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THE END FROM THE BEGINNING

Daniel C. Peterson

Abstract: *We are often at the dubious mercy of people, forces, and events that are beyond our control. But a trust in Providence — a word that is used relatively seldom these days for power that transcends even those people, forces, and events and that can, in the end, overrule them for our good — can nonetheless give us serene confidence. That such providential power exists, that it is personal and caring, is one of the fundamental messages of the scriptures and the prophets.*

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it. (Isaiah 46:10-11)

Notoriously, the imperial Japanese attack on the naval base at Pearl Harbor caught the United States by surprise. America was grossly unprepared and entirely shocked.

On Sunday, 7 December 1941, the day of the attack, my father, having fled the poor employment prospects available during the Great Depression, was serving in the horse cavalry of the United States Army — yes, such a thing still existed — along California's border with Mexico. Hearing the news from Hawaii, he made a journal entry that day for the first time in weeks. I don't know why he was keeping a journal. He wasn't a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at that time (nor for more than three decades thereafter), so it wasn't a result of exhortations to write one's personal history.

Camp Lockett, Calif.

Sunday

Lots of excitement today. Japanese bombers attacked Pearl Harbor — killed 350 soldiers at Hickman [*sic*] Field — lots of other damage etc. Our outfit is patrolling the Mexican border, machine guns have been set up at various points. All leaves, furloughs and passes cancelled until further notice. Just heard that Japan has officially declared war against the U.S. — No doubt as to what our answer will be — Hang on, boys, here we go.¹

That entry has fascinated me since we first unexpectedly found the journal and read it, several years after my father's passing. It's not a retrospective look at the Second World War. It hadn't been edited in the intervening years. It reads today as it was written then, from the perspective of someone caught in the rush of events as they unfolded.

Unlike us, now seventy-five years removed from Hitler's death in his bunker in the *Führerhauptquartiere* in Berlin and the surrender of the Empire of Japan on the deck of the USS Missouri, Dad could not look back with calm, informed understanding at the Pearl Harbor attack. Did he realize that World War II had just begun? Perhaps; I don't know. Certainly he didn't know that he would end up experiencing the V-1 "buzz bomb" and V-2 rocket attacks on London, crossing the English Channel just after the Battle of the Bulge, serving in General George S. Patton's Third Army, participating in the liberation of the Nazi death camp at Mauthausen, Austria, and being demobilized, whole and in good health, from liberated Paris. He didn't know that he and his brothers would survive. (Fortunately, all of them did.)

Camp Lockett, Calif.

Monday

Our country declared war on Japan today in answer to her declaration against us.

Our own particular little outfit here is armed to the teeth in case of any surprise from the border.

1. This quotation, along with the two following, comes from my father's personal journal, in my possession. Hickam Field (not *Hickman*), now Hickam Air Force Base and part of the Joint Base Pearl Harbor — Hickam, actually lost 189 with 303 wounded on 7 December 1941. In the overall Japanese attack, though, 2,403 Americans were killed and somewhat fewer than 1,200 others were wounded.

Three carloads of Japanese were captured today as they attempted to reach the border. We cooperated with the state police & immigration men in catching them. They were heavily armed but did not resist.

Enemy planes were over San Francisco tonite — city was blacked out.²

On Tuesday, 9 December, his journal entry reads, in part, “President Roosevelt speaking tonite — cussing Japan, Germany, Italy and giving the country a pep talk — stressing our obligations, etc.” From his entry of Wednesday, 10 December, “Another blackout again tonite. Had two last nite. Pacific coast is afraid of air raids.”

Fortunately, as I write, we don’t have a global military conflict hanging over us. But we nonetheless live under the shadow of death, in perpetual uncertainty about many things. And we are not in control — as the recent COVID-19 pandemic has sharply reminded us. Each of us is obligated to function with a host of unanswered, open questions. Will my business survive? Can I trust this or that person? Will I keep my job? Will I lose my investment? How long will my health hold out? How will my children do as they grow up? What if an earthquake comes? What if a tornado strikes? When will I die? What plans should I make?

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit” — yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” (James 4:13-15, English Standard Version)

In the Muslim world, very much in the spirit (or so it seems to me) of that passage from the Epistle of James, people don’t commit to an action or make a promise or arrange a meeting without saying *in sha’a Allah* (“if God wills”). That habit, of course, can easily slip into fatalism or even cynicism. But, if it is said sincerely, it seems to me a salutary acknowledgement that we are, in the end, neither the complete masters of our souls nor the autonomous captains of our fates. Overall, in fact, we are rather like improvising characters in the second act of a three-act

2. I have been unable to verify that Japanese aircraft really did fly over the San Francisco Bay area in December 1941, but there were certainly widespread reports of such activity. See comments of Lt. General John L. DeWitt in “Chronology of 1940-1941 San Francisco War Events,” *The Museum of the City of San Francisco* (December 9, 1941), <http://www.sfmuseum.org/war/40-41.html>.

play of which the first act has largely been forgotten and for which the script of the third act hasn't yet been delivered to us.

And yet, in the words of the great Danish Christian philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), “It is perfectly true, as the philosophers say, that life must be understood backwards. But they forget the other proposition, that it must be lived forwards.”³ We have absolutely no alternative. Keeping journals, as my father sporadically did, may have helped him — as it has certainly helped me — to understand something of his past. It isn't of great assistance, though, for peering into the future.

But faith in the teachings and promises of the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be of incomparable value in just that regard.

I think, in this connection, of a remarkable address given by my friend and former academic dean Todd Britsch at the 30 September 1997 Brigham Young University devotional assembly. It was titled “Trusting God When Things Go Wrong,” and I hope that he won't mind my extensive quotation from it:

I believe that the characteristic that helped both Mormon and Paul face difficult lives with calmness and optimism is trust in the Lord and his promises. For them this trust transcended any circumstance, however negative and threatening. Once believers have come to know that God's assurances are true, no circumstance can undermine their fervent and, ultimately, optimistic view of the world God has created. They understand that the reason for their existence, even in times of trial, is joy. For the next few minutes I would like to make some suggestions that might strengthen our trust in God — even when conditions are not the best.

First, it is good to know how things will ultimately end. That is, it is important to know that God's promises of the ultimate triumph of goodness and righteousness are valid. I would like to illustrate this point with an analogy from football. I do this with a bit of an apology to my colleagues who can't understand how someone who makes his living teaching about poetry, music, and painting could be such a fanatic about this slightly rough sport.

A few years ago, before the time that all BYU games were televised live, I landed at the Salt Lake airport just as a BYU

3. Søren Kierkegaard, *Journals IV A 164* (1843): *Det er ganske sandt, hvad Philosophien siger, at Livet maa forstaaes baglænds. Men derover glemmer man den anden Sætning, at det maa leves forlænd.*

“away” game was concluding. I rushed around the terminal until I finally found someone who could assure me that we had won, although by a very close score. That evening, after returning to Provo, I went downstairs to watch the replay of the game on KBYU. My demeanor was amazingly serene. When we fumbled or had a pass intercepted, I hardly reacted. My wife could even let our children get around me. Usually I feel obligated to help my brethren in striped shirts by pointing out their errors in judgment. Because my seats are on row 25, such correction often requires a rather high decibel level. This loudness has carried over to watching football on television. But on that day I remained absolutely calm, even when I had the benefit of instant replay to verify my claim that their defensive back clearly arrived early and that the ground had obviously caused our running back to lose the ball. I was a veritable model of football decorum, never becoming unduly upset or ill behaved.

The cause of my improved behavior was obvious: I already knew the outcome of the game — BYU would win. It is amazing how that knowledge changes things: cornerbacks can get beat, running backs can fumble, linebackers can miss tackles, offensive guards can blow blocking assignments, and other things can go wrong. But when we know the final score, such things can be endured and sometimes even ignored.

We also know the final score for the history of this world and for the life of the righteous. The Lord and his people will triumph. It is true that the sorrows of this world and the strength of Satan’s forces will win a number of the skirmishes. I am reminded of a wonderful cartoon that appeared in the *New Yorker* magazine many years ago. It depicts on a baseball scoreboard the battle between the optimists and pessimists. Each inning the pessimists are ahead, sometimes by rather large scores. But at the end of the game, the score reads, “Optimists 1, Pessimists 0.” So it is with the history of this world. Satan and his followers, as well as the natural circumstances of mortal life, will inflict many bruises and win many battles. But God, who knows the end from the beginning, has promised that those who serve him will receive the fullness of his blessings. When

we realize that righteous living puts us on the winning side, we can learn to trust him during trying times.⁴

Perhaps I can illustrate my point another way:

After their final Passover meal together, Jesus and his followers walked to the Garden of Gethsemane, where he apparently often went to pray. He withdrew himself, and, as Latter-day Saints understand, commenced there the awesome and mysterious process of his atonement for the sins of humanity.

However, that Passover — a communal celebration of goodness and hope and God’s power to save — was marred, as so many human activities are, by wickedness, this time in the form of Judas’s treachery. And that was followed by the stunning violence and injustice of the crucifixion. These were exceptionally abhorrent acts. In some ways, the most cosmically abhorrent in all of human history. But injustice and even injury are, far too often, everyday hallmarks of the ordinary world in which we live.

For centuries, Christians have commemorated the day that followed, that particular Friday, as *Good Friday*. Now, this is not meant ironically, even though the day was anything but a good one. It was, of course, the day on which Jesus Christ was crucified, the day of his death on Calvary. Nor is it intended superstitiously, apotropaically. Rather, the word *good* should be understood in one of its old, archaic meanings: “holy” or “godly” or “pious.”

But we can recognize that “goodness” only in the rearview mirror, as it were. The messianic dreams of Jesus’s disciples had, it seemed, been destroyed. The man in whom they trusted was dead. They were scattered as sheep without a shepherd.

What they do not seem to have fully understood — who *could* have fully understood it? Who can understand it today? — is that their leader’s violent, humiliating death, his apparent defeat, represented part of the greatest victory in this world’s history. His cry “It is finished” marked the culmination of the Atonement, his triumph over sin. It opened the door for all of us, if we will, to return into God’s presence. In its singularly horrible way, it was perfectly appropriate to Passover weekend, a peerless celebration of, precisely, goodness and hope and God’s power to save.

Holy Saturday, the last day of Holy Week and the day before Easter, follows Good Friday. It commemorates the day on which Jesus’s broken body lay dead in the tomb. It represents an interim period, a time of waiting and uncertainty.

4. Todd A. Britsch, “Trusting God When Things Go Wrong,” *BYU Speeches* (September 30, 1997), <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/todd-a-britsch/trusting-god-things-go-wrong/>.

Modern believers in the Restoration, however, understand that even while his body lay dead and motionless, Jesus was preaching as an immortal spirit to the spirits in prison, inaugurating the great work of the redemption of the dead that is carried on now in our temples.⁵ Encircled as we are by the obscuring veil, we may not always see God visibly at work from our vantage point in this fallen world. But he is always working for our salvation.

On that ancient Saturday, though, the apostles were hiding, their hopes dashed, not knowing what to do, perhaps anxiously anticipating their own arrest and execution.

Many of us are living our own Saturday, whether holy or unholy. Evil and injustice frequently seem to have the upper hand in the world around us, and indeed in our own lives. We're fearful and uncertain. Often, we've been defeated, sometimes we've been betrayed, and perhaps we feel that any significant victory is beyond our reach. We're worn out. We've heard promises of wonderful things to come, but we're unsure of them. Not uncommonly, our days can seem very dark. Have we believed in vain?

But the testimony of the four New Testament gospels, of the first apostles, of the early Christians, of Christian believers throughout the centuries, and of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his apostolic successors is that, early on Sunday morning, the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty. Jesus had risen.

And, for all of us, Easter will come. Our Saturday of uncertainty and defeat does not, it will not, continue forever. As the great English mystic Julian of Norwich (who died circa 1416) so simply but memorably expressed the Christian hope, in words that she said had been given her by Jesus, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."⁶

William Clayton's lyrics for one of the greatest of all Latter-day Saint hymns, written in a camp of the exiled, persecuted, and disposed Saints along the trail to the as-yet unseen and largely unknown Great Basin, testify to exactly the same inspired confidence:

We'll find the place which God for us prepared,
Far away in the West,
Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid;
There the Saints will be blessed.
We'll make the air with music ring,
Shout praises to our God and King;

5. See 1 Peter 3:18-20; 4:6; D&C 138.

6. Julian of Norwich, "The Thirteenth Revelation", in *Revelations of Divine Love*, 31, <https://www.basilica.ca/documents/2016/10/Julian%20of%20Norwich-Revelations%20of%20Divine%20Love.pdf>.

Above the rest these words we'll tell —
 All is well! All is well!
 And should we die before our journey's through,
 Happy day! All is well!
 We then are free from toil and sorrow, too;
 With the just we shall dwell!
 But if our lives are spared again
 To see the Saints their rest obtain,
 Oh, how we'll make this chorus swell —
 All is well! All is well!⁷

Knowing that things will end well transforms the meaning of the trials that go before and makes them endurable.

We can devote a great deal of time and energy to attempts to reconcile the earliest chapters of Genesis with contemporary geological science and the latest discoveries in biology. Given our current level of knowledge, though, the complete resolution of such matters seems to me not particularly urgent. And, of course, many have tried very hard over the centuries to wring precise timelines out of the often inscrutable prophecies of the Revelation of John, with varying degrees of thus far unverifiable success. We'll see who was right when the time comes.

But it doesn't seem to me insignificant that our Bibles begin with Genesis and end with Revelation. The first book does give us important insight into the first act of our play, and it forthrightly declares that, however the world came to be and however life arose on our planet, God was involved. It didn't happen by chance; He was in charge. Analogously, the book of Revelation, above and beyond all of its mysterious details, testifies that, no matter how difficult things become, God will be involved. It won't be mere chaos; He will be in charge. And those who align themselves with God will, in the end, be safe and secure and blessed.

There is no greater sense of peace, security, and assurance than in knowing how the play ends — that, in the old sense of the word, it's a comedy with a happy ending, not a tragedy — knowing that our team will win the game and that the good guys will win the war, knowing that evil will fail and be defeated, knowing that, if we're on the Lord's side, his certain victory will be ours, as well.

7. "Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, no. 30.

Daniel C. Peterson (PhD, University of California at Los Angeles) is a professor of Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University and is the founder of the University's Middle Eastern Texts Initiative, for which he served as editor-in-chief until mid-August 2013. He has published and spoken extensively on both Islamic and Mormon subjects. Formerly chairman of the board of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) and an officer, editor, and author for its successor organization, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, his professional work as an Arabist focuses on the Qur'an and on Islamic philosophical theology. He is the author, among other things, of a biography entitled *Muhammad: Prophet of God* (Eerdmans, 2007).

TIMES OF RECKONING AND SET TIMES IN ABRAHAM 3

J. Ward Moody

Abstract: *The third chapter of Abraham considers two types of times regarding the moon, the earth, and the planets: “times of reckoning” and “set times.” A straightforward interpretation of these two times, if correct, sheds light on the cosmology known to Abraham. “Times of reckoning” may be understood as the times of celestial movements directly observed or reckoned by someone standing on the surface of the earth. These times would most likely be synodic, meaning the motion being considered is referenced to the sun, but they could also be sidereal, meaning referenced to the stars. Observed from the earth’s surface, times of reckoning would naturally have a geocentric perspective. “Set times,” on the other hand, may refer to times of motion established or set by God. These would be the orbital motions intrinsic to the bodies themselves. They would be sidereal and, with the exception of the moon — which would still be geocentric, would be from a heliocentric or even wider galactocentric point of view. With this interpretation, Abraham 3:5–10 may be an account of God elevating Abraham’s knowledge of heavenly motions from that which is seen and measured by looking at the sky to that which actually exists in space. Such knowledge, likely possessed by the prophet Mormon as well, provided a natural means for Abraham to teach Pharaoh of the supremacy of God.*

It is well established that the prophet Abraham, as well as being the father of nations revered by Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike, was described by ancient historians as a man who studied and understood the heavens.¹ For example, the Jewish historian Josephus in *Antiquity of the Jews* — Book 1 7:2, writes,

1. Jared W. Ludlow, “Abraham’s Visions of the Heavens,” in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid (Provo, UT: FARMS,

[The Babylonian historian] Berosus mentions our father Abram without naming him, when he says thus: “In the tenth generation after the Flood, there was among the Chaldeans a man righteous and great, and skillful in the celestial science.”

In *Book 1*, 8:2 he speaks of Abraham teaching mathematics and astronomy to the Egyptians:

He [Abraham] communicated to them [the Egyptians] arithmetic, and delivered to them the science of astronomy; for before Abram came into Egypt they were unacquainted with those parts of learning.

Josephus may be giving too much credit to Abraham. The prophet lived in Mesopotamia around 2,000 BC. Studies of the Pyramid Texts show that the Egyptians were practicing observational astronomy hundreds of years before this time.² Temples and pyramids built before 2,000 BC were aligned with north by use of astronomical techniques as well, so the Egyptians clearly knew enough of the heavens before 2,000 BC to accomplish this feat.³ Therefore it is likely that the Egyptians already

2005), 57-73. This is an excellent summary of Abraham as an astronomer from extracanonical sources, such as *The Apocalypse of Abraham*. Specific writings on this topic from Artapanus, Eupolemus, Eusebius, Josephus, George Syncellus, and Ioannes Zonaras are found in John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee, and Brian M. Hauglid, eds., *Traditions About the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001), 7-10, 48-49, 225, 261.

2. The classic reference is Rolf Krauss, *Astronomische Konzepte und Jenseitsvorstellungen in den Pyramidentexten* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997). This article presents astronomical concepts in the Pyramid Texts, which date from 2600 -2200 BC. As it is written in German, I instead consulted the following work that draws upon it: Yasser A. Abdel-Hadi and Maha Yehia, “Astronomical Interpretation of the Winding Canal in the Pyramid Texts,” *NRIAG Journal of Astronomy and Astrophysics*, Special Issue (2008), 317-40. Despite its title (which refers to a specific celestial feature, likely the Milky Way), this article considers many astronomical aspects, including circumpolar stars and constellations.

