

Book of Moses Essays #34: Moses 1 in Its Ancient Context: Moses in the Spirit World (Moses 1:1–8)

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Figure 1. Moses' heavenly ascent begins with a vision of premortality: "the world upon which he was created ... and all the children of men which are, and which were created" (Moses 1:8). Likewise, in the Apocalypse of Abraham 21:7 and 22:2, Abraham is shown "a great crowd of men, and women, and children" before they "came into being."

In this *Essay*, we will describe the first part of the heavenly ascent of Moses 1 which, like the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 9:8, opens on “an exceedingly high mountain.”^[1]

Although our text of primary interest is Moses 1, we felt that the particular affinities of *Apocalypse of Abraham* (*ApAb*) to the visions of the premortal spirit world in the Joseph Smith translation of the Book of Abraham were of such importance and relevance that they should not be ignored. These affinities, among others, will be discussed in the present *Essay*.

Prologue

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
Setting	an exceedingly high mountain (1:1)	a high mountain (9:8)
Sacrifice	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)

Figure 2. Resemblances for the Prologue (Moses 1:1–2; Abraham, Facsimile 2, figure 2)



Figure 3. Abraham's Sacrifice Is Accepted of the Lord

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.^[2] 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.”^[3] Though this detail is not explicitly mentioned in the Book of Moses, the implicit presumption of a similar setting is not implausible.^[4]

The Prophet in the Spirit World

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
Aretology	the Lord God Almighty, Endless (1:3)	the primordial and mighty God (9:3)
God to show a vision of eternity	I will show thee the workmanship of my hands (1:4)	I shall ... make you know secrets (9:5-6)
Reason for God's favor	Thy servant has sought thee earnestly (Abraham 2:12)	since you loved to search for me (9:6)
The prophet is commissioned	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)

Figure 4. Resemblances for Moses in the Spirit World (Moses 1:3–6; Abraham 2:12)^[5]

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^[6] and in the destruction of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea.^[7] Significantly, Moses will later "be made stronger than many waters ... as if thou wert God."^[8]

Both "Endless" (Book of Moses) and "primordial"^[9] (*ApAb*) are related to the characterization of God as being "without beginning of days or end of years." "Endless"^[10] 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."^[11] Such imagery recalls the description in Latter-day Saint scripture of God's course as "one eternal round."^[12]

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,"^[13] describing them as "great things" that are "kept"^[14] (or "hidden"^[15]). These ancient descriptions resonate with the Book of Mormon prophet Ether's mention of "*greater things*, the knowledge of which is *hid up*."^[16] In Jewish tradition, such "secrets" include both a knowledge of "the system by which the whole cosmos is put together"^[17] (what the Lord describes to Moses as "the workmanship of my hands"^[18]) and also the revelation of what God is about to do^[19] (i.e., the things that will be shown in vision to Moses and to Abraham^[20]).

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.^[21]

The prophet is commissioned. Because each of the two prophets had found God’s favor, they both received personal titles and commissions. Stephen O. Smoot has shown that the conferral of the title of God’s “son”^[22] on Moses might be seen as ratifying the prophet’s membership in the divine council.^[23] 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 arguably at home in a text about Moses.^[24]

In Arabic, Abraham is often referred to as *al-Khalil*, “the Friend,” meaning the friend of God.^[25] The teachings and revelations of Joseph Smith sometimes use “friend” as a technical term,^[26] denoting one who is on intimate terms with the Lord and, like the members of the divine council, who has firsthand knowledge of the divine will.^[27]

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
Vision of the spirit world	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)
Cosmic circle with opposing premortal forces	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)
Some of the spirits are chosen	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)

Figure 5. 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 most likely refers to the creation of humankind in the preexistent spirit realm before the physical Creation took place^[28]—and “all the children of men which are, and which *were*

created.”^[29] Likewise, in *ApAb*, Abraham is shown “a great crowd of men, and women, and children” before they “came into being.”^[30] 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*.



