share an unusual description or event that is neither found in the Bible nor elsewhere in relevant pseudepigrapha.

While it has not been possible to apply every recommendation in the literature to our study in rigorous fashion, we have tried to be sensitive to the pertinent issues. In some cases, we have had to adapt standard practice to deal with challenges specific to our two texts. For example, we have tried to avoid placing too much stress on the specific wording of resemblances in Moses 1 and *ApAb* — especially because in both cases we are dealing with English translations rather than ancient originals.<sup>37</sup> Instead, we usually focus on resemblances in themes and sequencing of narrative elements, especially where the presence and ordering of such elements are recognized by relevant scholarship as belonging to the genre.

**Summary and conclusions.** In concluding this section, we cite the perspective of John Walton, who shares our optimistic view of the value of comparative study and the possibility of respectful collaboration with scholars of all persuasions. A comparative study of the kind he advocates

does not attempt to negate the concept of sources or the idea of long periods of composition. It merely indicates [in some cases] that comparative study is capable of offering some correctives to some of the assumptions and conclusions of source theory. ... Despite [some] pockets of resistance, critical scholarship as a whole has tended to absorb the data provided by comparative studies and adjust its theories accordingly. Comparative study poses a threat not to critical scholarship but only to occasional theories that critical scholars have espoused.<sup>38</sup>

We also agree with the balanced assessment of J. J. M. Roberts about the value of comparative analysis. He notes that although it “has never proven a particular interpretation, it has certainly ruled out some and suggested others.”<sup>39</sup> In addition, we are persuaded that the process of careful comparison can increase understanding and appreciation of otherwise obscure details that appear in both modern scripture and ancient texts.

Of course, we do not think it advisable, or even possible, to “find the key to every [scriptural] phenomenon in some ancient Near Eastern precedent.”<sup>40</sup> However, we think that in the case of Moses 1 it is appropriate to put the claim of ancient affinities in modern scripture to the test of scholarship by “silhouett[ing] the [scriptural] text against its wider literary and cultural environment”<sup>41</sup> in antiquity. And, importantly, in doing so “we must not succumb either to ‘parallelomania’ or to ‘parallelophobia.’”<sup>42</sup>



Figure 1. Joseph Brickey: *Moses Seeing Jehovah*.<sup>43</sup>

## 2. Moses 1 As an Account of Heavenly Ascent

Both the overall narrative structure and specific details within Moses 1 place it squarely in the genre of the ancient heavenly ascent literature.<sup>44</sup> Temple-going Latter-day Saints who read accounts of heavenly ascent will quickly discover that the structure and symbols found in such accounts are strongly related to the theology and rites of the temple.<sup>45</sup>

However, while stories of heavenly ascent bear important similarities to ancient and modern temple worship, they make the claim of being something more. Whereas temple rituals dramatically depict a *figurative* journey into the presence of God, the heavenly ascent literature contains stories of exceptional individuals who experienced *actual* encounters with Deity within the *heavenly temple*<sup>46</sup> — the “completion or fulfillment” of the “types and images” found in earthly ordinances.<sup>47</sup> In such encounters, individuals may experience a vision of eternity,<sup>48</sup> participate in worship and song with the angels,<sup>49</sup> and have certain blessings conferred upon them that are “made sure”<sup>50</sup> by the voice of God Himself. They may also acquire membership and a mission as a member of the divine council,<sup>51</sup> as is outlined with specific reference to Moses 1 in Stephen O. Smoot’s helpful exploration of this topic.<sup>52</sup>

In a 2014 *BYU Studies Quarterly* publication, it was suggested that the law of consecration lived by Enoch's people and the record of their resulting heavenly ascent in Moses 6–7 might be understood as the culminating episode of a temple text woven throughout chapters 2–8 of the Book of Moses.<sup>53</sup> The present article should be seen as a conceptual bookend to that piece, demonstrating that the account of heavenly ascent in Moses 1 provides a compelling *prelude* to the temple text in Moses 2–8. In the present study, we will show that certain aspects of the same general pattern in the Book of Moses — namely, heavenly ascent followed by a vision of the Creation and the Fall — holds in *ApAb* and elsewhere in selected Jewish, Christian, and Islamic tradition.<sup>54</sup>

### 3. Comparison of Moses 1 with the *Apocalypse of Abraham (ApAb)*

The *Apocalypse of Abraham* is thought to be Jewish in origin, though it has been preserved by Christian hands.<sup>55</sup> Contrary to early assessments that saw *ApAb* as a work that would have appealed mainly to fringe groups with mystical interests, recent scholarship embraces the conclusion that, when it was first composed, the teachings of *ApAb* reflected views held in large measure by mainstream Judaism.<sup>56</sup>

Though probably written in the first century CE, the work was not “introduced to Western readers” until 1897, through the German translation of Bonwetsch.<sup>57</sup> It is noteworthy that the first translation of an English edition of *ApAb*, based on Bonwetsch's German translation, was made by Latter-day Saint Richard T. Haag and published in the Church's *Improvement Era* magazine in 1898.<sup>58</sup>

Building on the earlier work of Hugh Nibley,<sup>59</sup> Jared Ludlow,<sup>60</sup> and Douglas Clark,<sup>61</sup> Bradshaw and Larsen<sup>62</sup> previously identified *ApAb* as a promising candidate for detailed comparison with Moses 1.<sup>63</sup> The present article significantly extends and updates their preliminary study.

This article focuses on the middle chapters of *ApAb* (9–23) that describe Abraham's heavenly ascent. An earlier section of *ApAb* relates the dispute with his idol-worshipping father (chapters 1–8) and a later portion of the text contains a detailed theological discussion between Abraham and the Lord (chapters 24–31).

**Overview of resemblances in narrative structure.** Accounts of heavenly ascent and temple ritual are not uncommonly structured into two main parts: a “down-road” followed by an “up-road.”<sup>64</sup> Consistent with this pattern, Moses 1 takes the prophet from a vision of his first home in the spirit world, then downward to the telestial world of the

mortal earth, and, finally, upward in a step-by-step return to God. Moses's experience culminates within the "heavenly temple," where he is shown a vision of the Creation, the Fall, and the essential role of the Atonement, as described in Moses chapters 2–5. Notably, the grand vision of Enoch in Moses 6–7 contains some of the same elements as Moses 1, with some variation in sequence and emphasis.<sup>65</sup>

In the overview diagram in Figure 2, thematic resemblances of the heavenly ascent chapters of *ApAb* to the narrative themes of Moses 1 have been roughly classified according to the section of the Moses 1 account in which they appear.<sup>66</sup> The frequency of resemblances of *ApAb* to Moses 1 in a given section is represented by a number.

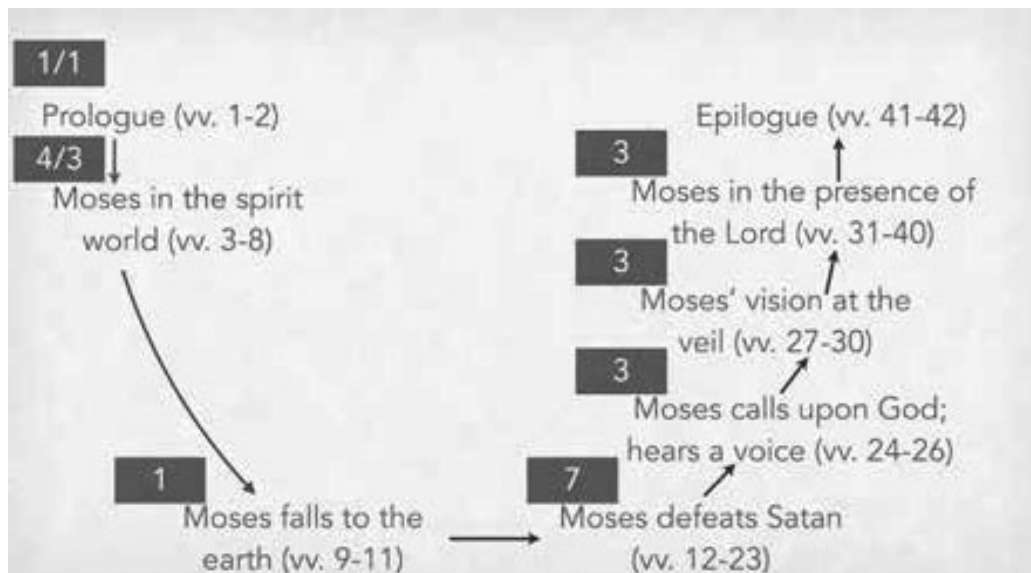


Figure 2. Number of resemblances with *ApAb* chapters 9-23 superimposed on the narrative structure of Moses 1.

The slash and second number that appear next to the first two sections refer to a few of the significant resemblances of *ApAb* to the Book of Abraham in the early part of the account. Although our text of primary interest is Moses 1, we felt that these particular affinities of *ApAb* to another of Joseph Smith's translations were of such importance and relevance that they should not be ignored.

By the term "thematic resemblances," we mean instances where reasonably similar topics of discussion occur in both texts, even when perspectives on that topic may differ. The criterion of thematic similarity rather than identical vocabulary is appropriate because we are comparing two English translations.



The summary of resemblances shown in Figure 2 paints an interesting picture. It is evident that the resemblances are not confined to limited sections of Moses 1 but rather are spread throughout the chapter.<sup>67</sup> The resemblances themselves are highly varied and tend to be unique within a given section of the narrative.

Importantly, not only the *occurrence* but also the *sequence* of common elements of the two texts is similar, satisfying a stronger comparative criterion that resemblances should form part of “a highly intricate pattern rather than [the simple matching of] an isolated ‘motif.’”<sup>68</sup> There is only one important exception to this consonance in narrative order: Moses’s vision of premortal spirits occurs near the beginning of his vision, whereas Abraham receives a similar view near the end of his vision. This anomaly is discussed in more detail later on.

**Value of the accompanying illustrations.** Over and beyond the value of the account itself, the beautiful accompanying illustrations in the *Codex Sylvester* manuscript of *ApAb* add to our understanding. The illustrations shed light on how medieval Christians in the East understood the text. In at least one case, it is clear that these Christians interpreted these stories differently than the first- or second-century redactor.

In addition to their appearance in the fourteenth-century manuscript, the illustrations are included in a facsimile edition first published in 1891.<sup>69</sup> Though a reproduction of one of the facsimile images was used previously in an article by Hugh Nibley,<sup>70</sup> so far as we have been able to learn, the full set of six illustrations from the facsimile edition had not been in print for more than a century when we photographed them in 2009.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the photographs of the corresponding pages in the *original* manuscript are published for the first time in this article. While the facsimile versions reveal some things that might otherwise be obscure, the photographs of the original manuscript are better witnesses of the care and artistry with which the miniatures were executed, particularly with respect to facial features and other minute details.

As would be expected in an account of heavenly ascent, the illustrations depict ordinances (such as sacrifice), along with various symbols associated with the temple and its priesthood.<sup>72</sup> In Figure 3, Abraham appears with a group of sacrificial animals.<sup>73</sup> The figure at right is Yaho’el, an angel bearing the name of Deity who will accompany Abraham in his heavenly journey. His body, face, and hair are also meant to signal the reader that his presence is akin to that of God Himself. The turban, blue robe, and golden staff recall a royal high-priestly figure.<sup>74</sup>



Figure 3. Abraham with Sacrificial Animals. Left: Photo of the Codex Sylvester. Right: Photo of the facsimile version.

Although Yaho'el is depicted in Figure 3 in human form, the text of *ApAb* describes him as a composite being: both man and bird.<sup>75</sup> While his anthropomorphic aspects feature high-priestly imagery, his pteromorphic aspects are those of a griffin<sup>76</sup> — a mythical creature that combines the form and powers of a falcon<sup>77</sup> and a lion. Other angelic beings in *ApAb* are also described as birds, including the Satan-like Azazel (specifically referred to as an “impure bird”<sup>78</sup>).<sup>79</sup>

Despite scattered references to “griffin-like” angels who provide transport to heaven for visionaries that appear in Jewish mystical texts and medieval legends, Andrei Orlov finds the birdlike imagery in *ApAb* “puzzling,” especially in light of the fact that “the primary angels in the apocalyptic and Merkabah materials are usually depicted as anthropomorphic creatures.”<sup>80</sup> He can account for the birdlike features of the angels in *ApAb* only in the general tendency of the text to avoid attributing human likeness to God to heavenly beings.<sup>81</sup>

Of possible relevance, however, is Hugh Nibley's reminder that both *ApAb* and the *Testament of Abraham*<sup>82</sup> “are full of Egyptian matter.”<sup>83</sup> For instance, the god Horus, the son and successor of the great god Osiris was typically represented as a falcon (or as a human-like creature with a falcon head). Horus “could also appear as a griffin”<sup>84</sup> — suggesting an analogue to the portrayal of Yaho'el as part griffin. One also recalls the appearance of an Azazel-like character who opposes Horus in Nibley's reading of de Buck's interpretation of Egyptian ritual texts as a ritual drama.<sup>85</sup> Nibley describes the drama in detail as depicting a “false” Horus depicted as a hyperbolic braggart who attempts to deceive Osiris by taking the form of a bird (falsely purporting to be the very form of Horus<sup>86</sup>) in order to usurp the role of the “true” Horus.<sup>87</sup>

In addition to the general resemblances in the character and griffin-like appearance of Horus, his role in conducting the dead “into the presence of Osiris”<sup>88</sup> is not inconsistent generally with the role of Yaho'el in bringing Abraham into the presence of God. One might also point to accounts where Horus and Yaho'el are both associated with the rescue of prominent protagonists threatened by death. In Egyptian myth, Horus is credited with saving his father Osiris,<sup>89</sup> while Yaho'el is sent to help Abraham immediately after the latter's close brush with fatal disaster when his father Terah's house was destroyed by fire (Figure 4).<sup>90</sup>

While none of these conjectures about Egyptian influence on *ApAb* are definitive, they do suggest intriguing possibilities for future research.<sup>91</sup>



Figure 4. The House of Terah Destroyed by Fire.

We now provide specific phrase-by-phrase comparisons of themes in the corresponding narrative structure of the two texts, occasionally supplemented by references to relevant material in the Book of Abraham and ancient Near East texts.

## Prologue

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
<b>Setting</b>	an exceedingly high mountain (1:1)	a high mountain (9:8)
<b>Sacrifice</b>	revealed from God to Abraham, as he offered sacrifice upon an altar (Abraham, Facsimile 2, figure 2)	Go ... and set out for me a pure sacrifice (9:5)

Table 1. Resemblances for the Prologue (Moses 1:1–2)

**Setting.** Like the Book of Moses, the first chapter of the heavenly ascent section of *ApAb* mentions a high mountain.

**Sacrifice.** In *ApAb*, the high mountain is to be a place of sacrifice. The prophet wears his robe on the left shoulder, in priestly fashion, as he performs the sacrifice (Figure 5).<sup>92</sup> Consistent with the settings and situations described in *ApAb* and in Genesis 15, a figure from Facsimile 2 of the Book of Abraham states that knowledge was “revealed from God to Abraham, as he offered sacrifice upon an altar, which he had built unto the Lord.”<sup>93</sup> Though this detail is not explicitly mentioned in the Book of Moses, it is not unreasonable to presume a similar setting.<sup>94</sup>

## Moses in the Spirit World

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
<b>Aretology</b>	the Lord God Almighty, Endless (1:3)	the primordial and mighty God (9:3)
<b>God to show a vision of eternity</b>	I will show thee the workmanship of my hands (1:4)	I shall ... make you know secrets (9:5–6)
<b>Reason for God’s favor</b>	Thy servant has sought thee earnestly (Abraham 2:12)	since you loved to search for me (9:6)
<b>The prophet is commissioned</b>	I have a work for thee, Moses, my son, and thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten ... full of grace and truth (1:6)	I called you my friend (9:6)

Table 2. Resemblances for Moses in the Spirit World (Moses 1:3–6).–6).<sup>95</sup>



Figure 5. Abraham's Sacrifice Is Accepted of the Lord.

**Aretology.** In both the Book of Moses and *ApAb*, the prophet is given a description of God’s majesty. Formally, such a description is termed an “aretology.” The titles “Almighty” (Book of Moses) and “mighty” (*ApAb*) recall the demonstration of God’s power over the waters as the first act of Creation<sup>96</sup> and in the destruction of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea.<sup>97</sup> Significantly, Moses will later “be made stronger than many waters ... as if thou wert God.”<sup>98</sup>

Both “Endless” (Book of Moses) and “primordial”<sup>99</sup> (*ApAb*) are related to the characterization of God as being “without beginning of days or end of years.” “Endless”<sup>100</sup> corresponds to the Hebrew *Ein Sof* (“without end,” “beyond all limits”), a concept that in the medieval *Kabbalah* is sometimes depicted visually as a set of concentric circles with their “end embedded in their beginning, and their beginning in their end.”<sup>101</sup> Such imagery recalls the description in Latter-day Saint scripture of God’s course as “one eternal round.”<sup>102</sup>

**God to show a vision of eternity.** In both texts, a vision of eternity is promised. In Alexander Kulik’s translation of *ApAb*, he elaborates on *ApAb*’s mention of “secrets,”<sup>103</sup> describing them as “great things” that are “kept”<sup>104</sup> (or “hidden”<sup>105</sup>). These ancient descriptions resonate with the Book of Mormon prophet Ether’s mention of “*greater things*, the knowledge of which is *hid up*.”<sup>106</sup> In Jewish tradition, such “secrets” include both a knowledge of “the system by which the whole cosmos is put together”<sup>107</sup> (what the Lord describes to Moses as “the workmanship of my hands”<sup>108</sup>) and also the revelation of what God is about to do<sup>109</sup> (i.e., the things that will be shown in vision to Moses and to Abraham<sup>110</sup>).

**Reason for God’s favor.** In the Old Testament, the promise of seeing the face of God is frequently associated with whole-hearted *searching* of the petitioner.<sup>111</sup>

**The prophet is commissioned.** Because each of the two prophets have found God’s favor, they both receive personal titles and commissions. Stephen O. Smoot has shown that the conferral of the title of God’s “son”<sup>112</sup> on Moses might be seen as ratifying the prophet’s membership in the divine council.<sup>113</sup> Though at first glance the words “Only Begotten” and “full of grace and truth” in Moses 1 might seem to be nothing more than obvious borrowings in language from the Gospel of John, biblical and extrabiblical texts convincingly demonstrate that these expressions are at home in a text about Moses.<sup>114</sup>

In Arabic, Abraham is often referred to as *al-Khalil*, “the Friend,” meaning the friend of God.<sup>115</sup> The teachings and revelations of Joseph Smith sometimes use “friend” as a technical term,<sup>116</sup> denoting one

who is personally acquainted with the Lord and, like the members of the divine council, has firsthand knowledge of the divine will.<sup>117</sup>

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
<b>Vision of the spirit world</b>	Moses ... beheld the world upon which he was created ... and all the children of men which are, and which were created (1:8)	And I saw there a great crowd of men, and women, and children ... before they were created (21:7, 22:2)
<b>Cosmic circle with opposing premortal forces</b>	Circular <i>hypocephalus</i> representing the universe, its two vertical divisions representing light and life (right side) and darkness and death (left side) (Facsimile 2, Book of Abraham)	the fulness of the whole world and its circle ... half of them on the right side of the portrayal, and half of them on the left side of the portrayal (12:10 (Box), 21:7)
<b>Some of the spirits are chosen</b>	among all these were many of the noble and great ones ... These I will make my rulers (Abraham 3:22, 23)	Those on the right side ... are the people set apart ... to be born of you and to be called my people (22:5)

Table 3. Resemblances for Moses in the Spirit World (Moses 1:8; Facsimile 2, Abraham 3:22–23).

**Vision of the spirit world.** Both Moses 1 and *ApAb* include a vision of the premortal spirit world. Moses is shown the “world upon which he was created” — which arguably refers to the creation of humankind before Creation in the preexistent spirit realm<sup>118</sup> — and “all the children of men which are, and which *were* created.”<sup>119</sup> Likewise, in *ApAb*, Abraham is shown “a great crowd of men, and women, and children” before they “came into being.”<sup>120</sup> In an exceptional deviation of narrative sequence between the two texts, we note that Abraham’s vision of premortal spirits occurs toward the end of his vision rather than near the beginning as in Moses 1.

**Cosmic circle with opposing premortal forces.** After passing through the celestial curtain, Abraham will see a “picture” on a “visionary screen,”<sup>121</sup> that is “projected” on the backside of the heavenly veil. By means of this image, accompanied by God’s explanations, he will obtain “a knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.”<sup>122</sup> Rubinkiewicz is careful to clarify that the term used for “picture” likely refers to something more like a “model” or “likeness”<sup>123</sup> of heaven and earth than a photographic reproduction.<sup>124</sup> He observes that “the idea that the model of the created world existed before Creation is widespread in the apocryphal literature.”<sup>125</sup>



Hinting at the geometrical shape of the model Abraham will be shown, Yaho'el tells him, "I will ... shew thee ... the fulness of the whole world and its *circle*."<sup>126</sup> In biblical cosmology, circles are used to "indicate the horizon where the earth comes together with the sky."<sup>127</sup>

In light of Hugh Nibley's extensive analysis of circular depictions of the cosmos,<sup>128</sup> it becomes possible to conjecture a general possibility for what Abraham's peculiar (and otherwise difficult-to-explain) vision of the premortal spirits of humankind in *ApAb* was supposed to look like — namely, "a graphic representation of 'the whole world [and] its circle,'<sup>129</sup> in which the human race, God's people and the others,<sup>130</sup> confront each other beneath or within the circle of the starry heavens, on opposite halves of the picture":<sup>131</sup>

[In *ApAb*, Abraham] sees the division of the earth's inhabitants into opposing hosts, "half ... on the right side of the portrayal and half ... on the left side of the portrayal."<sup>132</sup>

Noting general resemblances to Egyptian hypocephali, Nibley writes:

Almost all hypocephali [including Facsimile 2 of the Book of Abraham] ... are ... marked by strong vertical divisions right down the middle. ... This cosmic bisecting is prominent in Egyptian temples [where] "everything on the right side of the worshipper in the temple was on the south side, the side of light and life, while everything on the left side was north, darkness and death."<sup>133</sup>

Nibley also observed that in the *ApAb* account of Abraham's vision one can see a "throne of fire under which are four fiery creatures, each with four faces, those of a lion, man, ox and eagle."<sup>134</sup> Significantly, these figures correspond to "the canopic figures, figure 6 on [Book of Abraham] Facsimile 2."<sup>135</sup> Moreover, Michael Rhodes notes that the first part of the description of the picture in *ApAb* 12:10 ("what is in the heavens, on the earth and in the sea, in the abyss"<sup>136</sup>) "is almost an exact translation of the Egyptian words in the left middle portion of Facsimile Number 2 of the Book of Abraham (figures 9 and 10)."<sup>137</sup>

Whether or not *ApAb* is depicting an actual hypocephalus, this or a similar representation of the cosmic circle would be consonant with the evidence for other Egyptian influences in the text that we have already described.



Figure 6. Two Egyptian hypocephali, representing circular depictions of the cosmos.  
Top: British Museum 35875 (formerly 8445c); bottom: Louvre Museum E 6208.<sup>138</sup>

**Some of the spirits are chosen.** In the Book of Abraham, the Lord points out the many “noble and great ones” that were chosen before they were born.<sup>139</sup> Likewise, in *ApAb* (and within other Jewish and Islamic accounts in similar fashion<sup>140</sup>), a premortal group of spirits shown “on the right side ... of the portrayal”<sup>141</sup> is “set apart ... to be born of [Abraham]” and to be called “[God’s] people.”<sup>142</sup>

Although some scholars take this and other passages as evidence of a strong belief in determinism that pervades *ApAb*, Amy Paulsen-Reed has pointed to other passages in *ApAb* that demonstrate a belief in free will. She has convincingly concluded that *ApAb* “seems to fit quite comfortably into the category called ‘compatibilism.’”<sup>143</sup> In the specific version of compatibilism that appears to be espoused in *ApAb*, “a belief in divine election, i.e., that God has a predetermined plan for the world, including his election of Abraham and the people of Israel, [is] combined with the belief that individuals have the power to choose their lot.”<sup>144</sup>

### Moses Falls to the Earth

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
<b>Fall and loss of strength</b>	Moses ... fell unto the earth ... And ... it was for the space of many hours before Moses did receive his natural strength (1:9–11)	I ... fell down upon the earth, for there was no longer strength in me (10:2)

Table 4. Resemblances for Moses Falls to the Earth (Moses 1:9–11).

**Fall and loss of strength.** Following their initial divine encounter, both prophets experience a “fall to the earth” that leaves them vulnerable to the will of the Adversary.<sup>145</sup> Abraham is reported as saying, “I ... fell down upon the earth, for there was no longer strength in me,” closely resembling the description in Moses 1 where we are told that he “fell unto the earth” and lost his “natural strength.”<sup>146</sup>

While modern readers might easily skim over the description of the fall and the raising of the two prophets, thinking it of little interest, it was clearly a significant event to the ancient illustrator, who found it important enough to include it among the six passages he highlighted with visual depictions.<sup>147</sup> The drawing depicts Abraham being raised up out of sleep — or perhaps death<sup>148</sup> — by the hand of Yaho’el, who, using the right hand, lifts him firmly by the wrist.<sup>149</sup> The rays emanating from the hand of God<sup>150</sup> impart the spirit of life, recalling the creation of Adam, when God “breathed ... the breath of life” into the first man, and he became “a living soul.”<sup>151</sup>



Figure 7. Abraham Falls to the Earth and Is Raised by Yaho'el.

Medieval Christian depictions such as this one shown in Figure 8 that show of the resurrected Christ raising up the dead by the same gesture<sup>152</sup> further guide our intuitions about the importance of the raising of Moses and Abraham and how it may have been meant to be understood by the illustrator of the Codex Sylvester.



