

Book of Moses Essays #33: Moses 1 in Its Ancient Context: Moses 1 as a “Missing” Prologue to Genesis(Moses 1)

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Book of Mormon Central Staff with Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, David J. Larsen, and Stephen T. Whitlock

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In this *Essay*, we will describe how the *heavenly ascent* of Moses 1 provides a compelling prologue to the covenant-related themes of *ritual ascent* that can be found in the remaining chapters of the Book of Moses. Intriguingly, Moses 1 also provides a fitting introduction to the Book of Genesis. By calling this prologue “missing,” however, we are not claiming that it was ever an actual part of any early equivalent to Genesis.^[1]

After describing how Moses 1 functions as a prologue to Genesis, we will outline resemblances between Moses 1 and a corresponding account from the *Apocalypse of Abraham (ApAb)*, one of the earliest and most important Judaeo-Christian accounts of heavenly ascent. A comparison of the texts demonstrates a sustained sequence of detailed affinities in narrative structure that seem to go beyond what Joseph Smith could have created out of whole cloth from his environment and his imagination.^[2]



Figure 1. First Page of the Codex Sylvester, 14th century. In this and succeeding figures, a photograph of the original accompanies a corresponding photograph from the 1891 facsimile edition.

The Role of Revelation in Temple Architecture and Ordinances

John M. Lundquist has described the ancient expectation that temple plans are to be received by revelation:^[3]

Central to temple covenant systems all over the ancient Near East is the idea that the temple plan is revealed to the king or the prophet by deity. ... Perhaps the best example of this aspect of temple building is the Sinai episode itself, in which, according to D. N. Freedman, “this heavenly temple or sanctuary with its throne room or Holy of Holies where the deity was seated on his cherubim throne constituted the *tabnît* or structure seen by Moses during his sojourn on the same mountain.”

Likewise, various accounts relate the process of revelation in the designs for modern temples.^[4] And what is true for temple architecture is true for temple ordinances. Just as Moses received laws and instructions for temple worship by revelation, so also both initial instructions^[5] and ongoing modifications^[6] of temple ordinances and covenants in our day have come by revelation.

The Temple Vision of Creation, Fall, and Atonement Given to Moses

Given the nature of the textual linkages between Moses 1 and what follows in Moses 2–8, it seems reasonable to infer that the story of the Creation, Fall, and Atonement that provides the narrative backbone for the modern temple endowment was revealed to Moses immediately following his heavenly ascent.

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.”^[7] 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^[8] but *before* Moses had returned to Egypt to deliver the children of Israel.^[9]

Consistent with the basic two-part narrative pattern described in a previous *Essay*,^[10] Moses’ experience in chapter 1 takes him from a vision of his first home in the spirit world, downward to the telestial world, and, finally, upward in a step-by-step return to God. Unlike the figurative journeys that are represented in earthly temples, Moses 1 ends in an actual encounter with the Lord.

Of importance to this present article is the fact that the heavenly ascent described in the first chapter of the Book of Moses is presented as a prologue that culminates in a vision of the Creation and the Fall—the first part of the primary narrative backbone of the modern temple endowment for Latter-day Saints.^[11] Following Moses’ vision of the Creation and the Fall, chapters 5–8 of the Book of Moses, like other scripture-based temple texts, describe the elements of the Atonement that allow a return to the presence of God.

Remarkably, the stories in chapters 2–8 follow a pattern exemplifying both faithfulness and unfaithfulness to a specific sequence of covenants that is familiar to Latter-day Saints who have received the modern temple endowment. Specifically, the story illustrates how Enoch and his people lived the law of consecration, providing a vivid demonstration of the final steps on the path that leads the faithful back to God and upward to exaltation.^[12] Notably, the grand vision of Enoch in Moses 6–7 contains some of the same elements as the heavenly ascent of Moses 1, with some variation in sequence and emphasis.^[13]

Consistent with Moses 1, two Jewish texts from the Second Temple period also recount how 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*.^[14] 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.’”^[15]

Moses 1 and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (*ApAb*)

Building on the earlier work of Hugh Nibley,^[16] Jared Ludlow,^[17] Douglas Clark,^[18] and Bradshaw and Larsen^[19] previously identified *ApAb* as a promising candidate for detailed comparison with Moses 1.^[20] With the added collaboration of Steve Whitlock, this initial study has been significantly extended and updated.^[21] We will draw on selected elements from that study in future *Essays*.^[22]

The *Apocalypse of Abraham* is thought to be Jewish in origin, though it has been preserved by Christian hands.^[23] 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.^[24]

Though probably written in the first century CE, the work was not “introduced to Western readers” until 1897, through the German translation of Bonwetsch,^[25] and thus could not have been known to Joseph Smith. However, given the relevance of some portions of *ApAb* to Latter-day Saint teachings and scripture, members of the Church were enthusiastic to have it read as widely as possible. 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.^[26]

The comparison that we will be making to Moses 1 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).