3. Much has been written on the orientation of Egyptian temples and pyramids to celestial bodies or to the compass points defined by stars. A summary of recent work on the orientations of 330 temples, many of which were built before 2000 BC, can be found in Juan Antonio Belmonte, “In search of cosmic order: Astronomy and culture in Ancient Egypt,” *The Role of Astronomy in Society and Culture, Proceedings of IAU Symposium No. 260*, ed. D. Valls-Gabaud and A. Boksenberg (Paris: UNESCO, International Astronomical Union, 2009), 74-86. For pyramid alignments, see Kate Spence, “Ancient Egyptian chronology and the astronomical orientation of pyramids,” *Nature* 408 (2000), 320-24. See also Hugh Thurston, “On

had a significant knowledge of the heavens before Abraham arrived.⁴ In fact, their interest in the heavens may be one reason why Abraham, having a reputation as a man learned in such things, was able to gain an audience in Pharaoh's court to confer.

Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Abraham enlarged what we know of Abraham's knowledge of astronomy and what he communicated to the Egyptians. Within it, Abraham talks of many things in the heavens, including the stars and Kolob, planets and stars being above one another, and these planets and stars having different times.

For a greater understanding of the Book of Abraham itself, I refer the reader to any of several illuminating works by scholars proficient in ancient scripture or Egyptology.⁵ As a professional astronomer, I myself am particularly intrigued by the references to astronomy in Abraham chapter 3. Science in general is not considered in scripture, nor should it be. Thus the material on astronomy in the book of Abraham is singular, worthy of a closer look to understand why it is there and what it is communicating.

Astronomy in Abraham's Day

Abraham records that he obtained knowledge from "the records of the fathers":

But the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands; therefore a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers, have I kept even unto this day. (Abraham 1:31)

Knowledge "made known unto the fathers" could come from several sources and therefore might be secular, revelatory, or both. Knowledge

the Orientation of Early Egyptian Pyramids," *DIO* 13.1 (December 2003), 4-11, and references therein.

4. Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Abraham as Chaldean Scientist and Father of the Jews: Josephus, Ant. 1.154-68, and the Greco-Roman Discourse about Astronomy/Astrology," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 35.2 (2004), 119-58. Reed analyzes writing from Josephus in Ant. 1.154-68 together with astronomy/astrology from the Hellenistic age. She lays out the conflicting views regarding the flow of astronomical knowledge into and out of Egypt. In doing so she presents evidence that Josephus may have embellished Abraham's role as being the first to bring astronomy to Egypt (see pp. 140-42).

5. A good recent publication is John Gee, *An Introduction to the Book of Abraham* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University/Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2017).

of the priesthood and creation would surely come through inspired revelation. Since knowledge of the planets and stars is mentioned in the same phrase, it is reasonable to suppose that the knowledge of planets and stars referred to here is inspired as well.

But the first chapter of Abraham makes quite clear that the immediate fathers of Abraham were wicked and idolatrous and even allowed human sacrifice to idols (Abraham 1:5-15). Such thinking is clearly *not* inspired. This raises the possibility that other knowledge passed down to Abraham, such as that of the heavens, might also have been infused with the secular learning of the day or apostate and therefore false understanding, or both. We cannot know if such learning influenced Abraham. But it seems reasonable to assume that Abraham's knowledge of the heavens may have included secular learning as well.

What was the astronomical learning of Abraham's day? As far as we know, no fully developed physical theory of cosmology was ever produced in Mesopotamia or the surrounding areas at the time Abraham lived.⁶ The earliest known myth-based cosmological writings are found in the *Enuma Elish*, which dates to the First Babylonian Dynasty (1894-1595 BC).⁷ The earliest writings concerned with observations of motion in the heavens are found in the *Enuma Anu Enlil* and MUL.APIN. These most likely date from the 17th century BC for the astronomically significant tablet 63 of the *Enuma Anu Enlil* and 1400-1100 BC for MUL.APIN.⁸ Therefore these records were either contemporaneous with Abraham or were written several hundred years after him. Either way, they give us the best idea of what people observed in the heavens in this time period, and

6. Francesca Rochberg, "Mesopotamian Cosmology," *Cosmology: Historical, Literary, Philosophical, Religious, and Scientific Perspectives*, ed. Norriss S. Hetherington (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 37-38.

7. Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 13-14. The *Enuma Elish* honors Marduk as the champion of the gods and the creator of the heavens and the earth.

8. These dates draw upon research presented in Russell Hobson, "The Exact Transmission of Texts in the First Millennium B.C.E." (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2009); M. J. Geller, "Astronomy and Authorship," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 53:2 (1990), 209-13, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/619229>; Bradley E. Schaefer, "The Latitude and Epoch for the Origin of the Astronomical Lore in MUL.APIN," *Bulletin of the American Astronomical Society* 39 (2007), 157. These references all rely on Hermann Hunger and David Pingree, *MUL APIN: An Astronomical Compendium in Cuneiform* (Archiv für Orientforschung 24; Horn: Ferdinand Berger & Söhne Gesellschaft, 1989). The general idea is that the oldest records date to about 1,000 BC but contain aspects written within them that date to the Old Babylonian period of 1800-1595 BC.

how they interpreted those observations. These records are concerned with celestial phenomena like solar and lunar eclipses, planetary motions, and weather, which were thought to bring omens from deity.⁹ The omens were recorded and interpreted by priests schooled in celestial observing as a natural extension of their religious training.

The regular circling of the stars once around the sky every 24 hours was an obvious rhythmic motion which they explained through myths. The *Enuma Elish* says the sun, moon, planets, and stars were embedded in the body of a defeated goddess, Tiamat, who formed the “roof” of the sky. They moved around the earth¹⁰ under the control of the sun god Shamash.¹¹

Planets, because they moved *through* the stars, had to be a different sort of phenomenon, worthy of careful study. Planetary movements recorded in the *Enuma Anu Enlil* and MUL.APIN included the times when planets (especially Venus) were most distant from the sun or when they rose and set.¹² The records reveal that Babylonian astronomers knew that Venus and Mercury moved rapidly enough to swing about the sun in a few weeks or months. They knew that Mars, Saturn, and Jupiter moved more slowly, traversing the entire band of the zodiac in years or decades. The Babylonians used mathematics to model these motions and predict future positions. But not having a physical model of planetary movement, they would not have known why planets moved at different rates.

While there may not have been an exact planetary model embraced back then, the mathematics interpreting planetary motion still had the earth fixed and immovable.¹³ Eventually the Babylonian astronomical

9. Hermann Hunger and David Pingree, *Astral Sciences in Mesopotamia*, (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 1999). Chapter 1 is dedicated to discussing omens of all kinds, but especially astronomical omens.

10. Capitalization of the word *earth* is confusing. *The Chicago Manual of Style*, followed here, does not capitalize *earth* when preceded by *the*. However, it requires *earth* to be capitalized when *the* is not used. This latter form is a more exact reference to the planet rather than its soil or surface, i.e., “Venus, Earth, and Mars,” as opposed to “the earth beneath our feet.” Scripture in the Book of Abraham refers to planet Earth as “the earth.” In this paper I use the phrase “the earth” when considering it alone or with the moon or the sun because this is the scriptural format. When considering it clearly as a planet or with other planets, then “Earth” is used.

11. Rochberg, “Mesopotamian Cosmology,” 44.

12. Hunger and Pingree, *Astral Sciences in Mesopotamia*, 5-7, 12-20; John North, *The Norton History of Astronomy and Cosmology* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995), 25-30.

13. North, *Norton History of Astronomy and Cosmology*, 19-58. These pages summarize Babylonian planetary observations and the mathematical methods applied to make sense of them. The viewpoint of the math is geocentric.

records would make their way to Greece. In the days of Ptolemy they would help in creating a geocentric model that had the planets and the sun moving in circular paths placed somewhere between the surface of the earth and the realm of the stars.¹⁴

Distance, Times of Reckoning, and Set Times

It is apparent, then, that Babylonian astronomers, as with anyone familiar with planetary motions, knew that some planets drift through the background of stars faster than others. This is also true of the moon and the sun: they move through the background stars but at rates different from each other. This general idea is reflected in Abraham 3:5:

And the Lord said unto me: The planet which is the lesser light, lesser than that which is to rule the day, even the night, is above or greater than that upon which thou standest in point of reckoning, for it moveth in order more slow; this is in order because it standeth above the earth upon which thou standest, therefore the reckoning of its time is not so many as to its number of days, and of months, and of years.

Schooled in astronomy, Abraham would have known the moon and planets moved at different speeds. He could see that with his own eyes. Of course, if he had no model to refer to, he would not know why. This verse reads as if Abraham is being given a model. The moon is above the earth, as opposed to being embedded in a nearby object like Tiamat's body, and as a result it moves slower. In other words, perhaps in this scripture Abraham is being taught by God that not all objects in the heavens are the same distance away. And their speeds of movement are related to their distance, with more distant objects moving more slowly. Next consider verses 7-9:

Now the set time of the lesser light is a longer time as to its reckoning than the reckoning of the time of the earth upon which thou standest. And where these two facts exist, there shall be another fact above them, that is, there shall be another planet whose reckoning of time shall be longer still; And thus there shall be the reckoning of the time of one planet above another.¹⁵

14. Rochberg, "Mesopotamian Cosmology," 45.

15. Verse 9 continues, discussing the reckoning of Kolob's time. I reluctantly refrain from including Kolob in my discussion because its location and nature are as yet unknown. Anything I might conjecture at this time would be too speculative and would distract from the main points being addressed here.

These verses have the same flavor as verse 5, only extended to planets. Taking the word *above* to mean “more distant,” they are saying that planets are at different distances. If a planet is more distant, it moves more slowly, and thus it has a longer reckoning of time.

Verses 16 and 17 reinforce the idea that the objects in the heavens are at different distances:

If two things exist, and there be one above the other, there shall be greater things above them. ... Now, if there be two things, one above the other, and the moon be above the earth, then it may be that a planet or a star may exist above it; and there is nothing that the Lord thy God shall take in his heart to do but what he will do it.

These verses talk of how, for any two things in the heavens, one will be above or more distant than the other. In other words, the objects in the heavens are spread throughout space. And it is all because God took it in His heart to do it that way.

Time, in verses 7-9, is mainly qualified as being a *time of reckoning*. But verse 7 describes one of the times as being a *set time*. Verse 6 adds considerably to this:

And the Lord said unto me: Now, Abraham, these two facts exist, behold thine eyes see it; it is given unto thee to know the times of reckoning, and the set time, yea, the set time of the earth upon which thou standest, and the set time of the greater light which is set to rule the day, and the set time of the lesser light which is set to rule the night.

Abraham is given to know both times of reckoning and set times. Why the difference, and what might it mean?

To anyone standing on the earth's surface, the movements of the planets in the sky are recorded from his or her point of view. *Times of reckoning* may simply refer to the times a person sees or reckons. For example, Venus is seen to swing side to side around the sun in a regular pattern. The farthest it can ever get from the sun is about 45 degrees. The time it takes for Venus to go from 45 degrees east of the sun to the west of it, then back to 45 degrees east again is about 19 months. This would be its orbital period around the sun as seen from the earth — the *orbital time of reckoning*, if you will. The modern terminology for this is the *synodic period*, or the period with respect to the sun. Although it is with respect to the sun, it is measured as if the earth were fixed and immovable at

the center of the universe and so gives a geocentric perspective. Synodic periods of the eight planets and the moon are given in Table 1.

Planet	Synodic Period (Years)	Sidereal Period (Years)
Mercury	0.3173	0.24085
Venus	1.599	0.61521
Earth	---	1.0000
Mars	2.135	1.88089
Jupiter	1.092	11.8653
Saturn	1.035	29.6501
Uranus	1.012	83.7445
Neptune	1.006	165.951
Moon	29.5 days	27.3 days

Table 1: Synodic and sidereal periods of the planets and the moon

Other times of reckoning recorded by ancient astronomers include the interval of time between when planets aligned together in the sky with each other, with the moon, or with bright stars. These times are not synodic, since the sun is not used as a reference, but they are still geocentric.

Tracking synodic orbital times and positions and the times between planetary and lunar alignments was a major function and duty of ancient astronomers. Abraham, as an ancient astronomer, would have known about these and probably observed and tracked them himself. This is something he could see with his own eyes (Abraham 3:6).

All times considered above are reckoned from the earth's surface, which is, again, a geocentric perspective. If planet Earth were fixed and immovable at the center of the universe, they would be the only times to speak of. But Earth is not immovable; it orbits the sun. Removing Earth's motion from the synodic periods of the planets recovers the *sidereal* periods or periods with respect to the stars. This is the perspective of being lifted off Earth's surface and letting Earth move along in its own orbit without us. Being untethered from Earth, we can now place ourselves in the center of the solar system at the location of the sun and look at how solar system bodies move through the background of stars.

This change in orientation makes a large difference. With Earth's orbital motion taken out, the synodic period of 19 months for Venus becomes a sidereal period of seven and a half months. Sidereal periods of the eight planets are shown in Table 1 to illustrate this difference and

to show how planets move more slowly with greater distance from the sun. The synodic periods get closer to one year as planets get farther away because they move so slowly that the observed synodic period is increasingly just the orbital motion of Earth.

A sidereal period is the period derived as if the sun were stationary at the center of the universe and so is heliocentric. Understanding how to go from observed synodic periods to inferred sidereal periods was the revolutionary triumph of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, who established that Earth is a planet that orbits the sun.

The sidereal periods can be thought of as being the real periods set forth by God.¹⁶ Therefore, they are good candidates for the *set times*. They can be calculated from the observed synodic orbits, or they can be observed directly from the surface of the body they orbit, should a person happen to be there. One can say the set time for the moon is 27.3 days and is geocentric, since the moon orbits the earth. The set times for the planets would be *heliocentric*, since they orbit the sun. The set time of the sun would refer to the time it takes for it to orbit about the Milky Way galaxy. This perspective would be *galactocentric*.

The sun's orbital motion is similar to that of the stars. Regarding stars, Abraham 3:10 states:

And it is given unto thee to know the set time of all the stars that are set to give light, until thou come near unto the throne of God.

This refers to the set times of the stars but not to their times of reckoning. In fact, nowhere is a time of reckoning mentioned for stars, and this may be significant. Like the sun, the stars in the heavens move in individual orbits about the center of the Milky Way galaxy.¹⁷ From our perspective they move so slowly that this orbital motion cannot be measured without modern instrumentation. Because they look fixed with respect to each other, observers of Abraham's day would not associate times of reckoning with stars as they would with planets, which drift *through* the background of stars. But in reality, like the planets, they are

16. Jesus Christ is referred to in the Book of Abraham as "the Lord," "Jehovah," "God," and a few variants of "the Lord God," such as "the Lord my God," "the Lord thy God," etc. I use the term *God* throughout this paper unless the context needs to be clarified by a different reference.

17. Stellar orbital speeds are slowest near the galactic center. They increase linearly outward until they reach a maximum orbital speed a few kiloparsecs from the nucleus. From here, there is a stabilization of speeds at around 220 km/sec. How far out from the nucleus stars retain this speed is unknown and relates to the mystery of dark matter.

still individual bodies and still orbit as individual bodies with set orbital times. Saying the sun has a set time (verse 6) is the same as saying it is not immovable at the center of the universe, but instead has an orbit in its own right. The same is the case with the stars. If they have set times, then they are bodies in their own right with orbits of their own. As with the sun, the star's set times would be from a galactocentric perspective.

Abraham's Perspective

Interpreting *set times* as sidereal orbits means Abraham had to know the earth was a planet that orbited the sun. As far as we know, this was considered probable as far back as the Hellenistic Greeks. However, it was not generally accepted by scholars at large until the days of Copernicus and Galileo in the 16th and 17th centuries. There is no evidence it was an accepted idea in Abraham's day. Should we expect Abraham to have understood that the earth indeed moved about the sun?

Let us digress a moment to the prophet Mormon. In Helaman 12:13-15, Mormon illustrates the power and majesty of God as follows:

Yea, and if he say unto the earth — Move — it is moved.
Yea, if he say unto the earth — Thou shalt go back, that it
lengthen out the day for many hours — it is done; And thus,
according to his word the earth goeth back, and it appeareth
unto man that the sun standeth still; yea, and behold, this is
so; for surely it is the earth that moveth and not the sun.

The spin of the earth on its axis causes the sun to appear to move about the sky. Thus, 1,100 years before Copernicus published *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* proclaiming a heliocentric solar system, Mormon knew the earth spins. His parenthetical observation "it is the earth that moveth and not the sun" might also mean that the earth moves in an orbit about the sun as opposed to the sun moving in an orbit around the fixed, immovable earth. In other words, it seems likely that the prophet Mormon knew of the true organizational structure of the solar system, with the earth and the planets orbiting a central sun. Indeed, it is reasonable to suppose this would be one of the things a prophet of antiquity would *want* to know because it helps in understanding mankind's place in God's universe. If such knowledge is part of the divine schooling of ancient prophets, then surely Abraham, of all the prophets, knew of this same structure.

Abraham 3:7, in speaking of the earth's reckoning time, compares it to the set time of the moon, which is about a month. The earth does not

have a synodic period as do the other planets because we are on it and do not observe it in the sky. So what would be its time of reckoning?

As with the sun, the observed motion of the stars about the sky is caused by the spin of the earth on its axis. It seems reasonable to take the earth's time of reckoning to be the time of one spin, or a day of 24 hours, as has been previously suggested.¹⁸ This agrees with the moon's sidereal period of one month being longer than a day. This also supports the definition of *times of reckoning* being any time or period reckoned when viewing objects in the sky instead of being strictly a synodic orbital period.

Interpreting *times of reckoning* as observed periods and motion and *set times* as the true orbital periods and motions has a significant implication. Much in Abraham 3 is consistent with a geocentric cosmology,¹⁹ but many aspects are also congruent with a heliocentric point of view.²⁰ If the thesis of this paper is correct, then Abraham 3:1-13 may be a record of how Abraham's knowledge transitioned from a geocentric viewpoint, known to him and his fathers, to the heliocentric or even galactocentric cosmology revealed to him by God.²¹ In other words, verses 6 and 10 mean that Abraham, who had contemporaneous knowledge of how planets move as reckoned from the surface of the earth, was privileged to have God reveal to him how they truly move through space.

18. Gee, *Introduction to the Book of Abraham*, 116.

19. John Gee, William J. Hamblin, and Daniel C. Peterson, "And I Saw the Stars,..." 'The Book of Abraham and Ancient Geocentric Astronomy,' in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 1-16. The authors discuss how the astronomy in Abraham 3 relates to a geocentric cosmology.