Figure 8. *The Harrowing of Hell. The Barberini Exultet Roll, ca. 1087.*<sup>153</sup>  
 Note that Jesus is depicted as having two right hands, consistent with related accounts of God in Jewish Midrash.<sup>154</sup>

## Moses Defeats Satan

**Satan disrupts the worship of God.** Recalling Satan’s encounter with Christ in the wilderness,<sup>155</sup> the Adversary tempts the prophet — in his physically weakened state — to worship him (Moses 1) or, in the case of *ApAb*, to “Leave [Yaho’el] and flee!” In the Book of Moses, the title conferred by Deity on Moses as a “son of *God*” is explicitly challenged by Satan, who calls him a “son of *man*.”<sup>156</sup>

According to David Halperin, Satan’s tactics to deceive Abraham is a “last-ditch effort to retain his privileged place in heaven.”<sup>157</sup> If he can persuade Abraham “not to make his ascent, he will perhaps be able to keep his own privileged status.”<sup>158</sup>

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
<b>Satan disrupts the worship of God</b>	Satan came tempting him, saying: Moses, son of man, worship me (1:12)	And the impure bird flew down ... and said, “What are you doing, ... Leave [Yahoel] and flee! (13:4–5)
<b>Satan’s identity is questioned</b>	Moses ... said: Who art thou? (1:13)	I said to the angel, “What is this, my lord?” And he said, “This ... is [Satan]” (13:6)
<b>Satan contrasted with the prophet</b>	I am a son of God ... and where is thy glory, that I should worship thee? ... I can look upon thee in the natural man (1:13, 14)	[Yahoel]: “Reproach on you, [Satan]! Since Abraham’s portion is in heaven, and yours is on earth (13:7)

Table 5. Resemblances for Moses Defeats Satan (Moses 1:12–14).

**Satan’s identity is questioned.** Both Moses and Abraham ask their adversary for credentials, which, not unexpectedly, he fails to provide.<sup>159</sup> In the Book of Moses, the prophet questions Satan directly. By way of contrast, in *ApAb*, the angel Yaho’el mediates Abraham’s question. But it is an interesting sort of mediation, as indicated by the following summary of the conversation flow:

1. Satan addresses Abraham;
2. Abraham ignores Satan and converses with Yaho’el;
3. Yaho’el directly addresses Satan;
4. Abraham addresses Satan but only when and how Yaho’el instructs him to. Note how later, in 14:9, Abraham slips up and addresses Satan directly, for which he is sharply rebuked by Yaho’el.

Nowhere does Satan address Yaho’el.

**Satan contrasted with the prophet.** In both accounts, Satan’s attempt to disguise his identity is recognized. Lacking divine glory and heavenly inheritance, the Devil is easily and humiliatingly exposed.<sup>160</sup>

Documenting related instances of the Adversary’s deception, the Apostle Paul, drawing on early Jewish tradition,<sup>161</sup> spoke of Satan transforming himself “into an angel of light.”<sup>162</sup> With similar language, Joseph Smith also spoke of the Devil having appeared deceptively “as an angel of light.”<sup>163</sup>



Figure 9. *The Temptation of Christ, King Gagit I of Kars Gospels, ca. 1050.*<sup>164</sup>

Michael Stone sees a passage in the Latin *Life of Adam and Eve* as implying that “all Satan lacked to look like a heavenly angel was the glory. He lost the glory when he fell, and he could take it on temporarily in order to deceive Adam and Eve.”<sup>165</sup> Thus, Satan is depicted in illustrations of the temptation of Christ, as elsewhere in early Christian art, as angelic in form but differing in color — e.g., appearing with “false glory” in a blue tint rather than in a bright whiteness of glory (Figure 9).<sup>166</sup> Alternatively, one might interpret Satan’s blue color as his appearing, deceptively, in a form corresponding to the blue robe of the high priest, a robe that represented being clothed in the likeness of the body — the blue-black “shadow” — of the incarnate Logos.<sup>167</sup>

Moses, having received a taste of the celestial heights, had already learned to distinguish God’s glory from Satan’s pale imitation.<sup>168</sup> He challenged the Adversary, saying, “Where is *thy* glory, for it is *darkness* unto me? And I can judge between thee and God.”<sup>169</sup>

**Satan told to depart and cease his deception.** In similar terms, the Book of Moses and *ApAb* both relate a first command for Satan to depart. Both accounts specifically admonish him not to engage in further deception. In *ApAb*, as previously, Yaho’el mediates Abraham’s dialogue with Satan.

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
<b>Satan told to depart and cease his deception</b>	Get thee hence, Satan; deceive me not (1:16)	Depart from [Abraham]! You cannot deceive him (13:12–13)
<b>The prophet received the glory that Satan lost</b>	God said unto me [Moses]: Thou art after the similitude of mine Only Begotten (1:16)	the garment in heaven which was formerly yours [Satan’s] has been set aside for [Abraham] (13:14)
<b>Satan told to depart a second time</b>	Depart hence, Satan (1:18)	vanish from before me! (14:7)

Table 6. Resemblances for Moses Defeats Satan (Moses 1:16–18).

**The prophet received the glory that Satan lost.** Satan is reminded that the glory he previously possessed now belongs to the prophet. Moses’s words constitute a second “humiliating exposure of Satan” as an enemy rather than a son of God — reminding him of the divine declaration that Moses “actually *is* what his adversary falsely *claims* to be.”<sup>170</sup> In *ApAb*, Satan’s false pretensions and the prophet’s right to glory are both confirmed by the affirmation of Yaho’el that Satan’s heavenly garment is now reserved for Abraham<sup>171</sup> and that his erstwhile glory will be exchanged for Adam’s bodily “corruption.”<sup>172</sup>

**Satan told to depart a second time.** In both texts, Satan is again forcefully told to leave with no further discussion. Moses curtly commands, “Depart hence, Satan,” while in *ApAb* he is told, “Vanish from before me!” — or, in Rubinkiewicz’s translation, “Get away from me!”<sup>173</sup>

The wider context of Moses’ command for Satan to depart is noteworthy. In *ApAb* 14:5, Yaho’el instructs Abraham to preface his command for Satan to depart by saying: “May you be the fire brand of the furnace of the earth!”<sup>174</sup> which sounds like an artful way to say “Go to hell!”

**Satan’s final attempt to win the prophet’s worship.** In *ApAb*, Abraham momentarily gives in to Satan’s ploy to continue the dialogue, answering him deferentially, “Here am I, your servant!”<sup>175</sup> To ward off further danger, the angel gives Abraham a stern warning: “Answer him not! ... lest his [i.e., Satan’s] will affect you.”<sup>176</sup> In the Book of Moses, the goal of Satan’s demand is expressed more directly: “Worship me.”



	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
<b>Satan's final attempt to win the prophet's worship</b>	Satan cried with a loud voice, ... saying: I am the Only Begotten, worship me (1:19)	[Satan] said, "Abraham!" And I said, "Here am I, your servant!" And the angel said to me, "Answer him not!" (14:9-10)
<b>Satan's definitive departure following the invocation of the name of the Son of God</b>	Moses ... called upon God, saying: In the name of the Only Begotten, depart hence, Satan ... And ... he departed hence. (1:21)	When [Satan] saw the inscription ["In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit"] he was vanquished ( <i>The Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth</i> , 17)

Table 7. Resemblances for Moses Defeats Satan (Moses 1:19-23)

Significantly, the cosmic battles depicted in Moses 1 and *ApAb* are not head-on clashes between the titanic forces of opposing gods or demi-gods. Rather, they are the conflicts of mortals who are caught between those forces — being compelled to choose by devilish adversaries while at the same time being enabled to stand by heavenly powers. Marc Philonenko's analysis of this unusual aspect of *ApAb* applies equally well to Moses 1:

The interaction between the [good and malevolent powers] does not occur directly but rather through a medium of a human being — Abraham. ... Abraham thus becomes [the] place of ... battle between two spiritual forces. ... In [this] struggle ... the Prince of Lights and the Angel of Darkness are fighting in the heart of a man.<sup>177</sup>

**Satan's definitive departure following the invocation of the name of the Son of God.** In contrast to Satan's warrantless demand, Moses executes his authoritative command, thus forcing his adversary to depart through the power of the priesthood after the order of the Son of God.<sup>178</sup> The dramatic turning point of this episode hinges on Satan's desperate, false claim to be the Only Begotten, countered by Moses's triumphant invocation of the name of the *true* Only Begotten.

No corresponding passage is found in *ApAb*. However, a medieval Ethiopian text provides an interesting echo of a similar motif. As in Moses 1, it argues the potency of the divine *name* in driving Satan away. In an account of the battle between Satan's rebellious armies and the hosts of heaven, the angels twice charged Satan's ranks unsuccessfully. However, prior to their third attempt, they were given a cross of light

inscribed “In the *Name* of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” and “when Setna’el [Satan] saw that inscription he was vanquished.”<sup>179</sup>

### Moses Calls Upon God; Hears a Voice

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
Ascent to heaven	Moses lifted up his eyes unto heaven (1:24). upon the wings of his Spirit hath my body been carried away (2 Nephi 4:25)	the angel took me with his right hand and set me on the right wing of the pigeon and he himself sat on the left wing of the turtledove ... and carried me up (15:2–3)

Table 8. Resemblances for Moses Calls Upon God; Hears a Voice (Moses 1:24–26).

**Ascent to heaven.** The imagery of heavenly ascent on the wings of birds is a convention that goes back at least two thousand years.<sup>180</sup> In Figure 10 we see Abraham and Yaho’el ascending to heaven on the wings of the two birds provided by God but not divided at the time of the sacrifice.<sup>181</sup> As in earlier illustrations, Yaho’el holds Abraham firmly by the wrist, using the right hand.<sup>182</sup>

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Nephi was similarly “caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceedingly high mountain, which [he] never had before seen.”<sup>183</sup> Nephi later said that “upon the *wings of his Spirit* hath my body been carried away upon exceedingly high mountains,”<sup>184</sup> imagery that is arguably similar to the *ApAb* description of Abraham being raised up to heaven on the wings of a bird.<sup>185</sup>

In the Book of Moses, a context of priesthood ordinances seems implied. For example, having banished Satan by calling upon the name of the Only Begotten<sup>186</sup> (a motif that precedes baptism in some ancient Christian sources<sup>187</sup>), Moses was immediately afterward “filled with the Holy Ghost.”<sup>188</sup>

Further support for this idea is found in the fact that the description of Moses being “caught up”<sup>189</sup> (as Nephi was “caught away”) is phrased in what is sometimes termed the “divine passive.”<sup>190</sup> This syntactic form implies that his ascent was accomplished by God’s power and not his own.<sup>191</sup> The scriptural use of the divine passive may also indicate a context of priesthood ordinances. For example, we are told elsewhere that Adam was “*caught away* by the Spirit of the Lord” into the water and baptized.<sup>192</sup>



Figure 10. Ascent of Abraham and Yaho'el.

Note that the Apostle Paul, in a description similar to that of the experiences of Moses and Abraham, was “caught up” to the third heaven.<sup>193</sup> Going further, Hugh Nibley explained:

In the Old World accounts the hero is taken up to heaven by a dove; in the Joseph Smith revelations, it is by the Holy Ghost. The two are strikingly brought together in Abraham’s cosmic chart ([Book of Abraham,] facsimile 2), which has as its central theme the theophany, a design which does not depict but “*represents* God sitting upon His throne, revealing through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood; as, also, the sign of the Holy Ghost unto Abraham in the form of a dove” (explanation of Facsimile 2, figure 7). So there you have the whole situation — the dove that takes one to heaven is the Holy Ghost, who also instructs and teaches “through the heavens,” “revealing ... the grand Key-words ... as, also, the sign” by which alone supernal knowledge can be conveyed. It is exactly the same scenario in the Abraham apocrypha as in the Joseph Smith Book of Abraham.<sup>194</sup>

**Seeing God.** Moses 1:25 tells us that Moses “beheld [God’s] glory.” However, in an important divergence from the Book of Moses, *ApAb* has Yaho’el declare to Abraham “the Eternal One ... you will *not* see.”<sup>195</sup> Thus, the redactor of *ApAb* explicitly *rejects* any visualization of God and “insists on expressing the divine Presence in the form of the Deity’s Voice”<sup>196</sup> alone.

Importantly, however, the divine whisper or echo (Hebrew *bat kōl* בַּת קוֹל — literally, “daughter of the voice”) through which, in Jewish tradition, divine revelation continued aurally even after the open visions of the prophets had ceased,<sup>197</sup> was depicted for centuries in the art of Jewish synagogues and Christian churches as a divine hand. In portrayals of ritual or heavenly ascent, this hand was often shown as emerging from behind a cloud or veil, representing the obscuring boundary that separated earth from heaven.<sup>198</sup>

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
Seeing God	calling upon the name of God, he beheld his glory (1:25; cf. 1:31)	the Eternal One ... you will <i>not</i> see (16:3)
Passing through the veil	he heard a voice (1:25). Cf. 1:27: and while the voice was still speaking	And while he [the angel] was still speaking (17:1)
Many waters	Blessed art thou, Moses, for I, the Almighty, have chosen thee, and thou shalt be made stronger than many waters ... as if thou wert God (1:25)	behold a fire was coming toward us ... and a sound [voice] ... like a sound of many waters (17:1)

Table 9. Resemblances for Moses Calls Upon God; Hears a Voice (Moses 1:24–26).

A relevant example is shown in Figure 11, an illustration from a decoration on the Torah shrine of the synagogue at Dura Europos, built two centuries after the probable composition of *ApAb*. It is the “earliest known depiction of the hand of God in either Jewish or Christian art.”<sup>199</sup> Isaac, depicted behind the scene of his near sacrifice and clad in white clothing marked with reddish clavi,<sup>200</sup> is shown entering behind the veil of a tent sanctuary at the top of Mount Moriah.<sup>201</sup> This reading is supported by Jewish and early Christian texts suggesting that, in the *Akedah*, Isaac literally died, ascended to heaven, and was resurrected.<sup>202</sup> Note that the scene could be equally well-interpreted as a ritual simulating death, resurrection, and ascent to heaven, such as what seems to have been experienced by worshippers at Dura Europos.<sup>203</sup> The disembodied hand, a visualization of God’s body in “*pars pro toto*”<sup>204</sup> (i.e., the part shown representing all the rest) and of His heavenly utterance from behind the veil (i.e., the *bat kōl*<sup>205</sup>), is shown above the scene of the arrested sacrifice and to the immediate left of the tent sanctuary.<sup>206</sup>

Moses 1:25–31 describes the revelation of God as a progressive phenomenon, beginning with “a voice” and ending with a “face to face” encounter. Notably, the same sequence of divine disclosure is present in the story of the brother of Jared’s intimate encounter with the Lord “at the veil.”<sup>207</sup> In that account, the prayer of the brother of Jared is answered first with a divine voice,<sup>208</sup> then with seeing the finger of the hand of the Lord,<sup>209</sup> and finally with a view of the “body of [His] spirit.”<sup>210</sup>

**Passing through the veil: The voice of God.** In *ApAb* 17:3, the voice that accompanies Abraham’s passage through the veil is that of the angel Yaho’el. Yaho’el mediates God’s self-revelation to Abraham, as he previously mediated Abraham’s dialogue with Satan.<sup>211</sup> Yaho’el, standing with the prophet in front of the veil, gives encouragement to a fearful

Abraham, provides instructions to him about what to say at the veil, and promises to remain with him, “strengthening” him, as he comes into the presence of the Lord.<sup>212</sup>



Figure 11. Detail from the Torah shrine of the Dura Europos synagogue.<sup>213</sup>

In contrast to *ApAb*'s account of mediated revelation, Moses experiences the voice of God directly. At first, Moses hears God's voice but does not yet see Him “face to face.”<sup>214</sup> His experience parallels that of Adam and Eve, when they also “called upon the name of the Lord” in sacred prayer.<sup>215</sup> We read that “they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not,<sup>216</sup> for they were shut out from his presence.”<sup>217</sup> The “way toward the Garden of Eden” is, of course, the path that terminates in “the way of the Tree of Life.”<sup>218</sup> In the corresponding symbolism of the Garden of Eden and the temple, the Tree of Knowledge hides the Tree of Life, just as the veil hides the presence of God in His heavenly sanctuary.<sup>219</sup> To proceed further, the veil must be opened to the petitioner.

In Moses 1 and *ApAb*, multiple openings of multiple veils are signified explicitly if somewhat cryptically. We observe that in Moses 1:25, a significant *inclusio* opens with a description of how, after “calling upon God,” the Lord's glory “was upon” Moses “and he heard a voice.” In verses 30–31, the *inclusio* closes in similar fashion but states, significantly, that Moses *sees* God rather than just hearing Him: “Moses called upon God ... the glory of the Lord was upon Moses so that Moses stood in the presence of God, *and talked with him face to face.*” Sandwiched between the opening and closing of the *inclusio* is a phrase that is intriguing

because at first blush it seems both gratuitous and inexplicable: “as the voice was still speaking.”<sup>220</sup>

To our surprise, we discovered that *ApAb* repeats variants of a similar phrase (e.g., “And while he was still speaking”<sup>221</sup>). Further examination of these instances revealed a commonality in each of the junctures where it is used. In short, in each of the four instances where this phrase appears in *ApAb*<sup>222</sup> — as in its single occurrence in Moses 1:27 — the appearance of the phrase seems to be associated with an opening of a heavenly veil.<sup>223</sup>

In Moses 1, the phrase appears at the expected transition point in Moses’s ascent. We have already argued that when he “heard a voice” in v. 25, he was still positioned *outside* the veil. Immediately following the phrase “as the voice was still speaking,” he seems to have traversed the veil, allowing him to see every particle of the earth and its inhabitants projected on the *inside* of the veil. In this fashion, the veil serves in the Book of Moses as it typically does in similar accounts of heavenly ascent,<sup>224</sup> namely as “a kind of ‘visionary screen.’”<sup>225</sup> After the vision closes, Moses stands “in the presence of God” and talks with him “face to face.”<sup>226</sup>

We see a similar phenomenon repeated in *ApAb*. For example, the account explicitly describes how Abraham, after his ascent and while the angel “was still speaking,” looked down and saw a series of heavenly veils open beneath his feet, enabling his subsequent views of heavenly things.<sup>227</sup> Moreover, as Abraham traverses the heavenly veil in a downward direction as part of his return to the earth, the expression “And while he was still speaking” recurs.<sup>228</sup> Consistent with the change of glory that typically accompanies traversals of heavenly veils in such accounts, Abraham commented immediately afterward, “I found myself on the earth, and I said . . . I am no longer in the glory which I was above.”<sup>229</sup>

**Passing through the veil: The voice of the petitioner.** In ancient literature, passage through the veil is frequently accompanied not only with the sorts of divine utterance just described but also with human speech. For example, instances of formal prayer<sup>230</sup> and exchanges of words at the veil are variously described in Egyptian ritual texts,<sup>231</sup> Jewish pseudepigrapha,<sup>232</sup> and the Book of Mormon.<sup>233</sup> Similarly, in *ApAb*, a recitation of a fixed set of words, often described elsewhere as a “hymn,” “precedes a vision of the Throne of Glory.”<sup>234</sup>

In *ApAb*, Abraham is enjoined by the angel Yaho’el to recite a “hymn” in preparation for his ascent to receive a vision of the work of God.<sup>235</sup> Unlike other pseudepigraphal accounts of heavenly ascent, *ApAb* “treats the [hymn] sung by the visionary *as part of the means of achieving*

*ascent*.”<sup>236</sup> Near the end of Abraham’s recitation, he implores God to accept the words of his prayer and the sacrifice that he has offered, to teach him and to “make known to your servant as you have promised me.”<sup>237</sup> Then, “while [he] was still reciting the [hymn],” the veil opens and the throne of glory appears to his view.<sup>238</sup>



Figure 12. Moses with the sun, moon, and seven stars (i.e., planets) above his head from the Jewish synagogue at Dura Europos.<sup>239</sup> It represents Moses’s recitation of a “hymn” near the end of his ascent.<sup>240</sup>

Significantly, Abraham’s “form of ascension, where the literary protagonist reaches the highest sphere [of heaven] at once [rather than in stages] is only described in *ApAb* and cannot be found in any other apocalyptic text.”<sup>241</sup> Thus, *ApAb*’s account of Abraham’s direct entry to the highest heaven without first traversing a set of lower heavens is another unique resemblance to Moses 1.<sup>242</sup>

“**Many waters.**” After Abraham’s traversal upward through the veil “while [the angel] was still speaking,” he sees “a fire” and hears a “sound [i.e., voice] ... like a sound of many waters.”<sup>243</sup> Though a “comparison with the tumult of an army camp is not drawn explicitly here [like it is in Ezekiel 1:24], one may recognize in the sound an allusion to the



triumphant procession of a conqueror returning from war.”<sup>244</sup> “The heavenly light is of dazzling brilliance, the divine voice is like thunder.”<sup>245</sup> The resulting explosion of sensorial experience announces to all the arrival of the Lord of Hosts in the fulness of His glory.

As might be expected in light of the previous sequence of parallels in Moses 1 and *ApAb*, both texts share the imagery of “many waters.” However, by way of contrast to *ApAb*, the panoply of symbols employed to describe divine presence in Moses 1 is, astonishingly, applied to Moses himself. As in a hall of mirrors of cosmic scope, the verbal interplay of the scripture passage is “so constructed that, while one is always looking straight ahead at a perfectly solid surface, one is made to contemplate not the bright surface itself, but the bewildering maze of past circumstances and future consequence which ... it contains.”<sup>246</sup> Elsewhere, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Matthew L. Bowen<sup>247</sup> describe how the elegantly reflective, interlingual etymological nuances relating to a series of three temple-related names and titles ascribed to Moses by Clement of Alexandria (Joachim, Moses, Melchi) are made into various enriched likenesses of himself, interpreted and amplified in Moses 1 to reveal the latent character and identity of the prophet as a “God in embryo.”<sup>248</sup> The authors demonstrate how names such as these purportedly given to Moses are veritable “keywords,” allowing individuals like them to discover their destiny and enabling them to accomplish their heavenly ascent.

Jeff Lindsay illustrates the resonance of the imagery of Moses being made “stronger than many waters” with the Book of Mormon. He points out an allusion to the strength of Moses in 1 Nephi 4:2 that corresponds to Moses 1:20–21, 25 while having no strong parallel in the Bible.<sup>249</sup> Additionally Mark J. Johnson insightfully observes that the fact that Moses was “made stronger than many waters” already puts Moses in the similitude of God, God’s throne being on many waters.<sup>250</sup> Moreover, as God explains the significance of Moses’ name, He links it with one of His own titles: “Almighty.”<sup>251</sup> Fittingly, the divine name of “Almighty”<sup>252</sup> in Moses 1:4, 25 recalls the demonstration of God’s power over the waters of chaos as the first act of Creation.<sup>253</sup>

Consistent with this imagery, the promise to Moses of power over the waters resembles that given to David in Psalm 89:25. Like Moses, David is there depicted as a god — a “lesser YHWH” — on earth.<sup>254</sup> Moreover, E. R. Goodenough summarizes Philo’s view on the deification of Moses in ancient Jewish tradition as follows:<sup>255</sup>

Philo is so carried away by the exalted Moses that he frequently speaks of him as having been deified, or being God. “For when

he had left all mortal categories behind he was changed into the divine, so that he might be made akin to God and truly divine.”<sup>256</sup>

### Moses’s Vision at the Veil

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
<b>The prophet beholds the earth</b>	Moses cast his eyes and beheld the earth (1:27)	“Look now beneath your feet at the expanse and contemplate the creation” (21:1)
<b>The inhabitants of the earth</b>	he beheld also the inhabitants thereof (1:28)	and those who inhabit it (21:1)
<b>The prophet questions God</b>	Tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so, and by what thou madest them? (1:30)	Why ... have you set yourself with [Satan]? (20:7) Eternal, Mighty One! Why did you ordain it to be so? (26:1)

Table 10. Resemblances for Moses’s Vision at the Veil (Moses 1:27–30).

**The prophet beholds the earth.** The change in perspective as Moses passes upward through the heavenly veil is related in subtle beauty in the Book of Moses. Previously, as Moses stood on the earth, he “lifted up his eyes unto heaven.”<sup>257</sup> Now, after ascending to heaven, he “cast his eyes” down to see the earth and all of its inhabitants.<sup>258</sup> Similarly, Abraham is told, “Look now beneath your feet at the expanse [i.e., veil]<sup>259</sup> and contemplate the creation and those who inhabit it.”<sup>260</sup>

Significantly, Kulik notes that “Abraham’s exploration of the heavenly world in a *downward* direction as the heavens open below” is “unique” in the relevant heavenly ascent literature. He writes, “Other visionaries either moved from lower to upper firmaments or wandered in a horizontal direction.”<sup>261</sup> Remarkably, this feature, unique to *ApAb* in the pseudepigraphal literature, also appears in Moses 1.

The translation of Rubinkiewicz is stronger than that of Kulik, indicating that Abraham is not merely required to “contemplate” the creation and the inhabitants of the earth, but rather to “pay attention ... and *understand*”<sup>262</sup> it! How can Abraham come to understand the universe? In terms that echo the bipartite structure of the hypocephalus in Facsimile 2 of the Book of Abraham, Rubinkiewicz explains:

If we pay attention to our account, we will see an astonishing thing. Abraham sees the earth peopled by the wicked (v. 3), but he also sees Eden inhabited by the righteous (v. 6); God

shows him the sea ruled by Leviathan (v. 4), but Abraham also contemplates the “upper waters” that are above the firmament (v. 5). At the conclusion, he sees people at the left and right of the picture. What should Abraham understand by this vision? The answer is simple: the division between the righteous and the wicked is based on the structure of the world, where both the forces of evil (the earth and the wicked; the sea and Leviathan) and the forces of good (the “upper waters,” Eden) each have their place. The entire universe has thus been projected by God and “it is pleasing to Him” (22:2).<sup>263</sup>

In other words, as Lehi declared, “it must needs be that there is an opposition in all things” or else “there would have been no purpose in ... creation.”<sup>264</sup>

**The inhabitants of the earth.** In their visions, both Moses and Abraham seem to have not only seen the inhabitants of the earth but also witnessed the earth’s entire history from beginning to end — like Adam, Enoch, the Brother of Jared, John the Beloved, and others.<sup>265</sup> Moroni taught that those with perfect faith cannot be “kept from within the veil”<sup>266</sup> (i.e., cannot be kept *outside* the veil). The veil in question is the *heavenly* veil behind which God dwells in glory, whose *earthly* counterpart is the temple veil that divides the holy place from the holy of holies.<sup>267</sup>

Consistent with Jewish,<sup>268</sup> Islamic,<sup>269</sup> and other<sup>270</sup> ancient accounts, Abraham and Moses do not receive their cosmic visions until after they have passed through the heavenly veil. This is because the visions in such accounts, derived from a “blueprint”<sup>271</sup> of eternity that has been worked out before the Creation, are usually described as being depicted *inside* the heavenly veil.<sup>272</sup>

**The prophet questions God.** Now standing in the presence of God, Moses asks about the Creation: “Tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so?”<sup>273</sup> However, in an important divergence from Moses 1, in *ApAb*, Abraham asks two questions of a somewhat different nature, the first about the origin of evil in the world (“Why ... have you set yourself with [Satan]?”<sup>274</sup>) and later the other about the origin of evil in humankind (“Eternal, Mighty One! Why did you ordain it to be so?”<sup>275</sup>).