As both “the earliest mystical writing of Judaeo-Christian civilization”^[27] and as a foundational text for Islamic scripture,^[28] *ApAb* plays a prominent—and in some respects unique—role in its genre. Of importance to Latter-day Saints, *ApAb* is “the only Jewish text to discuss foreordination, Satan’s rebellion, and premortal existence.”^[29] Also of significance is another resemblance between *ApAb* and Moses 1: following the heavenly ascent of Abraham, *ApAb*, like Moses 1, recounts a vision of the Creation and the Fall.

General Comparison of the Narrative Structure of *ApAb* to Moses 1

A common explanation for Joseph Smith’s account of Moses’ heavenly ascent is that it was inspired by the story of Jesus’ encounter with Satan in Matthew 4. However, analysis of a preliminary study by Colby Townsend^[30] has demonstrated that Matthew’s account is a relatively unfruitful source of comparison. Twelve resemblances in vocabulary were found in the verbal battles with Satan described in Moses 1 and Matthew 4. However, closer examination revealed that eleven of these resemblances come from only three verses in Matthew. And each one is based on an occurrence of one of two key terms: ‘worship’ and “depart.” Moreover, every resemblance identified, except the first, score on the weaker end of the spectrum of the classification scale used—corresponding to a 1 or 2 out of a possible strength of 5. In short, although Moses 1 and Matthew 4 share some general elements of one particular type scene in common and out of which they both may have grown,^[31] the specific resemblances are weak and limited to a small fraction of the Moses 1 narrative.

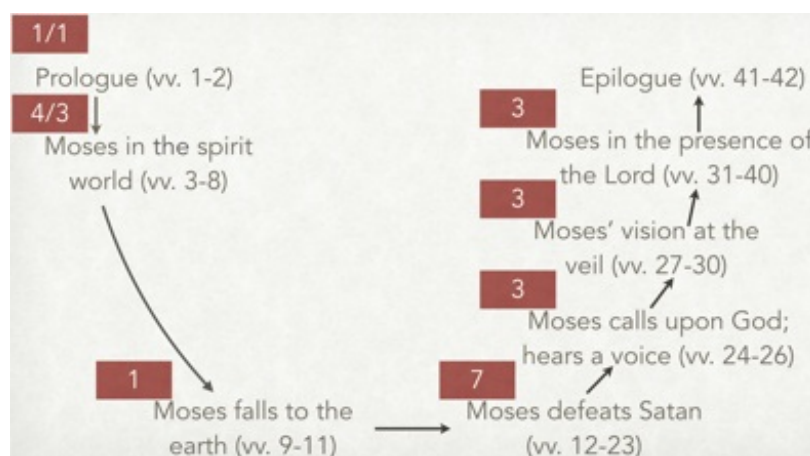


Figure 2. Resemblances with *ApAb* chapters 9–23 superimposed on the narrative of Moses 1

By way of contrast, in the overview diagram above, 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.^[32] The frequency of resemblances of *ApAb* to Moses 1 in a given section is represented by a number.

The slash and second number that appear in 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 above paints an interesting picture. It is evident that the resemblances are not confined to limited sections of Moses 1, as is the case of Matthew 4, but rather are spread throughout the account.^[33] 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 wherein resemblances form part of "a highly intricate pattern rather than [the simple matching of] an isolated 'motif.'"^[34] There is only one important exception to this consonance in narrative order: Moses' 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 in another *Essay*.^[35]

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.