20. Michael D. Rhodes and J. Ward Moody, "Astronomy and Creation in the Book of Abraham," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 17-36. The authors argue that descriptions of stars in Abraham 3, particularly after verse 12, are congruent with a heliocentric cosmology.

21. Kerry Muhlestein, "Encircling Astronomy and the Egyptians: An Approach to Abraham 3," *The Religious Educator* 10, no. 1 (2009), 33-50. Reprinted as Kerry Muhlestein, "Encircling Astronomy and the Egyptians: An Approach to Abraham 3," in *By Study and by Faith: Selections from the Religious Educator*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2009), 149-67. This article presents the point of view that Abraham's astronomy centers on Kolob. Note that stars orbit about the center of the Milky Way more slowly as you get nearer to the galaxy center. So if Kolob is near the galactic center, the view that stars move more slowly as you approach Kolob is consistent with how stars orbit in the Milky Way. With this interpretation, a Kolob-centered cosmology is also a galactocentric cosmology.

The Purpose of the Knowledge

Finally, consider that knowledge revealed to man always has a purpose. To what end might the Lord have revealed astronomical knowledge to Abraham? Abraham 3:15 makes clear one purpose:

And the Lord said unto me: Abraham, I show these things unto thee before ye go into Egypt, that ye may declare all these words.

Abraham is given this knowledge to declare it to Pharaoh. But again, why? Is the Lord departing from the purpose of saving souls to dabble in astronomy? Has He sent one of His greatest prophets to the dominant ruler of the day to help that ruler comprehend basic solar system physics? There must be a greater purpose than this, one related to the work and glory of bringing “to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

Pharaoh did not know of Jehovah and instead recognized multiple gods. Let us recall that Abraham was nearly killed in a sacrifice to one or more of the false gods of Shagreel, Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and Pharaoh (Abraham 1:9, 12-17, and facsimile #1). As he was rescued from death, he heard the voice of Jehovah proclaiming that He was to lead Abraham from his father’s house into a strange land (Abraham 1:16). This God would give Abraham a posterity as numerous as the stars, but first He was to send him to Pharaoh to teach Pharaoh a few truths about deity.

What is the best way to do this? Teachers teach best when they can expand upon the knowledge their students already have. The realm of the gods is an idea with which Pharaoh could relate. It therefore makes sense for Jehovah to give Abraham knowledge of the realm of the gods — the heavens — to use in teaching Pharaoh truths about God.²² In Abraham 3:16-20 we read:

If two things exist, and there be one above the other, there shall be greater things above them; therefore Kolob is the greatest of all the Kokaubeam that thou hast seen, because it is nearest unto me. Now, if there be two things, one above the other, and the moon be above the earth, then it may be that

22. The idea of the stars being used to educate Pharaoh in spiritual matters is well made by Muhlestein, “Encircling Astronomy and the Egyptians,” 34-37; and supported by Gee, *Introduction to the Book of Abraham*, 117. Stars as a metaphor of spirits and Kolob as a metaphor for Christ was presented by Joseph F. McConkie, “The Heavens Testify of Christ (Abraham 3:1-21),” in *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 2: The Pearl of Great Price*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 239-40.

a planet or a star may exist above it. ... as, also, if there be two spirits, and one shall be more intelligent than the other. ...

And the Lord said unto me: These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all. The Lord thy God sent his angel to deliver thee from the hands of the priest of Elkenah.

The flow of the logic here is from stars to spirits to God. There are many different stars in the heavens, organized such that greater bodies are above others. Kolob is greatest because it is nearest to God. Now extend that reasoning to spirits. They, too, have a distribution of greatness or intelligence. Just as stars are above each other, in comparing two spirits, one will be more intelligent than the other. It is as if Abraham were saying, "The Lord thy God is more intelligent than any of the other spirits. In fact, Pharaoh, He sent an angel to rescue me from the hands of a priest who represented one of your gods. So reason with me, Pharaoh. Does it make sense to worship these lesser deities rather than the greatest of them all? Understand that there is one God above them all. He delivered me from your gods. Forget your gods and worship Jehovah."

Once this point is made, astronomy is no longer considered in the book of Abraham. Being primarily a vehicle for teaching Pharaoh about the God of the universe in language he could understand, its usefulness has been fulfilled. After establishing there is one god above them all, the dialog shifts to that God and to creation. Ultimately, Abraham's knowledge of the universe, given to him by both God and man, was used as a tool for saving souls, and nations.

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ASCENDING INTO THE HILL OF THE LORD: WHAT THE PSALMS CAN TELL US ABOUT THE RITUALS OF THE FIRST TEMPLE

David J. Larsen

Abstract: *In this article, the author attempts to shed light on practices alluded to in the Psalms that may have formed part of the ritual system and theology of Solomon's original temple. He describes various aspects of the ritual system of pre-exilic Israel, including pilgrimage, questioning at the gates, epiphany, and royal rites. In the culmination of these rites, the king, who likely led the procession up to the temple, was enthroned on or beside the Lord's own throne and transformed or "reborn" as a Son of God, appearing before the people in glorious fashion as the representative of Yahweh.*

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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*, ed. Matthew B. Brown, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Stephen D. Ricks, and John S. Thompson (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 171–88. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/ancient-temple-worship/>.]

In her monograph on the Temple in Jerusalem, Old Testament scholar Margaret Barker remarked: "The easiest way to enter into the world of

the ancient temple is to read the Psalms and try to imagine the setting for which they were written.”¹ The world of the First Temple is considered largely inaccessible, as there are very few texts from the pre-exilic period that are available to us. This is a frustrating situation for those who long for insights into the Golden Age of the Israelite monarchy and the mysteries of Solomon’s original temple. In this chapter I will attempt to shed some light on practices alluded to in the Psalms that may have formed part of the ritual system and theology of that First Temple.

The specific focus of this study comes largely from my reading of an article by Dr. Silviu Bunta, published in the recent *festchrift* for Rachel Eilior, *With Letters of Light*.² I offer a brief summary of Dr. Bunta’s argument:

- He argues that 1 Enoch should not, as per the common view, be seen as the first example of an ascent to heaven in Jewish literature.
- He notes that Paul Joyce of Oxford University sees Ezekiel’s temple vision (starting in Ezekiel 40) as a heavenly ascent narrative and then argues that the vision of God’s *Kavod* in Ezekiel 1 should likewise be seen as an ascent to heaven because it is also a vision of the heavenly temple.
- In support of this conclusion, he asserts that the ancient Near East understanding did not differentiate between the “earthly” and “heavenly” temple — the earthly temple was the heavenly temple. The dwelling-place of the gods is often associated with the tops of mountains. That the early Israelites shared a similar conceptual view, he argues, is implied by many biblical references, most notably in the Psalms (see, e.g., Psalms 43:3; 46:4-5; 48:9; 50:2; 76:2; 132:13-140), to God dwelling on the holy mountain.
- He asserts that 1 Enoch 14 and Aramaic Levi seem to refer to the top of Mt. Hermon as the place to which they ascend during their visions.³
- Associated with this view is the idea that the sanctuary was to be equated with the holy mountain and thus with heaven. “When one enters a temple on earth,” says Bunta, “one reaches the top of the sacred mountain and is described as ‘entering heaven.’”⁴ Worshippers in the earthly temple were thought to be in heaven, standing before God.⁵

- Finally, he sees the temple vision of God on his throne in Isaiah 6 (cf. 1 Kings 22) as evidence supporting his claim.⁶ In essence, Isaiah ascending Mount Zion to the temple would be equivalent to his ascending into heaven (see 1 Enoch 93).

In light of this and other evidence, I believe Bunta is correct in suggesting that visions taking place in the Jerusalem Temple should be seen as essentially equivalent to visions of the heavenly temple and that the heavenly ascent motif occurred in settings such as Ezekiel 1 that were long prior to 1 Enoch.

Working from Bunta's general conclusions, I will take the next logical step: moving the origins of the heavenly ascent motif further back beyond Ezekiel into the pre-exilic cult of the Jerusalem Temple. I will argue that this type of theophanic experience — an ascent to heaven to see God — was a principal focus of the temple liturgy in monarchic times as depicted in some of the Psalms.

Later heavenly ascent narratives include, among others features, the following: a) the visionary being taken or led on a journey upwards through the various levels of heaven, b) passing through a series of gates guarded by angelic beings who require adherence to moral laws and answers to questions or passwords (e.g., the names of angels or the Godhead), c) standing before the Throne of God or seeing His Divine Face, and d) the initiation of the visionary into the heavenly order, including anointing, clothing, coronation, and enthronement.

The ritual system of the Jerusalem Temple in pre-exilic times paralleled the features of these later texts in important ways, which can be outlined as follows:

- Pilgrims travel to the Jerusalem Temple at least three times a year during the major pilgrimage festivals. The pilgrimage culminated in an ascent of the temple mount to the temple precincts. It seems that sometimes these processions were led by the king and accompanied by the Ark of the Covenant.
- The procession was subjected to questioning by the keepers of the temple gates, who required a test of moral worthiness for admission.
- The purpose of the pilgrimage was to experience the “epiphany” or “theophany” of Yahweh, to stand in the Lord's presence and to see His face.

- The king would have participated in further rituals, including washing, anointing, clothing, and enthronement.

We will now discuss details of each of these aspects of the ritual system — pilgrimage, questioning at the gates, epiphany, and royal rites — in turn.

At the three major pilgrimage festivals (*Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and *Succot*), the Israelites were directed to “go up” to “appear before the Lord.” In Exodus 34:23-24, we read:

Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. (see also Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:16; Isaiah 1:11-13).

While the earliest references may not have necessarily envisioned a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, they seem to imagine an ascent to an elevated sacred site. In later references, however, we do have pilgrims (and not just the men, see Deuteronomy 16:11, 14; 31:10–13) coming from all around the region to worship the Lord at the Temple in Jerusalem. In the time of the prophet Zechariah, Israel (and, in fact, all nations) were expected to observe this temple pilgrimage, or they would receive no rain (Zechariah 14:16-19).

Isaiah 30:29 seems to allude to the same type of festal temple pilgrimage:

You shall have a song as in the night when a holy festival is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel (NRSV).

A number of Psalms have a similar tone, and we can imagine that they could have been composed for or sung during the pilgrimage. Perhaps some of these were the type of song that Isaiah had in mind. Psalm 84, for example, describes a travelling group who is longing to be at the courts of the temple.

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God ... Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. They

go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion (NRSV, cf. Psalm 65:1-4).

The LXX (Psalm 83:6; English 84:5) sees this procession as an ascension (using the verb *anabaino*). We should note that this pilgrimage party, singing “as they go through the valley of Baca,” has the objective of reaching the temple and seeing the God of gods in Zion (NRSV translation, based on the LXX reading). The Psalm goes on to mention (in vv. 8-9) that the Lord’s anointed, a reference to the king, is with this group, and they ask God for a blessing upon him.

Psalm 122 is another clear example:

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD!” Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem — built as a city that is bound firmly together. To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. For there the thrones for judgment were set up, the thrones of the house of David (NRSV).

Psalm 122 is one of a body of psalms (Psalms 120-134) that are designated in their superscriptions as being *shir ha-mma'alot*, or a “song of ascents.” These are also frequently designated as “pilgrim songs.” Holladay explains that these should be seen as “a song sung when ascending (as a pilgrim) to Jerusalem”, and that this group of psalms should be seen as a “songbook for pilgrimage.”⁷ While we don’t know when all of the psalms in this set were composed, Holladay sees at least Psalm 122 (as well as Psalm 132) as pre-exilic.⁸

As the pilgrims reached Jerusalem, perhaps coming along what Isaiah calls the Way of Holiness (Isaiah 35:8; cf. Isaiah 62:10; Psalm 84:5),⁹ they would have had to “ascend” to Jerusalem’s mountainous perch and then climb the temple mount itself to get to the sanctuary. Psalm 24 asks: “Who shall ascend (*mi-ya’aleh*) the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?”

The Hebrew word *ālā* appears to be used often as a paradisaical term¹⁰ in the Hebrew Bible for ascending in procession to sacred places, including going up to the promised land of Israel (i.e., from out of Egypt, e.g. Exodus 3:8, 17) and ascending the holy mountain (e.g., Exodus 19:20). The directive for the thrice-yearly pilgrimage commanded the Israelites to “go up” (*ālā*) to the cultic site (Exodus 34:24, etc.).

Psalm 118:27 appears to depict a festal procession that has come up to the great altar of the temple as part of a ritual ceremony. Psalm

68 presents very clearly a liturgical procession that is going into the temple, delineating the order in which the tribes were to proceed, which is reminiscent of Psalm 122's pilgrimage procession.

Psalm 68:24-27 reads:

24 Your solemn processions are seen, O God, the processions
of my God, my King, into the sanctuary —

25 the singers in front, the musicians last, between them girls
playing tambourines:

26 “Bless God in the great congregation, the LORD, O you who
are of Israel's fountain!”

27 There is Benjamin, the least of them, in the lead, the princes
of Judah in a body, the princes of Zebulun, the princes of
Naphtali (NRSV).

The vivid depictions of the great power of Yahweh that is celebrated on this occasion convey the idea that these processions were meant to be imagined as a commemoration of Yahweh's victory and were somehow imagined to be led by Yahweh himself. Verses 17-18 of this psalm further elucidate this picture:

17 With mighty chariotry, twice ten thousand, thousands upon
thousands, the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place.

18 You ascended the high mount, leading captives in your train
and receiving gifts from people, even from those who rebel
against the LORD God's abiding there (NRSV).

Psalm 47, a song full of ritual allusions, depicts the people clapping, shouting, and singing because “God has gone up (*ālā*) with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet” (Psalm 47:5). It may be hard for us to imagine how God could have been seen as joining a festal procession, but the idea was common in the ancient Near East, where in the great festival processions of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon, statues representing the gods were carried along the festal highways into the gods' respective temples.¹¹

This recalls in the Hebrew Bible the imagery of the Ark of the Covenant, representing the Presence of the Lord, being carried ahead of the camp of Israel during the Exodus (Numbers 4:5-6; 10:33-36; etc.), into battle against Israel's enemies (1 Samuel 4; 14:8), in procession around the city of Jericho (Joshua 6:4-20), and being taken in procession up to Jerusalem by King David (2 Samuel 6).

We read in Numbers 10:35-36 that:

Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say, "Arise, O LORD, let your enemies be scattered, and your foes flee before you." And whenever it came to rest, he would say, "Return, O LORD of the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

Interestingly, Psalm 68 begins the way the Numbers passage begins, with: "Let God rise up, let his enemies be scattered; let those who hate him flee before him" (Psalm 68:1). The "ten thousand thousands of Israel" is reminiscent of the similar number of chariots that Psalm 68 describes as ascending with Yahweh up the high mountain and into the temple. It would appear that Psalm 68 describes or is meant to accompany a procession of the Ark up to the temple, using the imagery of the victorious march of Yahweh leading the host of Israel at the time of the Exodus.

Another "song of ascents," or "pilgrim song," is the pre-exilic royal Psalm 132, which has long been understood to have been composed to commemorate King David's finding of the Ark and its transfer to Jerusalem (see vv. 6-8; cf. 1 Samuel 6:13; 2 Samuel 6).¹² The procession that David led included "all of the house of Israel" following King David and the Ark up to the place of the sanctuary (compare the singing, dancing, shouting, and trumpet blasts of 2 Samuel 6:12-15 with the previously mentioned description of similar activities during the procession of Psalm 47).

A similar procession was performed at Solomon's dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:1), which took place at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles (1 Kings 8:2). The fact that the Chronicler (2 Chronicles 6:41) has Solomon quoting part of Psalm 132 in this context may indicate that he knew of a temple tradition in which Psalm 132 was sung to accompany a re-enactment of the procession of the Ark into the temple.

Whether the pilgrimage processions were accompanied by the Ark or not, there seems to be abundant evidence in the Psalms that the festival participants imagined themselves as joining Yahweh in his victorious march up to his holy dwelling-place on Mount Zion. As discussed previously, because the Israelites equated the top of the mountain and

more specifically the temple with heaven, the climb up the temple mount would have been imagined as an ascent to heaven.

We can conclude from this that a liturgical heavenly ascent was one of the principal features of the ritual system of the First Temple. Further details from the Psalms help confirm that this ritual ascent bore many more similarities to the literary accounts of heavenly ascent found in later texts.

Psalm 118 makes reference to passing through “the gates of righteousness” (v. 19), apparently in the context of a festal procession (*ḥag*, v. 27). The speaker pleads:

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.

20 This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.

The prophet Ezekiel, as part of his vision of the future ideal temple, gives in Ezekiel 44:1-3, a description of the king entering through the vestibule of the same gate (the eastern gate) that Yahweh himself had gone through. Chapter 46:1-12 describes the king leading pilgrims through the temple gates on festal days. While these events are described for the future temple, they should likely be understood to represent previous traditions with which the prophet was familiar.¹³

I read Psalm 24 in light of the preceding considerations. The psalm starts out with a doxology praising the Lord for his Creation. This hymn parallels the similar one (which actually quotes Psalm 96) that the Chronicler tells us was sung at the occasion of the David’s ark procession (1 Chronicles 16:23-33). Psalm 24:3-4 describes someone who desires to go up to the temple, and verse 6 can be seen to indicate that this is a group of people (NRSV has “company” and Donald W. Parry reads “circle”) who are going up to the temple. Taking the situations presented in Psalms 118, 132, and the vision of Ezekiel into consideration, the life setting we can imagine here for Psalm 24 is a procession of pilgrims led by an individual (likely the king) who are accompanying Yahweh (perhaps represented by the Ark) up to the temple. We can picture the procession proceeding up the holy mountain until they reach the temple gates, where they are required to stop.

In verse 3, we hear the questions: “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?” At the gates, there were likely priests (see, e.g., 2 Kings 25:18; later, they were Levites, see, e.g., Ezekiel 44:11; 1 Chronicles 9:17-27) that were stationed there as gatekeepers.¹⁴

There appears to be a question and answer dialogue that takes place, plausibly between the processional party and the gatekeepers.¹⁵

In verses 3-5, the qualifications for entry to the temple precincts are established.¹⁶ As Craig Broyles notes, the “qualifications are ethical, not sacral in nature.”¹⁷ We see in Psalm 118 that it is only “the righteous” who are permitted to pass through the gate (Psalm 118:20). While Psalm 24 appears to have an abbreviated list of requirements, Psalm 15 gives ten qualifications — reminiscent of the Decalogue given at Sinai — which can be similarly viewed as moral requirements for beginning an ascension of the holy mountain to stand in Yahweh’s presence.