Moses will receive a partial answer to his question about “by what” God made these things through a vision of the Creation.<sup>276</sup> He will also be told something about “why these things are so.”<sup>277</sup> As with Moses, the answer to Abraham’s first question will be found in his vision of the Creation and the Fall. However, the answer to his second question will come he sees the unfolding of the history of Israel.<sup>278</sup> Scholars, especially those who date this section of *ApAb* to the years following the destruction of the temple, see

the subsequent material as the sort of thing that a first-century redactor might have inserted into a potentially pre-existing heavenly ascent text as a means of providing a plausible context for the theological questions he aimed to answer for his contemporaries.<sup>279</sup>

By way of contrast to *ApAb*, the questions about Creation posed by Moses are more universal and timeless.<sup>280</sup>

### Moses in the Presence of God

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
<b>God's purpose and will are His own</b>	For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is wisdom and it remaineth in me (1:31)	As the will of your father is in him ... so also the will desired by me is inevitable (26:5)
<b>Seeing the Lord face to face</b>	Moses stood in the presence of God, and talked with him face to face (1:31)	Abraham and Yahel speak with the Lord face to face ( <i>ApAb</i> illustration from <i>Codex Sylvester</i> )
<b>Vision of the Creation, the Garden of Eden, and the Fall</b>	Moses sees the creation of the earth (ch. 2), the Garden of Eden (ch. 3), and the Fall of Adam and Eve (ch. 4)	Abraham sees the creation of the earth (21:1–5), the Garden of Eden (21:6), and Satan inciting the Fall of Adam and Eve (23:1–14)

Table 11. Resemblances for Moses in the Presence of God (Moses 1:31–40).

**God's purpose and will are His own.** As the Book of Moses refers to “mine own purpose” and the “wisdom [that] remaineth in me,”<sup>281</sup> so *ApAb*, in the answer to Abraham's second question *after* his vision of the Fall, God declares “the will desired by me” is “inevitable” (i.e., “sure to come”<sup>282</sup>) just “as the will of your father is in him.” Kulik sees a “very similar context” in Ephesians 1:11, which combines the concepts of “purpose” and “will”: “predestined according to the *purpose* of him who does all things according to *the will desired by him*.”<sup>283</sup>

**Seeing the Lord face to face.** Of significance for the present study is that, in explicit contradiction to the previously cited text of *ApAb* where Yaho'el declared to Abraham that “the Eternal One ... himself you will *not* see,”<sup>284</sup> the fourteenth-century Christian illustrator of the *Codex Sylvester* seems to have had no qualms about representing God visually.<sup>285</sup>

In Figure 13,<sup>286</sup> Abraham and Yaho'el are “traveling ... about the air”<sup>287</sup> with “no ground [beneath] to which [Abraham] could fall prostrate.”<sup>288</sup> The figure pictured on the throne seems to be the Christ.<sup>289</sup>



Figure 13. Abraham and Yaho'el Before the Divine Throne.

His identity is indicated by the cruciform markings on His nimbus. Behind the enthroned Christ is a second figure, perhaps alluding to the statement in *ApAb* that “Michael is with me [i.e., the Lord] in order to bless you forever.”<sup>290</sup>

Beneath the throne are fiery seraphim and many-eyed “wheels” praising God. The throne is surrounded by a series of heavenly veils<sup>291</sup> separating the Lord from the material world — the latter being signified by the outermost dark blue veil. The representation of the veils as multicolored may stem from an interpretation of Ezekiel 1:28, where the glory of the Lord is likened to a rainbow. In the depiction shown here, the illustrator has deliberately chosen to use the colors of red, green, and blue.<sup>292</sup>

**Vision of the Creation, the Garden of Eden, and the Fall.** At this point, just as Moses is shown the events of the Creation and the Fall,<sup>293</sup> *ApAb* describes how the great patriarch looked down to see the affairs of what is called in modern revelation the “kingdoms of a lower order.”<sup>294</sup> The Lord’s voice commanded Abraham to “look,” and a series of heavenly veils were opened beneath his feet.<sup>295</sup> As in Moses chapters 2–3, Abraham is shown the heavenly plan for creation — “the creation that was depicted of old<sup>296</sup> on this expanse” (21:1<sup>297</sup>), its realization on the earth (21:3–5), the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Adam and Eve (21:6), and the spirits of all men — with certain ones “prepared to be born of [Abraham] and to be called [God’s] people (21:7–22:5).”<sup>298</sup> When Abraham is told again to “Look ... at the picture,” he sees Satan inciting the Fall of Adam and Eve (23:1–14),<sup>299</sup> just as Moses saw these events following his own heavenly ascent (Moses 4).<sup>300</sup>

#### 4. Why Is the Witness of Ancient Manuscripts for the Book of Moses Significant?

**What can and cannot be concluded from the study.** Those who accept Joseph Smith’s calling as a seer capable of receiving revelations about the past will find affirmation in the finding that the strongest resemblances between Moses 1 and the heavenly ascent literature are contained in ancient manuscripts the Prophet could not have known. *ApAb*, as well as other relevant documents found outside the Bible, such as the *Life of Adam and Eve*, the Greek version known as the *Apocalypse of Moses*, and *Fourth Ezra*, were not published in English until well after the appearance of the Book of Moses.<sup>301</sup>

Though arguments for ancient affinities within the Book of Moses are often dismissed out of hand by non-Latter-day Saints, some broad-minded specialists not of the faith have been willing to take them seriously. For example, the eminent Yale professor and Jewish literary scholar Harold

Bloom found the Book of Moses and the Book of Abraham two of the “more surprising” and neglected works of scripture of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>302</sup> He wrote that he was intrigued by the fact that many of the themes of these books are “strikingly akin to ancient suggestions.” While expressing “no judgment, one way or the other, upon the authenticity” of this modern scripture, he said that he found “enormous validity” in the way these writings “recapture ... crucial elements in the archaic Jewish religion ... that had ceased to be available either to normative Judaism or to Christianity, and that survived only in esoteric traditions unlikely to have touched [Joseph] Smith directly.”<sup>303</sup>

Of course, we cannot go beyond arguments for the plausibility of Moses 1 as an ancient text to draw conclusions about whether Moses actually ascended to heaven and experienced a vision of Creation. The reality of transcendent experiences finds its support in the realm of faith rather than scholarship.<sup>304</sup> As Hugh Nibley wrote with respect to the Book of Mormon, the only thing that might be argued with some confidence when evaluating the authenticity of ancient documents is that a given event

really *could* have happened. Not that it *did* happen: to prove that is neither necessary nor possible. Unique events in history can never be reconstructed with certainty; but characteristic related events — manners, customs, rituals, etc., things that happen not just once but again and again in familiar patterns — may be the object of almost absolute certainty. Hence, they, and not particular events, are the hardest things to fake; in testing forgeries and identifying documents it is the general pattern that is all-important.<sup>305</sup>

**Could it be that Moses 1 was revealed rather than simply imagined?** With a generous openness to Joseph Smith’s claim of the exercise of seeric gifts, Samuel Zinner, a non-Latter-day Saint who is a lifelong scholar of ancient scripture and pseudepigrapha suggests that

it might prove fruitful to apply to Joseph Smith’s modern-era Enoch writings Michael Stone’s<sup>306</sup> model whereby he posits that at least some ancient post-canonical literature ... may have been created under the impact of visionary experiences rather than having been authored exclusively by imitating previous literary works.<sup>307</sup>

It is our experience that those who study the Book of Moses in relation to other ancient religious documents may come through them to feel a spiritual kinship to those who have experienced, transcribed, or

redacted them. More importantly, they may hope, eventually, like Moses and Abraham, to catch a glimpse of the reality behind the “dark curtain” and a release from the limitations of human effort to confine experience of the divine within “the little, narrow prison” of mere words alone.<sup>308</sup> “Reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to *them*,” said the Prophet, “can never give *us* a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God. Knowledge of these things can only be obtained by experience through the ordinances of God set forth for that purpose.”<sup>309</sup> Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that was ever written on the subject.”<sup>310</sup>

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## Endnotes

- 1 Alexander Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha: Toward the Original of the Apocalypse of Abraham. Text-Critical Studies* 3, ed. James R. Adair, Jr. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 1.
- 2 See Carlos A. Segovia, “‘Those on the right’ and ‘those on the left’: Rereading Qur’an 56:1–56 (and the Founding Myth of Islam) in Light of Apocalypse of Abraham 21–22,” *Oriens Christianum* 100 (2017): 197–211, [https://www.academia.edu/2221521/\\_Those\\_on\\_the\\_Right\\_and\\_Those\\_on\\_the\\_Left\\_Rereading\\_Qurān\\_56\\_1-56\\_and\\_the\\_Founding\\_Myth\\_of\\_Islam\\_in\\_Light\\_of\\_Apocalypse\\_of\\_Abraham\\_21-2\\_2013\\_Conference\\_Paper\\_Scholarly\\_Article](https://www.academia.edu/2221521/_Those_on_the_Right_and_Those_on_the_Left_Rereading_Qurān_56_1-56_and_the_Founding_Myth_of_Islam_in_Light_of_Apocalypse_of_Abraham_21-2_2013_Conference_Paper_Scholarly_Article).
- 3 Jared W. Ludlow, “Abraham’s Vision of the Heavens,” in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, eds. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid, *Studies in the Book of Abraham* 3 (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 70, <http://farms.byu.edu/publications/books/?bookid=40&chapid=164>.
- 4 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 3.
- 5 E.g., Hans Rosekat [Colby Townsend], “The King James Bible in the Book of Moses, Part 1” *Rational Faiths* (blog), 12 April 2014, <https://rationalfaiths.com/king-james-bible-book-moses/>; Colby Townsend, “Appropriation and adaptation of J material in the Book of Mormon” (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 2016), <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/details?id=205723>; Colby Townsend, “Returning to the sources: Integrating textual criticism in the study of early Mormon texts and history,” *Intermountain West Journal of Religious Studies* 10, no. 1 (2019): 55–85, <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/imwjjournal/vol10/iss1/6/>; Thomas A. Wayment and Haley Wilson-Lemmon, “A Recovered Resource: The Use of Adam Clarke’s Bible Commentary in Joseph Smith’s Bible Translation,” in *Producing Ancient Scripture: Joseph Smith’s Translation Projects and the Making of Mormon Christianity*, eds. Mark Ashurst-McGee, Michael Hubbard MacKay, and Brian M. Hauglid (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2020), 262–84.
- 6 For example, Nick Frederick, who has focused much of his study on intertextuality between the Book of Mormon and the New Testament said:

Let’s just cut through the whole “the Book of Mormon is absolutely true” or “the Book of Mormon isn’t true” and just say, “Let’s accept the New Testament’s here [in a given Book of Mormon context].” . . . One of the things you have to do then is to get rid of all the places where it just sounds King James, and it could be from the New Testament, but you don’t really know. You have to get those out of the way, so you can determine where there are actual crystal-clear examples. Then we can really study these passages under a microscope and try to get a sense

of what this is doing. (Nicholas J. Frederick, “Intertextuality in the Book of Mormon,” interview by Laura Harris Hales, Episode 92, *LDS Perspectives Podcast*, <https://ldsperspectives.com/2018/08/22/intertextuality-book-mormon/>. Cf. Nicholas J. Frederick, “Line within line: An intertextual analysis of Mormon scripture and the prologue of the gospel of John” [Doctoral Dissertation, Claremont Graduate University, 2013].)

- 7 J. J. M. Roberts, “The Ancient Near Eastern environment,” in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 23.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Elsewhere, Bradshaw has summarized his views on Joseph Smith’s translation process in more detail. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Foreword,” in *Name as Key-Word: Collected Essays on Onomastic Wordplay and the Temple in Mormon Scripture* (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, 2018), ix–xliv.
- 11 As Hugh Nibley expressed the thought, if modern scripture shows “any tendency at all to conform to the peculiar conditions prescribed, its critics must be put to a good deal of explaining.” Hugh W. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert, The World of the Jaredites, There Were Jaredites: The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 5 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 114.
- 12 For a readable introduction to the pseudepigraphal literature, see James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1983), 2:xxi–xxxiv, <http://ocp.acadiau.ca/>.
- 13 See, e.g., David E. Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament: Genesis–Deuteronomy* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014), 141–47, 169–72.
- 14 See, e.g., David E. Bokovoy, “The Book Which Thou Shalt Write’: The Book of Moses as Prophetic Midrash,” in *The Expanded Canon: Perspectives on Mormonism and Sacred Texts* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2018), 131–33.
- 15 See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Sorting Out the Sources in Scripture,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 9 (2014): 230–41, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/sorting-out-the-sources-in-scripture/>, for a discussion of weaknesses in Bokovoy’s arguments that characterize the Book of Moses and the Book of Abraham as pseudepigrapha. In addition to discussing several specific arguments used by Bokovoy in defense of this label, Bradshaw, in agreement with Kevin Barney, makes the following general observations:

Another difficulty with [the] description of the Book of Moses as an inspired pseudepigraphon is that tends to paint LDS readers into discrete camps. As a label, the term “pseudepigrapha” has an all-or-nothing feel. For that reason, it fails to capture a more nuanced view that could allow for the possibility of not only significant theological connections with ancient Israel — a position explicitly adopted by [Bokovoy] — but also authentic historical material reflecting memories of events in the lives of Moses and Abraham embedded in the text that Joseph Smith produced (even though he produced it in the nineteenth century). The result of this oversimplification is a sort of caricature that doesn’t fit well with relevant LDS scholarship on these books of scripture.

As scholars have observed (e.g., Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2013], 55–57), the Prophet’s Bible translation in general, and the Book of Moses in particular, is not a homogeneous production. Rather, it is composite in structure and eclectic in its manner of translation: some chapters contain long sections that have little or no direct relationship to the text of Genesis (i.e., the vision of Moses and the story of Enoch), while other chapters are more in the line of clarifying commentary that takes the text of the King James Version as its starting point, incorporating new elements based on Joseph Smith’s prophetic understanding. Classing the entire Book of Moses with a single label obscures the complex nature of the translation process and the work that resulted from it (see the similar view of Kevin L. Barney, “Authoring the Old Testament,” in *By Common Consent* [February 23, 2014], 233–34, <http://bycommonconsent.com/2014/02/23/authoring-the-old-testament/>), just as study of the Bible without taking into account its multiple sources obscures its richness.

- 16 Loyd Ericson, comment at 4 April 2014, 2:29 pm on Bradshaw, “Sorting Out the Sources in Scripture,” <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/comments-page/?id=4853>.
- 17 As Richard Palmer observed (Palmer, “The Liminality of Hermes and the Meaning of Hermeneutics,” in *MacMurray College Faculty Writings*, <https://www.mac.edu/faculty/richardpalmer/liminality.html>):

Ancient texts are, for moderns, doubly alien: they are ancient and they are in another language. Their interpreter . . . is a bridge to somewhere else, he is a mediator between a mysterious other world and the clean, well-lighted, intelligible world in which “we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

- 18 For a summary of arguments and sources bearing on this question, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Ryan Dahle, “Could Joseph Smith Have Drawn on Ancient Manuscripts When He Translated the Story of Enoch?: Recent Updates on a Persistent Question,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 33 (2019): 320–21, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/could-joseph-smith-have-drawn-on-ancient-manuscripts-when-he-translated-the-story-of-enoch-recent-updates-on-a-persistent-question/>.
- 19 C. S. Lewis, “De Descriptione Temporum,” in *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 13.
- 20 Moses 1:27.
- 21 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 17:1, p. 22; 18:1, p. 23; 19:4, p. 25; 30:1, p. 34.
- 22 As the most basic argument that Moses 1 did not come to us in unmediated fashion from Moses himself, one need only read the introductory verses (vv. 1–3) and epilogue (v. 42), which are written in the third person.
- 23 Although some revelatory passages in the Joseph Smith’s translations and revelations seem to have remarkable congruencies with ancient texts, we think it fruitless to rely on them as a means for uncovering lost *Urtexts*. When we present resemblances between extracanonical sources and modern scripture, the intent is not to show that they share identity, but rather to explore what seem to be common themes from antiquity — themes that are almost always older than *any* of the extant texts. Once relevant themes in ancient sources are discovered, they can be engaged as a means of interpreting modern scripture — and sometimes for illuminating the older texts.
- 24 David Bokovoy has described “two basic ways” that those who accept his arguments about the relationship of “Higher Criticism and other observations made by biblical scholars” might be reconciled “with the revelations of the Restoration concerning ... biblical figures who hold prominent roles in our theology and scripture.” He gives these options as: “(1) we can assume that these were historical figures whose stories, as told in the Hebrew Bible, reflect early Israelite and Near Eastern oral traditions incorporated into the documentary sources; or (2) we can assume that some of these men were *not* historical figures of the material past, and rather than having the purpose of providing a chronological record of the past, with scripture God uses ideas, assumptions, mythology, and even foreign texts to help us establish a relationship with Him and others” (Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament: Genesis–Deuteronomy*, 133).

While we accept option 1, Bokovoy's subsequent writings (e.g., Bokovoy, "The Book Which Thou Shalt Write") make his leanings toward option 2 clear.

- 25 John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 32.
- 26 Biblical figures seen in revelations and manifestations to Joseph Smith include, among others, the Old Testament figures of Adam, Noah, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Elias, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Elijah. New Testament figures include John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, Paul, Stephen, Philip, Matthew, James the Lesser, Matthias, Andrew, Mark, Jude, Bartholomew, Thomas, Luke, Simon, Barnabas, and others of the Apostles — and, of course, Jesus Christ Himself. See Trevan G. Hatch, *Visions, Manifestations, and Miracles of the Restoration* (Orem, UT: Granite Publishing, 2008), 135–55.
- Book of Mormon figures personally known to Joseph Smith include Lehi, Nephi, Moroni, and apparently others. See *ibid.*, 129–31.
- For a useful collection of additional accounts of divine manifestations to the Prophet, see John W. Welch and Erick B. Carlson, eds. *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005).
- 27 Roberts, "The Ancient Near Eastern environment," 23.
- 28 Benjamin L. McGuire, "Finding Parallels: Some Cautions and Criticisms, Part One," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 5 (2013): 1–59, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/finding-parallels-some-cautions-and-criticisms-part-one/>; McGuire, "Finding Parallels: Some Cautions and Criticisms, Part Two," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 5 (2013): 61–104, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/finding-parallels-some-cautions-and-criticisms-part-two/>. For other helpful guidelines and principles, see, e.g., Mark W. Chavalas, "Assyriology and Biblical Studies: A Century and a Half of Tension," in *Mesopotamia and the Bible: Comparative Explorations*, eds. Mark W. Chavalas and K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 21–67; Shemaryahu Talmon, "The 'Comparative Method' in Biblical Interpretation: Principles and Problems," in *Essential Papers on Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Frederick E. Greenspahn (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 381–419; Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 15–40.
- 29 For an insightful discussion of pseudepigraphal themes echoed in Matthew 4, see Andrei A. Orlov, *Dark Mirrors: Azazel and Satanael in Early Jewish Demonology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011), 107–12.

- 30 Cf. John W. Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4, no. 2 (1995): 6–7, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol4/iss2/1/>. See also Frederick’s criterion of “proximity” (Frederick, “Intertextuality in the Book of Mormon”).
- 31 Frederick, “Intertextuality in the Book of Mormon.”
- 32 For example, H. Ringgren, “Israel’s place among the religions of the ancient Near East,” in *Studies in the Religion of Ancient Israel*, eds. G. W. Anderson, et al (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 1, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004275461\\_002](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004275461_002), observed:
- Comparative research in the Biblical field has often become a kind of “parallel hunting.” Once it has been established that a certain biblical expression or custom has a parallel outside the Bible, the whole problem is regarded as solved. It is not asked, whether or not the extra-Biblical element has the same place in life, the same function in the context of its own culture.
- The first question that should be asked in comparative research is that of the *Sitz im Leben* and the meaning of the extra-Biblical parallel adduced. It is not until this has been established that the parallel can be utilized to elucidate a Biblical fact.
- 33 Jared Ludlow writes (Ludlow, “Abraham’s Vision of the Heavens,” 58):
- The more details of a tradition that are shared, the more likely they stem from the same core tradition. . . . ‘Detailed study is the criterion, and the detailed study ought to respect the context and not be limited to juxtaposing mere excerpts’ (Samuel Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81, no. 1 (March 1962): 2, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3264821>).
- 34 Compare one of John W. Welch’s criteria for the strength of a chiasm:
- A chiasm is stronger if it operates across a literary unit as a whole and not only upon fragments or sections which overlap or cut across significant organizational lines intrinsic to the text. (Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” 6).
- 35 Frederick also discusses a criterion of “sequence” in “Intertextuality in the Book of Mormon.”
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 *ApAb* itself is a translation of a translation (of a translation?) of a presumed Semitic original (Ryszard Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham en vieux slave : Introduction, texte critique, traduction et commentaire*, Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Zrodla i

*monografie* 129 [Lublin, Poland: Société des Lettres et des Sciences de l'Université Catholique de Lublin, 1987], 33–37). The only extant copies are found in Old Slavic.

- 38 Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 31–32, 33.
- 39 Roberts, “The Ancient Near Eastern Environment,” 23.
- 40 William W. Hallo, quoted in Chavalas, “Assyriology and Biblical Studies,” 43.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Joseph Brickey: *Moses Seeing Jehovah*, 1998, used with permission from the artist. Published with the article, “Moses: Deliverer and Lawgiver” in *Ensign* (April 2006), <http://lds.org/ensign/2006/04/moses-deliverer-and-law-giver?lang=eng>.
- 44 For a classic overview of this topic, see Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1993). For a readable survey of the history and themes of the heavenly ascent literature from a Latter-day Saint perspective, see, e.g., William J. Hamblin, “Temple Motifs in Jewish Mysticism,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 440–76.
- P. G. R. de Villiers emphasizes that early accounts of heavenly ascent such as ApAb “should be read within their own context. They should not be understood in terms of unio mystica [i.e., an actual union of the mystic’s soul with God], which [Gershom Scholem (Gershom Scholem, ed., *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* [New York City: Schocken Books, 1995], 43)] regarded as a theme that was prominent only in much later mystical texts.” (Pieter G. R. de Villiers, “Apocalypses and mystical texts: Investigating prolegomena and the state of affairs,” in *Apocalypticism and Mysticism in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. John J. Collins, Pieter G. R. de Villiers, and Adela Yarbro Collins [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018], 38.)
- 45 See, e.g., E. Isaac, “1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 14:8–25, Vol. 1, pp. 20–21; F. I. Andersen, “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 1, pp. 114–18; Howard C. Kee, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Levi 5, Vol. 1, pp. 789–90; 2 Corinthians 12:1–3; Revelation 4:1; 1 Nephi 8–13; Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2004), 205.
- 46 See, e.g., Hebrews 6:18–20; Revelation 11:19.



- 47 Hugh W. Nibley, “Apocryphal Writings and the Teachings of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don E. Norton, *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 12 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 312; cf. pp. 310–311. See Wesley W. Isenberg, “The Gospel of Philip (II, 3),” in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. James M. Robinson (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 85:14–16, p. 159. As an example of the contrast between heavenly and ritual ascent in ancient Jewish tradition, one might compare *ApAb*, “where a man is taken up to heaven,” with the twelfth Sabbath song at Qumran, where the religious community joins the angels in praising God through ritual “while staying firmly on earth” (Amy Elizabeth Paulsen-Reed, “The Origins of the Apocalypse of Abraham” [dissertation, Harvard Divinity School, 2016], 102, <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:27194248>).
- 48 E.g., Philip S. Alexander, “3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:9–12, Vol. 1, pp. 256–57.
- 49 E.g., *Ibid.*, 45, pp. 296–99.
- 50 2 Peter 1:10. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Now That We Have the Words of Joseph Smith, How Shall We Begin to Understand Them? Illustrations of Selected Challenges within the 21 May 1843 Discourse on 2 Peter 1,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 20 (2016): 47–150, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/now-that-we-have-the-words-of-joseph-smith-how-shall-we-begin-to-understand-them/>; Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 59–65.
- 51 See Margaret Barker, “Isaiah,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, eds. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 504; Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “How Might We Interpret the Dense Temple-Related Symbolism of the Prophet’s Heavenly Vision in Isaiah 6?,” in *Interpreter Foundation Old Testament KnowWhy JBOTL36A*, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/knowwhy-otl36a-how-might-we-interpret-the-dense-temple-related-symbolism-of-the-prophet-s-heavenly-vision-in-isaiah-6/>.
- 52 For a discussion of the divine council in relation to Moses 1, see Stephen O. Smoot, “‘I Am a Son of God’: Moses’ Ascension into the Divine Council,” in *2012 BYU Religious Education Student Symposium*, <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/byu-religious-education-student-symposium-2012/i-am-son-god-moses-ascension-divine-council>.
- 53 Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “The LDS Book of Enoch as the Culminating Story of a Temple Text,” *BYU Studies* 53, no. 1 (2014): 39–73, <http://www.templethemes.net/publications/140224-a-Bradshaw.pdf>. See 39–44 for a general discussion of temple theology and its relevance for modern

scripture and temple ordinances of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

- 54 Jewish tradition speaks of “several ascensions of Moses”: a first “at the beginning of his career,” a second “at the revelation of the Torah,” and a third “shortly before his death” (Louis Ginzberg, ed., *The Legends of the Jews*, trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin, rev. ed [1909–1938; repr., Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998], 5:417). The heavenly ascent recounted in Moses 1 corresponds to the first reported ascension, having taken place sometime *after* Jehovah called Moses out of the burning bush (Moses 1:17) but *before* Moses had returned to Egypt to deliver the children of Israel (Moses 1:25–26).