Figure 3. *The House of Terah Destroyed by Fire. Original at left, facsimile at right*

In addition to their appearance in the 14th century manuscript, the illustrations are included in a facsimile edition first published in 1891. Though a reproduction of one of the facsimile images was used previously in an article by Hugh Nibley,^[36] 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 Whitlock and Bradshaw first photographed them.^[37] Moreover, the photographs of the corresponding pages in the *original* manuscript are published for the first time in the 2020 article upon which this and several subsequent *Essays* will draw. 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.



Figure 4. Abraham with Sacrificial Animals

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.^[38] Above, Abraham appears with a group of sacrificial animals.^[39] 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.^[40]

Although Yaho'el is depicted in the illustration above in human form, the text of *ApAb* describes him as a composite being: both man and bird.^[41] While his anthropomorphic (human-like) aspects feature high-priestly imagery, his pteromorphic (bird-like) aspects are those of a griffin^[42]—a mythical creature that combines the form and powers of a hawk^[43] and a lion. Other angelic beings in *ApAb* are described as birds, including the Satan-like Azazel (specifically referred to as an “impure bird.”^[44]).^[45]

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.”^[46] Intriguing possibilities about plausible Egyptian influences that may help account for the bird-like qualities of Yaho'el and Azazel have been suggested. Taken

together with other passages within *ApAb* discussed in later *Essays*,^[47] these Egyptian themes may shed light on how some of the obscure passages in *ApAb* might be understood.^[48]

From the discussion above, it should be clear why *ApAb* is uniquely positioned as a comparative cohort to the Moses 1 account of heavenly ascent. In subsequent *Essays*,^[49] we will draw on specific phrase-by-phrase comparisons of themes in the corresponding narrative structure of Moses 1 and *ApAb*, supplemented by references to relevant material in the Book of Abraham and other ancient texts. These detailed comparisons demonstrate why *ApAb* is a powerful and heretofore unique witness of the antiquity of Moses 1.

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Notes on Figures

Figures 1, 3, 4. 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*” (A. Kulik, *Retroverting*, p. 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 Rzheutsky 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, England. The facsimile edition was originally published as N. Novickij (Novitskii, P. P., *Otkrovenie Avraama* and later as a reprint. 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 G. Davidson, *Angels*, pp. 316-317), and may have been the source for the figure used in H. W. Nibley, *Apocryphal*, p. 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 follow 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> [accessed March 28, 2020]) 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> [accessed March 28, 2020]).

ApAb occupies pages 328–375 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* (G. H. Box, *Apocalypse*; A. Kulik, *Retroverting*; A. Kulik, *Apocalypse of Abraham*; R. Rubinkiewicz, *Apocalypse of Abraham*) as well as the critical text prepared by Rubinkiewicz in French translation (R. Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*) follow the page order of Cornell and Marquette. We do not know whether or not 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.

Figures 2, 5. Copyright Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, 2020.

Endnotes

[1] See Book of Moses FAQ.

[2] For a more detailed comparison, see J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, Moses 1 and the Apocalypse of Abraham.

[3] J. M. Lundquist, Temple, Covenant, and Law, p. 302. See Exodus 25:8.

[4] See, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, God’s Image 1, Excursus 16: The Role of Revelation in Temple Building, pp. 561–563.

[5] Although it is clear that Joseph Smith knew much about the specifics of temple-related matters early in his ministry, his understandable reluctance to share details of sacred events publicly (see, e.g., R. O. Barney, Joseph Smith’s Visions; R. Nicholson, Cowdery Conundrum) has resulted in our possessing only very general descriptions of how these

things were revealed to him. And, of particular relevance as we try to picture the kind of instruction about temple work that is described in the Dell Paul letter, we know even less about how the Prophet gained the knowledge necessary for teaching these things to others. While Joseph Smith's exposure to Masonic ritual no doubt led him to seek further revelation as he prepared to introduce the ordinances of temple worship in Nauvoo, there is evidence that he received crucial knowledge about the pedagogical aspects of temple work by divine means well prior to that time. For instance, Matthew B. Brown has summarized some of the accounts that speak in broad terms about heavenly visions and visits from one or more heavenly messengers (M. B. Brown, *Gate*, p. 207):

Elder Parley P. Pratt stated in early 1845 that Joseph Smith had given the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles "a pattern in all things pertaining to the sanctuary and the endowment therein" and explained to them that this pattern had been shown to him in a "heavenly vision" (P. P. Pratt, *Proclamation*, p. 151). On another occasion Elder Pratt asked: "Who instructed [Joseph Smith] in the mysteries of the Kingdom, and in all things pertaining to Priesthood, law, philosophy, sacred architecture, ordinances, sealings, anointings, baptisms for the dead, and in the mysteries of the first, second, and third heavens, many of which are unlawful to utter? Angels and spirits from the eternal worlds" (P. P. Pratt, 6 April 1853, p. 44). Elizabeth A. Whitney likewise stated her understanding, in a Church periodical, that an angel of God committed the temple rituals to Joseph Smith.