Entrance to the temple precincts involved the revelation of moral requirements in the form of covenants from God, the acceptance of these on the part of the worshippers, and confirmation to the gatekeepers that these requirements were being met. Verse 5 seems to be spoken by the gatekeepers or accompanying priest(s), declaring the blessings promised to those who fulfill the requirements. V. 6 appears to be an indication from the pilgrims that they do, indeed, comply with the requirements.

After having confirmed that the pilgrims are living the covenantal requirements, there is a call for the gates to be opened so that “the King of Glory may come in” (Psalm 24:7-9; cf. Psalm 118:19). It is interesting to note that Broyles interprets the use of the name Yahweh in response to the questions of Psalm 24:8 and 10 to signify that “the name of God [is] used as a ‘password’ through the gates.”¹⁸ Furthermore, he argues that the name “King of glory” is used here as a “new name” — he assumes this because the respondents in verses 8 and 10 appear to not know the name.¹⁹

If we take it to represent a similar context, Psalm 118 seems to indicate that the procession has been allowed to go through the gates, has received a blessing from the Lord, and now makes its way to the altar of the temple. Mowinckel saw the festal procession as indicated in verse 27 as approaching and perhaps circling, the altar.²⁰ As noted previously, Parry sees Psalm 24:6 as describing the processional group as a circle (reading *dur* instead of *dôr*). He notes that this could be a reference to a religious prayer circle in which the participants inquire of or pray to the Lord in hopes to see his face (Psalm 24:6, “seek to see the face of the God of Jacob,” based on the LXX: *zetounton to prosopon tou theou Iakob*).²¹

The Psalms depict the purpose of the pilgrimage to the temple not simply to “appear before the Lord”, but, as previously mentioned, Psalm 84:7 (as in RSV/NRSV, based on the LXX reading: *ophthesetai ho theos*) declares that the expectation is to be able to see the Lord. Some scholars

have argued that the injunction in Exodus 34:24 (etc.) to appear in the presence of the Lord may have originally read: “to see the face of the Lord.” While the Masoretic Text has the *Niphāl* imperfect of the verb *ra’ah* (“to see”), meaning “you will be seen” or “you will appear,” some argue that the original reading would have had a *Qal* imperfect, “you will see.”²² Holladay suggests that the text may have been “changed for theological reasons.”²³

The idea of going to the holy place to see the Lord, or that the Lord would make an appearance at a cultic site, is certainly not foreign to the Hebrew Bible. I have already mentioned the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah. There are many others worthy of mention. King Solomon, in 1 Kings 3, goes up to the high place of Gibeon to offer sacrifice, and the Lord appears to him in a dream. In 1 Samuel 3:21, we read: “The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh....” The prophet Malachi (Malachi 3), in language reminiscent of some of the Psalms, envisioned that “the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple” and asked: “But who can abide the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appeareth?”

The priestly instructions for sacrifice recorded in Leviticus 9:3-6 declare:

3 And say to the people of Israel, “Take a male goat for a sin offering; a calf and a lamb, yearlings without blemish, for a burnt offering ... For today the LORD will appear to you.” (cf. Exodus 20:24).

In the story of the children of Israel at Sinai, while most of the people of Israel are required (Exodus 19:12-13; cf. Psalm 24) to remain at a distance from the foot of the holy mountain, a number of individuals are chosen to ascend up the mountain together with Moses and Aaron.

We read in Exodus 24:9-11:

9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up (*wayya’al*),

10 and they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.

11 God did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; also they beheld God, and they ate and drank.

As an important aside, I would mention that James Tabor, among others, has noted that Exodus 24 bears a number of similarities to the heavenly ascent genre. He explains:

...Moses (or alternatively Moses, Aaron and the seventy elders), ascend[s] the mountain, enter[s] the presence of God, the realm of the divine. He is given revelation in the form of heavenly tablets, then descends back to the mortal realm ... [H]e becomes a semi-divine figure, eating and drinking in the divine presence and returning from the mountain with his face transformed like an immortal (Exodus 24:11; 34:29-30).²⁴

We may also note that the Exodus and Sinai experiences are an important theme in the Psalter, as can be seen, for example, in Psalms 68, 81, 95, 99, 114, and others. Mowinckel and others saw the festal procession to the temple mount as a reliving of the journey through the wilderness to experience the theophany at Mount Sinai (compare, for example, Exodus 15 and Psalm 68).²⁵

The principal paradigm of these texts is that God would appear in the described cultic situations. Klaus Seybold sees theophany as one of the key recurring features of the Psalms and explains that the theophany must have been a cultic event and that the relevant psalms reveal a “tradition of an event experienced and passed on in worship...” He argues that the “oldest of these texts (Psalm 18; 68; 97) record the pre-exilic existence of such liturgical traditions, as do the references [outside] the Psalter (such as Isaiah 6; Judges 5; Deuteronomy 33, etc.).”²⁶

To cite just a few further examples of this theme, we can read in Psalm 17:15: “As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your form (*tʾmunateka*).” Psalm 11:7 has: “For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.”

Psalm 27:4 puts the vision of the Lord explicitly in the context of the temple: “One thing I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.”

Seybold sees in Psalm 63, as in Psalm 18, evidence of an advent celebration in which the appearance of Yahweh was dramatically represented. “I have seen you in the sanctuary, and beheld your power and glory” (v. 2).²⁷ This psalm seems to place the king in the setting of the Holy of Holies of the temple, experiencing a Theophany of Yahweh.²⁸

The language of so many of the Psalms, especially if we attempt to view them in a cultic setting, combined with the numerous other biblical expressions of the expectation of Theophany in connection with cultic ritual lead us to the conclusion that the principal goal of one or more of the pilgrimage festivals in pre-exilic times was to ascend to the temple so that one could experience the Theophany and “see the face of the Lord,” however this was imagined or ultimately realized.

Another key feature of many later heavenly ascent narratives is that after the visionary has beheld the Deity on his throne, the visionary himself is enthroned either on the throne of God or on a similar throne beside God’s. To cite a relevant example, later Jewish traditions understood Moses when he ascended Mount Sinai as having seen God on his throne and then having been himself enthroned in heaven and set to rule as God’s vice-regent on Earth.²⁹

In *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian, starting in line 67, Moses is made to say:

I had a vision of a great throne on the top of Mount Sinai and it reached till the folds of heaven. A noble man was sitting on it, with a crown and a large scepter in his left hand. He beckoned to me with his right hand, so I approached and stood before the throne. He gave me the scepter and instructed me to sit on the great throne. Then he gave me a royal crown and got up from the throne. I beheld the whole earth all around and saw beneath the earth and above the heavens.

This sequence was also arguably a part of the pre-exilic temple ritual. We read in 1 Chronicles 29: 23:

Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.

The idea that when the king was enthroned, he was being seated on the cherubim throne of Yahweh seems to be an early, pre-exilic concept. With that in mind, we can then get a broader perspective of the pre-exilic coronation rituals by looking at the relevant psalms

Psalm 2:6-7 reads:

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

We can interpret this passage to refer to God having taken the king up to the top of the temple mount, which would be equivalent to an ascent into heaven and having enthroned him there. The Lord gives a decree to the king, announcing him to be the son of God.

Psalm 110:1 has the Lord directing the king to sit at his right hand. Psalm 2:2 indicates that the king has previously been anointed. Just as the visionary in the ascent narratives is described as being washed, anointed, clothed, and invested with royal regalia as part of his heavenly experience, we learn from the Bible that the coronation of kings followed a similar pattern. The king was washed and purified, likely at the spring of Gihon (1 Kings 1:34). He was anointed on the head with a perfumed olive oil that was kept in a horn in the sanctuary (1 Kings 1:39; Psalm 89:20; Psalm 23:5). He was clothed in robes and also wore a priestly apron (ephod, see 1 Chronicles 15:27), sash (Isaiah 22:21; “girdle” in KJV), and diadem/headress (see Ezekiel 21:26). Finally, the king was consecrated a priest “after the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4).

Just as Moses was understood in later Jewish writings to have been deified by his experience on Mt. Sinai, this may very well have been ritually true for the Israelite kings as well.

Margaret Barker describes a Second Temple Ritual in which the high priest, Simon, emerges from the temple and is treated as if he were Yahweh. She notes, citing ben Sira 50:17:

When he emerged from the Holy of Holies he was like the morning star, like the sun shining on the temple; his very presence made the court of the temple glorious. When he had poured the libation, the trumpet sounded and “all the people together ... fell to the ground upon their faces to worship (*proskunein*) their LORD ...” (ben Sira 50:17). The most natural way to read this is that they were worshipping the high priest, or rather, Yahweh whom he represented.³⁰

This Second Temple Ritual expression involving the high priest as the representative of Yahweh should likely be understood to be an example of post-exilic borrowing of pre-exilic royal rites — attributing, in the absence of the monarchy, to the high priest functions previously attached to the figure of the king. Turning again to the narrative of Solomon’s coronation in 1 Chronicles 29, verse 20:

And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of

their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king.

If the “throne of the Lord” that Solomon was enthroned on refers to the cherubim-throne in the Holy of Holies, then a situation very much like that described for Simon, where he emerged from the temple with the early morning light causing his glorious raiment to gleam brilliantly, likely ensued.³¹ Zechariah 12:8 informs us that, ideally, the monarchs of the house of David were to be like the Angel of the Lord, representing God before the people. This is likely what was believed to have been the king’s status after he was set on God’s holy hill, enthroned at his right hand, and declared to be the Son of God. Ritually, he had ascended into heaven to stand before the throne of God and was enthroned there. After this experience, the king would have been seen as having been transformed into an angelic messenger, the representative of Yahweh.

Conclusion

To summarize my findings, we can see that:

- The origin of the heavenly ascent motif should be sought even earlier than Bunta supposed, namely in the context of the pre-exilic temple cult.
- The pilgrims were required to go up to the temple at ordained festal times.
- The pilgrimage culminated in a climb to the pinnacle of the holy mountain of God. Because the peak of the temple mount and temple structure represented heaven, the upward journey likely would have been imagined as a heavenly ascent.
- The procession to the temple would have involved passing through gates and being confronted by guardians who required adherence to moral laws and answers to questions or passwords.
- A key purpose for arriving at the temple was to experience the Divine Theophany, thus “appearing before the Lord” or perhaps even “seeing the face of the Lord.”
- The king, who likely had led the procession up to the temple, was enthroned on or beside the Lord’s own throne, was transformed or “reborn” as a Son of God, and appeared before the people in glorious fashion as the representative of Yahweh.

In light of these findings, it is my conclusion that the earliest roots of the Israelite tradition of heavenly ascent should not be sought in the book of 1 Enoch, as is commonly argued, nor even in the earlier book of Ezekiel, as Silviu Bunta suggests, but rather in the Psalms and in other early pre-exilic biblical texts. The ascent to heaven was not merely a literary invention based on a creative interpretation of prophetic texts but was a cultic drama made real for worshippers through the temple liturgy. I believe that the ascent to heaven to stand before the Throne of God and to see his Face was a key feature of early Israelite religion and one of the major paradigms of the pre-exilic royal cult of the First Temple.

Notes

1. Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 146.
2. Silviu Bunta, "In Heaven or on Earth: A Misplaced Temple Question About Ezekiel's Visions," in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism in Honor of Rachel Elior*, ed. Daphna V. Arbel and Andrei A. Orlov, *Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages 2* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 28-44.
3. Bunta, "In Heaven or on Earth," 31-33.
4. Bunta, "In Heaven or on Earth," 33.
5. Bunta, "In Heaven or on Earth," 34.
6. Bunta, "In Heaven or on Earth," 34-35.
7. William Lee Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 72.
8. Holladay, *The Psalms*, 44.
9. J. H. Eaton, *Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah* (London: SPCK, 1979), 15.
10. Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. 2 vols. *The Biblical Resource Series*, ed. Astrid B. Beck and David Noel Freedman. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), Vol. 1, 172.
11. See e.g., Hans Ulrich Steymans, "Traces of Liturgies in the Psalter: The Communal Laments, Psalms 79, 80, 83, 89 in Context," in *Psalms and Liturgy*, eds. Dirk J. Human and Cas J. A. Vos (London, New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 168-234. Steymans discusses the processions of various gods, represented by their cultic statues, into their temples as part of the New Year Feasts of Asshur and Babylon. He makes comparisons between the sequence of hymns used for

these events and what he sees as a similar series of Psalms (Pss. 79, 80, 83, 89) in the Hebrew Psalter. He concludes that these five last psalms of the Asaph collection “represent a liturgical sequence of prayers for one single day of the New Year Festival in Jerusalem” (p. 226). For the idea that in Egypt similar processions of the statues of the gods, including the solar barque, were performed, see generally Georges Posener, *De la divinité du Pharaon* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale; Cahiers de la Société Asiatique XV, 1960), 47-48, 55, 59-61, 69, 71, 81-82; Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt, *Vie et mort d'un pharaon: Tutankhamon* (Paris: Hachette, 1963), 185-190; Serge Sauneron, *The Priests of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 90-93; Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 79-88.

12. See, e.g., J. H. Eaton, *Psalms* (London: S. C. M. Press, 1967), 291. Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years*, 34. Mowinckel, *The Psalms*, Vol. 1, 129.
13. Compare also the procession described in Nehemiah 12:30-43 that goes through gates as it ascends up to the temple.
14. Mowinckel argues that the gatekeepers were priests that belonged to the “higher clergy,” and that at least in pre-exilic times they ranked next to the chief priest (2 Kgs 25:18). Mowinckel, *The Psalms*, Vol. 1, 177.
15. Broyles, “Liturgies of Temple Entry,” 252.
16. Compare with moral requirements delineated for “those who can go down to the vision of the Merkabah” in *Hekhalot Rabbati* 20:1; 13. See William J. Hamblin, “Temple Motifs in Jewish Mysticism” in *Temples of the Ancient World*. Donald W. Parry, ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. and Provo, Ut.: FARMS, 1994), 448.
17. Broyles, “Liturgies of Temple Entry,” 250.
18. Broyles, “Liturgies of Temple Entry,” 252.
19. Broyles, “Liturgies of Temple Entry,” 252.
20. Mowinckel, *The Psalms*, Vol. 1, 181.
21. Donald W. Parry, “Temple Worship and a Possible Reference to a Prayer Circle in Psalm 24.” He notes that “On other occasions in the psalms the word *dor* is translated as circle: “for God is in the circle of the righteous” (Psalm 14:5); “I will make thy name to be remembered in all circles” (Psalm 45:17); and “the circle of the upright” (Psalm 112:2). Such passages may refer to a social circle, a wedding circle, or a ceremonial circle.” From Clarke’s Commentary: That seek thy face, O Jacob - It is most certain that “Elohey, O God” has been lost out of

- the Hebrew text in most MSS., but it is preserved in two of Kennicott's MSS., and also in the Syriac, Vulgate, Septuagint, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Anglo-Saxon. "Who seek thy face, O God of Jacob."
22. William Lee Holladay and Ludwig Köhler, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Based Upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 328. See argument in Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 146.
 23. Holladay and Köhler, *A Concise H.A.L.O.T.*, 328.
 24. James D. Tabor, "Ascent to Heaven in Antiquity," accessed online at <http://religiousstudies.uncc.edu/people/jtabor/heavenlyascent.html>.
 25. See, e.g., Mowinckel, *The Psalms*, Vol. 1, 173-74; Eaton, *Festal Drama*, 14.
 26. Klaus Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1990), 133.
 27. Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms*, 134.
 28. See Craig C. Broyles, "The Psalms and Cult Symbolism: The Case of the Cherubim-Ark," in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, ed. David Firth and Philip S. Johnston (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005). Commenting on Psalm 63, Broyles notes: "It is possible to read the phrase 'in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy' (v. 7b) as simply an imaginative metaphor for Yahweh's protection. But the earlier claim, 'so I have looked upon you in the sanctuary [...]', locates the speaker in the temple. To interpret this remarkable claim of seeing God appropriately we must remember our context is not that of prophets and their visions but that of liturgies and temple symbolism. In poetic parallelism the second colon often specifies the first. In the parallel phrase the objects of 'beholding' are two terms that are clearly associated with and sometimes even denote the cherubim-ark (cf. 78:61). Thus, it is possible that this psalm was to be recited in direct vision of the cherubim-ark" (Broyles, "The Psalms and Cult Symbolism," 152-53).
 29. This is the most likely interpretation of Moses' vision described in *The Exagoge of Ezekiel the Tragedian*.
 30. See Philo, *De vita Mosis* 2.290-91; *De virt.* 73-75; Ezekiel the Tragedian, *Exagoge*, 668-82, as referenced in James Tabor, "Ascent to Heaven in Antiquity," accessed online at <http://religiousstudies.uncc.edu/people/jtabor/heavenlyascent.html>. See also, e.g., Meeks, Wayne A. "Moses as God and King." In *Religions in Antiquity: Essays*

in *Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, edited by Jacob Neusner. *Religions in Antiquity, Studies in the History of Religions (Supplements to Numen* 14; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 354-71. My thanks to Jeff Bradshaw for this last reference.

31. Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, 77. Josephus describes a very similar event to that of Simon the high priest that occurred during the reign of Herod Agrippa, in which, at the new theater in Caesarea, during the celebratory games he instituted, Agrippa entered the theater at dawn, dressed in glorious silver robes. As he took a seat on his elevated throne, the early morning sunlight made his shining robes gleam while members of the audience acclaimed him as a god. Jules Morgenstern saw this event as happening at the time of a great festival and speculated that this must have been in imitation of the ancient royal rites. In light of this observation, Morgenstern reconstructs the ancient ritual involving the king at the Temple of Jerusalem:

The ceremony in question was performed, it is stated clearly, just at sunrise. The king entered the theater just as the day was dawning. Unquestionably he took the seat regularly reserved for him alone. It must have been located at the western side of the theater and was no doubt elevated somewhat above the remainder of the seats in the edifice in such manner and to such height that the first rays of the rising sun upon this particular day might fall unobstructedly upon the king's person and be reflected brilliantly from the robe of silvered cloth which he was wearing, undoubtedly for this very purpose. The elevated royal seat resembled in various essential respects, and was no doubt even regarded as, a throne, and that too a throne of the character which the Bible very appropriately terms a *kisse' kabod*, "a throne of radiance", 2) a throne bathed in fiery light, the throne of Yahweh Himself. And as the people, assembled at that very early hour primarily to observe and even to an extent to participate in this very ceremony, beheld the king, seated upon his elevated throne and brilliantly radiating light from his very person, as it seemed, the light of the first rays of the rising sun upon this solstitial day, they hailed him as a god. Julian Morgenstern, "The King-God among the Western Semites and the Meaning of Epiphanes," *Vetus Testamentum* 10, no. 2 (1960): 156ff.