In addition — and consistent with Moses 1 — two Jewish texts from the Second Temple period state that Moses received the stories of the Creation and the Fall in vision. As to the first text, Douglas Clark has ably compared Moses 1 to the vision of Creation received by Moses in the book of *Jubilees* (O. S. Wintermute, “Jubilees,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:26, Vol. 1, p. 54). Clark summarizes resemblances between Moses 1, the book of *Jubilees*, and various Jewish traditions about the ascension of Moses. Summarizing significant passages in *Jubilees*, he writes:

In contrast to Genesis, the creation account is preceded by an entire chapter of prologue that describes the setting for the subsequent divine revelation to Moses. Moses is divinely summoned to a mountain where he experiences God’s glory and is instructed to record what he would be told. He is then apprised of the future apostasy of the children of Israel after they are settled in the promised land and how they would kill the prophets and go into captivity. He learns that eventually, however, the children of Israel would repent and be transplanted back as a righteous plant. Following Moses’s intercessory prayer, in which he pleads with the Lord to show mercy and salvation to the people, Moses is again instructed to write everything that should be made known to him, and the “angel of the presence” is told to dictate to Moses the whole account of the creation and the division of years until all creation would be renewed by the powers of heaven. (E. Douglas Clark, “A Prologue to Genesis: Moses 1 in Light of Jewish Traditions,” *BYU Studies* 45, no. 1 [2006]: 135.)

See also Hugh W. Nibley, “To Open the Last Dispensation: Moses Chapter 1,” in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless: Classic Essays of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978), 7–19, <http://farms.byu.edu/publications/transcripts/?id=71>.

Similarly, *Fourth Ezra* preserves a tradition that the Lord led Moses “up on Mount Sinai, where I kept him with me many days; and I told him many wondrous things, and showed him the secrets of the times and declared to him the end of times. Then I commanded him saying, “These words you shall publish openly, and these you shall keep secret” (Bruce M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 14:4–6, Vol. 1, p. 553).

Besides individuals such as Moses who experienced actual heavenly ascent, it has been argued that some Jewish worshippers in the Second Temple period emulated the experience of these exceptional figures through ritual ascent, a practice that has been documented in the synagogue of Dura Europos (Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “The Ezekiel Mural at Dura Europos: A Tangible Witness of Philo’s Jewish Mysteries?,” *BYU Studies* 49, no. 1 [2010]: 4–49), and at Qumran (Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* [Leiden: Brill, 2002]). On the rise of temple terminology and forms in the synagogue and the expanded centrality of prayer during the Amoraic period, see Jodi Magness, “Heaven on Earth: Helios and the Zodiac Cycle in Ancient Palestinian Synagogues,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 59 [2005]: 1–52).

Accounts of heavenly ascent are also to be found in Islam, the best-known story concerning Muhammad himself. Moreover, the *hajj* can be seen as a form of ritual ascent (Syed Ali Ashraf, “The Inner Meaning of the Islamic Rites: Prayer, Pilgrimage, Fasting, Jihad,” in *Islamic Spirituality 1: Foundations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr [New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987], 125). For a readable account of Muhammad’s night journey, see Daniel C. Peterson, “Muhammad,” in *The Rivers of Paradise: Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad as Religious Founders*, eds. David Noel Freedman and Michael J. McClymond (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 527–29. Similarities between the Jewish Merkabah literature and Islamic *mi’raj* accounts are described in Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad Is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety*, English edition, *Studies in Religion*, ed. Charles H. Long (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 298n8

- 55 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 2–3; Ryszard Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 681–83.
- 56 Paulsen-Reed, *Origins of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, 261–62. “There is no indication that the text was intended for an elite few” (*ibid.*, 194). For a detailed analysis, see pp. 207–32, 253–55.

Underscoring the importance of *ApAb* for an understanding of heavenly ascent, the eminent Jewish scholar Gershom Scholem stated that it “more closely resembles a *Merkabah* text (i.e., having to do with prophetic visions of the heavenly chariot-throne, as in Ezekiel 1) than any other in Jewish apocalyptic literature” (Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* [New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1965], 23). More recently, Kulik concluded that, in its original Jewish form, *ApAb* constituted “the earliest mystical writing of Judaeo-Christian civilization and [a] representative of a missing link between early apocalyptic and medieval *Hekhalot* traditions [i.e., heavenly palaces encountered in a tour of the heavens]” (Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 1. Cf. Paulsen-Reed, *Origins of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, 263, who concludes that it “appears to be one of the earliest examples we have of Jewish mysticism.” See also de Villiers, “Apocalypses and mystical texts,” 54.). Consistent with the strong relationship between heavenly ascent and ritual ascent, Andrei Orlov and others have written extensively on priestly and other temple symbolism in *ApAb* (Andrei A. Orlov, *Heavenly Priesthood in the Apocalypse of Abraham* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013]).

Importantly, Paulsen-Reed points out that the chapters at the heart of *ApAb* that describe Abraham’s heavenly ascent are surprisingly outside in volume when compared with later chapters that describe the new knowledge that he purportedly received from God afterward (Paulsen-Reed, *Origins of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, 167):

The actual revelations Abraham receives only constitute the last third of the book. He must pass through many stages and tests, some of which require angelic tutelage. This probably reflects the mystical orientation of the author.

The large proportion of the text dedicated to the details of the ascent itself raise the possibility that, notwithstanding connecting passages and themes throughout, the redactor may have composed *ApAb* by drawing on and elaborating older, lengthy traditions of heavenly ascent attributed to figures such as Abraham and Moses and then added, to fit his immediate purpose, shorter, theological reflections that seem to address concerns of his contemporaries. While the account of heavenly ascent itself was not irrelevant to the theological questions raised by the redactor, it may have also served to legitimize his personal theological views, showing that the answers Abraham received were grounded in an authentic revelatory experience.

With respect to Islamic tradition, Geneviève Gobillot includes *ApAb* as one of the key textual corpora that constitute the “hermeneutical threshold of the Qur’an” (*seuil herméneutique du Coran* [Segovia, “Those

on the right,” 3]) — the basis of its conceptual framework as a whole. Segovia cites Gobillot’s conclusions that have “rightly emphasized the role presumably played by the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, and by the *Testament of Abraham* – another 1st-century-CE Jewish pseudepigraphon — both in the composition of several key-passages of the Qur’ān (e.g., 17:1, 5, 7; 20:133; 53:33–41; 87:16–19) and in the development of some equally significant Muhammadan legends (including Muḥammad’s celestial journey).”

More specifically, Gobillot, along with some other scholars, dispute that the claim (especially in light of Qur’ān 6:35 and 17:93) that Muhammad was originally the “servant” (*‘bd* or *‘abd*) mentioned in an allusion to the “night journey” in Qur’an 17:1 can be argued with “any measure of finality” (Geneviève Gobillot, “Apocryphes de l’Ancien et du Nouveau Testament,” in *Dictionnaire du Coran*, ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi [Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007], 58). Indeed, Carlos Segovia specifically concludes: “Most likely, this passage [which is generally taken as referring to Muhammad’s “night journey”] was modeled after Abraham’s ascension as outlined in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*” (Carlos A. Segovia, “Thematic and Structural Affinities Between 1 Enoch and the Qur’an: A Contribution to the Study of the Judaeo-Christian Apocalyptic Setting of the Early Islamic Faith,” in *The Coming of the Comforter: When, Where, and to Whom? Studies on the Rise of Islam and Various Other Topics in Memory of John Wansbrough*, eds. Carlos A. Segovia and Basil Lourié (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2012), 238, <https://www.gorgiaspress.com/Content/files/GorgiasOpen/978-1-4632-0158-6.pdf>. Cf. *ApAb* chapters 15–18. Mehdy Shaddel provides a brief and highly readable summary of the issues and open questions in trying to understand Mohammad’s “night journey” in the context of Judaeo-Christian apocrypha, including *ApAb* [Mehdy Shaddel, “An Apocalyptic Reading of Qur’an 17:1-8,” *International Qur’anic Studies Association* (blog), July 25, 2016, <https://iqsaweb.wordpress.com/2016/07/25/an-apocalyptic-reading-of-quran-171-8/>]).

Given the conclusion of credible scholars that *ApAb* provided inspiration for at least some elements of the accounts of Muhammad’s night journey, the conjecture that, in similar fashion, earlier traditions about the heavenly ascents of Abraham and Moses could have been appropriated for use in *ApAb* is strengthened. The Qur’an itself mentions the “books of Moses ... and of Abraham” (Allama Abdullah Yusuf Ali, ed., *The Holy Qur’an: Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary* [Lahore, Pakistan: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, 2001], 53:36–37, p. 1382; 87:19, p. 1638), which are also called “the Books of the earliest [Revelation] [*al-ṣuḥuf al-ūlā*]” (ibid., 87:18, p. 1638). We should not automatically assume that this sacred text imagined the kinds of stories one reads about these prophets in the Bible. Rather, it seems more plausible to presume,

as some scholars have argued explicitly (e.g., *ibid.*, 1648n6094) that the books referred to were “apparently not the Pentateuch, or the Tawrat [Torah], but some other book or books now lost” (*ibid.*, 1570n5110). Such arguments presume that early readers of the Qur’an were familiar with accounts of the *heavenly ascents* of Abraham. Note that the *Testament of Abraham* exists in Arabic translation (see E. P. Sanders, “Testament of Abraham,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:871), and there is late evidence for an Arabic *ApAb* (see Alexander Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” in *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture*, eds. Louis H. Feldman, James L. Kugel, and Lawrence H. Schiffman [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2013], 2:1477n3).

By way of contrast, Nicolai Sinai is an example of a scholar who follows Hamilton Gibb in taking the view that references to the books of Abraham and Moses in the Qur’an are simply “a loose way of referring to the Biblical corpus — including the New Testament” (“An Interpretation of Sūrat al-Najm [Q. 53],” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 13 [2011]: 17). As a final conjecture, al-Tha’labi preserves traditions that the “pages” revealed to and written by Abraham contain admonitions and proverbs (Abu Ishaq Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim al-Tha’labi, *‘Ara’is Al-Majalis Fi Qisas Al-Anbiya’* or “*Lives of the Prophets*,” trans. William M. Brinner [Leiden: Brill, 2002], 168–69). This view is probably based on a passage in the Qur’an (Ali, *The Holy Qur’an*, 53:38–56, pp. 1382).

- 57 Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 1454. The German translation of Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch (1848–1925) was published in 1897 (Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch, *Die Apokalypse Abrahams, Das Testament der vierzig Märtyrer, Hrsg. von Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch (German)* [Leipzig, DEU: A. Deichert, 1897], <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=yale.39002050329854&view=1up&seq=9>). For brief biographies of Bonwetsch, see Wikipedia, s.v. “Nathanael Bonwetsch,” last updated November 6, 2019, 02:50, [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathanael\\_Bonwetsch](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathanael_Bonwetsch), and Wikipedia, s.v. “Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch,” last updated November 18, 2018, 03:46, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gottlieb\\_Nathaniel\\_Bonwetsch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gottlieb_Nathaniel_Bonwetsch).
- 58 See Edward Henry Anderson and Richard Theodore Haag, “The Book of the Revelation of Abraham,” *Improvement Era* 1, no. 10, 11, 12 (August, September, October 1898), 705–14, 793–806, 896–901, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera110unse>, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera111unse/page/793/mode/2up>, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera112unse/page/896/mode/2up>; Hugh W. Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 14 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 11–13. A little over two decades later, a second

English translation was made by Box (G. H. Box, *The Apocalypse of Abraham* [London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1919], <https://www.marquette.edu/maqom/box.pdf>).

- 59 Nibley, “To Open the Last Dispensation”; Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 1–73.
- 60 Ludlow, “Abraham’s Vision of the Heavens.”
- 61 Clark, “A Prologue to Genesis,” 129–42.
- 62 Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, “The Apocalypse of Abraham: An ancient witness for the book of Moses” (Presentation, FAIR Conference, Sandy, UT, August 5, 2010), [http://www.fairlds.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/2010\\_Apocalypse\\_of\\_Abraham.pdf](http://www.fairlds.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/2010_Apocalypse_of_Abraham.pdf); Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses* (Salt Lake City: Eborn, 2014), 23–50.
- 63 Bradshaw and Larsen, “The Apocalypse of Abraham.”
- 64 Bradshaw, “The LDS Book of Enoch,” 44–47.
- 65 Like Moses, Enoch “beheld the spirits that God had created” (Moses 6:36), and then received a separate vision of “all the inhabitants of the earth” (Moses 7:21). As the Book of Abraham, *ApAb*, and Islamic accounts describe the division of the righteous and the wicked in the premortal world, a similar division of those in the mortal world is described in Enoch’s vision (Moses 7:22–23). A telescoped account of Enoch’s vision of Satan, emphasizing his power on earth, is given (Moses 7:24–26), followed by the return of angelic messengers and what seems to be the administration of priesthood ordinances (“the Holy Ghost” and “the powers of heaven”).

These ordinances enabled individuals to be “caught up” and translated to dwell in the heavenly “Zion” of Enoch’s redeemed city (Moses 7:27), in a fashion similar to Enoch and the three Nephites, who were “transfigured” for the duration of their mortal lives (i.e., translated; see 3 Nephi 28:8, 15, 17, 36–40 [see Joseph Smith, Jr., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 97n10, <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/words-joseph-smith-contemporary-accounts-nauvoo-discourses-prophet-joseph/1843/21-may-1843>]; cf. Hebrews 11:5; D&C 107:49; Joseph Smith, Jr., “Instruction on Priesthood, 5 October 1840,” 6–7, in *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-on-priesthood-5-october-1840/11> [see Smith, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 50–53nn. 1, 13, 16]; Joseph Smith, Jr., “Discourse, 3 October 1841, as Reported by Willard Richards,” in *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-3october-1841-as-reported-by-willard-richards/1>; Joseph Smith, Jr., “Discourse, 3 October 1841, as Reported by *Times and Seasons*,” in *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-3october-1841-as-reported-by-times-and-seasons/1>].

org/paper-summary/discourse-3-october-1841-as-reported-by-times-and-seasons/1) after having been “caught up into the heavens” (3 Nephi 28:36; cf. v. 13). The process of “translation” was analogous to Moses having been “caught up into an exceedingly high mountain” (Moses 1:1) where he was *temporarily* transfigured during his vision (Moses 1:11, 14).

Both Moses and Enoch were granted a vision of “all things, even unto the end of the world” (Moses 7:67).

- 66 Of course, the opposite course could have been taken — comparing Moses 1 against the narrative structure of *ApAb*. However, we concur with Ludlow, “Abraham’s Vision of the Heavens,” 73n60, that extracanonical traditions should be measured against the standard works, not vice versa. “This comparison may appear to be a circular argument,” attempting to “prove” modern scripture by analyzing ancient traditions against it, “but the truthfulness of [modern scripture] will certainly not be proved by ... any ... intellectual endeavor,” though such analysis “may help eliminate some possible explanations (like Joseph Smith’s having made up these stories *ex nihilo*). If one has a testimony of [works of modern scripture], however, one can then use [them] as standards against which other traditions can be measured.”
- 67 We used the following list to come up with the count of thematic resemblances in the figure. More detail on these resemblances is given below:

**Prologue.** 1: Moses 1:1/*ApAb* 9:9. Additionally, Book of Abraham Facsimile 2 and *ApAb* 9:5.

**Moses in the spirit world.** 4: Moses 1:3/*ApAb* 9:3; Moses 1:4/*ApAb* 9:6; Moses 1:6/*ApAb* 9:6; Moses 1:8/*ApAb* 21:7, 22:2. Additionally, Abraham 2:12/*ApAb* 9:6; Facsimile 2, Book of Abraham/*ApAb* 12:10, 21:7; Abraham 3:22, 23/*ApAb* 22:5).

**Moses falls to the earth.** 1: Moses 1:9–11/*ApAb* 10:2.

**Moses defeats Satan.** 7: Moses 1:12/*ApAb* 13:4–5; Moses 1:13/*ApAb* 13:6; Moses 1:13, 14/*ApAb* 13:7; Moses 1:16/*ApAb* 13:12–13; Moses 1:16/*ApAb* 13:14; Moses 1:18/*ApAb* 14:7; Moses 1:18/*ApAb* 14:9–10. Additionally, Moses 1:21/*The Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth*, p. 17.

**Moses calls upon God; hears a voice.** 3: Moses 1:25/*ApAb* 16:3; Moses 1:25, 27/*ApAb* 17:1; Moses 1:25/*ApAb* 17:1. Additionally, 2 Nephi 4:25/*ApAb* 15:2–3.

**Moses’s vision at the veil.** 3: Moses 1:27/*ApAb* 21:1; Moses 1:28/*ApAb* 21:1; Moses 1:30/*ApAb* 20:7, 26:1.



**Moses in the presence of the Lord.** 3: Moses 1:31/*ApAb* 26:5;  
Moses 1:31/*ApAb* illustration; Moses 2, 3, 4/*ApAb* 21:3–5, 21:6,  
23:1–14.

- 68 R. Welleck and A. Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1956), 258, quoted in Jeffrey H. Tigay, “On evaluating claims of literary borrowing,” in *The Tablet and the Scroll: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo*, eds. Mark Cohen, Daniel C. Snell, and David B. Weisberg (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1993), 251, [https://www.academia.edu/30057805/\\_On\\_Evaluating\\_Claims\\_of\\_Literary\\_Borrowing\\_in\\_The\\_Tablet\\_and\\_the\\_Scroll.\\_Near\\_Eastern\\_Studies\\_in\\_Honor\\_of\\_William\\_W.\\_Hallo\\_ed.\\_Mark\\_Cohen\\_Daniel\\_C.\\_Snell\\_and\\_David\\_B.\\_Weisberg\\_Bethesda\\_MD\\_CDL\\_Press\\_1993\\_pp.\\_250-255](https://www.academia.edu/30057805/_On_Evaluating_Claims_of_Literary_Borrowing_in_The_Tablet_and_the_Scroll._Near_Eastern_Studies_in_Honor_of_William_W._Hallo_ed._Mark_Cohen_Daniel_C._Snell_and_David_B._Weisberg_Bethesda_MD_CDL_Press_1993_pp._250-255). Cf. Speiser: “the proof that the ... passage must be literarily (even if not directly) dependent ... is the identical order in which the ideas are presented” (also quoted in *ibid.*, 251).
- 69 Photographs of the originals of the illustrations are from *Otkrovenie Avraama (Apocalypse of Abraham or ApAb)*, which comprises pages 328–375 of the *Codex Sylvester*. The *Codex Sylvester*, “the oldest and the only independent manuscript containing the full text of *ApAb*” (Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 3), is known to scholars as manuscript “S.” It is the only illustrated manuscript of *ApAb*. Photographs of the illustrations from the original manuscript are published in this article for the first time with the kind permission of the *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov* (RGADA — Russian State Archive of Early Acts, formerly TsGADA SSSR = Central State Archive of Early Acts) in Moscow. We express our sincere gratitude to Evgeniy Rychalovskiy, Head of the Publication Department, and Vladislav Rzhetsky, of the German Historical Institute in Moscow, for their assistance on 4 and 6 December 2019. Within the RGADA collection, the *Codex Sylvester* is catalogued as folder 381, Printer’s Library, no. 53, folios 164v–186. The six illustrations can be found in these folios: 182v, 174, 172v, 170v, 168b v, and 168a.

Photographs of the illustrations from a rare printed copy of the first facsimile edition (1891) were taken on 26 April 2009 and are © Stephen T. Whitlock and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw. We express our special thanks to Carole Menzies and Jennifer Griffiths who facilitated our access to the facsimiles for filming purposes in the Taylor Bodleian Slavonic and Modern Greek Library, Oxford University, Oxford, UK. The facsimile edition was originally published by Novickij (P. P. Novickij [Novitskii, Novitsky], ed. *Откровение Авраама (Otkrovenie Avraama [Apocalypse of Abraham])*, Facsimile edition of Sil’vestrovskii sbornik [Codex Sylvester], [1891; repr., Leningrad, Russia, 1967], <http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/spart1.pdf>, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/>

pt?id=coo.31924028567927&view=1up&seq=1). Whitlock's Image IDs are as follows: ApAb-OX10, ApAb-OX19, ApAb-OX20, ApAb-OX26, ApAb-OX30, ApAb-OX33, ApAb-OX50. For this article, the photos have been enhanced digitally for readability and size consistency, and a colored mask has been added to the backgrounds of all photos except ApAb-OX10.

One of the illustrations, taken from the facsimile edition and reproduced in black and white, appeared in "The Dictionary of Angels" (see Gustav Davidson, *A Dictionary of Angels, including the Fallen Angels* [New York: Free Press, 1971], 316–17, <https://archive.org/details/ADictionaryOfAngels/mode/2up>) and may have been the source for the figure used in Nibley, "Apocryphal writings," 278.

Stephen Whitlock discovered differences in the page ordering of the original manuscript held in Moscow with some of the facsimile editions. Based on his careful research he makes the following observations:

While all of the currently available digital reproductions of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* manuscripts derive from the RGADA original of the *Codex Sylvester* in Moscow described above (Slavonic Manuscript "S," the only complete manuscript of *ApAb*), the pagination varies from the original in some cases. The RGADA original of the *Codex Sylvester* in Moscow and copies made from it (including the copy of Novickij's 1891 facsimile edition at the Taylor Bodleian Library at Oxford) differ in pagination with respect to six pages from two other copies we have located online: a digitized scan by Google of a copy of the facsimile edition from the Cornell University Library hosted on the HathiTrust website (<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924028567927>) and a black and white scan of the facsimile edition hosted by Andrei Orlov at Marquette University (<https://www.marquette.edu/maqom/spart1.pdf>, <https://www.marquette.edu/maqom/spart2.pdf>, <https://www.marquette.edu/maqom/spart3.pdf>).

*ApAb* occupies pages 328–75 of the *Sylvester Codex*, making 48 pages in all. Pages 9–13 of the Moscow original and the Oxford facsimile edition are in the following order in the Cornell and Marquette scans of the facsimile edition: 11, 10, 13, 12, 9. The text of the English translations of *ApAb* (Box, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*; Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*; Kulik, "Apocalypse of Abraham"; Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham") as well as the critical text prepared by Rubinkiewicz in French translation (Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*), follow the page order of Cornell and Marquette. We do not know whether the Cornell and Marquette scans came from

a reprint of the 1891 facsimile edition that was created with different pagination or if the pages were re-ordered afterward as part of the scanning process. Finally, we do not know why the page ordering of the *Codex Sylvester* is not consistent with the sequence of the critical text edition.

- 70 See Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 44.
- 71 To our best knowledge, the first formal publication of the illustrations published in the facsimiles since their original appearance in 1891 was in the 2010 edition of Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, 31–50. Photographs of the 1891 facsimile edition have since been published in the University of Vienna Masters Thesis of Kerstin Mayerhofer (Kerstin Mayerhofer, “Die Slavische Abrahamsapokalypse und ihre Ügerlieferung” [Vienna, AUT: Universität Wien, 2012], [http://othes.univie.ac.at/19915/1/2012-04-12\\_0501496.pdf](http://othes.univie.ac.at/19915/1/2012-04-12_0501496.pdf)) and have also been made available in an online version of the entire 1891 facsimile edition is now available through the HathiTrust (<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924028567927>). Unfortunately, the high-contrast results of the online version compromise the fidelity of some details in the illustrations.
- 72 Orlov, *Heavenly Priesthood*.
- 73 Translation of caption: “Go make a sacrifice. And (he) put me on my feet and led me to the glorious mountain of God Oriv [Horeb]. And I said to the angel, Oh, singer of the eternal, I have no sacrifice with me. How can I make a sacrifice? And (he) said, turn around and I turned around and lo, coming after us (+1 unintelligible word) were the sacrifices: calf, goat, sheep, turtledove and pigeon.” Cf. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 12:3–6, 19. The first part of the caption comes from 9:5, which Kulik translates as: “Go ... and set out for me a pure sacrifice” (ibid., 9:5, p. 17). The phrase “And (he) put me on my feet” has no equivalent here but probably relates to 10:4. The next part of the caption comes from 12:3–6, which Kulik renders as: “And we came to the glorious God’s mountains — Horeb. And I said to the angel, ‘Singer of the Eternal One, behold, I have no sacrifice with me, nor do I know a place for an altar on the mountain, so how shall I make the sacrifice?’ And he said, ‘Look behind you.’ And I looked behind me. And behold, all the prescribed sacrifices were following us: the calf, the she-goat, the ram, the turtledove, and the pigeon” (ibid., 12:3–6, p. 19).
- 74 Ibid., 11:3, p. 19; Orlov, *Heavenly Priesthood*, 95–96; Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 62.
- 75 Andrei A. Orlov, “The pteromorphic angelology of the Apocalypse of Abraham,” in *Divine Manifestations in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 203–15. See also Kulik,

*Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 83; Basil Lourié, “Review of A. Kulik’s *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*,” *Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha* 15, no. 3 (2006): 229-37.

- 76 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 83. See also Orlov, “The pteromorphic angelology of the Apocalypse of Abraham,” 205–207. For an erudite description of the proliferation and usages of this mythical animal from its origins in Egypt from the late fourth millennium onward, see Nicholas Wyatt, “Grasping the griffin: Identifying and characterizing the griffin in Egyptian and West Semitic tradition,” *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 1, no. 1 (2009): 29-39, <https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index.php/jaei/article/view/8/11>. Wyatt suggests “a symbolic equivalence” (*ibid.*, p. 30) of the griffin and the sphinx in its Egyptian form. He argues that the figure of an eagle in Judeo-Christian iconography derived from Ezekiel’s chariot vision is actually a falcon, derived from Egyptian royal symbolism. Wyatt relates the griffin to the iconography of the cherubim and seraphim, and to solar and royal symbolism down to modern times.
- 77 Though, as Wyatt notes, in Egyptian art the wings are not explicitly portrayed (Wyatt, “Grasping the griffin,” 29).
- 78 Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 13:3, p. 143; Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 13:3, p. 1465, alluding to the cadaver-eating “fowls” that descended on Abraham’s sacrifice in Genesis 15:11. See, more generally, Orlov, “The pteromorphic angelology of the Apocalypse of Abraham,” 209–12.
- 79 Cf. Ezekiel 1:10; Lourié, “Review of A. Kulik’s *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*,” 2:1, p. 257; 24:9, p. 278; 26:3, p. 280; 44:5, p. 295; 47:4, p. 300. Andrei A. Orlov has argued that in Jewish apocalyptic accounts, including the *ApAb*, the demonic realm is maintained by mimesis of divine reality — the satanic “bird” imitating the angelic “bird.” Going further, Orlov argues that, with respect to the two sacrificial goats in the Yom Kippur ritual depicted in *ApAb*, “the protagonist of the story, the patriarch Abraham, takes on the role of a celestial goat for YHWH, while the text’s antagonist, the fallen angel Azazel, is envisioned as the demonic scapegoat.” Andrei A. Orlov, *Divine Scapegoats: Demonic Mimesis in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2016); Andrei A. Orlov, *The Atoning Dyad: The Two Goats of Yom Kippur in the Apocalypse of Abraham* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), <https://brill.com/abstract/title/32266>.
- 80 Orlov, “The pteromorphic angelology of the Apocalypse of Abraham,” 206.
- 81 *Ibid.*, 207.