Figure 6a, b. Two Egyptian hypocephali, representing circular depictions of the cosmos. Left: British Museum 35875 (formerly 8445c); Right: Louvre Museum E 6208

Cosmic circle with opposing premortal forces. After passing through the celestial curtain, Abraham will see a “picture” on a “visionary screen,”^[31] 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.”^[32] Rubinkiewicz is careful to clarify that the term used for “picture” likely refers to something more like a “model” or “likeness”^[33] of heaven and earth than a photographic reproduction.^[34] He observes that “the idea that the model of the created world existed before Creation is widespread in the apocryphal literature.”^[35]

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*.”^[36] In biblical cosmology, circles are used to “indicate the horizon where the earth comes together with the sky.”^[37]

In light of Hugh Nibley’s extensive analysis of circular depictions of the cosmos,^[38] it becomes possible to conjecture a 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,’^[39] in which the human race, God’s people and the others,^[40] confront each other beneath or within the circle of the starry heavens, on opposite halves of the picture”:^[41]

[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."^[42] ...

In light of the possibility of Egyptian influences in *ApAb* (as mentioned in a previous *Essay*^[43]), Nibley's recognition of resemblances between Egyptian hypocephali and the portrayal of the cosmos in *AbAb* merits consideration.^[44]

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."

Nibley also observed that in the *ApAb* account of Abraham's vision he sees a "throne of fire under which are four fiery creatures, each with four faces, those of a lion, man, ox and eagle."^[45] Significantly, these figures correspond to "the canopic figures, figure 6 on [Book of Abraham] Facsimile 2."^[46] 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"^[47]) "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)."^[48]

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.^[49] Likewise, in *ApAb* (and in similar fashion within other Jewish and Islamic accounts^[50]), a premortal group of spirits shown "on the right side ... of the portrayal"^[51] is "set apart ... to be born of [Abraham]" and to be called "[God's] people."^[52]

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.'"^[53] 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."^[54]

Conclusions

The resemblances between the Book of Abraham and *ApAb* to the initial sacrificial setting and the vision of the spirit world are impressive and illuminate the meaning of both texts. Despite the absence of detail in the corresponding description in Moses 1:8, the context of

this verse as well as additional details in Moses 1 provide evidence that it is also an account of a similar premortal scene.

In subsequent *Essays*, it will become apparent that the major elements of the narrative structure of Moses 1 are well-represented in the text of *ApAb*—and, importantly, in identical sequence.

This article is adapted from Bradshaw, Jeffrey M., David J. Larsen, and Stephen T. Whitlock. “Moses 1 and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*: Twin sons of different mothers?” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 38 (2020): 179-290.

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Notes on Figures

Figure 1. iStock.com, Image ID: 657020424. Licensed by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw.

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Figure 3. 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.

Figure 6. Photographs by Stephen T. Whitlock of items on display. a: Hypocephalus of Hor (2005); b: Hypocephalus of Ti (21 April 2007) Copyright Stephen T. Whitlock. According to Hugh Nibley (H. W. Nibley, *et al.*, *One Eternal Round*, pp. 194–195): “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 H. W. Nibley, *et al.*, *One Eternal Round*, Appendix 4, p. 636] and the one belonging to *Hr* [Horus] in the British Museum” (included herein as Figure 6). 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 Breathing papyrus in the Church collection” (M. D. Rhodes, *Joseph Smith Hypocephalus ... Twenty Years Later*, p. 2), i.e., the source of Facsimiles 1 and 3 of the Book of Abraham (see M. D. Rhodes, *Hor*). In his translation of the Hor Book of Breathing, Rhodes cites Quaegebeur, who identifies Hor as the son of Usirwer (M. D. Rhodes, *Hor*, p. 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 Breathing 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 Essay #30, Purpose and Function*).

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 J. H. Taylor, *Journey Through the Afterlife*, pp. 58–59). For more on the purpose of the hypocephalus in Egyptian tradition, see *The Purpose and Function of the Egyptian Hypocephalus – Book of Abraham Insight #30, Purpose and Function*; J. H. Taylor, *Journey Through the Afterlife*, p. 130. For translations of Spell 162, see, e.g., P. Barguet, *Le Livre des Morts*, pp. 228–229; R. O. Faulkner, *et al.*, *Book of the Dead*, pp. 156, 158.