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OFFERING AMERICANS RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL SALVATION

Craig L. Foster

Review of Derek R. Sainsbury, *Storming the Nation: The Unknown Contributions of Joseph Smith's Political Missionaries* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2020). 400 pages. \$27.99 (hardback).

Abstract: *Derek Sainsbury's book discusses Joseph Smith's quest for the presidency of the United States of America and how more than six hundred missionaries were sent out across the United States not only to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ but also to electioneer for Joseph Smith and his political platform. The book offers a concise history of and fascinating information about the 1844 electioneering mission and the men and woman who offered fellow Americans both religious and political salvation.*

The 1844 presidential election was fraught with controversy over slavery and the proposed annexation of the Republic of Texas as well as a handful of flawed candidates trying to gain political leverage. Ultimately, political dark horse James K. Polk, running on a strong Manifest Destiny stand, had a close win over Whig candidate Henry Clay.

Often overlooked by people studying the 1844 presidential election and its aftermath is the short-lived campaign of Joseph Smith, which ended with his assassination in Carthage, Illinois, on 27 June 1844. Smith thus became the first United States presidential candidate to be assassinated.

Previous to his tragic end as a martyr for his cause, Joseph Smith and other Church leaders sent out what was, to that point, the largest missionary force of the Church of Jesus Christ. These men and one woman — a little more than six hundred missionaries and electioneers — spread out across the United States from Maine to Louisiana and numerous places in-between.

Author Derek Sainsbury explains that “these electioneers offered their fellow Americans religious and political salvation.” As would be expected, many missionaries experienced not only disinterest and skepticism but also persecution. What is surprising is the number of American citizens interested in Smith’s views of government and society who favorably received his electioneers.

Smith’s campaign platform, published in a pamphlet titled “General Smith’s Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States,” was actually quite foresighted and progressive for his day. He encouraged the abolition of slavery gradually and with compensation through the sale of public lands. He suggested decreasing the size and pay of Congress; pushed for a stronger federal government; supported closing penitentiaries and having the prisoners perform public works while learning the word of God; pushed free trade and securing international rights on the high seas; and, reflecting the spirit of Manifest Destiny so strong in the nation at that time, espoused the annexation not only of Texas and Oregon but also other parts of Canada. Furthermore, he pushed for a uniting of both Canada and Mexico to the United States, creating a large Pan-American country.¹

For most of these electioneers, their mission campaigning for Joseph Smith’s presidential candidacy strengthened their commitment to him as a prophet of God and to his Zionistic ideals of a righteous theocratic society, or theodemocracy governed by an aristarchy — governance by upright, inspired men without regard to social rank or wealth. Joseph Smith’s view of theodemocracy as a governmental form involved people willingly supporting leaders they believed to be divinely called and inspired.

Those who served electioneering missions believed Joseph Smith to be divinely called and inspired and sincerely believed he would, with God’s help, win the presidency of the United States. These men and the woman were a cadre of dedicated members, chosen and trained to promote Smith’s presidential ambitions and political beliefs.

Joseph Smith and his electioneers openly pushed a theodemocracy “where God and the people hold the power to conduct the affairs of men in righteousness” (97). Sainsbury writes, “The hope of Zion and theodemocracy burned in the hearts of the electioneer cadre” (145).

1. Joseph Smith, Jr., “General Smith’s Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States,” *Times and Seasons*, 1844, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/2595>. Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster, *The Mormon Quest for the Presidency: From Joseph Smith to Mitt Romney and Jon Huntsman* (Independence, MO: John Whitmer Books, 2011), 30.

Smith's death was met with shock, anger, and sadness by his electioneers, who felt Joseph's assassination was nothing less than religious rejection of the restored gospel and a political refutation of the prophet. Most of this cadre of electioneers later traveled west with Brigham Young and the Twelve and helped establish and lead the theodemocratic kingdom of the State of Deseret in the west. Their great desire was to fulfill Joseph Smith's Zionistic vision by establishing a theodemocracy in the Great Basin. Brigham Young put it succinctly when he stated, "To carry out Joseph's measures is sweeter to me than ... honey" (187).

In *Storming the Nation*, Sainsbury does a beautiful job of placing Joseph Smith's presidential campaign and the electioneering mission in the greater historical context. He does the same when moving the emphasis west with the Mormon migration and settlement of the Great Basin. He also does an excellent job describing the electioneering campaign of these dedicated missionaries, their journeys, successes, failures, and trials. But the book has gone a step beyond, one of the many things I love about it. Sainsbury spends about twenty pages introducing and detailing the background of these men and woman. He includes, when available, ages, marital information, how long they had been members of the Church, priesthood information, Church experience, where they were from, occupations, and a host of other information. But Sainsbury doesn't stop there. He follows these men and woman as much as possible, showing what happened to them, particularly those who made it to Utah. He gives information about how many practiced plural marriage, held Church, community, and other leadership positions, their wealth over the years, and much more.

As a professional genealogist and lover of such background information, I was a family history nerd in heaven as I read about this electioneering cadre and what became of them. Topping it off, the appendix has nine pages listing all known electioneers (311–19). The list of electioneers reads like a veritable who's who of early Mormon and Utah history. How many thousands of living members of the Church are there who have no idea that one or more of their ancestors were electioneers campaigning for the prophet Joseph Smith's quest for the presidency of the United States? The author himself found out while researching this fascinating topic that one of his own ancestors was an electioneer.

It's obvious Derek Sainsbury put a lot of time and effort into researching and writing this book, and he did an excellent job. One of the few flaws I found with the book is really nothing more than a minor quibble. While Sainsbury has an extensive bibliography, he doesn't cite

Arnold K. Garr's small but interesting book, *Joseph Smith: Presidential Candidate* (2007), a part of the Setting the Record Straight series. Even more disappointing to me personally, he appears to be completely unaware of Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster, *The Mormon Quest for the Presidency* (2008) or its enlarged and updated second edition, *The Mormon Quest for the Presidency: From Joseph Smith to Mitt Romney and Jon Huntsman* (2011).

Sainsbury suggests Mormon theodemocracy's twilight took place between 1869 and 1896. By 1896 and statehood, the Americanization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members was well underway. Nancy Naomi Tracy, the only female to officially number among Joseph Smith's cadre of electioneers, sadly wrote, "Now where is Zion?" (281). By that time, the theodemocracy was only a memory. During the twentieth century, the Church made efforts to downplay its theocratic past and forget about Joseph Smith's campaign for president (xii).

Important and informative works like Derek R. Sainsbury's *Storming the Nation: The Unknown Contributions of Joseph Smith's Political Missionaries* are resurrecting this once forgotten past and helping a new generation remember Joseph Smith's campaign for the presidency of the United States and early Latter-day Saints' vision of Zion and theodemocracy. I strongly and most heartily recommend this important history.

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THE SÔD OF YHWH AND THE ENDOWMENT

William J. Hamblin

Abstract: *Most scholars agree that sôd, when used in relationship to God, refers to the heavenly council, which humans may sometimes visit to learn divine mysteries or obtain a prophetic message to deliver to humankind. Biblical texts on this subject can be compared to passages in Latter-day Saint scripture (e.g., 1 Nephi 1:8-18; Abraham 3:22-23). In this article, William Hamblin succinctly summarizes this concept and argues that the Latter-day Saint temple endowment serves as a ritual and dramatic participation in the divine council of God, through which God reveals to the covenanter details of the plan of salvation — the hidden meaning and purpose of creation and the cosmos.*

[Editor's Note: Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.

See William J. Hamblin, “The Sôd of Yhwh and the Endowment,” in *Ancient Temple Worship: Proceedings of The Expound Symposium 14 May 2011*, ed. Matthew B. Brown, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Stephen D. Ricks, and John S. Thompson (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 189–94. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/ancient-temple-worship/>.]

In its broader sense the Hebrew term *sôd* (סוד) means a confidential discussion, a secret or plan, a circle of confidants, or council.¹ Nearly all scholars now agree that *sôd*, when used in relationship to God, refers to the heavenly council/*sôd* of God, which humans may sometimes visit to learn divine mysteries or obtain a prophetic message to deliver to

humankind.² The celestial members of this council are variously called the “host of heaven” (1 Kings 22:19), “gods” or “sons of God” (Psalms 82:1, 6), or “Holy Ones.” *Sôd* can refer to either the divine council itself or to the deliberative secret results of that council — that is the secret plans of the council — which a prophet is sometimes permitted to learn or to reveal to humankind. Only those who are part of the divine *sôd*/council know the *sôd*/secret plan, and only those who are given explicit permission may reveal that *sôd* to humankind.³ This concept is illustrated in a number of biblical passages:

In 1 Kings 22:19–23, the prophet Michaiah describes his vision of the *sôd* as follows:

19 I saw YHWH sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left; 20 and YHWH said, “Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?” And one said one thing, and another said another. 21 Then a spirit came forward and stood before YHWH, saying, “I will entice him.” 22 And YHWH said to him, “By what means?” And he said, “I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.” And he said, “You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.” 23 Now therefore behold, YHWH has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; YHWH has declared disaster for you.⁴

Notice here that Michaiah participated in the *sôd* of YHWH and therefore knows YHWH’s secret plan and therefore can accurately prophesy, whereas the other court prophets, with no knowledge of YHWH’s *sôd*, are deceived. Note, too, the important motif that God is sitting on his throne surrounded by his *sôd*. (22:19). Biblical divine enthronement scenes and throne theophanies often imply a meeting of the *sôd*.⁵

In Isaiah 6, Isaiah enters the presence of Yhwh seated on his throne in the temple (6:1). There he meets with the divine council (6:2–3) and is invested with a mission to reveal the deliberations of the council to humankind (6:8–9). Note that in Isaiah the *sôd* of Yhwh meets in the celestial temple, where Yhwh sits enthroned just as in Michaiah’s vision.

Jeremiah 23:16–18 describes Jeremiah’s response to prophets who prophesy victory for Judah over Babylon. Jeremiah writes:

16 Thus says YHWH of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the [false] prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of YHWH. 17 They say continually to those who despise

the word of YHWH, ‘It shall be well with you’; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, ‘No disaster shall come upon you.’ 18 But who among them has stood in the *sôd* of YHWH to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened?

Jeremiah 23:21–22 continues this theme, when YHWH himself speaks:

21 “I did not send the [false] prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. 22 But if they had stood in my *sôd*, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds.”

The obvious implications of these two passages is that Jeremiah has “stood in the *sôd* of YHWH,” just like Michaiah and Isaiah before him, and therefore knows YHWH’s *sôd*/secret plan, which he can reveal to humankind through his prophecies. The distinction between a true prophet and a false one is that the true prophet has “stood in the *sôd* of YHWH,” while the false prophet hasn’t. This precisely parallels the description of Micaiah’s vision of the *sôd*, while the false prophets don’t know God’s *sôd*/secret plan.

Psalm 82 offers a fascinating description of the “council of God”:

1 God (אלהים *ēlōhîm*) has taken his place in the council (עדת *’ădat*) of God (אל *’el*); in the midst of the gods (אלהים *ēlōhîm*) he holds judgment. . . . 6 I [God] said, “You [of the divine council/ *’ădat*] are gods (אלהים *ēlōhîm*), sons of the Most High (בני עליון *benê ’elyôn*), all of you.”

In this meeting of the “council of God,” God calls the members of his *sôd* “gods” and “sons of the Highest.”

Amos 3:7 — a passage often quoted by LDS — describes YHWH’s *sôd* as follows: “For the Lord YHWH doesn’t do anything (דבר *dābār*)⁶ without revealing his *sôd* to his servants the prophets.” Amos provides here a summary principle paralleling the explicit examples of Michaiah, Isaiah and Jeremiah given above. God reveals the *sôd* (secret plan) of his *sôd* (divine council) to his prophets.

Psalm 25:14 adds an interesting covenantal aspect to the *sôd*. “The *sôd* of YHWH is for those who honor him; he reveals his covenant (*berît*) to them.” In this verse knowledge of the *sôd* of YHWH is directly linked

with the revelation of his covenant.

Finally, **Job** provides a description of God's *sôd*, composed of the "sons of God," meeting in council (Job 1:6, 2:1). In Job 15:8, Eliphaz insists that Job has not sat in the *sôd* and therefore cannot understand God's will regarding Job.

All of this is, of course, familiar to many Latter-day Saints, since these texts have been compared to several passages in LDS scripture which also describe the *sôd* of YHWH (e.g., 1 Nephi 1:8–18; Abraham 3:22–23). I would like, however, to move one step further and suggest that we should understand the LDS Endowment as a ritual and dramatic participation in the *sôd*/divine council of God, through which God reveals to the covenanter his *sôd*/secret plan of salvation — the hidden meaning and purpose of creation and the cosmos. When we consider the Endowment drama in this way — remembering that in Isaiah the meeting place of the *sôd* of YHWH is in the temple (Isaiah 6:1) — the Endowment fits broadly in the biblical tradition of ritually observing or participating in "the council/*sôd* of YHWH" described in these biblical texts.

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Notes

1. L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 745; J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975–2003), 10:171–77.
2. See *Bibliography*.
3. Part of this is reflected in the Bible, where prophets are often expressly “sent” from YHWH (Hebrew *Yahweh*, anglicized as Jehovah) with a message — what it is that they are to reveal YHWH’s *sôd*. See Exodus 3:10, 15, 7:16; Deuteronomy 34:11; Joshua 24:5; 1 Samuel 15:1; 2 Samuel 12:1, 25; Isaiah 6:8–9; Jeremiah 1:7, 7:25, 19:14, Ezekiel 2:3–4; Micah 6:4; Haggai 1:12; Zechariah 2:12,13,15; Malachi 3:23; Psalms 105:26. See James Ross, “The Prophet as Yahweh’s Messenger,” in Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson, eds., *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 98–107.
4. Translations are generally modified by me from the English Standard Version (ESV), which is a modernized and corrected KJV.
5. On the significance of throne theophanies, see Timo Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).
6. The Hebrew *dābār* can mean “thing” or “word.”

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MISSING WORDS: KING JAMES BIBLE ITALICS, THE TRANSLATION OF THE BOOK OF MORMON, AND JOSEPH SMITH AS AN UNLEARNED READER AND EDITOR OF A VISIONED TEXT

Stan Spencer

Abstract: *Chapters from Isaiah quoted in the Book of Mormon use the King James Bible as a base text yet frequently vary from it in minor ways, particularly in the earliest text of the Book of Mormon. A disproportionate number of these variants are due to the omission or replacement of words italicized in the KJV. Many of the minor variants were eliminated by the printer for the 1830 edition or by Joseph Smith himself for the 1837 edition, but others remain. Some of the minor variants are easily explained as errors of dictation, transcription, or copying, but others are not so readily accounted for. While some are inconsequential, others negatively affect Isaiah's text by confusing its meaning or violating grammatical norms. Most have no clear purpose. The disruptive character of these variants suggests they are secondary and were introduced by someone who was relatively uneducated in English grammar and unfamiliar with the biblical passages being quoted. They point to Joseph Smith, the unlearned man who dictated the Book of Mormon translation. Even so, it seems unlikely that a single individual would have intentionally produced these disruptive edits. They are better explained as the product of the well-intentioned but uncoordinated efforts of two individuals, each trying to adapt the Book of Mormon translation for a contemporary audience. Specifically, many of these variants are best explained as the results of Joseph Smith's attempts to restore missing words to a text from which some words (those italicized in the KJV) had been purposefully omitted by a prior translator. The proposed explanation is consistent with witness accounts of the Book of Mormon translation that portray Joseph Smith visioning a text that was already translated into English. It is also supported by an 1831 newspaper article that describes Joseph Smith dictating one of the Book of Mormon's biblical*

chapters minus the KJV's italicized words. An understanding of the human element in the Book of Mormon translation can aid the student of scripture in distinguishing the "mistake of men" from those variants that are integral to the Book of Mormon's Bible quotations.

The Book of Mormon quotes entire chapters from Isaiah, following the King James Version almost word for word. Smaller biblical interactions scattered throughout the Book of Mormon also tend to use the wording of the KJV.¹ Even more intriguingly, when the Book of Mormon Isaiah chapters differ from the KJV, the differences are often at locations where the KJV has italicized words.² These variants are usually minor but sometimes result in readings that conflict with the larger context of Isaiah's message or create ungrammatical or even nonsensical sentences, particularly in the earliest text of the Book of Mormon.³ In this article, I will briefly review existing explanations for this peculiar pattern of variation and then propose an explanation that not only accounts for the Book of Mormon's Isaiah variants that are associated with the KJV's italicized words, but also for many of the other minor variants in these chapters. I will then assess the consistency of each explanation with various lines of evidence from the Book of Mormon text and manuscripts.

The King James Bible as the Base Text for Bible Interactions

The Book of Mormon uses the King James Bible as a base text for Bible quotations and other interactions. This means that when the Book of

1. For reference to the various biblical quotations, allusions, and echoes in the Book of Mormon, Nicholas Frederick recommends the more generic term, "biblical interactions," especially for KJV language from the New Testament, which, as far as we know, the Nephites did not possess. Nicholas J. Frederick, "Evaluating the Interaction between the New Testament and the Book of Mormon: A Proposed Methodology," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 24, no. 1 (January 2015): 4–10.

2. B.H. Roberts, "Bible Quotations in the Book of Mormon; and Reasonableness of Nephi's Prophecies," *Improvement Era* 7, no. 3 (January 1904): 191.

3. Brant A. Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), 215–25; David P. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, eds. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 157–234. Also see Royal Skousen's analysis of textual variants in the Isaiah chapters. Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, six parts (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004–2009); <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/atv/>.