- 82 With specific respect to Egyptian influences in the *Testament of Abraham*, see Dale C. Allison, ed., *Testament of Abraham* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 32-33.
- 83 Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 57.
- 84 Geraldine Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), 120.
- 85 Adriaan de Buck and Alan H. Gardiner, eds., *The Egyptian Coffin Texts, Texts of Spells 268-354* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Oriental Institute, 1951), 4:68–86, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/publications/oip/oip-67-egyptian-coffin-texts-4-texts-spells-268-354>.

Eminent Egyptologists such as Raymond Faulkner and Jan Assmann have also relied on de Buck's interpretation of Coffin Text 312 and Book of the Dead 78, seeing them as corrupted extracts of a more ancient ritual drama (Jan Assmann and Andrea Kucharek, *Ägyptische Religion: Totenliturgie* (Frankfurt Am Main, DEU: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2008), 421–27, 828–29; Jan Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 39–52; Étienne Drioton, "Compte Rendu de : Adriaan de Buck, The Egyptian Coffin Texts. IV, Texts of Spells 268-354," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 10, no. 5 (September 1953): 167–71; Étienne Drioton, "La question du théâtre égyptien," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 98, no. 1 (1954): 51-63, [https://www.persee.fr/doc/crai\\_0065-0536\\_1954\\_num\\_98\\_1\\_10221](https://www.persee.fr/doc/crai_0065-0536_1954_num_98_1_10221); Raymond O. Faulkner and Carol A. R. Andrews, eds., *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, trans. Raymond O. Faulkner (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001), Spell 78, pp. 74–78; Raymond O. Faulkner, ed., *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts: Spells 1-1185 and Indexes* (Oxford, UK: Aris & Phillips, 2007), Spell 312, pp. 229–32. Cf. Raymond O. Faulkner, "Coffin Texts Spell 313," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 58 (August 1972): 91-94, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3856239>; Faulkner and Andrews, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, Spell 313, pp. 233–35). Among the kinds of corruptions of the original form of the drama that begin to appear already the Coffin Texts and are only exacerbated in the later Book of the Dead are the personal pronouns, leading to confusions in the identity of the characters involved in the drama:

In the case of this spell the mixing up of the different personal pronouns has been a source of much confusion already in the Coffin Texts, and in the Book of the Dead so little remains of the original pronouns that the well-arranged plan of the story as told by the earlier version must needs have suffered (or have been altered) considerably. (Adriaan de Buck. "The

earliest version of Book of the Dead 78,” *The Journal of Eastern Archaeology* 35 (December 1949): 87-97, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3855214>.)

- 86 The Egyptian term given in Spell 312 is *ba*. However, Faulkner observes that “here and in several other places in this text has not its common meaning of ‘soul,’ represented by a bird which in later times has a human head, but, as is clear from the context, has the rarer meaning of ‘form’ or ‘shape’” (Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, Spell 312, p. 232 n. 2).
- 87 Hugh W. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Abraham, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 18 (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2009), 269–87.

Nibley cites Jewish legends of Abraham’s prayers for deliverance being answered by a devilish impostor lacking authority as further analogues for the situation he describes (Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Abraham*, 285. See, e.g., Adolph Jellinek, ed., *Bet ha-Midrash. Sammlung kleiner Midraschim und vermischter Abhandlungen aus der ältern jüdischen Literatur* (Leipzig, DEU: F. Nies, 1853–1877), 255–34, translated in John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2001), 164–77, esp. 167, 173. Cf. John C. Reeves and Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Sources from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Enoch from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 157–58.

Nibley’s view of the messenger differs from that of de Buck, Assmann, and others, who regard the messenger as an authentic envoy of Horus rather than as an impostor. Nevertheless, Drioton, “La Question du Théâtre,” 56 recognizes, consistent with Nibley’s highlighting of the repeated failures of the messenger’s exaggerated efforts (Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Abraham*, 279–80), the “*difficultés, parfois comiques, à chaque passage gardé qu’il lui faut franchir*” (i.e., “the sometimes comical difficulties [he experiences] at every guarded gate that he must pass through”). Highlighting the central role of this motif to the spell, Drioton entitles the text of Spell 312: “The misadventures of the messenger of Horus.” Regarding the comic exaggeration of the messenger, Nibley translates Drioton, “Compte Rendu,” 170 as follows: “He is really too much of a braggart, this Messenger of Horus. That is no doubt the comic element in the play.”

Certain observations by Anne Marie Landborg also lend credence to Nibley’s doubts about competing interpretations from other scholars. While Landborg notes that the messenger of Spell 312 goes to Osiris

because “Horus cannot, or does not wish to go into the Netherworld” (Anne Maria Landborg. “Manifestations of the Dead in Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts,” Doctoral Dissertation [Liverpool, UK: University of Liverpool, 2014], 93, [https://livrepository.liverpool.ac.uk/2002779/1/LandborgAnn\\_Feb2014.pdf](https://livrepository.liverpool.ac.uk/2002779/1/LandborgAnn_Feb2014.pdf)), the fact that “Osiris and his son [Horus] speak and the son comes to Osiris” in Spell 303 (ibid., 143; see Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, Spell 303, 222–23) makes the idea that Horus did not or would not go in person to Osiris seem unlikely. Going further, Landborg comments on the puzzling anomaly of “two” Horus characters in the text:

In contrast to spell 286 where “Horus” and “falcon” seem to be interchangeable, in spell 312 Horus has a “split” personality where his *ba/irw/falcon*-form is the messenger, the *ba* and *irw* of Horus, while he is continuing to act and speak independently. (Landborg, “Manifestations of the Dead in Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts,” 93.)

As an alternative to Nibley’s hypothesis about a “false” messenger, this “split personality” can be explained in terms of ritual for the deceased if, “in spell 312, the dead takes the role of Horus’ *ba* and *irw*-form in order to reach Osiris in the Netherworld” (ibid., 148. Cf. 215–18), though Landborg admits that Horus’ actions in putting the “dead person into his *ba* in order to send it to Osiris in the Netherworld ... are quite unparalleled in the Coffin Texts, even though the sending and the *ba* going to the Netherworld occur in other spells” (ibid., 187).

For a general survey of literature involving a “keeper of the gate” in the ancient Near East, see John Gee, “The keeper of the gate,” in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 1999), 233-73.

- 88 Hugh W. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 447 and Figure 145. See also David J. Larsen, “Abraham and Jehovah” (23 August 2014), *The Interpreter Foundation* (blog), <https://interpreterfoundation.org/blog-abraham-and-jehovah/>; Raymond O. Faulkner, Ogden Goelet, Jr., and Carol A. R. Andrews, eds., *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Book of Going Forth by Day*, trans. Raymond O. Faulkner (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1994), chapter 30b and plate 4.
- 89 “According to the Pyramid Texts it is Horus and not Osiris who does the saving. Horus is the son who saves his father (Pyr. 633b; cf 898a-b)” (John Gwyn Griffiths, *The Origins of Osiris and His Cult* [Leiden: Brill, 2018], 232, <https://brill.com/view/title/4027>). R. T. R. Clark gives the

following as a somewhat conjectural form of a related drama in which Horus saves Osiris as follows:

The “call” of Osiris for help is the great turning-point in the drama. Apparently it was “Come down to me!” “*Ha-k ir-i*,” which gave the name Haker to the great festival at Abydos. The old texts hint at the tension of this moment “when, during the night of the Great Sleep,” the call of the god was heard outside by the worshippers. During this night no sound of music or singing was to be heard, for all were waiting for the moment when the god should cry for help. Also, in the ritual for “Opening the Mouth” the chief officiating priest pretended to sleep and dream that his father had called out to him. He then rose to answer the call, and this was the beginning of the operative part of the ceremony. In the myth — and it was always implied in the ritual — Horus descends to the Underworld and there embraces his father and “recognizes” him. That means, as we have seen, that Horus receives the *Ka* of Osiris. (R. T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1959), 130. See also figures and text on 160–161, citing Coffin Text spell 228 [Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, 181–82].)

On the gesture of the embrace as “the symbol of connectivity that crosses both the boundary between the generations and the threshold of death” (Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, 44), by which *ka*, “a sort of spirit, genius, or vital energy ... is transferred from the father to the son” (ibid.); see Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 429–36. The gesture emphasizes that “Father and son are dependent on one another. They stand by one another, the one in the afterlife, and the other in this life” (Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, 47). The imagery recalls the general theme of D&C 128:18: “For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect.” See also Raymond O. Faulkner, “Spells 38-40 of the Coffin Texts,” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 48 (December 1962): 36–44, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3855781>.

In connection with the saving of Osiris by Horus, see also Kerry Muhlestein’s explanation of the meaning of Horus’ enigmatic command to save his already dead father from “drowning”:

On the Shabaka Stone it is made clear that Horus is overly anxious that Osiris’ body not be left in the Nile. Hence he sends Nephthys and Isis to rescue Osiris’ body from drowning in the Nile. This action seems somewhat strange, Osiris is already dead when the rescue is enacted, how can he be saved from drowning? It is clear that [the Egyptian term] does not mean



“drowning” as we think of it, but it is equally clear that Osiris needs to be saved from something terribly detrimental that is a result of being left in the water. Horus’ command is not designed to afford Osiris life, but rather Afterlife [cf. Griffiths, *The Origins of Osiris and His Cult*, 233] — in this case drowning does not mean that the body will cease to breathe because water has filled the lungs, but that water will destroy the body, and with it, the opportunity for Afterlife. (Kerry Muhlestein, “Death by water: The role of water in ancient Egypt’s treatment of enemies and juridical process,” in *L’Acqua Nell’antico Egitto: Vita, Rigenerazione, Incantesimo, Medicamento* [Proceedings of the First International Conference for Young Egyptologies, Italy, Chiaciano Terme, October 15-18, 2003], eds. Alessia Amenta, Maria Michela Luiselli and Maria Novella Sordi [“L’Erma” di Bretschneider, 2003], 177.)

For background and a summary of commentary by Nibley on the account of the Memphite theology written on the Shabaka Stone, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve. In God’s Image and Likeness 1* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 514–15.

- 90 Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 8:1–10:4, pp. 1461–63. For an impressive collection of ancient witnesses to Terah’s idolatry and Abraham as a sacrificial victim, see Tvedtnes, Hauglid, and Gee, *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham*. Many of these accounts depict Abraham being saved by God or by an angel, though from death by fire rather than sacrifice.
- 91 Following the lead of David Larsen (Larsen, “Abraham and Jehovah”), it is tempting to go beyond general suggestions about the plausibility of Egyptian influences on *ApAb* to speculate about the possibility of a relationship of some kind between *ApAb* and Book of Abraham Facsimile 1. For example, in rough analogue to the rescue pictured in Facsimile 1, H. Donl Peterson observed that it was “Horus [the falcon] who delivered his father Osiris from death just as a personage represented by a birdlike figure delivered Abraham from death” (H. Donl Peterson, *The Pearl of Great Price: A History and Commentary* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987], p. 48). It should be noted, however, that Nibley’s suggestion that Horus is represented by the bird in facsimile 1 (see Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Abraham*, 258–87) does not exhaust the possibilities, especially when we consider that the bird is likely to have had a human head, and thus, at least from a purely Egyptian standpoint, normally could not be Horus himself (see Michael D. Rhodes, ed., *Books of the Dead Belonging to Tshemmin and Neferirnub: A Translation and Commentary* [Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2010], 18), though he could represent a deity (Richard H.

Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Egyptian Painting and Sculpture* [London: Thames and Hudson, 2006]) or an angel-like messenger of a deity.

Of course, in considering any seeming similarities or differences between Egyptian symbolism and interpretations given in the Book of Abraham, we should be careful not to assume that all of Joseph Smith's explanations reflect Egyptian perspectives — only some of these explanations are said to reflect Egyptian names and meanings. Though the possibility of Egyptian parallels should not be ruled out in any case, not everything needs to have an Egyptian parallel to be authentic.

In addition, the pteromorphism of the angel Yaho'el is intriguing in light of the depiction of “the Angel of the Lord” (Facsimile 1, Figure 1) on the far right of Facsimile 1 of the Book of Abraham as a bird (almost certainly with a human head in the original papyrus). In the Latter-day Saint Book of Abraham, the young Abraham is saved by “the angel of his presence,” who declares himself to be Jehovah (Abraham 1:15–16). Significantly, Yaho'el, in his identification with Metatron in *3 Enoch* (Alexander, “3 [Hebrew Apocalypse of] Enoch,” 48D:1, p. 313) is similarly introduced as “the prince of the presence” (Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism* 107 [Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2005], 121–27) and his name explicitly connotes “Jehovah-God.” Yaho'el's name is apparently an expression of *yhwh'l* (Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 11:2, p. 19; see John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], 228; Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 693n10b; Andrei A. Orlov, “Praxis of the voice: The divine name traditions in the Apocalypse of Abraham,” in *Divine Manifestations in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha* [Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009], 162; Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 1463–64 nn. 10:3–11:3).

Is it plausible that the Book of Abraham and *ApAb*, illustrated more than a millennium apart, could be connected in any way? Though, of course, the Book of Abraham facsimile is from the Ptolemaic period in Egypt while the *ApAb* figure is medieval and Christian in origin, Hugh Nibley reminds us that some common Egyptian influences may lie behind the two texts, both from the late Second Temple period, that these images are meant to illustrate:

The Book of Abraham is right at home in the world of the *Apocalypse [of Abraham]* and *Testament of Abraham*. And those texts in turn are full of Egyptian matter, which is so generally accepted that no long demonstration is necessary. (Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 57)

With respect to the plausibility of the owners of the Joseph Smith papyri having had access to manuscripts relevant to our Book of Abraham, John Gee writes:

The ancient owners of the papyri were among the most literate and educated people of Ptolemaic Egypt. They had access to the great Theban temple libraries, containing narratives, reference works, and manuals, as well as scrolls on religion, ritual, and history. Ptolemaic Thebes had a sizable Jewish population; some of them served as the tax collectors. The Egyptian religion of the time was eclectic. Foreign elements like deities and rites — including those from the Greek religion and Judaism — were added to Egyptian practices. The papyri owners also lived at a time when stories about Abraham circulated in Egypt. If any ancient Egyptians were in a position to know about Abraham, it was the Theban priests. (John Gee, *An Introduction to the Book of Abraham* [Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2017], 59, 61)

- 92 Translation of caption: “And the angel said to me, all these many [+2 unintelligible words] but the bird do not divide and give to men which I will show standing by you since these are the altar on the mountain to bring a sacrifice to the eternal. And I gave to the angels which came [that?] which had been divided. And an unclean bird flew down to me. And spoke to me, the unclean bird, and said, Why, Abraham, are you on the holy heights? In them neither eat nor drink, and no food of men but all are scorched by fire. Leave the man who is with you. Run away. As they will destroy you. And it was [when?] I saw the bird speaking, and said to the angel, what is this, oh lord? And he said this is from Azazel and the angel said: Go away. You cannot deceive this man.” Cf. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 12:8–9, 13:1, pp. 19, 20.

The sacrificial animals required are consistent with those in Genesis 15, whose symbolism was a source of rabbinic speculation (Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 123, 125n5). The mention of a “pure sacrifice” recalls the “pure offering” mentioned in Malachi 1:11 (*ibid.*, p. 125 n. 5).

Note that Satan appears as a bird, which is apparently how Yaho’el appeared. Thus it seems that Satan is here imitating the form of an angel of God Himself [Orlov, *Divine Scapegoats*; Orlov, *Atoning Dyad*; Andrei A. Orlov, “The likeness of heaven: The *kavod* of Azazel in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*,” in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism*, eds. Daphna V. Arbel and Andrei A. Orlov (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 232–53; Orlov, *Dark Mirrors*, 11–26]. Kulik renders the text corresponding to the second part of the caption as: “And an

impure bird flew down on the carcasses, and I drove it away. And the impure bird spoke to me and said, ‘What are you doing, Abraham, on the holy heights, where no one eats or drinks, nor is there upon them food of men. But these will all be consumed by fire and they will burn you up. Leave the man who is with you and flee! Since if you ascend to the height, they will destroy you.’ And it came to pass when I saw the bird speaking I said to the angel, ‘What is this, my lord?’ And he said, ‘This is iniquity, this is Azazel!’ And he said to him, ‘Reproach on you, Azazel! ... Depart from this man! You cannot deceive him’ (Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 13:3–7, 12–13, p. 20).

- 93 Abraham, Facsimile 2, figure 2.
- 94 See endnote regarding “Shelem” above. A context of calling upon God is also implied in both accounts, as in the similar experiences of Lehi, Joseph Smith, and Abraham (i.e., in the Book of Abraham).
- 95 Moses 1:4: “workmanship of my hands” (compare Psalm 19:1).
- 96 Moses 2:1–2.
- 97 A. Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinical Literature and The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1968), 64 #5. In addition, the authority of God’s law, given through Moses, rested on the argument that it came “from the mouth of the all-powerful, Almighty” (ibid., 82 #32).
- 98 Moses 1:25. See additional discussion on this verse below.
- 99 This title, which literally means “he who was before the world,” appears 23 times in *ApAb*. For more on this term and its correspondences in Hebrew and Greek, see Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 123n3.
- 100 The endlessness of God, His works, and His words is stressed throughout Moses 1: “without end,” “numberless,” “without number,” “innumerable,” “cannot be numbered,” “no end” (Moses 1:4, 28, 33, 35, 37, 38).
- 101 *Sefer Yetsirah* in David Blumenthal, ed., *The Merkabah Tradition and the Zoharic Tradition, Understanding Jewish Mysticism: A Source Reader 1* [Jersey City, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1979], 1:7, p. 17. The passage is quoted in Daniel C. Matt, ed., *The Zohar, Pritzker Edition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 1:xlvii.
- 102 E.g., 1 Nephi 10:19. The imagery associated with the inner “rung of being” in the *Kabbalah* is the crown: *keter* — but Daniel Matt urges readers to “also recall that the more primary meaning of the word *keter* is ‘circle’; it is from this that the notion of crown is derived” (Matt, *The Zohar*, xlvii).
- 103 See his discussion in Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 1462n9:6.

- 104 Ibid., 9:6, p. 1462. See e.g., James H. Charlesworth, “Odes of Solomon,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 8:10, Vol. 2, p. 742: “Keep my mystery, you who are kept by it.”
- 105 Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 9:6, p. 125: “*choses cachées*” = hidden things.
- 106 Ether 4:13. Cf. Jeremiah 33:3: “I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”
- 107 Blumenthal, *The Merkabah Tradition and the Zoharic Tradition*, 59n1. Cf. *Hekhalot Rabbati* 16:1:

the secrets and mysteries which have been suppressed, [the] wonders and weaving of the tractate upon which the betterment of the world, the setting (of the world) on its path, and the beautification of heaven, and earth depend, for all the ends of the earth and the universe and the ends of the upper heavens are bound, sewn, and connected, dependent upon it [i.e., the secret knowledge]. (ibid., *Hekhalot Rabbati*, 16:1, p. 59.)

For an extensive discussion of similar lists of “revealed things” that are shown to the prophets in the apocalyptic visions, see Michael E. Stone, “Lists of revealed things in the apocalyptic literature,” in *Selected Studies in Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha With Special Reference to the Armenian Tradition. Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha* 9, ed. A. M. Denis and M. De Jonge (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 379–418.

- 108 Moses 1:4.
- 109 Cf. Jacob Neusner, ed., *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis, A New American Translation*, 3 vols, Vol. 2: Parashiyot Thirty-Four through Sixty-Seven on Genesis 8:15–28:9, *Brown Judaic Studies* 105 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985), 50:9:1B, 2:218. Cf. Deuteronomy 29:28; Daniel 2:8–29.
- 110 In *ApAb*, God announces that he will show the “worlds created,” “the covenants to be renewed,” and “what will happen” to humankind: “And there [on the high mountain] *I will show thee the worlds created by my word* and the oaths [= covenants] that I have fulfilled and [*those that will be*] renewed. And I will tell you what will happen to those who do evil and those who (do) good among the race of men” (Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 9:9–10, pp. 125, 127). Similarly, in Moses 1, God will show “this earth, and the inhabitants thereof [presumably past, present, and future — ‘not a soul which he beheld not’ (v. 28)], and also the heavens” (v. 36).

In contrast to the translation of Rubinkiewicz that, following a conjectural emendation in one of the source manuscripts in an appropriate parallel to Genesis 15:18, mentions “covenants,” Kulik gives

a less plausible translation of a term that literally means “worlds” as “ages” (Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 9:5 and 9, p. 2:1462. Cf. 1983 translation by Rubinkiewicz [Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 9:5, 9, p. 693]). See *ibid.*, n. 9c, p. 693 and Kulik, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 125n5 for additional details.

Kulik’s interpretation seems to have been made in support of the assumption that the history of *ApAb* ended before the last destruction of the temple in 70 CE (Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 1.3.6, pp. 46–47; Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 1462n9:9). However, most scholars now date the text to the decades following 70 CE (see, e.g., Paulsen-Reed, *Origins of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, 6).

Ludlow, “Abraham’s Vision of the Heavens,” 62n19, following an earlier translation in Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 9:9, p. 693 (“things ... affirmed, created, and renewed”), asks: “Could this be referring to stages of God’s creative processes? Affirmed — spiritual creation, created — physical creation, renewed — restoration to pre-fall conditions?”

- 111 E.g., Deuteronomy 4:29; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 2 Chronicles 15:12, 31:21; Ecclesiastes 1:13; Jeremiah 29:13. See David J. Larsen, “Ascending into the hill of the Lord: What the Psalms can tell us about the rituals of the First Temple,” in *Ancient Temple Worship: Proceedings of the Expound Symposium, 14 May 2011*, eds. Matthew B. Brown et al. (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, 2014), 171–88. Cf. David J. Larsen, “Psalm 24 and the Two YHWHs at the Gate of the Temple,” in *The Temple: Ancient and Restored. Proceedings of the 2014 Temple on Mount Zion Symposium*, eds. Stephen D. Ricks and Donald W. Parry (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, 2016), 201–23. See also the insightful discussion by James L. Kugel, *The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 37–70 of the increased emphasis of searching for God as He is increasingly portrayed as less personal and more remote as biblical history goes on.
- 112 Moses 1:6.
- 113 Smoot, “I Am a Son of God,” 134–37.
- 114 In the writings of the Jewish scholar Philo Judaeus, the terms “only begotten” and “firstborn” (often treated as synonyms) are closely identified with Moses himself. The meanings of “firstborn” and “begetting” are strongly interrelated in the writings of Philo and his contemporaries (see an excellent discussion in Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003], 1:412–16). Likewise, the interpretation of the uniqueness of *monogenēs* in New Testament usage partly depends on understanding of Hellenistic Jewish ideas about inheritance. For example, Philo wrote:

In the second place, after he [Abraham] had become the father of this his only legitimate [*agapetos kai monos* = loved-and-only] son, he, from the moment of his birth, cherished towards him all the genuine feelings of affection, which exceeds all modest love, and all the ties of friendship which have ever been celebrated in the world. (Philo, “On the Migration of Abraham (*De migratione Abrahamo*),” in *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, ed. and trans. Charles Duke Yonge [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006], 35 (194), p. 427.)

And he [Jacob] learnt all these things from Abraham his grandfather, who was the author of his own education, who gave to the all-wise Isaac all that he had, leaving none of his substance to bastards, or to the spurious reasonings of concubines, but he gives them small gifts, as being inconsiderable persons. For the possessions of which he is possessed, namely, the perfect virtues, belong only to the perfect and legitimate son. (Philo, “A Treatise on the Sacrifices of Abel and Cain,” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus*, ed. and trans. Charles Duke Yonge, Vol. 1 [London: George Bell and Sons, 1890], 207–41, <https://archive.org/stream/worksofphilojuda0lyonguoft#page/206/mode/2up>, 10 (43), p. 99)

Yonge’s rendering of “loved-and-only son” (*agapetos kai monos uios*) as “only legitimate son” is not unreasonable given Philo’s parallel comments in *On Sacrifice* 10:43 [above]. It also parallels Josephus’ use (see Flavius Josephus, “The Antiquities of the Jews,” in *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus, the Jewish Historian, Translated from the Original Greek, according to Havercamp’s Accurate Edition*, trans. William Whiston, 23–426 [London: W. Bowyer, 1737], reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1980., 20:2:1 (20), p. 415) for a legitimate son of the main royal wife.

Likewise, in the later Jewish Septuagint revisions:

Genesis 22:2 of Aquila “take your son Isaac, your only-begotten (*monogenēs*) son whom you love”

Genesis 22:12 of Symmachus “now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only-begotten (*monogenēs*) son, from me.”

In contrast in Proverbs 4:3 Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion all have *monogenēs* of a mother’s only-begotten son where legitimacy is not an issue. (Wikipedia, s.v. “Monogenēs,” last updated February 6, 2020, 16:40, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monogenēs>)

With respect to “full of grace and truth,” we note that the phrase in Greek (*plērēs charitos kai alētheias*) is a rendering of the Hebrew in Exodus 34:6

of God’s declaration to Moses that He is “abundant in steadfast love and faithfulness (*rab-ḥesed we’emet*)” (Lester J. Kuyper, “Grace and Truth: An Old Testament Description of God, and its Use in the Johannine Gospel,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 18, no. 1 [1964]: 1, <https://repository.westernsem.edu/pkp/index.php/rr/article/view/283/295>; Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:416; see also John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* [Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007], 299–300). Significantly, in both Exodus 34 and Moses 1, God makes this declaration immediately after appearing to Moses in glory. In John 1, the sequence of events, as applied to Jesus, is the same: “We beheld his glory ... full of grace and truth.”