Endnotes

[1] Moses 1:1.

[2] Translation of caption: “And the angel said to me, all these many (+2 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. A. Kulik, *Retroverting*, 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 (R. Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, pp. 123, 125 n. 5). 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 (A. A. Orlov, *Divine Scapegoats*; A. A. Orlov, *Atoning Dyad*; A. A. Orlov, *Likeness*; A. A. Orlov, *Dark Mirrors*, pp. 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’” (A. Kulik, *Retroverting*, 13:3-7, 12-13, p. 20).

[3] Abraham, Facsimile 2, figure 2.

[4] 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).

[5] Moses 1:4: “workmanship of my hands” (compare Psalm 19:1).

[6] Moses 2:1–2.

[7] A. Marmorstein, *Doctrine, Names and Attributes*, p. 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.*, *Names and Attributes*, p. 82 #32).

[8] Moses 1:25. See additional discussion of this verse below.

[9] 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 R. Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, p. 123 n. 3.

[10] 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).

[11] D. C. Matt, *Zohar* 1, p. *xlvi*, citing *Sefer Yetsirah* (D. Blumenthal, *Merkabah*, 1:7, p. 17).

[12] 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 us 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” (D. C. Matt, *Zohar* 1, p. *xlvi*).

[13] See his discussion in A. Kulik, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, p. 1462 n. 9:6.

[14] *Ibid.*, 9:6, p. 1462. See e.g., J. H. Charlesworth, *Odes*, 8:10, p. 742: “Keep my mystery, you who are kept by it.”

[15] R. Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 9:6, p. 125: “*choses cachées*” = hidden things.

[16] Ether 4:13. Cf. Jeremiah 33:3: “I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

[17] D. Blumenthal, *Merkabah*, p. 59 n. 1. 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 M. E. Stone, *Lists of Revealed Things*.

[18] Moses 1:4.

[19] Cf. J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah* 2, 50:9:1B, p. 218. Cf. Deuteronomy 29:28; Daniel 2:8–29.

[20] 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” (R. Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 9:9–10, pp. 125, 127). In Moses 1, God will show the “earth, and the inhabitants thereof [presumably past, present, and future—“not a soul which he beheld not” (v. 28)], and also the heavens” (v. 35).

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” (A. Kulik, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, 9:5 and 9, p. 1462. Cf. 1983 translation by Rubinkiewicz [R. Rubinkiewicz, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, 9:5 and 9, p. 693]). See *ibid.*, n. 9c, p. 693 and R. Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, p. 125 n. 5 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 (A. Kulik, *Retroverting*, 1.3.6, pp. 46-47; A. Kulik, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, p. 1462 n. 9:9). However most scholars now date the text to the decades following 70 CE (see, e.g., A. E. Paulsen-Reed, *Origins*, p. 6).

J. W. Ludlow, *Visions*, p. 62 n. 19, following an earlier translation in R. 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?”

[21] E.g., Deuteronomy 4:29; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 2 Chronicles 15:12, 31:21; Ecclesiastes 1:13; Jeremiah 29:13. See D. J. Larsen, *Ascending*. Cf. D. J. Larsen, Psalm 24. See also the insightful discussion by J. L. Kugel, *God of Old*, pp. 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.

[22] Moses 1:6.

[23] S. O. Smoot, *I Am a Son of God*, pp. 134–137.

[24] 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 C. S. Keener, *John*, 1:412–416). 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, *Abraham*, 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, *Treatise on the Sacrifices*, 10 (43), p. 99)

Yonge's rendering of "loved-and-only son" (*agapetos kai monos uios*) as "only legitimate son" (*Monogenēs*, *Monogenēs*):

is not unreasonable given Philo's parallel comments in *On Sacrifice* 10:43 [above]. It also parallels Josephus' use (see F. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 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.