Mormon interacts with the Bible, it tends to follow the wording of the KJV rather than that of any other Bible translation. This is the case even at some points where the translation in the KJV is awkward or problematic. (An acceptance of minor translation errors in quoted scripture is also seen when the New Testament quotes the Old.⁴) The use of base texts is a common and accepted practice in translations of the Bible. For example, the translators who produced the King James Version were instructed to use the well-known Bishops' Bible as a base text, diverging from it only when necessary to produce a suitable translation.⁵ By using a well-known prior translation as a base text, translators can produce a new translation that is still somewhat familiar to readers. The use of the KJV as a base text for biblical passages in the Book of Mormon makes sense since it allows for any important differences to be easily seen. A completely independent retranslation of the Isaiah chapters would have differed more in wording than in meaning. The differences in wording would have invited fruitless criticism of the suitability of word choice in the Book of Mormon. The use of wording from the KJV precludes such a diversion of attention from the intended messages of the Book of Mormon. Even for short biblical interactions, the use of KJV wording makes it more clear that the Bible is indeed being quoted or alluded to.⁶ An independent translation of these shorter passages would have

4. John A. Tvedtnes explains: "When New Testament writers included quotations from Isaiah or other Old Testament writings, they often employed the extant Greek translation known as the Septuagint rather than translate anew from the Hebrew text, even when the Greek text included translation errors." John A. Tvedtnes, "Isaiah in the Bible and the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 16, no. 2 (2004): 169, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1633&context=msr>.

5. The first of fifteen rules drawn up to guide the King James translators stated that "the ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the Bishops' Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit." David Norton, *A Textual History of the King James Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 7n1.

6. For more discussion of the KJV as a base text for the Book of Mormon, see Royal Skousen, "Textual Variants in the Isaiah Quotations in the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 373–77, 379–81, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/textual-variants-isaiah-quotations-book-mormon>; also Shon D. Hopkin, "Isaiah 52–53 and Mosiah 13–14: A Textual Comparison," in *Abinadi: He Came Among Them in Disguise*, ed. Shon D. Hopkin (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2018), 154–62.

differed enough in wording from the KJV that some of these interactions would have been less clear.⁷

The close connection between the Book of Mormon and the Bible, and specifically the King James Version of the Bible, can be clearly seen in 2 Nephi 22, which, at 134 words, is identical to Isaiah 12 of the KJV. At 519 words, 2 Nephi 21 is nearly identical to Isaiah 11 of the KJV. The only differences are two changes in word order (“also of Ephraim” becomes “of Ephraim also” in verse 13, and “shall he” becomes “he shall” in verse 15).⁸ Even these differences may simply be errors of dictation, transcription, or copying of the manuscripts. The close connection with the KJV is also seen in short biblical phrases scattered throughout the Book of Mormon. For example, Alma describes the awful dread of those who rebel against God as a “fearful looking for of the fiery indignation of the wrath of God” (Alma 40:14), which echoes the KJV’s description of the “fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation” (Hebrews 10:27). The phrase “looking for of,” although grammatically correct, is so awkward as to be seldom found in English literature except in this passage in the KJV lineage of Bibles (most other Bible versions have “expectation of”).⁹ It is William Tyndale’s odd word choice in translating the Greek. There is no apparent reason for the Book of Mormon to use such awkward and unusual language except to make it clear that it is referencing the Bible. Given the variety of ways a single idea can be expressed in the English language, such a high degree of similarity between the Book of Mormon and the KJV in both entire chapters and scattered phrases cannot be due to chance.

7. For example, there is an obvious interaction between 2 Nephi 9:39 (“Remember, to be carnally-minded is death, and to be spiritually minded is life eternal”) and Romans 8:6 (“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace”). Most modern Bibles translate Romans 8:6 closer to “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace” (NASB). If the Book of Mormon had used wording similar to this, readers of the standard Bible at the time of the Book of Mormon’s publication, the KJV, would have been less likely to notice this biblical interaction.

8. It also differs from some editions of the KJV by having ‘a highway’ instead of ‘an highway’ in verse 16.

9. To see evidence for this tendency, search the online Google Books database for “looking for of” (without the quotes) using the Ngram Viewer interface (<https://books.google.com/ngrams/>). Nearly all results from the Early Modern Period through the early 19th century either quote or allude to this biblical passage. Instead of “fearful looking for of,” most other Bible translations have something more like “fearful expectation of” or “terrifying expectation of.”

Although the Bible that was used as a base text for the Book of Mormon was certainly the KJV, it was probably not the 1769 Oxford edition, which most King James Bibles today are based on. The text of that edition was not uniformly used in King James Bibles until after the Book of Mormon was translated. Many distinctive American editions of the KJV were printed in the latter part of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries, and these, along with the contemporary King James Bibles out of Cambridge, had many minor differences from the Oxford 1769 edition, some of which served to modernize the language. Some of these editions more closely match the Book of Mormon than does the 1769 edition — the 1828 Phinney Cooperstown Bible and the 1819 American Bible Society octavo edition being among the closest. Since it is not known which edition of the KJV the Book of Mormon's language is based on, for the purpose of textual analysis in this article, I will consider only those variants for which the Book of Mormon differs from most or all of the major editions of the KJV printed by 1828.¹⁰

Two Sample Chapters

As demonstrated above, the Book of Mormon is clearly using the King James Bible as a base text for biblical interactions. The way it uses the KJV as a base text, however, is highly unusual. The concentration of minor variants around the KJV's italicized words and their often negative effects on the sense, clarity, or grammar of the text are not the expected results of the use of a base text in translating. This unusual pattern of variation from the KJV can be seen in 2 Nephi 16 and 17, which correspond to chapters 6 and 7 of Isaiah. I have selected these chapters for discussion because they are consecutive, of moderate size, and have an intermediate number of variants, most of which are minor. In these chapters, 41 percent of the KJV's italicized words have been omitted, compared to an average of 37 percent across all Book of Mormon Isaiah chapters.¹¹ These two chapters do not contain any major additions that

10. For those chapters from Isaiah, Malachi, and Matthew that are quoted or adapted in the Book of Mormon, most of the variation in the KJV (except for typesetting errors confined to one or a few editions) is encompassed in three editions: the 1611 edition, the 1782 Aitken Bible, which was the first complete King James Bible printed in America, and the 1819 American Bible Society octavo edition, which uses more modern language than does the 1769 Oxford edition.

11. These statistics are based on a comparison of the KJV with the quoted Isaiah chapters in *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, ed. Royal Skousen (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009). Isaiah 2–14 is quoted in 2 Nephi 12–24, Isaiah 48–49 is quoted in 1 Nephi 20–21, Isaiah 50–51 is quoted in 2 Nephi 7–8,

might signal editing by Jacob or Nephi, but only the type of relatively minor differences that are common throughout the Book of Mormon's Isaiah chapters and that are the focus of this article.

In the text of these chapters provided below and in quoted passages throughout this article, words that appear in the Book of Mormon but not the KJV are underlined, while those that appear in the KJV but not the Book of Mormon are struck through.¹² Bolding is used to indicate those changes specifically discussed in the text. Capitalization and use of italics follow the KJV. The Book of Mormon text used here and throughout this article is Royal Skousen's *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* with punctuation removed, as the original Book of Mormon manuscript was mostly unpunctuated.¹³

Isaiah 6 as quoted in 2 Nephi 16:

1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up and his train filled the temple 2 Above it stood the seraphims each one had six wings with twain he covered his face and with twain he covered his feet and with twain he did fly 3 And one cried unto another and said Holy holy holy *is* the LORD of hosts the whole earth *is* full of his glory 4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried and the house was filled with smoke 5 Then said I Woe *is* me for I am undone because I *am* a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean

Isaiah 53 is quoted in Mosiah 14, and Isaiah 54 is quoted in 3 Nephi 22. Much of Isaiah 29 appears in 2 Nephi 27, but this is not presented as a quote from Isaiah but rather as Nephi's own prophecy (see 2 Nephi 25:1,7); hence, it was not included in the analysis. The range of italicized words omitted varies from zero in the Book of Mormon's versions of Isaiah 11, 12, and 53, to 73 percent in the Book of Mormon's version of Isaiah 4. Royal Skousen has determined that, across all Isaiah quotations in the Book of Mormon, 38 percent of the KJV's italicized words are "linked to differences." Skousen, "Textual Variants," 382.

12. In addition to these variants, the following Book of Mormon variants for Isaiah 6 and 7 are not found in the 1769 Oxford edition but are found in the 1611 edition or the 1782 Aitken Bible, both of which are editions of the KJV potentially available at the time of translation: "then I said" versus "then said I" in Isaiah 6:8, "Rezin king of Syria" versus "Rezin the king of Syria" in Isaiah 7:1, "towards Jerusalem" versus "toward Jerusalem" in Isaiah 7:1, and "he shall eat butter" versus "that he shall eat butter" in Isaiah 7:22.

13. Skousen, *The Earliest Text*. Regarding punctuation, see Royal Skousen, "Changes in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 164. Although I use Skousen's Book of Mormon text, use of the printer's manuscript would have given similar results.

lips for mine eyes have seen the King the LORD of hosts 6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me having a live coal in his hand *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar 7 And he laid **it** upon my mouth and said Lo this hath touched thy lips and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying Whom shall I send and who will go for us Then I said Here **am** I send me 9 And he said Go and tell this people Hear ye indeed but they understand not and see ye indeed but they perceive not 10 Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and convert and be healed 11 Then said I Lord how long And he **answered said** Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant and the houses without man and the land be utterly desolate 12 And the LORD have removed men far away **and for there shall be** a great forsaking in the midst of the land 13 But yet in it there shall be a tenth and **if they** shall return and shall be eaten as a teil tree and as an oak whose substance *is* in them when they cast *their leaves so* the holy seed *shall be* the substance thereof

Isaiah 7 as quoted in 2 Nephi 17:

1 And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah **that** Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel went up towards Jerusalem to war against it but could not prevail against it 2 And it was told the house of David saying Syria is confederate with Ephraim And his heart was moved and the heart of his people as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind 3 Then said the LORD unto Isaiah Go forth now to meet Ahaz thou and Shear-jashub thy son at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field 4 And say unto him Take heed and be quiet fear not neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria and of the son of Remaliah 5 Because Syria Ephraim and the son of Remaliah have taken evil counsel against thee saying 6 Let us go up against Judah and vex it and let us make a breach therein for us and set a king in the midst of it **even yea** the son of Tabeal 7 Thus saith the Lord God It shall not stand neither shall it come to pass 8 For the head of Syria *is* Damascus and the head of Damascus

is Rezin and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken that it be not a people 9 And the head of Ephraim *is* Samaria and the head of Samaria *is* Remaliah's son If ye will not believe surely ye shall not be established 10 Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz saying 11 Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God ask **it** either in the **depth depths** or in the **height heights** above 12 But Ahaz said I will not ask neither will I tempt the LORD 13 And he said Hear ye now O house of David *Is it* a small thing for you to weary men but will ye weary my God also 14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign Behold a virgin shall conceive and **shall** bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel 15 Butter and honey shall he eat that he may know to refuse the evil and **to** choose the good 16 For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings 17 The LORD shall bring upon thee and upon thy people and upon thy father's house days that have not come from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah **even** the king of Assyria 18 And it shall come to pass in that day *that* the LORD shall hiss for the fly that *is* in the uttermost part of **the rivers of** Egypt and for the bee that *is* in the land of Assyria 19 And they shall come and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys and in the holes of the rocks and upon all thorns and upon all bushes 20 In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired **namely** by them beyond the river by the king of Assyria the head and the hair of the feet and it shall also consume the beard 21 And it shall come to pass **that** in that day **that** a man shall nourish a young cow and two sheep 22 And it shall come to pass for the abundance of milk **that** they shall give he shall eat butter for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land 23 And it shall come to pass in that day **that** every place shall be where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings **it which** shall **even** be for briars and thorns 24 With arrows and with bows shall *men* come thither because all the land shall become briars and thorns 25 And **on** all hills that shall be digged with the mattock there shall not come thither the fear of briars and thorns but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen and **for** the treading of lesser cattle.

In these two chapters, the KJV has 37 italicized words and 1,021 non-italicized words. In the Book of Mormon's version of these chapters, 15 (41 percent) of the italicized words have been omitted, compared to only 11 (1 percent) of the non-italicized words. The KJV's italicized words are missing at a rate approximately 40 times that of its non-italicized words!¹⁴ Such a strong association of variants with the KJV's italicized words is not attributable to chance.

There are 29 differences, or variants, in these two Book of Mormon chapters relative to the KJV. None of these variants has any obvious purpose or value.¹⁵ Certainly, none clarifies Isaiah's message or substantially improves the grammar.

Of the 29 variants, ten affect the degree of parallelism in the English text but are otherwise of little consequence: the omission of "the rivers of" in 2 Nephi 17:18, the replacement of "answered" with "said" in 2 Nephi 16:11, the addition of "shall" to 2 Nephi 17:14, the addition of "to" in 2 Nephi 17:15, the replacement of "and" with "for" and the addition of "shall" in 2 Nephi 16:12, the omission of "is" in 2 Nephi 17:8, the transposition of "that" in 2 Nephi 17:21, the omission of "that" in 2 Nephi 17:23, and the omission of "for" in 2 Nephi 17:25.¹⁶ The net effect

14. Royal Skousen observed that 29 percent of the differences between the Book of Mormon Isaiah chapters and the KJV are linked to italicized words. Skousen, "Textual Variants," 382.

15. One variant, the omission of "the rivers of" in 2 Nephi 17:18, slightly alters the meaning but without any apparent significance to Isaiah's or Nephi's message. I see no apparent purpose or value in any of the other variants, but some others do. For example, Joseph Spencer suggests that Isaiah is so "undone" in 2 Nephi 16:5 that he is dropping words from his sentences. Joseph M. Spencer, *The Vision of All: Twenty-five Lectures on Isaiah in Nephi's Record* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2016), 174. In the Hebrew source behind Isaiah's text, however, Isaiah has not dropped any words, since the KJV's italicized words have no direct counterpart in the Hebrew. It is only the English that is broken with their omission. Clay Gorton finds significance in the difference between the "commandment" in Isaiah 6:9: "understand not . . . perceive not" and the "condemnatory phrase" in the 2 Nephi 16:9: "they understand not . . . they perceive not" (emphasis added). H. Clay Gorton, *The Legacy of the Brass Plates of Laban: A Comparison of Biblical & Book of Mormon Isaiah Texts* (Bountiful, UT: Horizon Publishers, 1994), 201–202. However, this change runs counter to the meaning of the next verse, in which God again dictates impediments to perception and understanding: "make their ears heavy and shut their eyes lest they see . . . and understand."

16. The replacement of "and" with "for" in 2 Nephi 16:12 (Isaiah 6:12) adds to the set of possible interpretations of this verse (i.e., it adds a possible interpretation that some kind of "forsaking" by the people was the inducement for God's punishment), but that is not necessarily a beneficial change. It does not eliminate

of these Book of Mormon variants is a loss of parallelism relative to the KJV and to the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT) from which the KJV was translated.¹⁷

Of the remaining 19 variants, nine are neutral in their effects on meaning and grammar. One of these consists of the addition of a nonessential word: the addition of “there” in 2 Nephi 16:13. Four consist of the replacement of one word with another word that has more or less the same contextual meaning: the replacement of “it” with “they” in 2 Nephi 16:13, “even” with “yea” in 2 Nephi 17:6, and “depth” with “depths” and “height” with “heights” in 2 Nephi 17:11. Another four involve the omission without replacement of a nonessential italicized word: the omission of “that” in 2 Nephi 17:1 and in 17:22, of “even” in 2 Nephi 17:23, and of “on” in 2 Nephi 17:25.¹⁸

The remaining 10 variants are harmful to the sense or English grammar. Six of these involve the omission of italicized words. In 2 Nephi 16:5, the omission of “is” and “am” from the KJV’s “Woe *is* me for I am undone because I *am* a man of unclean lips and I dwell” makes this sentence ungrammatical and potentially confusing. In verse 7, the omission of “it” from the KJV’s “he laid *it* [a live coal] upon my mouth” produces the illogical, “he laid upon my mouth.” In verse 8, the omission of “am” from “Here *am* I send me” makes the English text awkward, at least. In 2 Nephi 17:17, the omission of “even” could lead the reader to wrongly believe that Judah was king of Assyria. The italicized “even” in that verse in the KJV is important because it discourages such a misinterpretation. Similarly, the italicized “namely” that is omitted in the Book of Mormon from 2 Nephi 17:20 is important in clarifying that the king of Assyria is

the interpretations that were previously possible nor does it make clear which interpretation is the correct one.

17. The first three of these variants (the variants in 2 Nephi 17:18, 16:11, and 17:14) increase the parallelism of the text relative to the KJV, and two of these three (the variants in 2 Nephi 16:11 and 17:14) better reflect the parallelism in the Masoretic Text than does the KJV. The next variant listed (the addition of “to” in 2 Nephi 17:15) has mixed effects, increasing the parallelism within the verse but decreasing it between verses relative to the KJV. The remaining six variants result in a relative decrease in parallelism relative to the KJV and are less reflective of the parallelism in the Masoretic Text. Note that “And it shall come to pass in that day *that*” in Isaiah 7:21 and 7:23 is parallel to this same phrase in verse 18.

18. There is another possible instance of replacement of an italicized word in these Book of Mormon chapters. In 2 Nephi 17:1 of the printer’s manuscript, which is the earliest text for this verse, “&” appears in place of the italicized “that.” Skousen concluded that the insertion of “&” was likely accidental in part because it makes the text difficult to interpret. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 703–706.

not the one hiring a razor; he is the razor. The remaining four variants that are harmful to the sense or grammar do not involve italicized words. In 2 Nephi 16:9, the KJV's "Hear ye indeed but understand not and see ye indeed but perceive not" becomes "Hear ye indeed but **they** understand not and see ye indeed but **they** perceive not." This change results in an awkward switching back and forth between second person and third person and between the imperative and indicative moods. It also alters the meaning contrary to the statement in the next verse, which has God again dictating impediments to understanding and perception. The omission of "it" from "ask it either in the" in 2 Nephi 17:11 implies, illogically, that the asking (not the sign) is to be done in the depths or heights. The replacement of "it" with "which" in 2 Nephi 17:23 muddles the meaning of Isaiah's message. The text as it stands in the KJV makes sense — the deserted land, once fruitful, will be overrun with briars and thorns. With "which" in place of "it," the Book of Mormon appears to instead say, in an incomplete sentence, that briars and thorns will be purchased with a thousand silverlings (i.e., a thousand silver coins).