Thus, the ostensibly New Testament terms relating to Jesus are completely at home in Joseph Smith’s story of Moses’s heavenly ascent. Thanks to Samuel Zinner and David Seely for their helpful suggestions on this topic.

- 115 “This title comes from Isaiah 41:8, where the Lord designates Abraham “my friend” (*’ōhābî*) [cf. 2 Chronicles 20:7]. James, alluding to this passage, calls Abraham “the friend of God” (*philos theou*, James 2:23)” (Matthew L. Bowen, e-mail message to Jeffrey M. Bowen, August 15, 2019).
- 116 For more on this topic, see Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*, 73–79.
- 117 John 15:15, emphasis added.
- 118 Though our reading of Moses 1:8 as a vision of premortal spirits makes sense in terms of its sequence in the overall story of the plan of salvation, this interpretation can be further argued by considering other verses in the same chapter.

First, we note that the statement in Moses 1:8 about “the world upon which he was created” seems to be made in deliberate contradistinction to the reference to “the earth upon which thou standest” in Moses 1:40 — the qualifications used in each case would be unnecessary if the “world” and the “earth” were one and the same place.

Moreover, if the world Moses is shown in v. 8 were the same as the earth he beholds in vv. 27–28, why the need for two separate visions? These puzzles are resolved if we take “world” in the Book of Moses as most often referring to the realm of the human family in premortal life (fifteen consistent occurrences; two possible exceptions in Moses 1:33, 35; two exceptions in 6:59; and one in 7:4). This also sets a context where the phrase “thou art in the world” in Moses 1:7 can be understood not as an obvious truism, but as a comprehensible justification for why it was expedient to show Moses the world of spirits at that particular time.



Finally, assuming we also accept this reading as applying later in the Book of Moses, Moses 6:51 can function as an instance of deliberate parallelism (“I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh”) rather than simply as a pair of loosely related assertions.

119 Cf. Moses 6:36.

120 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 21:7, 22:2, p. 26.

121 Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 1470n21:2.

122 D&C 93:24. Cf. Jacob 4:13.

123 See discussion of the translation of this and related terms in Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 2:1470n21:2.

124 Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 175n1.

125 Ibid.

126 Following the literal translation of Box, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, 12:8, p. 51. Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 12:10, Vol. 1, p. 695 gives the phrase as “I will ... show you ... the fullness of the universe. And you will see its circles in all.” Cf. Ibid., 21:5, p. 699; Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 21:5, p. 26: “I saw there the rivers ... and their circles.”

In his 1983 translation and commentary, Rubinkiewicz finds the mention of circles in the Slavonic manuscript to be “obscure,” a signal that the text is “possibly corrupt” (Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 695n12c). Similarly puzzled by the text, Kulik, in his 2013 translation and commentary, responds to the seeming difficulty of rendering the text literally by translating *ApAb*’s explicit reference to circles with an overly loose reading: “*round about it you will see everything*” (Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 12:10, p. 1465).

Surprisingly, neither the commentaries of Rubinkiewicz nor Kulik seemed to connect this imagery to other Jewish visionary descriptions of the circles of the heavens surrounding the waters of the earth — notably including the “celestial circles” (Andersen, “2 [Slavonic Apocalypse of] Enoch,” 48:1 and 3, p. 174. Cf. 27:3–28:1, p. 146) described in the creation vision of 2 *Enoch*, another Slavonic ascension text. However, in the 1987 critical text edition of *ApAb* prepared by Rubinkiewicz, he reverses his previous conclusion that the reference to “circles” was a corruption of the text (see Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 141n10).

127 Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 141n10. He cites these biblical references as examples: Job 22:14; 26:10; Isaiah 40:22; Proverbs 8:27–28. He also cites references to celestial spheres in 2 Baruch 19:3 and 48:9.

128 Hugh Nibley notes that on the “great round” (Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 45) of the shield of Achilles is depicted “a crowded representation of the

cosmic drama.” Similarly, Book of Abraham Facsimile #2 is divided “into two antithetical halves, the one the reverse or mirror image of the other” (ibid., p. 50).

As one of his arguments for this seemingly far-fetched comparison of a symbol from pagan antiquity and the apocalyptic visions of Moses and Abraham, Nibley cites both modern scholarship and the “most revered of ancient Christian apologists, Justin Martyr ... who sees in the Shield of Achilles a most obvious borrowing from the book of Genesis, explaining the coincidence that Homer became acquainted with Moses’ cosmic teachings while he was visiting Egypt” (ibid., p. 46). In a book-length study, Nibley discusses related depictions and stories of heavenly ascent from antiquity in great detail (see Hugh W. Nibley and Michael D. Rhodes, *One Eternal Round, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 19 [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010]).

- 129 Box, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, 12:8, p. 51.
- 130 See Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 22:5, p. 1471.
- 131 Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 45.
- 132 Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 21:7, p. 699–700.
- 133 Nibley and Rhodes, *One Eternal Round*, 596, 597.
- 134 See Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 18:3–5, p. 698.
- 135 Nibley and Rhodes, *One Eternal Round*, 354. Going further, he continues:  
 Abraham is now instructed to consider the expanse of the universe and the hierarchical powers and orders of the seven firmaments and sees the “hosts of stars, and the orders they were commanded to carry out, and the elements of earth obeying them” (see Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 19:9, p. 699. Cf. Abraham 3:10–12, 18). ... Powers? Obey? Governed? We begin to catch echoes of the Joseph Smith explanation to figures 1–3, 5.
- 136 Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 12:10, p. 141.
- 137 Michael D. Rhodes, “The Book of Abraham: Divinely inspired scripture,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): 123, quoted in Ludlow, “Abraham’s Vision of the Heavens,” 63. Rhodes further observes that *ApAb* 18:5 “describes the four animal-headed figures labeled number 6 in Facsimile Number 2.”
- 138 Photographs by Stephen T. Whitlock. a: Hypocephalus of Hor (2005); b: Hypocephalus of Ti (21 April 2007). Copyright Stephen T. Whitlock. According to Hugh Nibley, “the Joseph Smith hypocephalus [Book of Abraham, Facsimile 2] is almost identical with the *Ws.t-wr.t* hypocephalus in the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna [Wien 253

a/2, published in Nibley and Rhodes, *One Eternal Round*, Appendix 4, 636] and the one belonging to H̄r [Horus] in the British Museum” (included in the present article as Figure 6a). (Nibley and Rhodes, *One Eternal Round*, 194–95.)

In addition to finding the latter hypocephalus interesting because of its resemblance to Facsimile 2, Michael Rhodes wonders whether the owner of the hypocephalus was “the same as the owner of the Book of Breathings papyrus in the Church collection” (Michael D. Rhodes, “The Joseph Smith Hypocephalus ... Twenty Years Later,” in *FARMS Preliminary Report* [Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 1997], 2), i.e., the source of Facsimiles 1 and 3 of the Book of Abraham (see Michael D. Rhodes, *The Hor Book of Breathings: A Translation and Commentary*, ed. John Gee [Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2002]). In his translation of the Hor Book of Breathings, Rhodes cites Quaegebeur, who identifies Hor as the son of Usirwer (*ibid.*, 3):

the founding father of a family of priests of Min-Amon in Thebes during the Ptolemaic period, thus dating to approximately the first half of the second century BCE. This identification, if accurate, would make this Book of Breathings the oldest that can be dated. Marc Coenen has identified parts of an abbreviated Book of the Dead in the Musée du Louvre that belongs to this same Hor.

None of the 158 currently catalogued and published hypocephali are exactly alike — they have each been custom made for their individual owner (“The Purpose and Function of the Egyptian Hypocephalus — Book of Abraham Insight #30,” *Pearl of Great Price Central* (2020), <https://www.pearlofgreatpricecentral.org/the-purpose-and-function-of-the-egyptian-hypocephalus/>).

Spell 162, which explains the function of the hypocephalus (literally “under the head”), originated in Thebes at the end of the 25th Dynasty and came into widespread use in the 26th Dynasty as part of the Saite recension of the Book of the Dead (664–525 BCE). See Irmtraut Munro, “The Evolution of the Book of the Dead,” in John H. Taylor, ed., *Journey Through the Afterlife: Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* [London: The British Museum Press, 2010], 58–59). For more on the purpose of the hypocephalus in Egyptian tradition, see *ibid.*, 130; “The Purpose and Function of the Egyptian Hypocephalus.” For translations of Spell 162, see, e.g., Paul Barguet. *Le Livre des Morts des Anciens Égyptiens* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1967), 228–29; Faulkner and Andrews, eds., *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 156, 158.

- 139 Abraham 3:22–23. The idea of making the chosen ones rulers does not appear in *ApAb*. However, the idea of divine selection of “rulers” from among a larger congregation is echoed in the story of the Exodus (e.g., Exodus 18:21, 25; Deuteronomy 1:13).
- 140 For example, Clark cites a rabbinic source as saying that “‘God did shew unto Adam every Generation,’ meaning ‘all the Souls, which were to come into the World, ... so that Adam could perfectly distinguish them,’ later ‘thus it happened on Mount Sinai’ with Moses, so that ‘the Souls, which were not then born into the world, were present on Mount Sinai, in the same form in which they were to appear in the World’” (Clark, “A Prologue to Genesis,” 138. Cf. Qur’ān 7:172; 30:30; 33:7; 53:56; Muhammad ibn Abd Allah al-Kisa’i, *Tales of the Prophets (Qisas al-anbiya)*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston, Jr. [Chicago: KAZI Publications, 1997], 63–64; G. Weil, ed., *The Bible, the Koran, and the Talmud or, Biblical Legends of the Mussulmans, Compiled from Arabic Sources, and Compared with Jewish Traditions, Translated from the German* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1863), 39–40, [https://books.google.com/books?id=\\_jYMAAAAIAAJ](https://books.google.com/books?id=_jYMAAAAIAAJ); Brannon M. Wheeler, *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis. Comparative Islam Studies* [London: Continuum, 2002], 32–33). A related Jewish tradition recounts that “the unborn souls of future generations ... were present at Sinai to receive the Torah” (Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* [Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004], 164). For a more general discussion of this subject, see Bradshaw, *Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve*, 649–50.
- 141 Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 21:7, pp. 699–700.
- 142 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 21:7, 22:5, pp. 26, 27. Cf. Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 1471n22:4. Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 22:5, p. 177n5 observes that the term “my people” is used in the Bible as a title for Israel, the people of God. Cf. Exodus 3:7; 5:1; 7:16; Isaiah 1:3, 3:12, etc.
- 143 Paulsen-Reed, *Origins of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, 93.
- 144 *Ibid.*, 98. For more details, see the thorough discussion of the issue in *ibid.*, 88–100.
- 145 Moses 1:9–11; Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 10:1–3, p. 17. For a broader exploration of the significance of this motif, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Standing in the Holy Place: Ancient and Modern Reverberations of an Enigmatic New Testament Prophecy,” in *Ancient Temple Worship: Proceedings of the Expound Symposium, 14 May 2011*, eds. Matthew B. Brown, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Stephen D. Ricks, and John S. Thompson (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 80–81, 118–20, <http://www.templethemes.net/publications/04-Ancient%20Temple-Bradshaw.pdf>.

- 146 Moses 1:9–10.
- 147 Translation of caption: “I heard a voice saying, Here Oilu, sanctify this man and strengthen (him) from his trembling and the angel took me by the right hand and stood me on my feet and said to me, stand up oh friend of God who has loved you.” Kulik’s translation of the corresponding text in *ApAb* reads: “And when I was still face down on the earth, I heard the voice of the Holy One, saying, ‘Go, Yaho’el, the namesake of the mediation of my ineffable name, sanctify this man and strengthen him from his trembling!’ And the angel whom he sent to me in the likeness of a man came, and he took me by my right hand and stood me on my feet. And he said to me, ‘Stand up, <Abraham,> the friend of God who has loved you, let human trembling not enfold you. For behold I am sent to you to strengthen you and to bless you in the name of God.” (Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 10:3–6, pp. 17–18). For similar accounts in the heavenly ascent literature, see Charles Mopsik, ed., *Le Livre Hébreu d’Hénoch ou Livre des Palais. Les Dix Paroles* (Lagrasse, France: Éditions Verdier, 1989), 170–71 n.1:16. In 3 *Enoch*, the angel who raises Rabbi Ishmael to his feet is Metatron (*ibid.*, 1:7–10, pp. 99–100). Comparing that experience to the one recounted in *ApAb*, Mopsik notes that Yaho’el is one of the names of Metatron and that he is the angel of resurrection (*ibid.*, 170–171 n. 1:16; pp. 261–262 n. 18:21).
- 148 In the Ezekiel mural at Dura Europos, the “hand from heaven” is specifically associated with the “revivication of the dead” (Harald Riesenfeld, *The Resurrection in Ezekiel XXXVII and in the Dura-Europos Paintings*, *Uppsala Universitets Arsskrift* 11 (Uppsala, SWE: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1948), 34; Bradshaw, “The Ezekiel Mural at Dura Europos,” 22–23). In a formula repeated throughout the rabbinical literature, the “Key of the Revival of the Dead” is mentioned as one that “the Holy one . . . has retained in His own hands” (Riesenfeld, *The Resurrection in Ezekiel XXXVII*, 12).
- 149 The scene recalls Rashi’s exegesis of the account of how the children of Israel fell back at the power of the voice of God at Sinai, after which “the angels came and helped them forward again” (Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Genesis: The Beginning of Desire* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995], 32–33. See Rashi, *The Torah with Rashi’s Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*, Vol. 2: Shemos/Exodus, trans. Rabbi Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg [Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1994], 240–41). Compare John 18:4–6, where the arresting guards fell back when Christ declared His divinity. On the symbolic significance of these and similar events, see Bradshaw, “Standing in the Holy Place,” 82–87.
- 150 In classic iconography, the gesture being given by God represented the spoken word. This is consistent with the mention of the heavenly voice in

the caption. In medieval Christianity, the meaning later changed to that of blessing (H. P. L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (Oslo, NOR: Instituttet for Sammenlignende Kulturforskning and H. Aschehoug, 1953), 171–83, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.105206/page/n5/mode/2up>).

- 151 Moses 3:7. See the insightful discussion regarding the creation of Adam in this context in André LaCocque, *The Trial of Innocence: Adam, Eve, and the Yahwist* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2006), 60–64. Nibley also cites a resemblance with Abraham 1:18 (“Behold I will lead thee by my hand”), and sees a corresponding theme in the Book of Abraham when Abraham is delivered from the altar:

The expressions “loose the bands of Hades” and “him who stareth at the dead” signify the nature of the deliverance and are both typically Egyptian, the latter of which Box finds quite bizarre. Facsimile 1 is a very proper illustration to the story. (Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 16; see also 42)

In a personal communication, Jeff Lindsay noted that arising from the dust in this fashion “can refer to entering into a covenant relationship, receiving life, reigning power, authority, and resurrection” (Jeffrey Dean Lindsay, personal communication to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, August 5, 2019). See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “What Did Joseph Smith Know About Modern Temple Ordinances by 1836?,” in *The Temple: Ancient and Restored. Proceedings of the 2014 Temple on Mount Zion Symposium*, eds. Stephen D. Ricks and Donald W. Parry (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, 2016), 18–33, for a discussion of the handclasp and the embrace in the context of ritual and heavenly ascent.

- 152 See Walter Brueggemann, “From dust to kingship,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84, no. 1 (1972): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1515/zatw.1972.84.1.1>, where God raising someone from the dust is symbolic of resurrection and enthronement. Thanks to Jeff Lindsay for this reference. Cf. 1 Kings 16:2, 1 Samuel 2:8, and Isaiah 52:2.
- 153 Public domain. From *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, Codex Barberini Latinus 592.
- 154 As evidence that this is not a simple error on the part of the illustrator, we note that both Midrash and the art of Dura Europos depict God protecting Israel with two right hands (see Carl H. Kraeling, et al., *The Synagogue: The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report VIII, Part I* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1956), 83n251. Cf. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah*, 3rd ed., 10 vols. (London: Soncino Press, 1983), Exodus, 22:2, p. 276; Rachel Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Diaspora, Handbook*

- of Oriental Studies, Section 1: The Near and Middle East* 35 (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 1998), 145, <https://books.google.com/books?id=cKGpa-FJ3XsC>.
- 155 Matthew 4:8–9.
- 156 For more on this topic, see Smoot, “I Am a Son of God,” 136.
- 157 Orlov, *Heavenly Priesthood*, 140.
- 158 David Halperin, quoted in Orlov, *Heavenly Priesthood*, 140.
- 159 See D&C 129:8.
- 160 Rubinkiewicz concludes that the phrase “Reproach upon you!” is an explicit allusion to Zechariah 3:2 (cf. Jude 1:9) (Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 145n7).
- 161 Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 449.
- 162 2 Corinthians 11:14.
- 163 D&C 128:20. See also 2 Nephi 9:9; D&C 129:4–7; Joseph Smith, Jr., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 204–205. Elder Parley P. Pratt wrote that “although [spirits not worthy to be glorified] often attempt to pass as angels of light there is more or less of darkness about them. So it is with Satan and his hosts who have not been embodied” (Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* [Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855], 72, <https://books.google.com/books?id=-rJWAAAACAAJ>).
- 164 Jerusalem: Armenian Patriarchate, Calouste Gulbenkian Library, Armenian Cathedral of St. James, Ms. 2556, fol. 244 (Index of Armenian Art Number: J2556G). Public domain, [http://armenianstudies.csufresno.edu/iaa\\_miniaatures/image.aspx?index=0178](http://armenianstudies.csufresno.edu/iaa_miniaatures/image.aspx?index=0178).
- 165 Michael E. Stone, *Adam’s Contract with Satan: The Legend of the Cheirograph of Adam* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 18. Cf. Solomon Caesar Malan, ed., *The Book of Adam and Eve: Also Called The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan: A Book of the Early Eastern Church, Translated from the Ethiopic, with Notes from the Kufale, Talmud, Midrashim, and Other Eastern Works* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1882), 1:27, pp. 27–29; 1:60, pp. 67–70; and 2:5, pp. 110–11.
- 166 Stone, *Adam’s Contract with Satan*, 18–19. See also Andrei A. Orlov, “The Garment of Azazel in the Apocalypse of Abraham,” in *Dark Mirrors: Azazel and Satanael in Early Jewish Demonology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011), 69–71.
- 167 Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1991),

119–20; Wesley Williams, “The Shadow of God: Speculations on the Body Divine in Jewish Esoteric Tradition,” (paper, 2005), <http://www.theblackgod.com/Shadow%20of%20God%20Short%5B1%5D.pdf>.

168 Moses 1:13–15.

169 Moses 1:15, emphasis added. Similarly, in the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*, God warns Adam and Eve about Satan, saying, “This is he who promised you majesty and divinity. Where, then, is the beauty that was on him? Where is his divinity? Where is his light? Where is the glory that rested on him?” (Malan, *Book of Adam and Eve*, 1:51, p. 56). Orlov describes the very face or countenance of the Devil as being clothed with darkness, while the face of the glorified visionary is bathed in light (Orlov, “The Garment of Azazel,” 79).

Joseph Smith also had to learn “by experience, how to discern between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of the Devil (Oliver Cowdery, “Letter 8 on the Rise of the Church,” *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 1 [October, 1835]: 200, <https://ia802700.us.archive.org/18/items/latterdaysaintsm01unse/latterdaysaintsm01unse.pdf>, spelling and capitalization modernized). According to an account by Oliver Cowdery, the Prophet, prior to obtaining the Book of Mormon plates, “beheld the prince of darkness, surrounded by his innumerable train of associates” and afterward was told the purpose of this vision by the angel Moroni: “All this is shown, the good and the evil, the holy and impure, the glory of God and the power of darkness, that you may know hereafter the two powers and never be influenced or overcome by that wicked one” (ibid., p. 198).

170 Nibley, “To Open the Last Dispensation,” 5.

171 For the role of sacred clothing in *ApAb*, see Orlov, *Heavenly Priesthood*, 119–53. Cf. Zechariah 3:3, 5.

172 Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 13:14, p. 1466. Similarly, in the *Apocalypse of Moses*, God tells Adam that he will be “seat[ed] on the throne of [his] deceiver” (Gary A. Anderson and Michael Stone, eds., *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve* [Atlanta:Scholars Press, 1999], 39:2, p. 86).

173 “Écarte-toi de moi !” (Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 14:7, p. 149). See a discussion of the translation of this phrase in ibid., p. 149 n. 7.

174 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 14:5, p. 21.

175 Ibid., 14:9, p. 21. Cf. Genesis 22:1, 11.

176 Ibid., 14:10, 12, p. 21. Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 149n10 notes that according to the Qumran *Rule of the Community* 10:16, it is forbidden to argue with the ungodly (Geza Vermes, ed., *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* [London: Penguin Books, 2004], 111).



- 177 As summarized in Orlov, “The Garment of Azazel,” 154n63.
- 178 The rhetorical complexity of Moses 1:20–21 seems deliberate. In v. 20, Moses received strength after calling upon God. In v. 21, these events are reported in reverse order. Rather than seeing in vv. 20–21 two instances of the same command for Satan to depart, we would suggest that the threefold report (calling upon God, receiving strength, command to depart) in the two verses is a description of the same event, repeated twice for emphasis. The description of the command to depart in verse 20 highlights the exclusivity of Moses’s worship and the corresponding description of the same event in verse 21 underlines the use of the name of the Only Begotten as part of the formal command.

Note that v. 21 has a complex history of revisions. Cf. Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 84; *ibid.*, p. 593; 1866–67 RLDS Publication; and current edition of the Book of Moses used by Latter-day Saints. See also Kent P. Jackson, *The Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 2005), 62, <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/book-moses-and-joseph-smith-translation-manuscripts>; Robert J. Matthews, “What is the Book of Moses?,” in *The Pearl of Great Price*, eds. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985), 35–36.

- 179 Bakhayla Mika’el, “The book of the mysteries of the heavens and the earth,” in *The Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth and Other Works of Bakhayla Mika’el (Zosimas)*, ed. E. A. Wallis Budge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), 17, emphasis added.
- 180 Lourié notes “a medieval legend of the ascension of Alexander the Great, which goes back to the Hellenistic era. In the legend Alexander reaches the heaven (or even heavenly Jerusalem) transported by four griffins. This motif suggests that the griffins as the psychopomps transporting visionaries to heaven were not an invention of the authors of the *hekhalot* literature but were a part of the early Jewish environment” (Lourié, “Review of A. Kulik’s *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*,” 233).
- 181 They had been told not to divide these birds, evidently so that the birds could provide the means of their ascent (Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 12:8, p. 19, cf. 15:2, p. 22). Translation of caption: “And the angel took two birds and the angel took me by the right hand and set me on the wing of a pigeon, on the right, and himself set on the wing of a turtledove. And we ascended into the regions of fiery flame and went up into the heights.” Cf. *Ibid.*, 15:2–3, p. 22. Note that Abraham is shown on the left wing, though *ApAb* reads that he was set on the right wing.

- Kulik has “edge” for “regions.” Brian Hauglid mistakenly concludes that “it is not Abraham who ascends to heaven on the ‘wings of the birds’ (which is the main force of the parallel) but the angel to whom Abraham is talking” (Brian M. Hauglid, “A New Resource on the Book of Moses,” *Mormon Studies Review* 23, no. 1 (2011): 59, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1833&context=msr>).
- 182 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 12:10, p. 19; 15:2, p. 22; Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 12:10, p. 695; 15:2, p. 696. Cf. Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 18; Genesis 15:9ff.
- 183 1 Nephi 11:1. Cf. Exodus 19:3, Ezekiel 40:2; JST Matthew 4:8; Revelations 21:10; Moses 7:2.
- 184 2 Nephi 4:25. Cf. “wings of his *Shekinah*” (Judah Goldin, ed., *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983], 68). Joseph Smith explained, “The sign of the dove was instituted before the creation of the world, a witness for the Holy Ghost, and the Devil cannot come in the sign of a dove” (Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 276; cf. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979–1981], 1:404; Smith, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 66).
- 185 Brian Hauglid argues that “equating the ‘Spirit’ with ‘birds’” in this case “is a stretch” (Hauglid, “A New Resource on the Book of Moses,” 59). However, in G. H. Box’s comment on the ascent of Abraham and Yaho’el (Box, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, XIII, note 8), he had no qualms about this association, reminding readers of the “symbolism of the dove” as it “applied to the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 3:16). Moreover, Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 151n1, citing the symbolism of the angel mounting on the left wing of the turtledove, noted that the turtledove is “identified [in Jewish tradition] with the Holy Spirit, the source of prophecy” (see Charles Perrot and Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, *Pseudo-Philon: Les Antiquités Bibliques, Vol. 2, Introduction Littéraire, Commentaire et Index*, SC 230 [Paris: Cerf, 1976], 147, quoted in Frederick J. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], 111n23, referencing in turn *Targum Canticles* 2:12). Moreover, because the turtledove is said explicitly elsewhere to be a symbol of the prophets (Pseudo-Philo, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, trans. Montague Rhodes James [London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1917], 23:7, p. 142), he conjectured that the scene in *ApAb* is a way to describe the prophetic investiture of Abraham.
- The resemblance between *ApAb* and 2 Nephi was first proposed in Nibley, “To open the last dispensation,” 11, who has written extensively

on the symbolism on related imagery in Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Abraham*.

- 186 Moses 1:21.
- 187 See, e.g., Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Matthew L. Bowen, “‘By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified’: The Symbolic, Salvific, Interrelated, Additive, Retrospective, and Anticipatory Nature of the Ordinances of Spiritual Rebirth in John 3 and Moses 6,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 24 (2017): 144-46.
- 188 Moses 1:24.
- 189 Moses 1:1.
- 190 Kevin L. Barney, e-mail to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, June 21, 2006.
- 191 Cf. 2 Corinthians 12:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Moses 7:27.
- 192 Moses 6:64.
- 193 2 Corinthians 12:2.
- 194 Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 56–57.
- 195 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 16:3, p. 22, emphasis added. This Jewish belief is found in Exodus 33:20 and rabbinic commentaries (Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 155n3).
- 196 Andrei A. Orlov, “‘The Gods of My Father Terah’: Abraham the iconoclast and the polemics with the divine body traditions in the Apocalypse of Abraham,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 18, no. 1 (2008): 53; see also Orlov, “Praxis of the Voice,” 160. Orlov has argued that there may be some connection between the anti-anthropomorphism in the heavenly ascent of Abraham and its prelude in the destruction of Terah’s idols (Orlov, *Divine Manifestations in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha* [Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009], 217–35). He has also shown that this attitude has Deuteronomical precedents (*ibid.*, 8–12). Importantly, Robin M. Jensen depicts similar ambivalence to divine anthropomorphism in early Christianity (Jensen, “The Invisible Christian God in Christian Art,” in *Histories of the Hidden God: Concealment and Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions*, eds. April D. DeConick and Grant Adamson [Bristol, CT: Acumen, 2013], 217–33).
- 197 “A. When the latter prophets died, that is, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, then the Holy Spirit came to an end in Israel. B. But even so, they made them hear [Heavenly messages] through an echo [*bat kōl*]” (Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002], 13:3, p. 885).