Whitney wrote (E. A. Whitney, *Leaf* (15 December 1878), p. 105):

It was during the time we lived at the Brick Store that Joseph received the revelation pertaining to celestial marriage; also concerning the ordinances of the House of the Lord. He had been strictly charged by the angel who committed these precious things into his keeping that he should only reveal them to such persons as were pure, full of integrity to the truth, and worthy to be trusted with divine messages.

From the statement, it seems that Whitney was referring specifically to the ordinances of sealing associated with celestial marriage, not the temple ordinances that had been revealed previously. For a late, third-hand account of a remembrance of how the ordinances were revealed to the Prophet in Kirtland, see J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *How Thankful*.

[6] See, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, *Freemasonry*, pp. 182–184; First Presidency Statement on Temples, First Presidency Statement on Temples.

[7] L. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:417.

[8] *Moses* 1:17.

[9] *Moses* 1:25–26.

[10] *Essay #32*.

[11] See J. E. Talmage, *House of the Lord* (1912), pp. 99–100.

[12] J. M. Bradshaw, *LDS Book of Enoch*. For a more thorough analysis of these steps, see

J. M. Bradshaw, *What Did Joseph Smith Know*.

[13] 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, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, 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 J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, p. 97 n. 10]; cf. Hebrews 11:5; Doctrine and Covenants 107:49; J. Smith, Jr., *Instruction on Priesthood*, 5 October 1840, pp. 6–7 [see J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, pp. 50–53 nn. 1, 13, 16]; J. Smith, Jr., *Discourse*, 3 October 1841 (Richards), p. 1; J. Smith, Jr., *Discourse*, 3 October 1841 (*Times and Seasons*), p. 577) 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).

[14] O. S. Wintermute, *Jubilees*, 2:52, 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 that (E. D. Clark, *Prologue*, p. 135. See also H. W. Nibley, *To Open*, pp. 7–19):

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’ 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.

[15] B.M. Metzger, *Fourth Ezra*, 14:4–6, p. 553.

[16] H. W. Nibley, *To Open*; H. W. Nibley, *Abraham* 2000, pp. 1–73.

[17] J. W. Ludlow, *Visions*.

[18] E. D. Clark, *Prologue*.

[19] J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *Apocalypse of Abraham*; J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes* (2014), pp. 23–50.

[20] J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *Apocalypse of Abraham*.

[21] J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *Moses 1 and the Apocalypse of Abraham*.

[22] See *Essay #34-37*.

[23] A. Kulik, *Retroverting*, pp. 2–3; R. Rubinkiewicz, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, pp. 681–683.

[24] A. E. Paulsen-Reed, *Origins*, pp. 261–262. “There is no indication that the text was intended for an elite few” (*ibid.*, p. 194). For a detailed analysis, see pp. 207–232, 253–255. 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” (G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 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]” (A. Kulik, *Retroverting*, p. 1. Cf. A. E. Paulsen-Reed, *Origins*, p. 263, who concludes that it “appears to be one of the earliest examples we have of Jewish mysticism.”). 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* (A. A. Orlov, *Heavenly Priesthood*).

Importantly, Paulsen-Reed points out that the chapters at the heart of *ApAb* that describe Abraham’s heavenly ascent are surprisingly outsize in volume when compared with later chapters that describe the new knowledge that he purportedly received from God afterward (A. E. Paulsen-Reed, *Origins*, p. 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* [C. A. Segovia, *Those on the Left*, p. 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” (G. Gobillot, *Apocryphes*, p. 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*” (C. A. Segovia, *Thematic and Structural Affinities* p. 238. Cf. *ApAb* chapters 15–18. M. Shaddel, *Apocalyptic Reading* 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*.).