As shown above, these two Book of Mormon chapters follow the wording of the King James Bible very closely except for minor variants that are strongly associated with the KJV's italicized words, have no clear purpose, result on a net loss of parallelism relative to the KJV and its Hebrew source, and are often disruptive or damaging to the sense or grammar. How can this pattern, which stands in contrast to the sophisticated use of language and biblical understanding elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, be explained?

Three Hypotheses

The odd relationship of the Book of Mormon to the King James Bible, including the association of the Book of Mormon variants with the KJV's italicized words, is not a new discovery. In the 1904 *Improvement Era*, Assistant Church Historian B. H. Roberts acknowledged the reliance of the Book of Mormon on the KJV and attempted to explain the nature of the differences:

There remains to be accounted for the *differences* that exist between these Book of Mormon passages and those which parallel them in the King James' translation.¹⁹

He went on to say:

19. Roberts, "Bible Quotations," 184, emphasis in original.

They unquestionably arise from the fact that the Prophet compared the King James' translation with the parallel passages in the Nephite records, and when he found the sense of the passage on the Nephite plates superior to that in the English version he made such changes as would give the superior sense and clearness. This view is sustained by the fact of uniform superiority of the Book of Mormon version wherever such differences occur. It is also a significant fact that these changes occur quite generally in the case of supplied words of the English translators, and which in order to indicate that they are supplied words, are printed in *Italics*.²⁰

In this quote, Robert correctly notes that the KJV italicizes words that have no direct equivalent in the source text. Roberts attributes the differences in the Book of Mormon to ancient variants in the Nephite plates, presumably reflecting the record on the brass plates, at least in the chapters Nephi and Jacob say they are reading. According to Roberts, the version of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon is consistently "superior [in] sense and clearness." Roberts's explanation has largely held sway among believers in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.²¹ I will refer to this explanation as the Ancient Variants Hypothesis.

Stan Larson, in his 1991 article comparing versions of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and 3 Nephi, agrees that the Book of Mormon is based on the KJV, but comes to a different conclusion regarding the nature of the differences:

20. Ibid., 191, emphasis in original.

21. Brigham Young University religion professor Richard Anderson expressed this view in a 1977 *Ensign* article in which he quoted fellow religion professor Daniel Ludlow: "Summarizing the view taken by Latter-day Saint scholars on this point, Daniel H. Ludlow emphasizes the inherent variety of independent translation and concludes: 'There appears to be only one answer to explain the word-for-word similarities between the verses of Isaiah in the Bible and the same verses in the Book of Mormon.' That is simply that Joseph Smith must have opened Isaiah and tested each mentioned verse by the Spirit: 'If his translation was essentially the same as that of the King James version, he apparently quoted the verse from the Bible.'" Richard Lloyd Anderson, "By the Gift and Power of God," *Ensign* 7, no. 9 (September 1977), <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1977/09/by-the-gift-and-power-of-god>. Regarding the variants, see Legrande Davies, "Isaiah: Texts in the Book of Mormon," in *Scriptures of the Church: Selections from the Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 332; John A. Tvedtnes, *The Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1981), 1–2, 128; Gorton, *Brass Plates of Laban*.

When Smith came to the KJV italics in the Sermon on the Mount, which he knew indicated that whatever was printed in italics was not in the original Greek, he would often either drop the word or revise it.

... This analysis based on textual criticism confirms ... that the Book of Mormon text of the sermon is not a genuine translation from an ancient language but Smith's nineteenth-century targumic expansion of the English KJV.²²

Larson's idea is similar to Roberts's in that both have Joseph Smith using a physical Bible during the dictation of the Book of Mormon. Larson parts from Roberts, however, in attributing the differences in the Book of Mormon, not to ancient variants, but to Joseph Smith's intentional targeting of the Bible's italicized words as he creates his own revisions of the Bible chapters. David P. Wright, in his 2002 analysis of Book of Mormon Isaiah variants, expands on Larson's idea:

Many of the variants in the [Book of Mormon] Isaiah came about as a revision of italicized words and of their contexts in the KJV text. ... Joseph Smith's suspicion of the italicized words, shared by others of his age, was not well-founded, since in most cases the KJV's italicized words simply supply words necessary for the proper rendering of the text's meaning in English. ... Smith's suspicion of the italicized words led him to produce a text that sought to obviate the supposed problems they created. But his corrections created their own problems and errors.²³

Wright also explains that many of the variants in the Book of Mormon, although not directly corresponding to words italicized in the KJV, are conceptually intertwined with them so that Joseph Smith's revisions of the KJV's italicized words would have "brought in their wake larger contextual revision so that the text would make sense."²⁴

Although we have no record of Joseph Smith expressing the suspicion of italicized words that Wright presumes, a dismissive attitude toward

22. Stan Larson, "The Historicity of the Matthean Sermon on the Mount in 3 Nephi," in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 130–31.

23. Wright, "Isaiah," 168–69.

24. Wright, "Isaiah," 168.

the KJV's italicized words was expressed in an article entitled "Errors in the Bible" in a Latter-day Saint newspaper in 1833:

As to the errors in the bible, any man possessed of common understanding, knows, that both the old and new testaments are filled with errors, obscurities, italics and contradictions, which must be the work of men.²⁵

A similar misunderstanding of the KJV's italicized words had been expressed a few months earlier in the same newspaper:

The book of Mormon, as a revelation from God, possesses some advantage over the old scripture: it has not been tinctured by the wisdom of man, with here and there an Italic word to supply deficiencies.²⁶

As Wright notes, the idea that the italicized words represent deficiencies in the Bible is, in most cases, incorrect. Although these words have no direct equivalent in the source text, their meanings are generally implied or represented in other ways.

I will refer to Larson's idea, as expanded by Wright, as the Italics Revision Hypothesis.

Wright as well as Brant Gardner have provided detailed arguments supporting the idea that Joseph Smith was intentionally interacting with the KJV's italicized words as he translated.²⁷ After discussing the Book of Mormon's dependence on the KJV, Gardner summarizes:

The evidence is strong that, when Joseph translated the Isaiah passages, he was reading from the King James Bible. In the overwhelming majority of the time, the two texts are identical. When they differ, a statistically significant number of the changes involved words italicized in the KJV. Joseph removed those words, then dictated the changes that became necessary to maintain grammatical sentences, a process he could accomplish if he could see which words were in italics. Unfortunately, the evidence also suggests that Joseph didn't read from the Bible.²⁸

25. "Errors of the Bible," *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2, no. 14 (July 1833): 106.

26. "The Book of Mormon," *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1, no. 8 (January 1833): 58.

27. Wright, "Isaiah," 157–234; Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 215–25.

28. Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 304.

Indeed, it is unfortunate for both Roberts's and Larson's ideas that they are not supported by eyewitness accounts of the translation of the Book of Mormon, none of which have Joseph Smith making use of any physical text, including a Bible. The most authoritative witness accounts describe Joseph Smith dictating the Book of Mormon translation with a hat pulled close to his face to exclude the light, which would have made reading from a physical text impossible.²⁹ If Joseph Smith used a physical bible, he would have had to do so frequently, since biblical interactions are scattered throughout the Book of Mormon. Continuously removing his face from the hat to make use of a physical Bible would not have gone unnoticed by those who watched him translate. Both Joseph's wife Emma and David Whitmer asserted that Joseph used no notes or books during translation. Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery reportedly asserted the same.³⁰ An alternative idea — that Joseph Smith had the ability to memorize large portions of the Bible (including, for Larson's explanation, the locations of the italicized words) — also lacks historical evidence. If Joseph Smith referred to a biblical text while translating, it may have been one he saw in vision.³¹ This is essentially the conclusion at which Gardner arrives:

Although the alterations associated with italicized words suggest that Joseph was working with a visual text, the chapter breaks tell us that he was not seeing the KJV with its current chapter divisions. . . . It is at this point that we invoke the divine. The Lord provides the stimulus of the appropriate neural nets, and the brain creates the appropriate visual image.³²

The idea that Joseph Smith's part in translating the Book of Mormon included the visioning of an English text is supported by witness accounts

29. For the principal accounts of translation of the Book of Mormon, see Stan Spencer, "Seers and Stones: The Translation of the Book of Mormon as Divine Visions of an Old-Time Seer," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2017): 32–43.

30. See Daniel Peterson's review of witness statements in Daniel C. Peterson, "A Response: 'What the Manuscripts and the Eyewitnesses Tell Us about the Translation of the Book of Mormon,'" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 11, no. 2 (2002): 68; <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol11/iss2/9/>.

31. Many of Joseph Smith's early revelations came as visions, and some of these involved seer stone and hat as in his translation of the Book of Mormon. Spencer, "Seers and Stones," 52–56. There are no reports of Joseph having the kind of prodigious memory he would have needed to memorize entire chapters of Isaiah, complete with the locations of the italicized words.

32. Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 306.

of the translation. Firsthand accounts by those who saw Joseph Smith “translate” or heard him describe the process indicate that he would place one or more seer stones in a hat, pull the hat to his face to exclude the light, and then read the English words that miraculously appeared. The words that Joseph saw are described in these witness accounts as appearing “in the hat” (David Whitmer’s 1881 letter) or “in the stone” (William Smith’s 1883 account) or, more specifically, on “something resembling parchment” that “would appear before Joseph” (Whitmer’s 1887 and 1879 accounts).³³ None of the most authoritative accounts claim that the text appeared on the surface of a stone as if the stone were a technological device, as is sometimes assumed. According to David Whitmer, Joseph Smith described the translation as an imaginative vision in which “parchment would appear before Joseph” with writing on it.³⁴ This is reminiscent of how the founding scripture of the Nephites was revealed to the seer Lehi. Lehi read the scriptural text from a book (likely a roll of papyrus or leather) that he saw in imaginative vision (1 Nephi 1:8–13, 16–17; 6:1).³⁵ As the word *seer* implies, seer stones were traditionally used for facilitating visions, and Joseph Smith used both

33. For a discussion of these and other principal accounts of the translation relative to where the translated text appeared, see Spencer, “Seers and Stones,” 32–43. I use the term *translate* in the sense that Joseph Smith apparently used it — to produce a translation by whatever means. He produced the translation of the Nephite record by visioning the translated text and dictating it to his scribe.

34. John L. Traughber Jr., “Testimony of David Whitmer,” *Saints’ Herald* 26 (November 15, 1879): 341, https://archive.org/stream/TheSaintsHerald_Volume_26_1879/the%20saints%20herald%20volume%2026%201879#page/n340/mode/1up. *Imaginative* in this sense does not mean *imaginary*. It simply means that a vision is perceived through the brain’s imaginative faculty or the mind’s eye, as one perceives a dream or other vivid mental image, rather than through the physical senses. A piece of parchment appearing out of nowhere would seem to indicate an imaginative vision, unless one surmises that an actual piece of parchment materialized in Joseph Smith’s hat. In our technological world, we might alternatively imagine the seer stone physically projecting an image of a parchment into Joseph Smith’s eyes. Although such a miraculous transformation of stone to projector is plausible, it is not required to explain the witness accounts.

35. The standard books at the time of Lehi and Ezekiel (who also read from a book in vision; Ezekiel 2:8–10) were rolls of papyrus or leather. By the time John envisioned a “little book” (Revelation 10:2–10) writing on sheets of parchment was becoming more common. Jack Finegan, *Encountering New Testament Manuscripts: A Working Introduction to Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 19–29.

his individual seer stones and the interpreter stones for that purpose.³⁶ It makes sense that a translation obtained by the use of “seer” stones would be revealed in vision, with the seer stone perhaps facilitating the vision by functioning as an aid to faith or as an object of mental focus.³⁷ The idea that translation by seer stone includes a visionary element is also consistent with other scriptures that describe the use of such instruments and the translation of ancient scripture.³⁸ The idea that God provided Joseph Smith with a vision of the English translation does not imply that God was the translator, nor does it imply that the translation was perfect; God could have shown Joseph a translation produced by someone else, whether immortal or mortal.³⁹

36. Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary defines seer (as in seer stone) as “1. One who sees; as a seer of visions.” *Webster’s Dictionary 1828 Online Edition*, s.v. “seer,” <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/seer>. Scientifically, a vision would be considered a hallucination, which is “an experience involving the apparent perception of something not present.” Lexico.com, Oxford University Press, s.v. “hallucination,” published 2019, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/hallucination>. A visual hallucination (a vision) may or may not have revelatory content (and what is revelatory may not be divine). Spencer, “Seers and Stones,” 55–59. The established Christianity of Joseph Smith’s day could not teach him how to see divine visions — it rejected their very occurrence in the modern age. But the art of “seeing” was still alive in folk religion, and Joseph’s use of seer stones to facilitate his early visions reflects that source of training. For the traditional use of seer stones, see “Seer Stone,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed June 1, 2020, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/topic/seer-stone>. For Joseph Smith’s use of seer stones, see Spencer, “Seers and Stones,” 52–54. Seers in many cultures throughout history have looked into objects or surfaces to attain a visionary state, including, perhaps, ancient Israel’s high priest with the Urim and Thummim. Spencer, “Seers and Stones,” 96n152, 59–64.

37. For an exploration of how seer stones and hats may have functioned in facilitating imaginative visions, see Spencer, “Seers and Stones,” 68–72.

38. Spencer, “Seers and Stones,” 49–51, 59–68; also, Stan Spencer, “The Faith to See: Burning in the Bosom and Translating the Book of Mormon in Doctrine and Covenants 9,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 219–32. The description of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in 2 Nephi 27:20 has Joseph Smith reading words that God provides. This could be interpreted as referring explicitly to Joseph Smith’s reading of English words seen in vision (Spencer, “Seers and Stones,” 67), but it could also be interpreted as referring to Joseph’s ability to effectively “read” the words inscribed on the plates. If “give unto thee” in this passage is taken to mean “grant unto thee [to read],” it is then the granting of the authorization or power (not another set of words) that God would provide. For this meaning of give in reference to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, see Mormon 8:15.

39. Accounts of two of Joseph Smith’s other translation projects have him being shown, in vision, parchment or papyrus documents presumably written by mortals

To the explanations proposed by Roberts and Larson, I add another plausible explanation, based on an early source, that is consistent with witness accounts of the translation of the Book of Mormon. In August of 1831, *The Sun* printed the following as part of its report of the origin of the Book of Mormon, based apparently on an interview with Martin Harris:

So, in order to convince Harris that he could read from the plates, Jo deposits them in his hat, applies spectacles, and refers Harris to a chapter in the Bible which he had learned by rote; and which he read from the plates, with surprising accuracy; and what astonished Harris most, was, that Jo should omit all the words in the Bible that were printed in Italic. And, if Harris attempted to correct Jo, he persisted that the plates were right, and the Bible was wrong.⁴⁰

While this is not one of the more authoritative accounts relating to Joseph Smith's dictation of the Book of Mormon, being secondhand at best, it is the only one that makes any mention of italics.⁴¹

This account has Joseph Smith dictating one of the Book of Mormon's biblical chapters to Martin Harris. Joseph Smith's basic method of dictating the Nephite record outlined in this account (by the use of stones and hat) agrees well with witness accounts of translation.⁴²

(see Spencer, "Seers and Stones," 44–45, regarding the parchment of John [D&C 7] and a visioned papyrus of the Book of Abraham).

40. "Mormonites," *The Sun*, August 18, 1831, <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/PA/Phil1830.htm>

41. For the more authoritative accounts relating to the translation of the Book of Mormon, see Spencer, "Seers and Stones," 32–43.

42. This account is obviously incorrect in stating that the plates were placed in the hat. This error may have been a result of an interviewer misinterpreting Martin Harris's description. In another interview, when Martin Harris spoke of "placing them in a hat," he was speaking of the interpreters ("spectacles"). The most reliable witness statements agree that the interpreters were used by placing them in a hat like other seer stones, not by wearing them. It is easy to see how an interviewer would assume that spectacles would be worn on the face, and that the "them" that went in the hat was the plates. See Spencer, "Seers and Stones," 35–36, 40–41. The claim that Joseph Smith memorized a chapter from the Bible is likely a conclusion reached by the reporter, not something Harris, a firm believer in Joseph Smith's ability to "see" with a stone and who was apparently sufficiently impressed that he agreed to serve as Joseph Smith's scribe, would have told the reporter. For Martin Harris's beliefs regarding the translation of the Book of Mormon, see "Martin Harris Interview with Joel Tiffany, 1859," in *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 2, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 302–10.

And the literary product described in this account — a Bible chapter quoted quite closely, with the exception of the Bible’s italicized words — agrees fairly well with what we see in the Book of Mormon.⁴³ There are, however, a couple of differences between the dictated biblical chapter described in this account and what we see in the Book of Mormon. This account says that “all the words” italicized in the Bible were missing from the dictated text, while in most of the Book of Mormon’s quoted biblical chapters, some of those words are present. Also, in most of the biblical chapters in the Book of Mormon, there are many words added at locations not associated with the KJV’s italicized words, in contrast to the “surprising accuracy” noted in *The Sun*.

If the biblical chapter described in *The Sun*’s report typifies what Joseph Smith saw in vision as he translated, then the many minor variants in the Book of Mormon’s biblical chapters might be explained as follows. With all of the italicized words omitted, the visioned biblical chapter would have been rough reading. In trying to convince Martin Harris that he was indeed visioning a biblical chapter quoted in the Nephite record, Joseph Smith would have wanted to dictate it as accurately as possible — exactly how he saw it. When actually dictating the full Book of Mormon for the world to read and understand, however, Joseph Smith may have decided to try to smooth the text by adding words whenever words appeared to be missing. Sometimes it would have been obvious what word or words needed to be added to smooth a rough spot. Some of the missing words may have come to his mind because of his familiarity with these biblical passages, either from his own earlier Bible readings or from hearing popular passages read by others. For unfamiliar passages in which the identities of the missing words were not obvious, he would have, by chance, sometimes chosen different words than those used in the KJV. Sometimes he would have added extra words where he perceived rough spots and thought words were missing but no words had actually been omitted. Some instances of omission of italicized words would have escaped his notice or made the text so confusing that he didn’t know how to fix it and so left it alone.⁴⁴

43. The Book of Mormon quotes several chapters of Isaiah chapters, chapters 3 and 4 of Malachi, and chapters 6 and 7 of Matthew quite closely.