198 Citing E. R. Goodenough, Hugh Nibley explained:

In a stock presentation found in early Jewish synagogues [see, e.g., Bradshaw, “The Ezekiel Mural at Dura Europos,” 11–12, 22–23] as well as on very early Christian murals [see, e.g., Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Faith, Hope, and Charity: The ‘Three Principal Rounds’ of the Ladder of Heavenly Ascent,” in “*To Seek the Law of the Lord*”: *Essays in Honor of John W. Welch*, eds. Paul Y. Hoskisson and Daniel C. Peterson (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, 2017), 64–65, 96], “the hand of God is represented, but could not be called that explicitly, and instead of the heavenly utterance, the *bat kōl* [echo, distant voice, whisper] is given (Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *The Archeological Evidence from Palestine and the Diaspora* [New York: Pantheon Books, 1953], 1:246). From the hand “radiate beams of light” (ibid.). “To show the hand and light thus emerging from central darkness,” writes Goodenough, “is as near as one could come in conservative Judaism to depicting God himself” (ibid., 248). In early Christian representations the hand of God reaching through the veil is grasped by the initiate [i.e., in ritual ascent] or human spirit [i.e., in heavenly ascent] who is being caught up into the presence of the Lord. (Nibley, “The Meaning of the Atonement,” in *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don E. Norton, *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 9 [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989], 561–62.)

Goodenough is specifically describing a hand that appears next to an illustration of the *Akedah* in the Beth Alpha synagogue (Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *Illustrations* [New York: Pantheon Books, 1953], figure 638), where the message of the *bat kōl* is represented in Hebrew words written below the hand that explicitly tell Abraham “do not raise [your hand against the boy]” (*al tishlah [yadkha el ha-na‘ar]*) in order to stop the sacrifice (Genesis 22:12). The same symbolism is in play in the Dura synagogue Torah shrine (Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue* [New York: Pantheon Books, 1964], 9:71; cf. Kraeling et al., *The Synagogue*, 57). However, extending the meaning of the hand in Beth Alpha, the hand at Dura may have been intended to signify *two* events at the same time: God’s speech at the altar as well as at the entrance to the sanctuary-tent. Significantly, Rachel Hachlili notes that the hand of God in this scene “differs from all the others [in the Dura synagogue] by the addition of two lined borders” (Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Diaspora*, 144). She interprets this border tentatively as “a cloud?” but the two-lines more plausibly resemble layered fabrics of a veil, as in the illustration of the veils surrounding the throne of God from the *Codex Sylvester*.

- 199 Shira Lander, “Revealing and Concealing God in Ancient Synagogue Art,” in *Histories of the Hidden God: Concealment and Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions*, eds. April D. DeConick and Grant Adamson (Bristol, CT: Acumen, 2013), 205.
- 200 “*Clavi rouges*” (André Grabar, «Le thème religieux des fresques de la synagogue de Doura (245–256 après J.-C.),» *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 123, 124 (1941): 145, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23665640>. In this image, the clavi can be seen as reddish purple stripes descending diagonally from left to right on what is usually taken to be a white chiton (tunic or outer robe). More generally, Goodenough comments:

The feeling of a special meaning in the Jewish-Christian version of the pallium tradition [large rectangular cloak associated with Greek philosophers and still used, e.g., as an emblem of the pope in the Roman Catholic Church] is intensified by the common use of the marks in the corners of the himation [outer garment associated with the ancient Greeks worn over the left shoulder and under the right] as well as of the stripes on the chiton. ... I find it hard to believe that even the stripes were ‘purely ornamental,’ though I cannot trace their origin or explain their meaning. ... It came in Christianity [as a mark in the shape of a half-square] to be called a *gam* or gamma or gammadia. Whatever it originally represented, obviously it had some sort of religious potency, perhaps explained or re-explained as it went from religion to religion, or perhaps just persisting as a symbol in its own right without explanations. (Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, “The Greek garments on Jewish heroes in The Dura Synagogue,” in *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Translations*, ed. Alexander Altmann [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966], 228–29.)

Tertullian describes how the pallium was used in Greek mysteries, but “now that Christians have adopted it, ... it surpasses all the clothing of the gods or priests” (Tertullian, *On the Mantle*, 4:10, paraphrased in *ibid.*, 228).

Some scholars have dismissed the depictions of distinctive clothing of this sort as merely the product of slavish copying by the mural makers from standard design books. Others assert that different marks may serve merely to distinguish between male and female garments (Michael Avi-Yonah, “Goodenough’s evaluation of the Dura paintings: A critique,” in *The Dura-Europos Synagogue: A Re-evaluation (1932-1972)*, ed. Joseph Gutmann [Chambersburg, PA: American Academy of Religion, Society of Biblical Literature, 1973], 120–21). However, Erwin Goodenough notes that distinctive marks are found not only in the Dura murals, but also in a cache of white textile fragments also discovered at Dura that “may

well have been the contents of a box where sacred vestments were kept, or they may have been fetishistic marks, originally on sacred robes, that were preserved after the garments had been outworn” (Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, “The Greek garments on Jewish heroes in The Dura Synagogue,” in *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Translations*, ed. Alexander Altmann [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966], 225; cf. Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue* [New York City: Pantheon Books, 1964], 9:127–29; see also discussion of “cultic refuse pits” in Alexandra Wrathall, “Cult objects,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 46, no. 3 [Summer 2020]: 36–37.). Such marks on Christian robes, as well as on clothing in Hellenistic Egypt and Palmyra, and on Roman figures of Victory, are thought to be “a symbol of immortality” (Goodenough, *Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue*, 9:163). For further discussion of Goodenough’s conclusions and a report of similar patterns found at Masada and elsewhere, see John W. Welch and Claire Foley, “Gammadia on early Jewish and Christian garments,” *BYU Studies* 36, no. 3 (1996–1997): 253–58. See also Bradshaw, *Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve*, 551–73, 654–57; Hugh W. Nibley, “Sacred vestments,” in *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 91–138.

201 Grabar, “Le thème religieux des fresques” (translation by Bradshaw):

[The Targum] explains every detail of this particular image, including its setting. The hut with the child at its door is “The House of God” at the summit of the mountain. Before it stands the youth Isaac that his father has brought there as an offering[, clad in a tunic adorned with red *clavi*]. The crimson color of the interior of the modest hut raises its status to that of a sanctuary (according to the *Pirke de R. Eliezer*, chapter 31, this summit had already served as the site of the sacrifices of Adam, Abel, and Noah [Marc-Alain Ouaknin and Éric Smilévitch, eds., *Chapitres de Rabbi Éliézer (Pirqé de Rabbi Éliézer): Midrach sur Genèse, Exode, Nombres, Esther, Les Dix Paroles*, ed. Charles Mopsik (Lagrasse, France: Éditions Verdier, 1992), 31, p. 186]). Each of the figures are seen from the back because, having been placed between the observer and the mountain, they are turned toward its summit and the sanctuary that crowns it. Abraham and Isaac, according to what is written in the Targum, thus foreshadow the “future generations” of Israel reunited behind them who stand before the Torah of the synagogue. Thus, the setting of the scene is completely explained, as well as the connection, within the same panel, between the *sacra* of the Temple and this *Sacrifice of Isaac* that includes an image of the first sanctuary of Yahweh.

On the tradition of Abraham's vision of God's presence on the top of Mount Moriah and the identification of this site of sacrifice with the Jerusalem Temple mount, see, e.g., Martin McNamara, ed., *Targum Neofiti 1, Genesis, translated, with apparatus and notes*, Vol. 1a, *Aramaic Bible* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 22:14, p. 119; Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, eds., *The Book of Legends (Sefer Ha-Aggadah): Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. William G. Braude (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), 41; Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 5:253n253; William G. Braude, ed. *The Midrash on Psalms (Midrash Tehillim)*, 2 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), Psalm 76:3, Vol. 2, p. 14–15; Rashi, *The Torah with Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*, Vol. 1: Beresheis/Genesis, trans. Rabbi Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1995), 22:14, Vol. 2, p. 237; A. J. Rosenberg, ed., *Mikraot Gedoloth: Genesis and Exodus* (Brooklyn, NY: Judaica Press, 1993), Genesis 22:14 Vayera, 1:259; Meir Zlotowitz and Nosson Scherman, eds., *Bereishis/Genesis: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources* (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1986), 22:14, Vol. 1, pp. 806–807; Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, Genesis (Vayera) 56:10, pp. 500–501.

- 202 See Margaret Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2007), 36. “This motif is based in part on the fact that only Abraham is mentioned as returning after the incident in Genesis 22:19” (James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998], 325).

Schwartz, *Tree of Souls*, 171 gives the following summary of relevant Jewish traditions about “Isaac’s Ascent”:

When the knife touched Isaac’s throat, his soul flew from him. ... Then the angel spoke “Lay not your hand upon the lad,”?? and at that instant Isaac’s soul returned to his body. And when Isaac found that his soul had been restored to him, he exclaimed: “Blessed is He who quickens the dead!” (cf. Ouaknin and Smilévitch, *Chapitres de Rabbi Éliézer*, 31, 187, which adds “Then Isaac became acquainted with [connut] the resurrection of the dead and knew that the dead would someday live again.”)

Afterward, “the angels on high took Isaac and brought him to the schoolhouse of Shem the Great” (Michael Maher, ed., *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Genesis*, Vol. 1b, *Aramaic Bible* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992], 22:19, p. 81). While he was there (Schwartz, *Tree of Souls*, 171):

all the Treasuries of Heaven [were] opened to Isaac[, including] the celestial Temple, which has existed there since the time of

Creation ... , for no mystery of heaven was deemed too secret for the pure soul of Isaac. There, too, Isaac found his own face on the curtain [heavenly veil] of God known as the *Pargod*. [Regarding the *tselem* (= image) of souls of individuals on the veil, see Mopsik, *Le Livre Hébreu d'Hénoch*, 51ff., pp. 326–27.]

Regarding ancient sources for relevant Jewish traditions of the “death” and “resurrection” of Isaac, see Schwartz, *Tree of Souls*, 172; Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 5:251n243; Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, Genesis (Vayera) 56:11, p. 502.

Barker refers to early Christian texts that “compared the death and resurrection of Jesus to Isaac; others contrasted the death of Jesus and the *Akedah*, because Abraham offered a ram in his place, implying that Isaac did not die” (Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* [London: T&T Clark, 2008], 31. Cf. p. 28). See also James L. Kugel, *The Bible As It Was* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), 177–78; Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 306–307, 324–25; Hebrews 11:17–19; Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling: A Dialectical Lyric*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941), 47–48; Jon D. Levenson, *Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), especially 111–14, 125–42 (an argument against the story of Abraham as an etiology for animal sacrifice). In this regard, James L. Kugel notes one particularly revealing passage (Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 324–25):

The allusion in Romans 8:32 to the Genesis narrative came to have great significance, indirect though it may have been. The allusion itself is certainly felt in Paul’s use of the word “spare,” but it also may be carried in the expression “His own son,” Greek *tou idiou huiou*. This phrase is sometimes rendered “only son” since *idiou* here may represent a translation of Hebrew “your only [son]” ... in Genesis 12:2, 12, and 17; see also John 3:16. It was taken up by Origen (*Homilies in Genesis*, 8) and Irenaeus (*Against the Heresies*, 4:5.4). [See also Augustine (*City of God*, 16:32).]

Kugel also notes that “the same idea was sometimes represented visually, with the ram depicted as hanging from a tree (= crucified)” (*ibid.*, 324–25). Cf. Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis* 20:3, as in the *Akedah* mosaic at Beth Alpha.

- 203 Bradshaw, “The Ezekiel Mural at Dura Europos,” 4–49, <http://www.templethemes.net>.
- 204 Lander, “Revealing and Concealing God,” 205.
- 205 According to *ibid.* 208, Joseph Gutmann sees “the whole image [of the *Akedah* at Dura Europos as] ‘symbolic of the *bat kōl* = voice from



heaven.’ This view is supported by the use of the *bat kōl* in the expansive Palestinian *Targum Neofiti* on Genesis 22:10 (McNamara, *Targum Neofiti I*, Genesis 22:10, p. 118; see also p. 39). ... According to Jensen, late antique Christianity shares this understanding of the divine hand, yet the divine voice is identified with the first person of the Trinity. ... Jensen ponders the choice of this human body part to represent God’s voice: ‘Does God have hands?’”

- 206 Other scholars have given different interpretations, but none account for all the data as well as Grabar and Du Mesnil de Buisson (Comte Du Mesnil de Buisson, *Les peintures de la synagogue de Doura-Europos*, après J.-C. [Rome, Italy: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1939], 245–56). Goodenough (Goodenough, *Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue*, 9:71), Kraeling (Kraeling et al., *The Synagogue*, 57), and Perkins (Ann Perkins, *The Art of Dura-Europos* [Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1973], 57) are in agreement that the structure with the figure at the entrance is a tent. However, despite the fact that every woman depicted elsewhere in the synagogue is wearing a head covering and colored clothing (see Warren G. Moon, “Nudity and Narrative: Observations on the Frescoes from the Dura Synagogue,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 60, no. 4 [Winter 1992]: 596–97), Goodenough differs from these and other scholars in insisting that the figure is a female (Sarah) rather than a male (Goodenough, *Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue*, 9:72–75; cf. Goodenough, *The Problem of Method; Symbols from Jewish Cult* [New York: Pantheon Books, 1954], 189–90). Goodenough also clearly misinterprets the figure at the door of the tent as looking outward from the tent rather than inward toward its interior (Goodenough, *Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue*, 9:73: “Sarah face[s] the hand of God” vs. Grabar, “Le thème religieux des fresques,” 145: “Turning his back to the observer — like the other two figures in the scene — the child [Isaac] seems to be entering the hut” [*Tournant le dos au spectateur — tout comme les deux autres figures de la scène — l’enfant semble entrer dans la cabane*]). Though admitting that many aspects of Goodenough’s interpretations are brilliant, Michael Avi-Yonah faults him at times for “disregarding inconvenient facts” when they contradict his overarching “vision” of the meaning of the murals (Michael Avi-Yonah, “Goodenough’s Evaluation of the Dura Paintings: A Critique,” in *The Dura-Europos Synagogue: A Re-Evaluation (1932–1972)*, ed. Joseph Gutmann [Chambersburg, PA: American Academy of Religion, Society of Biblical Literature, 1973], 121, 120) — which, in Goodenough’s analysis of the Dura Europos wall painting of the binding of Isaac, required him to define a key role for Sarah.

Alternative interpretations suffer from their own problems (for a list of these interpretations see Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Diaspora*, 239). For example, Kraeling et al., *The Synagogue*, 58, although accepting that the small figure at the entrance of the tent is a male, implausibly concludes that he is intended to represent “one of the two ‘young men’ left behind a short distance before proceeding

to the sacrifice” (similarly Perkins, *The Art of Dura-Europos*, 571). However, as Goodenough, *Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue*, 9:72 points out, this interpretation is made improbable because the young men in Genesis 22:5 are occupied with tending an ass, not keeping a tent (as shown in the related mural at the Beth Alpha synagogue — see Goodenough, *Illustrations*, figure 638). Moreover, only one male figure rather than the expected two young men is depicted.

In light of all the data, the interpretation of Grabar, Hopkins (Clark Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979], 144–45), and Du Mesnil de Buisson seems the best resolution of these difficulties. From de Buisson’s perspective, “the tent has been interpreted as a temple or the Temple, and the small figure on its threshold as either Abraham (which is unlikely because of the dress) or Isaac himself” (Kraeling et al., *The Synagogue*, 57–58, citing the findings of de Buisson, *Les peintures*, 23–27; Grabar, “Le thème religieux des fresques,” 144–46). See also Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, 28.

207 For a description of this Book of Mormon account as an encounter “at the veil,” see M. Catherine Thomas, “The Brother of Jared at the Veil.” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 388–98.

208 See Ether 2:22–25.

209 See Ether 3:6–10.

210 See Ether 3:13–20.

211 Explaining the mediating function of the angel Metatron (who is sometimes identified with Yaho’el (Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 1463n10:3) and whose name is sometimes derived from the Latin *mediator* (ibid., p. 1663 n. 10:8), Orlov writes:

The inability of the angelic hosts to sustain the terrifying sound of God’s voice or the terrifying vision of God’s glorious Face is not a rare motif in the Hekhalot writings. In such depictions Metatron usually poses as the mediator *par excellence* who protects the angelic hosts participating in the heavenly liturgy against the dangers of direct encounter with the divine presence. This combination of the liturgical duties with the role of the Prince of the Presence appears to be a long-lasting tradition with its possible roots in Second Temple Judaism. James VanderKam notes that in 1QSb 4:25 the priest is compared with an angel of the Face. (Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 114n125.)

212 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 16:2–4, p. 22. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 69; mentions the teaching in

“a manuscript originating among the twelfth century Jewish mystics in Germany” (Ms. British Museum, Margoliouth n. 752 f.; published in Mordecai Margalioth, ed., *Midrash ha-Gadol ‘al hamishah humshey Torah: Sefer Bereshit* [Jerusalem: Mosadha-Rav Kook, 1947]) that Yaho’el was Abraham’s teacher and taught him the whole of the Torah. The same document also expressly mentions Yaho’el as the angel who — in [a] Talmudic passage (Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre, ed., *Aggatoth du Talmud de Babylone: La Source de Jacob - ‘Ein Yaakov. Collection «Les Dix Paroles»*, ed. Charles Mopsik [Lagrasse, France: Éditions Verdier, 1982], 39a, p. 1031) — invites Moses to “ascend to heaven.”

- 213 Kraeling et al., *The Synagogue*, plate 51.
- 214 Moses 1:31. The opening *inclusio* in v. 25, corresponding to Moses 1:30, seems to be an “announcement of plot,” previewing what is going on generally in verses 25–31. What vv. 25–30 appear to emphasize is the voice in response to Moses’s calling upon the Lord as a prelude to the climactic encounter in v. 31.
- 215 Moses 5:4. For more on the nature of the prayer that is implied in this verse, see Bradshaw, *Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve*, 355–57; Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, 185–92.
- 216 Cf. “whom himself you will not see” (Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 16:3, p. 22).
- 217 Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price*, 233:
- [Adam and Eve] could hear [God’s] voice speaking from the Garden, but they saw him not. They were shut out from his presence, but the link was there. This is what the rabbis call the *bat kōl*. The *bat kōl* is the “echo.” Literally, it means the “daughter of the voice.” After the last prophets, the rabbis didn’t get inspiration, but they did have the *bat kōl*. They could hear the voice. They could hear the echo. You could have inspiration, intuition, etc. (not face-to-face anymore, but the *bat kōl*).
- 218 Moses 4:31.
- 219 For more on this symbolic correspondence, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “The Tree of Knowledge as the Veil of the Sanctuary,” in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament*, eds. David Rolph Seely, Jeffrey R. Chadwick, and Matthew J. Grey (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2013), 52–54.
- 220 Moses 1:27.
- 221 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 17:1, p. 22; Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 17:1, p. 696.

- 222 Ibid., 17:1, p. 22; 18:1, p. 23; 19:4, p. 25; 30:1, p. 34. The first time the speaker is the angel Yaho'el (just before they bow and worship as the divine Presence approaches), the second time it is Abraham (reciting the "hymn" just prior to the vision of the seraphim), and in the last two instances God is the interlocutor (first, prior to Abraham's vision of the firmaments, and then, as Abraham descends again to earth).
- 223 Our search through the relevant literature revealed no commentary discussing this odd, repeated phrase.
- 224 E.g., Alexander, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch," 45:1, p. 296. Cf. 45:6, pp. 298–99.
- 225 Kulik, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 1470n21:2. Kulik notes that the "visionary screen" is called a *"pargod"*, 'veil', ... in *hekhlot* literature." For an extensive note on the derivation and usage of this Persian loanword, see Alexander, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch," 45:1, p. 296 n. a; Mopsik, *Le Livre Hébreu d'Hénoch*, 325–27 nn. 45:1–2.
- 226 Moses 1:31.
- 227 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 19:4–9, pp. 24–25; cf. Abraham 3:1–18.
- 228 Ibid., 30:1, p. 34; Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 30:1, p. 704.
- 229 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 30:1, p. 34; Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 30:1, p. 704.
- 230 Accounts purporting to reproduce the words of such prayers have long puzzled interpreters, principally because the introductions to such prayers or the prayers themselves are frequently portrayed as being given in unknown tongues. For example, during the ascent of *ApAb*, Abraham describes "a crowd of many people ... shouting in a language the words of which I did not know" (Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 15:6–7, p. 22; cf. Kulik, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 1467n15:7), probably referring to the special language of angels (Alexander Kulik, "Slavonic Apocrypha and Slavic Linguistics," in *The Old Testament Apocrypha in the Slavonic Tradition: Continuity and Diversity*, eds. Christfried Böttrich, Lorenzo DiTommaso, and Marina Swoboda, *Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism* [Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2011], 252, <https://www.scribd.com/document/124601634/Article-Slavonic-Apocrypha-and-Slavic-Linguistics-1>). For more on this motif, see Bradshaw, "Faith, Hope, and Charity," 102–104.

Repetition is another hallmark of solemn prayer. For example, at the dedication of the Kirtland temple the Prophet prayed following the pattern of "Adam's prayer" (Hugh W. Nibley, "A House of Glory," in *Eloquent Witness: Nibley on Himself, Others, and the Temple*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 17 [Salt Lake City:

Deseret Book, 2008], 339) with threefold repetition: “O hear, O hear, O hear us, O Lord! ... that we may mingle our voices with those bright, shining seraphs around thy throne” (D&C 109:78–79). Similarly in *ApAb*, Abraham, having “rebuilt the altar of Adam” at the command of an angel (Hugh W. Nibley, “The Early Christian Prayer Circle,” in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, eds. Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks, *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 4 [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987], 57), is reported as having repeatedly raised his voice to God, saying: “El, El, El, El, Yah’el ... Accept my prayer” (cf. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 17:13, 20, p. 23). Kulik conjectures that “the fourfold repetition of the transliterated Hebrew ‘God’ might have come as a substitution for the four letters of God’s ineffable name [the Tetragrammaton]” (Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 1467n17:13). Abraham’s prayer was also in imitation of Adam (“May the words of my mouth be acceptable” [Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 1:91]; cf. Psalm 54:2: “Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth”).

- 231 Compare Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 449–57.
- 232 See Bradshaw, “Faith, Hope, and Charity,” 103–104.
- 233 See *ibid.*, p. 103.
- 234 Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 1468n18:1–14.
- 235 Drawing on Philo (Philo, “On Drunkenness (*De Ebrietate*),” in *Philo*, 105, p. 3:373) and *Midrash Rabbah* (Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah*, 43:9 C-E, Vol. 2, p. 123), Steven Weitzman argues that the Hymn of Abraham in *ApAb* 17 is an exegesis of Genesis 14:22–23 (Steven Weitzman, “The Song of Abraham,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 65 [1994]: 27–33, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23508527>). This reading interprets Abraham’s raised hand (Genesis 14:22) or perhaps the raising of both of his hands (“he lifted up his right hand and his left hand to heaven” [Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah*, 43:9 C, Vol. 2, p. 123]) prior to the opening of the veil to him as a prayer or “hymn” rather than as an oath.
- 236 Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 64, emphasis added.
- 237 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 17:20–21, p. 23.
- 238 *Ibid.*, 18:1–3, pp. 23–24.
- 239 Goodenough, *Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue*, 11, Plate v.
- 240 Jewish tradition avers that “when the righteous see the *Shekinah*, they break straightway into song” (Schwartz, *Tree of Souls*, 341). Such “hymns” are often described as hymns of praise, emulating the *Sanctus* of the angels. For a broader overview of the function of hymns in later Jewish accounts of heavenly ascent in Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 57–63. For a discussion of the “tongue of angels” in 2 Nephi 31

and the hymn Moses sang during his heavenly ascent as recounted by Philo (Philo, “On the Virtues [*De Virtutibus*],” in *Philo*, ed. and trans. F. H. Colson [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939], 72–78, pp. 8:207–209; cf. Deuteronomy 32:1–43) as illustrated in this mural (Bradshaw, “The Ezekiel Mural at Dura Europos,” 17–19), see Bradshaw, “Faith, Hope, and Charity,” 103–104. See also *The Inquiry of Abraham*, in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, eds. Richard Bauckham et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2013), 59–63.

- 241 Kerstin Mayerhofer, “‘And they will rejoice over me forever!’ The History of Israel in the Light of the Catastrophe of 70 C.E. in the Slavonic Apocalypse of Abraham,” *Judaica Olomoucensia* 1–2 (2014): 28, [https://judaistika.upol.cz/fileadmin/userdata/FF/katedry/jud/judaica/Judaica\\_Olomoucensia\\_2014\\_1-2.pdf](https://judaistika.upol.cz/fileadmin/userdata/FF/katedry/jud/judaica/Judaica_Olomoucensia_2014_1-2.pdf). Cf. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 63. See also 137n59.
- 242 Of course, it could be argued that Moses has implicitly ascended from the celestial world (where he encountered Satan) to the terrestrial world (where he called upon God in formal prayer) prior to his passage through the veil that defines the boundary of the celestial realm. Be that as it may, Moses’s upward journey, like Abraham’s upward journey, bears very little resemblance to the elaborately described passages through a series of lower heavens typically found in the extracanonical literature.
- 243 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 17:1, p. 22. See similar imagery in Ezekiel 43:2; Revelation 1:15, 14:2, 19:6; D&C 133:22. Cf. Psalm 29:3; 2 Samuel 22:14. “The same terms are used in the ‘Greater Hekhaloth’ in describing the sound of the hymn of praise sung by the ‘throne of Glory’ to its King — ‘like the voice of the waters in the rushing streams, like the waves of the ocean when the south wind sets them in uproar’” (Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 61).
- 244 Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 43:1–2,4, p. 579.
- 245 Box, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, 17n9, p. 36. Cf. 2 Enoch 39:7: “like great thunder with continual agitation of the clouds” (*ibid.*). See further discussion of this imagery in Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 155, 157n1.
- 246 Mark Schorer, “The good novelist in ‘The Good Soldier,’” *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 9, no. 3 (April 1948): 128–33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26400408.pdf>.
- 247 Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Matthew L. Bowen, “‘Made Stronger Than Many Waters’: The Names of Moses as Keywords in the Heavenly Ascent of Moses,” in *Proceedings of the Fifth Interpreter Foundation Matthew*

*B. Brown Memorial Conference, 7 November 2020*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw (Orem and Salt Lake City, UT: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, in preparation).