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” (A. A. Y. Ali, Qur’an, 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., p. 1638 n. 6094; Elsewhere, Ali writes that the text means “apparently not the Pentateuch, or the *Tawrat* [Torah], but some other book or books now lost” (ibid., p. 570 n. 5 ¶¶ o) 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*, p. 871) and there is late evidence for an Arabic *ApAb* (see A. Kulik, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, p. 1477 n. 3).

See Nicolai Sinai as 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’ān are simply “a loose way

of referring to the Biblical corpus—including the New Testament” (N. Sinai, *Interpretation*, p. 17). Alternatively, al-Tha’labi preserves traditions that the “pages” revealed to and written by Abraham contain admonitions and proverbs (A. I. A. I. M. I. I. al-Tha’labi, *Lives*, pp. 168–169). This view is probably based on a passage in the Qur’ān (A. A. Y. Ali, *Qur’an*, 53:38–56, pp. 1382).

[25] A. Kulik, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, p. 1454. The German translation of Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch (1848–1925) was published in 1897 (G. N. Bonwetsch, *Die Apokalypse Abrahams*). For brief biographies of Bonwetsch, see Nathanael Bonwetsch, Nathanael Bonwetsch; Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch, Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch.

[26] See E. H. Anderson *et al.*, *Abraham*; H. W. Nibley, *Abraham* 2000, pp. 11–13. A little over two decades later, a second English translation was made by Box (G. H. Box, *Apocalypse*).

[27] A. Kulik, *Retroverting*, p. 1.

[28] See C. A. Segovia, *Those on the Left*, pp. 2–3.

[29] J. W. Ludlow, *Visions*, p. 70.

[30] C. Townsend, *King James Bible* 1.

[31] For an insightful discussion of pseudepigraphal themes echoed in Matthew 4, see A. A. Orlov, *Dark Mirrors*, pp. 107–112.

[32] Of course, the opposite course could have been taken—comparing Moses 1 against the narrative structure of *ApAb*. However, we concur with J. W. Ludlow, *Visions*, p. 73 n. 60 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 them, 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 ...). 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.

[33] 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' 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.

[34] Welleck and Warren, cited in J. H. Tigay, *On evaluating claims of literary borrowing*, p. 251. 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 cited in *ibid.*, p. 251).

[35] *Essay #34.*

[36] See H. W. Nibley, *Abraham* 2000, p. 44.

[37] 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 J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes* (2014), pp. 31–50. Photographs of the 1891 facsimile edition have since been published in the University of Vienna Masters Thesis of Kerstin Mayerhofer (K. Mayerhofer, *Die Slavische Abrahamsapokalypse und ihre Ügerlieferung*) 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 compromises the fidelity of some details in the illustrations.

[38] A. A. Orlov, *Heavenly Priesthood*.

[39] 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 word??) were the sacrifices: calf, goat, sheep, turtledove and pigeon. Cf. A. Kulik, *Retroverting*, 12:3-6, p. 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).

[40] *Ibid.*, 11:3, p. 19; A. A. Orlov, *Heavenly Priesthood*, pp. 95–96; M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, p. 62.

[41] A. A. Orlov, *Angelology*. See also A. Kulik, *Retroverting*, p. 83; B. Lourié, *Review*.

[42] A. Kulik, *Retroverting*, p. 83. See also A. A. Orlov, *Angelology*, pp. 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 N. Wyatt, *Grasping the Griffin*. 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.

[43] Though, as Wyatt notes, in Egyptian art the wings are not explicitly portrayed (N. Wyatt, *Grasping the Griffin*, p. 29).

[44] R. Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 13:3, p. 143; A. 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, A. A. Orlov, *Angelology*, pp. 209–212.

[45] Cf. Ezekiel 1:10; B. Lourié, *Review*, 2:1, p. 257, 24:9, p. 278, 26:3, p. 280, 44:5, p. 295, 47:4, p. 300. Andrei A. Orlov (A. A. Orlov, *Divine Scapegoats*; A. A. Orlov, *Atoning Dyad*) 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” (<https://brill.com/abstract/title/32266> [accessed July 25, 2019]).

[46] A. A. Orlov, *Angelology*, p. 206.

[47] See *Essays* #34 and #40.

[48] For a more complete discussion of Egyptian influences in *ApAb*, including possible hints of themes relating to the Latter-day Saint Book of Abraham, see J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *Moses 1 and the Apocalypse of Abraham*.

[49] *Essay* #34-41.