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*)" (L. J. Kuyper, *Grace and Truth*, p. 1; C. S. C. S. Keener, *John*, 1:416; see also J. Ashton, *Understanding*, pp. 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' heavenly ascent. Thanks to Samuel Zinner and David Seely for their helpful suggestions on this topic.

[25] "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)" (M. L. Bowen, August 15 2019).

[26] For more on this topic, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 73–79.

[27] John 15:15, emphasis added.

[28] 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 (15 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.

[29] Cf. Moses 6:36.

[30] A. Kulik, *Retroverting*, 21:7, 22:2, p. 26.

[31] A. Kulik, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, p. 1470 n. 21:2.

[32] D&C 93:24. Cf. Jacob 4:13.

[33] See discussion of the translation of this and related terms in A. Kulik, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, p. 1470 n. 21:2.

[34] R. Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, p. 175 n. 1. Note that in references to Book of Abraham, Facsimile 2, figures 3, 6, and 7, as well as to Facsimile 1 (Abraham 1:12), Joseph Smith characterizes the illustrations as “representations.”

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 175 n. 1.

[36] Following the literal translation of G. H. Box, *Apocalypse*, 12:8, p. 51. R. Rubinkiewicz, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, 12:10, 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; A. Kulik, *Retroverting*, 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” (R. Rubinkiewicz, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, p. 695 n. 12c). 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*” (A. 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” (F. I. Andersen, 2 *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 R. Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, p. 141 n. 10).

[37] R. Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, p. 141 n. 10. 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. Compare the Egyptian conception shown in H. W. Nibley *et al.*, *One Eternal Round*, p. 42 Figure 4. See also related discussions in *Essay #24*.

[38] Hugh Nibley notes that on the “great round” (H. W. Nibley, *Abraham* 2000, p. 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 H. W. Nibley *et al.*, *One Eternal Round*).

[39] G. H. Box, *Apocalypse*, 12:8, p. 51.

[40] See A. Kulik, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, 22:5, p. 1471.

[41] H. W. Nibley, *Abraham* 2000, p. 45.

[42] R. Rubinkiewicz, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, 21:7, pp. 699–700.

[43] See *Essay #33*.

[44] H. W. Nibley *et al.*, *One Eternal Round*, pp. 596, 597. See also pp. 286–288. For other possible allusions to hypocephalus-like imagery in *ApAb*, see *Essay #40*. For more on allusions to circular maps of the cosmos in the ancient Enoch literature, see *Essay #24*.

[45] See R. Rubinkiewicz, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, 18:3–5, p. 698.

[46] H. W. Nibley *et al.*, *One Eternal Round*, p. 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 R. 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.

[47] R. Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 12:10, p. 141.

[48] M. D. Rhodes, *Book of Abraham: Divinely Inspired*, p. 123, as cited in J. W. Ludlow, *Visions*, p. 63. Rhodes further observes that *ApAb* 18:5 “describes the four animal-headed

figures labeled number 6 in Facsimile Number 2.”

[49] 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).

[50] 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’” (E. D. Clark, Prologue, p. 138. Cf. Qur’ān 7:172; 30:30; 33:7; 53:56; M. i. A. A. al-Kisa’i, *Tales*, pp. 63-64; G. Weil, *Legends*, pp. 39-40; B. M. Wheeler, *Prophets*, pp. 32–33). A related Jewish tradition recounts that “the unborn souls of future generations ... were present at Sinai to receive the Torah” (H. Schwartz, *Tree*, p. 164). For a more general discussion of this subject, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, Excursus 48: The Nature and Scope of Premortal Covenants, pp. 649–650.

[51] R. Rubinkiewicz, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, 21:7, pp. 699–700.

[52] A. Kulik, *Retroverting*, 21:7, 22:5, pp. 26-27. Cf. A. Kulik, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, p. 1471 n. 22:4. R. Rubinkiewicz, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham*, 22:5, p. 177 n. 5 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.

[53] A. E. Paulsen-Reed, *Origins*, p. 93.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 98. For more details, see the thorough discussion of the issue in *ibid.*, pp. 88–100. See also the discussion in *Essay #41*.