- 248 James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 474n4, citing James E. Talmage, *The Story of 'Mormonism' and The Philosophy of 'Mormonism'* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1914), 109, <https://archive.org/details/storyofmormonism00talmi>.
- 249 Jeff Lindsay, "Arise from the Dust': Insights from Dust-Related Themes in the Book of Mormon. Part 1: Tracks from the Book of Moses," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 22 (2016): 189–90, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/arise-from-the-dust-insights-from-dust-related-themes-in-the-book-of-mormon-part-1-tracks-from-the-book-of-moses/>. In a personal communication, Lindsay further explains that 1 Nephi 4:2 "has Nephi urging his brethren to be strong like Moses, as if they were familiar with this concept, but the [King James Bible] has nothing about Moses being strong" (Jeffrey Dean Lindsay, personal communication to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, August 5, 2019). Elsewhere, Noel Reynolds and Jeff Lindsay write:

Mark J. Johnson observed [Mark J. Johnson, "The lost prologue: Reading Moses Chapter One as an Ancient Text," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 36 (2020): 178–79, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-lost-prologue-reading-moses-chapter-one-as-an-ancient-text/>] that the three references in Moses 1 to strength involving Moses describe a three-tiered structure "for personal strength and spirituality" in which strength is described in patterns reminiscent of sacred geography, each tier bringing Moses closer to God. The first instance depicts Moses having "natural strength like unto man," which was inadequate to cope with Satan's fury. In fear, Moses called upon God for added strength, allowing him to gain victory over Satan. Next, Moses is promised additional strength which would be greater than many waters. "This would endow Moses with powers to be in similitude of YHWH, to divide the waters from the waters (similar to Genesis 1:6) at the shores of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21)." Johnson sees the treatment of the strength of Moses as one of many evidences of ancient perspectives woven into the text of Moses 1. In light of Johnson's analysis, if something like Moses 1 was on the brass plates as a prologue to Genesis, to Nephite students of the brass plates, the reference to the strength of Moses might be seen as more than just a random tidbit but as part of a carefully developed literary tool related to important themes such as the commissioning of prophets

and becoming more like God through serving Him. If so, the concept of the strength of Moses may easily have been prominent enough to require no explanation when Nephi made an allusion to it. (Noel B. Reynolds and Jeff Lindsay, “‘Strong like unto Moses’: The case for ancient roots in the Book of Moses based on Book of Mormon usage of related content apparently from the Brass Plates,” presentation at *Tracing Ancient Threads of the Book of Moses* conference, September 18–19, 2020 [Provo, UT: Brigham Young University].)

- 250 Johnson, “The lost prologue,” 166. See Psalm 29:3, 10.
- 251 Moses 1:25.
- 252 Matthew L. Bowen notes insightfully that “the plausible connection between *šadday* and Akkadian *šadu(m)* (= “mountain, range of mountains”) is perhaps significant in a creation context” (Bowen, e-mail message to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, August 15, 2019).
- 253 Moses 2:1–2.
- 254 See Larsen, “Psalm 24,” 212–13. Speaking more broadly, Peter Schäfer is reluctant to take passages with similar implications taken to their logical conclusions in the medieval Jewish mystical literature “at face value” because they are so “common,” leaving one to conclude that there must be an “enormous number of deified angels in heaven” (Peter Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012], 137). However, he does concede that this is “just one more indication that the boundaries between God and his angels in the Hekhalot literature ... become fluid” and that when references to individuals bearing God’s name are made, “we cannot always decide with certainty whether God or his angels are meant” (ibid., 137). Cf. Kugel, *The God of Old*, 5–36.
- 255 Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 148–49; cf. Robert S. Eccles, *Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough: A Personal Pilgrimage* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 60–61; Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1935), 223–29.
- 256 See Philo, *Philo Supplement 2 (Questions on Exodus)*, trans. Ralph Marcus, ed. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), 2:29, p. 70. Qualifying his statement, Goodenough adds, “Philo vacillates on this point, but the fact that he could make such a statement is highly significant.”

Wayne Meeks summarized the personal outcome of Moses’s heavenly ascent as follows:



Moses's enthronement in heaven, accompanied by his receiving the name "god" and God's crown of light, meant that the lost glory of Adam, the image of God, was restored to him and that Moses henceforth was to serve on earth as God's representative, both as revealer (prophet) and as vice-regent (king). (Wayne A. Meeks, "Moses as God and King," in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. Jacob Neusner [Leiden, NDL: Brill, 1968], 371. Cf. Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* [Leiden: Brill, 1967], 110–11)

On Moses as god and king, see Philo, "Moses 1 and 2 (De Vita Mosis)," in *Philo*, 1:158, pp. 6:356–69. For an extended discussion of the enthronement of Moses and other figures in the literature of the ancient Near East, see David J. Larsen, "And He Departed From the Throne: The Enthronement of Moses in Place of the Noble Man in Exagoge of Ezekiel the Tragedian (Originally prepared as a term paper for a Master's Degree, Theology 228, Dr. Andrei A. Orlov, Marquette University, Fall 2008)," (paper, Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Session on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism, 23 November 2009, New Orleans, Louisiana), [https://www.academia.edu/385529/\\_And\\_He\\_Departed\\_from\\_the\\_Throne\\_The\\_Enthronement\\_of\\_Moses\\_in\\_Place\\_of\\_the\\_Noble\\_Man\\_in\\_Exagoge\\_of\\_Ezekiel\\_the\\_Tragedian](https://www.academia.edu/385529/_And_He_Departed_from_the_Throne_The_Enthronement_of_Moses_in_Place_of_the_Noble_Man_in_Exagoge_of_Ezekiel_the_Tragedian).

In addition to the Jewish traditions that mention the title of "god" in connection with Moses's heavenly ascents, see also Exodus 4:16, 7:1.

The conferral of the titles of prophet and king on Moses should be compared to similar patterns in the ancient Near East. For example, Nicolas Wyatt summarizes a wide range of evidence indicating "a broad continuity of culture throughout the Levant" wherein the candidate for kingship underwent a ritual journey intended to confer a divine status as a son of God and allowing him "*ex officio*, direct access to the gods. All other priests were strictly deputies." (Nicolas Wyatt, "Degrees of Divinity: Some Mythical and Ritual Aspects of West Semitic Kingship," in *There's Such Divinity Doth Hedge a King: Selected Essays of Nicolas Wyatt on Royal Ideology in Ugaritic and Old Testament Literature*, Society for Old Testament Study Monographs, ed. Margaret Barker, 191–220 [Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005], 192, 220.) For a comparative study of the rituals of kingship in Old Babylon and the Bible, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Ronan J. Head, "The Investiture Panel at Mari and Rituals of Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East," *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 4 (2012): 1–42.

Commenting on Psalm 110:4, John Eaton describes the same pattern in ancient Israel: "He will be priest-king, the supreme figure for whom all the other personnel of the temple were only assistants" (John H. Eaton,

*The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* [London: T&T Clark, 2003], 385). Likewise, Hugh Nibley, commenting on Egyptian kingship: “kings must be priests, and candidates to immortality must be both priests and kings” (Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 353).

- 257 Moses 1:24.
- 258 Moses 1:27–28.
- 259 The KJV term “firmament” in Genesis 1:6, 7, 8, 14, 15, 17, and 20 is a translation of the Hebrew term *raqia’* (רָקִיעַ = “expanse”), which describes how the waters were “‘divided’ between the surface of the earth and the atmospheric heavens that surround it” (Bruce R. McConkie, “Christ and the Creation,” *Ensign* 12 [June 1982], 11). Figuratively, however, it alludes to the veil that divided off the Holy of Holies in the temple (see, e.g., the selection of sources summarized in Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 1:51), corresponding to the veil in the heavenly “temple” (Alexander, “3 [Hebrew Apocalypse of] Enoch,” 45:1, p. 296 n. a).
- 260 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 21:1, p. 26.
- 261 Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 1469n19:3.
- 262 “*Prête attention maintenant à l’espace sous tes pieds, et comprends (mon) dessein*” = “Pay attention now to the space beneath your feet, and understand my design” (Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 21:1, p. 171). Cf. Daniel 9:23: “Understand the matter, and consider the vision.”
- 263 *Ibid.*, p. 171 n. adds: “This idea is not unique, for it is also found in the *Testament of Naphtali* 2:7–8” (see Kee, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” 1:811).
- 264 2 Nephi 2:11, 12.
- 265 D&C 107:56, Moses 7:4–67, Ether 3:25, 1 Nephi 14:25, 1 Nephi 14:26, Luke 4:5, Thomas, “The Brother of Jared at the veil.”
- 266 Ether 3:20; cf. Moses 1:27.
- 267 Alexander, “3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch,” 45:1, p. 296 n. 45a.
- 268 Gershom Scholem wrote descriptively that “this cosmic curtain, as it is described in the Book of Enoch, contains the images of all things which since the day of creation have their pre-existing reality, as it were, in the heavenly sphere. All generations and all their lives and actions are woven into this curtain. . . . [All this] shall become universal knowledge in the Messianic age” (Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 72).
- 269 For example, Islamic tradition speaks of a “white cloth from Paradise” upon which Adam saw the fate of his posterity (al-Kisa’i, *Tales of the*

*Prophets*, 82). For a description of an account by al-Tha'labi, see Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price*, 117.

270 See, e.g., Nibley and Rhodes, *One Eternal Round*, 188–585; Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 42–73.

271 Alexander, “3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch,” 45:1, p. 296 n. 45a. The English term “blueprint” is an apt choice to describe the vision of Rabbi Ishmael:

Come and I will show you the curtain of the Omnipresent One, which is spread before the Holy One, blessed be he, and on which are printed all the generations of the world and all their deeds, whether done or to be done, till the last generation. (ibid., 45:1, p. 296 [cf. 45:6, pp. 298–99])

Citing precedents in translations of similar visions in Jewish tradition, Kulik translates the relevant term in *ApAb* 21:2 as a “likeness.” In 22:1, 3, 5; 23:1, and “many other instances” he translates it as “picture” (East Slavic *obrazovanie*) (Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 1470n21:2).

272 For more on this subject, see, e.g., Margaret Barker, “Beyond the Veil of the Temple: The High Priestly Origin of the Apocalypses,” in *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 188–201; Margaret Barker, “The Veil as the Boundary,” in *The Great High Priest*, 202–28; Bradshaw, *Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve*, Moses 1:27b, pp. 62–63. Joseph Smith may have been alluding to such an experience when he wrote the following to William W. Phelps:

Oh, Lord, when will the time come when Brother William, Thy servant, and myself, shall behold the day that we may stand together and gaze upon eternal wisdom engraven upon the heavens, while the majesty of our God holdeth up the dark curtain until we may read the round of eternity, to the fulness and satisfaction of our immortal souls? Oh, Lord, deliver us in due time from the little, narrow prison, almost as it were, total darkness of paper, pen and ink; — and a crooked, broken, scattered and imperfect language. (Joseph Smith, Jr., “Letter to William W. Phelps, 27 November 1832,” in *Documents, Volume 2: July 1831–January 1833*, eds. Matthew C. Godfrey et al., *The Joseph Smith Papers* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2013) p. 320, spelling and punctuation modernized. Cf. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Documentary History)* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978], 1:299)

273 Moses 1:30.

274 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 20:7, p. 25.

- 275 Ibid., 26:1, p. 30.
- 276 See Moses 2.
- 277 See Moses 1:39.
- 278 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 27:1–31:12, pp. 30–35. Nibley nonetheless sees resemblances between these passages in the *ApAb* and the Books of Moses and Abraham (Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 25–26).
- 279 For example, Rubinkiewicz concludes, consistent with most recent scholarship: “Our pseudepigraphon was written after 70 CE, because the author describes the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. chapter 27)” (Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 683).
- 280 Demonstrating that similar questions are not unknown elsewhere in the heavenly ascent literature, we note this example from the Islamic *Mother of Books*: “My Lord, ... From where did he make the spirits? What was the origin of his creation?” (Willis Barnstone and Marvin W. Meyer, “The Mother of Books (*Umm al-kitab*),” in *The Gnostic Bible*, trans. Willis Barnstone [Boston: Shambhala, 2003], 685).
- 281 Moses 1:31.
- 282 See Kulik, “Slavonic Apocrypha and Slavic Linguistics,” 263.
- 283 Ibid. Kulik concludes that “we are dealing here with the rabbinic conception of free will combined with the inevitability of God’s will (predetermination)” (ibid., 264). Cf. Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (London: Yale University Press, 1988), 3:15 I A, p. 680: “Everything is foreseen, and free choice is given.” See the conclusions of Paulsen-Reed above on *ApAb*’s “compatibilism,” in contrast to previous views of its “determinism.” Cf. Ludlow, “Abraham’s Vision of the Heavens,” 63n20.
- 284 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 16:3, p. 22, emphasis added.
- 285 Margaret Barker observes:
- To see the glory of the Lord’s presence—to see beyond the veil— was the greatest blessing. The high priest used to bless Israel with the words: “The Lord bless you and keep you: The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26). ... Seeing the glory, however, became controversial. Nobody knows why. There is one strand in the Old Testament that is absolutely opposed to any idea of seeing the divine... [On the other hand,] Jesus said: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8); and John saw “one seated on the throne” (Revelation 4:2). There can

be no doubt where the early Christians stood on this matter. (Margaret Barker, *Christmas: The Original Story* [London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008], 14–15.)

Jesse Hurlbut, a specialist of illustrated medieval manuscripts, comments on the discrepancy between the text and illustration as follows:

As for contradictions, it is not uncommon for medieval illustrations to differ from the texts they represent. The scribes almost never did their own illustrations, and the communication between scribes and illuminators wasn't always successful, especially in cases where the illuminator could not (or did not) read the text. ...

I've also had another thought about your illumination of the face-to-face encounter with God/Christ. It may be that the veil is pulled back for the benefit of the viewer--but not for Abraham. This was a frequent convention in 14th-15th-century illuminations. Here's an example from one of the *Bibles Moralisées* that shows Zacharias (father of John the Baptist) serving in the temple. The walls are stripped away so we can see what's going on, but the other present observers ("*multitude de peuples*") are certainly not able to see him. Similarly, I think the artist has exposed God's face to the reader in the ApAb, even though He remains concealed to Abraham. (Jesse Hurlbut, e-mail message to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, February 17, 2020)

- 286 Translation of caption: "Abraham bowing with an angel before the throne of God in the heavens." Cf. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 18:3, p. 24.
- 287 From the text of manuscript K. See Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 697 n. c.
- 288 *Ibid.*, 17:5, p. 697.
- 289 Adela Yarbro Collins explains her view of the relationship between God the Father, Christ, and the angels in the writings of Paul as follows:

In the prose poem or hymn of Philippian [2:6], Paul portrays the pre-existent Christ as being "in the form of God." This phrase does not refer to being God or being divine in the fullest sense. Otherwise, the "hyper-exaltation" after his death on the cross would lose its rhetorical force (Philippians 2:9). Thus "being in the form of God" is best understood as being a heavenly being, probably some sort of angel. The hyper-exalted state of Christ, historically interpreted, is best thought of as being the principal angel. The principal angel in some ancient Jewish texts is the angel who bears the name of God, such as

Yaho'el in the Apocalypse of Abraham, and is closest to and most like God. That the pre-existent Christ, who became the earthly Jesus, was transformed and became the highest angel is analogous to the transformation of the human Enoch into the exalted angel Metatron, whom God gives the name "The lesser YHWH" (Alexander, "3 [Hebrew Apocalypse of] Enoch," 12:5, p. 265). Thus, when the bodies of Paul and the members of his communities are "conformed to his glorious body" (Philippians 3:21) they will become like those of the angels. (Adela Yarbro Collins, "Paul, Jewish mysticism, and spirit possession," in *Apocalypticism and Mysticism in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. John J. Collins, Pieter G. R. de Villiers, and Adela Yarbro Collins [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018], 94.)

Curiously, however, the Christian illustrator of ApAb represents Christ, sitting on the throne of God, separately from Yaho'el, the angelic companion of Abraham, whereas the earliest Christians might have more easily seen a fusion of Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, and Jesus Christ, His earthly manifestation (e.g., Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* [Louisville, KY: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1992]).

- 290 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 10:17, p. 18. The figure may instead represent *Metatron*, whose name, according to one interpretation, is short for the Greek *Metathronios*, i.e., "he who stands beside the (God's) throne," or "who occupies the throne next to the divine throne" (Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 69), or perhaps *Metaturannos*, "the one next to the ruler" (Alexander, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch," 243). "Metatron was merged with two other heavenly figures, (1) the archangel Yaho'el (*ibid.*, 1:4, p. 257, 48D:1(1), p. 313), and (2) translated Enoch ... From other texts, however, we know of an angel Yaho'el quite independent of Metatron (e.g., Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 10, pp. 17–18)" (Alexander, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch," 244).

Christopher Rowland speculated that Yaho'el, "like Wisdom (Wisdom 9:4) was the companion of God's throne. While there is no explicit evidence that [Yaho'el] was the one whose seat was on the throne of God, it is not impossible that we have a theological description here which reflects that found in Ezekiel 1 and 8, where the human figure on the throne leaves the throne to function as the agent of divine will" (Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* [New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1982], 103).

Other, more distant possibilities for the identity of this figure might include the "angel of the Holy Ghost" (quoted in Michael A. Knibb, "Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah," in *The Old Testament*

*Pseudepigrapha*, 11:33, Vol. 2, p. 176) or the Father, with Christ serving as his Face, in front, and the more invisible/formless Father behind.

291 For a description of the terms used to describe the different levels represented by the veils, see Kulik, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 1480n46.

292 Significantly, the veil in Israelite temples was woven with different colors, as described by Barker:

The veil marked the division between the visible and the invisible creation. It represented matter, and was woven from red, blue, purple, and white threads, to represent the four elements from which the material world was made: earth (white), air (blue), fire (red), and water (purple). It was embroidered with cherubim, the winged heavenly beings found throughout the temple — in the Holy of Holies, on the walls of the great hall, and on the veil between them. They could move between the two states of creation, and transmitted heavenly knowledge to earth. (Margaret Barker, *An Extraordinary Gathering of Angels* [London: MQ Publications, 2004], 14. Cf. Barker, *The Gate of Heaven*, 108–11; Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*, 18–19)

293 Moses chapters 2–4. Other ancient writings affirm what the book of Moses says about how the stories of the Creation and the Fall were revealed in vision. For example, the book of Jubilees prefaces a recital of the Creation and other events of Genesis with the Lord’s instructions to Moses to record what he would see in vision (Wintermute, “Jubilees,” 2:26, 54).

294 D&C 130:9.

295 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 19:1, 4–5, 9, pp. 24–25; cf. Abraham 3:1–18.

296 I.e., formerly shadowed, sketched, outlined, prefigured (Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 1:699n21a). Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 21:1, p. 26, translates this phrase as “the creation which was previously covered over.”

297 Cf. Abraham 5:3–5.

298 Cf. Abraham 3:22–23. See the discussion of this passage earlier in this article.

299 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 26–28. Whereas Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 177n5, sees *ApAb* 23:4–10 as an insertion by a Bogomil editor, this idea is refuted in the more recent analysis of Paulsen-Reed, *Origins of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, 122–24.

Consistent with the emphasis in the first part of *ApAb*, which condemns idolatry through the story of Terah, the *ApAb* version of the Fall supposes that Adam, Eve, and Cain also practiced idolatry. Mayerhofer further explains the point of these illustrations for the protagonist of *ApAb*: “Abraham, who manages to stand up against his father’s ungodly practices, can escape both the crisis and the punishment” (Mayerhofer, “And they will rejoice over me forever!” 15). See also the discussion of idolatry in Paulsen-Reed, *Origins of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, 108–17.

300 Ludlow, “Abraham’s Vision of the Heavens,” 64, sees a parallel in *ApAb* 19:9, “and [Abraham saw] the orders they [the hosts of stars] were commanded to carry out, and the elements of earth obeying them” (Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 19:9, p. 167) as echoing “the idea found in the Book of Abraham that greater stars had power or governed over lesser stars (see Abraham 3:2–6; 4:14–17).” The idea that the stars could be commanded to carry out God’s orders also corresponds to Abraham 4:18: “And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed.”

301 See M. D. Johnson, “Life of Adam and Eve,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2, pp. 249–51; Metzger, “Fourth Book of Ezra,” Vol. 2, pp. 518–19. Similarities and differences between these works and *ApAb* are summarized by George Nickelsburg:

Among the apocalypses we have studied in this chapter, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* is unique in its explicit indictment of the cult. With respect to this theme, what is the relationship between the author’s narrative world and his real world? Is the author simply following biblical tradition, that the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE was punishment for Manasseh’s sin (2 Kings 21:10–15)? Arguing against such a conclusion is the centrality of right and wrong cult in this work. It provides content for the crucial elements in the plot. It is the cause for Abraham’s election, the means of his ascent, the reason for the destruction of Jerusalem, and a key element in the author’s hope for the future. Thus it is likely that the author believes that the events of 70 CE were caused by wrong cultic activity, which he construes as idolatry. (George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005], 288)

See also the discussion of these works in relation to *ApAb* in Paulsen-Reed, *Origins of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, 205–55.

302 Harold Bloom, *Jesus and Yahweh: The Names Divine* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2005), 25. Hugh Nibley concurs with this assessment,



noting that the Pearl of Great Price “has received less attention than the other writings and has been studied only superficially” (Nibley and Rhodes, *One Eternal Round*, 18).

303 Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 98, 99, 101.

304 Hugh Nibley was always clear that his faith in the Book of Mormon was not built on the shifting sands of scholarship, as he made clear in the following statement (Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, 114):

We have never been very much interested in “proving” the Book of Mormon; for us its divine provenance has always been an article of faith, and its historical aspects by far the least important thing about it.

Commenting on this passage, Richard L. Bushman asked:

What can [Nibley] possibly mean when he says he has never been much interested in “proving” the Book of Mormon? How can a man who dedicated his life to that endeavor say he is not much interested? He has to have been interested to focus his energies so zealously on that enterprise for decades. And then to say that the “historical aspects” were “by far the least important thing about it” compounds the amazement. What was he doing in all those books about the historical aspects if they were not important?

His belief in the book, Nibley tells us, arises in another realm, the realm of faith, not from the historical aspects, which he considers the most trivial of considerations. Apparently, he did not need that kind of proof for either Joseph or the Book of Mormon. The book’s “divine provenance,” Nibley says, comes from another realm — his faith. (Richard Lyman Bushman, “Hugh Nibley and Joseph Smith,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 19, no. 1 (2010): 6, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol19/iss1/3>)

If the ultimate answers come from faith, why bother with scholarship at all? For one thing, we are persuaded that competent wielding of the tools of scholarship can be of immense value in increasing our understanding both ancient and modern scripture. Moreover, we see no reason why the same methods of comparative scholarship that are sometimes employed to argue that Joseph Smith used nineteenth-century sources as aids in translation cannot also be used to discover *ancient* affinities to modern scripture. While such arguments are not the *sine qua non* of the believer’s testimony, they have their place in cracking open by a hair the doors of faith for a skeptical world. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has said:

Our testimonies aren’t dependent on evidence — we still need that spiritual confirmation in the heart ... — but not to seek for

and not to acknowledge intellectual, documentable support for our belief when it is available is to needlessly limit an otherwise incomparably strong theological position and deny us a unique, persuasive vocabulary in the latter-day arena of religious investigation and sectarian debate. Thus armed with so much evidence of the kind we have celebrated here tonight, we ought to be more assertive than we sometimes are in defending our testimony of truth.

To that point I mention that while we were living and serving in England, I became fond of the writing of the English cleric Austin Farrer. Speaking of the contribution made by C. S. Lewis specifically and of Christian apologists generally, Farrer said: “Though argument does not create conviction, lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish.” (Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Greatness of the Evidence” [lecture, Chiasmus Jubilee, Joseph Smith Building, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 16 August 2017], <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/transcript-elder-holland-speaks-book-of-mormon-chiasmus-conference-2017>)

- 305 Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, 114.
- 306 Michael E. Stone, “Apocalyptic — Vision or Hallucination?,” in *Selected Studies in Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha With Special Reference to the Armenian Tradition*, *Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha* 9, eds. A.-M. Denis and M. De Jonge (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 1991), 419–28. Cf. Angela Kim Harkins, *Reading with an ‘I’ to the Heavens: Looking at the Qumran Hodayot Through the Lens of Visionary Traditions, Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Medieval Period* 3 (Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 2012).
- 307 Samuel Zinner, “‘Zion’ and ‘Jerusalem’ as Lady Wisdom in Moses 7 and Nephi’s Tree of Life Vision: Reverberations of Enoch and Asherah in Nineteenth Century America,” in *Textual and Comparative Explorations in 1 & 2 Enoch*, (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, 2014), 268–69, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/zion-and-jerusalem-as-lady-wisdom-in-moses-7-and-nephi-tree-of-life-vision/>.
- 308 Joseph Smith taught, “The best way to obtain truth and wisdom is not to ask it from books, but to go to God in prayer, and obtain divine teaching” (Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 191). The original publication of this statement reads “the *only* way” instead of “the *best* way” (Smith, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 77, emphasis added).

- 309 On the temple ordinances that enable one to receive revelation, see Smith, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 53–54n19.
- 310 Joseph Smith, Jr., “Remarks at the Funeral of James Adams, 9 October 1843,” in *Documentary History* 6:50. Cf. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 324; “Joseph Smith’s Journal by Willard Richards,” in *Journals, Volume 3: Journals: May 1843–June 1844*, eds. Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Brent M. Rogers, *The Joseph Smith Papers* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2015), 109.
- 311 David K. Hart, e-mail message to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, January 29, 2009.