44. The question might be asked, “Why, if Joseph thought words were missing, didn’t he just open up a Bible and looked up the missing words?” There could have been several reasons for not considering or taking such a course of action. Being in a visionary state and having his face in a hat could have made stopping and looking through a Bible impracticable. He may not have realized how closely the text he was reading was following the KJV and that looking at a Bible would have been helpful.

For example, when Joseph Smith got to 2 Nephi 17:6 (Isaiah 7:6) in his translation of the Book of Mormon, he would have seen the following text in vision:

Let us go up against Judah and vex it and let us make a breach
therein for us and set a king in the midst of it the son of Tabeal
Thus saith the Lord God It shall not stand

He would have suspected that a word was missing before “the son of Tabeal.” Not knowing the missing word, he guessed “yea,” which is used much more frequently than “even” in the Book of Mormon. Although “yea” is not the word that was missing, it works. A few verses later (v. 20), he would have seen this text:

In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired
by them beyond the river by the king of Assyria the head and
the hair of the feet and it shall also consume the beard And
it shall come to pass in that day a man shall nourish a young
cow and two sheep

Upon reading the first sentence, he would not have noticed any problem, or, if he did, would not have known what to do about it, and left it alone, thus leaving out the clarifying “*namely*” that had been omitted. Upon reading the second sentence, he would have suspected that a “that” was missing after “and it came to pass” and added it since this phrase is usually followed by “that” in the Book of Mormon as well as the Bible. Even though the biblical text does not have a “that” at this location, it works.

In making these changes, Joseph Smith would not have been intending (or pretending) to restore ancient understanding, but rather to correct perceived errors of transmission of the English text. His focus during this process would not have been on the KJV’s italicized words per se, nor on intentionally revising the biblical text, but rather on supplying words where he thought they had been mistakenly (in his view) dropped. He was more a reader and editor of the English than a revisor or a translator, as we usually use the term. While Joseph Smith had been commanded to “read” the visioned words (2 Nephi 27:20), his editing of them may have been at his own initiative.

He may not have had a Bible available. He may have been rushed or overconfident in his own reasoned solutions. It is also possible that he was in a general habit of supplying words where he thought they were needed as he dictated throughout the Book of Mormon translation and did not think to adapt his practice in any way when he came to biblical passages.

I will refer to this explanation as the Missing Words Hypothesis.

Why would a presumed prior translator of the Book of Mormon have omitted the KJV's italicized words from the quoted biblical chapters? In the absence of any record of the translator's thoughts on this topic, we can only speculate. I will mention one possible motivation. The words in italics may have been omitted by the translator in order to avoid the confusion, opportunity for derision, and general distraction from the book's message that including them might have caused.

In using the KJV as a base text for the Bible chapters in the Book of Mormon, the translator would have been faced with the question of what to do with the KJV's italicized words. Should they be included but differentiated from the rest of the text as they are in the KJV? Or should they be included but not differentiated? Or should they be omitted altogether?

Perhaps the third option was the least problematic. In the early 19th century, most Protestant readers versed in the KJV would have found the omission of the KJV's italicized words in the Book of Mormon understandable. In realizing that the KJV's italicized words had been omitted, these readers would have been able to surmise that the words were omitted because they represented words that were added by the KJV translators and had no direct correspondence in the ancient source text. The downside of the omission of these words would have been the resulting rough reading in some passages. For smoother reading, readers could supply the missing words from memory if they were familiar enough with the Bible, or by reading the quoted portions side-by-side with a Bible.⁴⁵

Including the KJV's italicized words without somehow distinguishing them from other words, whether as italics or in some other way, would have perhaps been most problematic. Since the purpose of the italicization of these words was to make it clear that they did not have direct counterparts in the original language but had been added by the translators, to leave them undistinguished in a scriptural text would have led many to conclude that (borrowing the words of Adam Clarke, a popular and respected Bible scholar of Joseph Smith's day) "words have been attributed to God which he never spoke."⁴⁶ Although the

45. Encouraging such side-by-side reading of the Book of Mormon and Bible may have even been a secondary objective of the translator, as this practice would have enabled the reader to see any important differences between the two texts.

46. Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, vol. 1 (Cincinnati: Applegate, 1856), ix.

practice of distinguishing such words is no longer considered necessary by most translators, it was formerly seen as a matter of transparency on the part of the translators.⁴⁷ For nearly three centuries, Protestant Bibles had distinguished these “added” words from the rest of the text. For Christians, the Bible had been the definition of scripture. The Book of Mormon, in presenting itself as scripture of equal authenticity, would have been broadly expected to follow the same rules and be as forthright in its presentation of the “added” words. To fail to do so would be to invite accusations of dishonesty and be a potential stumbling block to the reader.

The remaining alternative — to include the KJV’s italicized words and distinguish them from the rest of the text — might have also been problematic. Would italicization (or some other method of distinguishing the KJV’s italicized words) have been consistently transmitted through the dictation and manuscript copying processes to finally appear in the printed Book of Mormon? Implementing the consistent transmission of this information may have been too much to expect of the unlearned Joseph Smith, who apparently didn’t even attempt to preserve whatever capitalization or punctuation appeared in the visioned text.⁴⁸ Even if the representation of the KJV’s italicized words were uniformly achieved in the printed Book of Mormon, it would have provided opportunity for confusion and derision. The appearance of words set in italic type in the quoted Bible chapters could have been confusing and seemed inconsistent unless the remainder of the Book of Mormon also distinguished words that lacked direct counterparts in the original language.⁴⁹ One thing that is clear is that the option of distinguishing italicized words was

47. For a discussion of italics in the King James Bible, see Kent P. Jackson, Frank F. Judd Jr., and David R. Seely, “Chapters, Verses, Punctuation, Spelling, and Italics in the King James Version,” *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* 7, no. 2 (July 2006): 41–64, https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/8e29/e15f1e807572a605c8e813e22e237c3ee0ae.pdf?_ga=2.227749917.1499217316.1590848283-1642248848.1589842705; also Thomas A. Wayment and Tyson J. Yost, “The Joseph Smith Translation and Italicized Words in the King James Version,” *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* 6, no. 1 (2005): 51–64; <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/re/vol6/iss1/7/>.

48. Capitalization and punctuation can be immediately lost in dictation of a text unless they are made explicit, since they are not normally spoken. Italicization or underlining have the same vulnerability. The wording and smoothness of a dictated text are more natural objects of focus during dictation.

49. The lack of consistency with the rest of the Book of Mormon would also be an argument against omitting the KJV’s italicized words, although the lack of consistency in that case would have been less obvious.

not chosen by the translator of the Book of Mormon, or if it was, it was not successfully implemented, since the KJV's italicized words that do appear in the printed Book of Mormon are not distinguished from the rest of the text in any way.

The differences between the Ancient Variants Hypothesis, the Italics Revision Hypothesis, and the Missing Words Hypothesis hypotheses can be summarized as follows:

According to the Ancient Variants Hypothesis and the Italics Revision Hypothesis, Joseph Smith was responsible for the English wording of the Book of Mormon and took much of it from an open King James Bible. According to the Missing Words Hypothesis, a prior translator filled that role, with Joseph Smith simply seeing in vision and dictating the work of the prior translator, and making minor edits as he dictated it.

The Ancient Variants Hypothesis would explain many differences between the Book of Mormon and the KJV as reflections of differences on the brass plates, at least for those chapters that Nephite prophets say they are reading from their records or copying from the brass plates.⁵⁰ Although the Missing Words Hypothesis does not exclude the possibility that some variants in the Book of Mormon reflect differences on the brass plates, it would explain a greater number of the differences as resulting from the excision of the KJV's italicized words by the prior translator followed by Joseph Smith's compensatory editing as he dictated the visioned text. The Italics Revision Hypothesis would explain many differences as Joseph Smith's intentional revisions to the Bible prompted by his suspicion of its italicized words. According to the Ancient Variants Hypothesis, Joseph Smith's departures from the KJV text were based on his inspired thoughts. According to the other two hypotheses, his editing was mostly based on his own logic and limited understanding of the Bible.

All three hypotheses would also allow for unintentional errors by Joseph Smith or his scribe during dictation, transcription, or copying of the original manuscript. They would also allow for intentional editing by Joseph Smith's scribe, as well as adaptation of Biblical quotations by Nephi, Jacob, or other Book of Mormon characters since they are all silent on those topics. Intentional modernization of words or expressions

50. For example, Nephi reads Isaiah 48 and 49 from the brass plates (1 Nephi 19:22–24; 22:1), Jacob reads Isaiah 49:22 through Isaiah 52:2 (2 Nephi 6:4–5, 9:1), Nephi copies Isaiah chapters 2 through 14 from the brass plates (2 Nephi 4:14, 11:8), and Abinadi reads from Exodus (Mosiah 13:11).

by Joseph Smith would be consistent with the Missing Words Hypothesis but would be unexpected under the Ancient Variants Hypothesis and the Italics Revision Hypothesis. Although neither of the latter hypotheses explicitly excludes the possibility that Joseph Smith intentionally modernized portions of the text, they assume that he was responsible for the overall style of the English of the Book of Mormon, which is characterized by archaic word forms and expressions. The Missing Words Hypothesis does not have this assumption since the overall style of language of the Book of Mormon would have been determined by the prior translator and not by Joseph Smith.

I will now evaluate various aspects of the text of the Book of Mormon as a test of the explanatory power of each hypothesis. Although there are other aspects of the text, not evaluated here, that would also serve to test these hypotheses, it would be impossible to evaluate all in an article of reasonable size. This article addresses a few that seem to most clearly distinguish among the hypotheses.

Accounting for the Variants in 2 Nephi 16 and 17 (Isaiah 6 and 7)

How well does each hypothesis explain the 29 Book of Mormon Isaiah variants in 2 Nephi 16 and 17?

Errors of Transmission, or Modernization — 7 Variants

Seven of the variants can be most easily explained under all three hypotheses as errors of transmission made by Joseph Smith or his scribe during dictation, transcription, or copying of the original manuscript, or possibly as intentional modernization of a phrase:

the uttermost part of ~~the rivers of~~ Egypt (2 Nephi 17:18)

a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings **it which** shall (2 Nephi 17:23)

Then said I Lord how long And he ~~answered~~ **said** (2 Nephi 16:11)

Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God ask **it** either in the ~~depth~~ **depths** or in the ~~height~~ **heights** above (2 Nephi 17:22)

for the sending forth of oxen and ~~for~~ the treading of lesser cattle (2 Nephi 17:25)

In his analysis of textual variants, Royal Skousen notes that the phrase “the rivers of” could have been easily lost from 2 Nephi 17:18 when the scribe’s eyes skipped from the “of” preceding this phrase to the “of” ending the phrase as he copied from the original to the printer’s manuscript (the original manuscript is not extant for this verse).⁵¹ This kind of error (parablepsis) frequently occurs in the copying of manuscripts.

The replacement of “it” with “which” in 2 Nephi 17:23 may be due to the scribe’s mishearing of “it shall” /ɪtʃæl/ as “which shall” /wɪtʃʃæl/. Except for the initial /w/ of “which,” which can be relatively difficult to hear, these two phrases are pronounced the same unless carefully enunciated.

The other variants listed above are typical of the kinds of errors frequently made in reading and dictating. Stan Larson compared a recording of an oral recitation of the Book of Mormon with the printed text used in the recitation. He classified the errors in the recitation into three categories:

- Misreading a word as one of similar appearance. For example, the recording had “enemies” instead of “armies” (1 Nephi 17:27), “trust” instead of “visit” (Enos 10), “Israel” instead of “Ishmael” (Alma 17:21), “resurrection” instead of “restoration” (Alma 41:10), “forfeited” instead of “fortified” (Alma 62:42), “appointed” instead of “anointed” (Ether 9:15), and “caused” instead of “ceased” (Moroni 8:28).
- Misreading a word as another word found in the immediate context, either before or after the misread word. For example, the recording had “word” instead of “world” (Jacob 4:9), “commandments” instead of “judgments” (Alma 8:15), “toiled” instead of “fought” (Alma 56:16), “fallen” instead of “fled” (Moroni 9:17), and “dust” instead of “dead” (Moroni 10:27).
- Misreading a word or phrase by adding or deleting letters or words. For example, the recording had several instances of singular words replaced by plurals or plural words replaced by singulars by adding or dropping an s.⁵²

Larson’s second category could easily explain the replacement of “answered” with “said” in response to the appearance of “said” earlier in the passage in 2 Nephi 16:11.

51. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 715.

52. Stan Larson, “Textual Variants in Book of Mormon Manuscripts,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10, no. 4 (1977), 27–28.

Larson's third category could account for other four variants listed above. They are also typical of errors made during transcription and copying. The omission of "it" in 2 Nephi 17:11 is probably best explained under all three hypotheses as an error of transmission since none of the hypotheses provides any justification for its omission, which results in damage to the sense of the English text.⁵³ The omission of "for" from 2 Nephi 17:25 is probably also best explained under all three hypotheses as an error of transmission since it doesn't provide any benefit besides slightly shortening the text. As a small, unnecessary word, it could have easily been skipped inadvertently during dictation by Joseph Smith or during transcription or copying by his scribe.⁵⁴ The replacements of "depth" with "depths" and "height" with "heights" in 2 Nephi 17:11 could be the result of the unintentional addition of *s* to these words by Joseph Smith during dictation or by his scribe during transcription or copying of the original manuscript.⁵⁵ Oliver Cowdery sometimes unintentionally added *s* to nouns as he took down Joseph's dictation, and he may have also done so while copying from the original to the printer's manuscript.⁵⁶

Unintentional changes during dictation or copying would be consistent with all three hypotheses. The replacement of both "depth" and

53. Skousen points out that "it" in Isaiah 7:11 has no direct counterpart in the Hebrew text behind the KJV. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 712. This does not speak to a question of ancient variants, but only to whether or not "it" should be italicized.

54. There is an apparent example of such an unnecessary word skipped during transcription in 3 Nephi 12:11 (compare Matthew 5:11). In copying from the original manuscript to the printer's manuscript, Oliver Cowdery initially wrote "& say all manner of evil against you falsly [sic] for my sake," skipping over the "shall" that precedes "say" in the KJV. He came back and wrote "shall" above the line. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts* (Provo, UT: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2001), 816.

55. The Hebrew behind "depth" and "height" in the KJV can be translated in either the singular or the plural, so either form could be considered correct.

56. For examples of Oliver Cowdery's accidental addition of *s* to nouns during dictation, see Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 415–16 ("prophets"), 452 ("wines"), 774 ("multitudes"), and 2221–22 ("traditions"). For examples of Cowdery's addition of *s* to a noun as he copied from the original to the printer's manuscript, see Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 88–89 ("commandments"), 105–106, 112 ("walls"), 117 ("commandments"), 317–18 ("things"), 444 ("waters"), 1108–109 ("records"), 1264–65 ("mights"), 2518 ("bloodsheds"), and 2777–78 ("mights"). See also Skousen's discussion of "cursings" in 976–78.

“height” together, however, suggests that Joseph or his scribe may have been intentionally modernizing the language of this passage. Intentional modernization of the language by Joseph Smith would be unexpected under both the Ancient Variants Hypothesis and the Italics Revision Hypothesis but is consistent with the Missing Words Hypothesis.

The 22 remaining variants would be explained differentially by the three hypotheses; thus, they will be more helpful in determining which hypothesis best accounts for the overall pattern of variation in these chapters.

Italicized Words Omitted — 12 Variants

Twelve variants in these chapters consist of the omission, without replacement, of the KJV’s italicized words:

Then said I Woe *is* me for I am undone because I *am* a man of unclean lips (2 Nephi 16:5)

And he laid *it* upon my mouth (2 Nephi 16:7)

Then I said Here *am* I send me (2 Nephi 16:8)

And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah *that* Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel went up (2 Nephi 17:1)

For the head of Syria *is* Damascus and the head of Damascus *is* Rezin (2 Nephi 17:8)

The LORD shall bring upon thee and upon thy people and upon thy father’s house days that have not come from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah *even* the king of Assyria (2 Nephi 17:17)

In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired *namely* by them beyond the river by the king of Assyria (2 Nephi 17:20)

And it shall come to pass for the abundance of milk *that* they shall give he shall eat butter (2 Nephi 17:22)

And it shall come to pass in that day *that* every place shall be where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings it which shall *even* be for briars and thorns (2 Nephi 17:23)

And *on* all hills that shall be digged with the mattock there shall not come thither the fear of briars and thorns (2 Nephi 17:25)

How would the three hypotheses explain these 12 instances in these two chapters in which the KJV's italicized words are simply omitted?

The Ancient Variants Hypothesis, as expressed by Roberts, does not provide a valid reason for the omission of the KJV's italicized words. Although italicized words have no direct counterpart in the underlying Masoretic Text from which the KJV was translated, they are usually needed to convey the full meaning of the Hebrew into English and are therefore an essential part of the translation. Omitting such words would generally do damage to the "sense and clearness" valued by Roberts. One might propose that the Book of Mormon (assuming it is based on a source text very similar to the Masoretic Text at the locations of the missing words) is providing a more literal translation by omitting these words, but this is not true for the reason just stated. The words are necessary for a complete translation, however literal it may be.

The Italics Revision Hypothesis explains the omission of the italicized words as resulting from Joseph Smith's supposed belief that, since these words had no direct counterpart in the Hebrew, he had license to alter or remove them.

The Missing Words Hypothesis also explains the omission of the 12 italicized words quite well. The words were already missing from the text that Joseph Smith visioned; he simply dictated what he saw.

Italicized Words Transposed — 1 Variant

One variant consists of the transposition of an italicized word to a location earlier in the verse:

And it shall come to pass that in that day *that* a man shall nourish a young cow and two sheep (2 Nephi 17:21)

Since "that" has no direct counterpart in this verse in the underlying Hebrew, and since there is no change in sense or increase in clearness, the Ancient Variants Hypothesis does not provide an explanation for the transposition. The Italics Revision Hypothesis would explain this variant as Joseph Smith's response to encountering an italicized word,

although it is not apparent what would have motivated him to make such an inconsequential change.

The Missing Words Hypothesis better accounts for this variant. Upon reading in vision the KJV text minus the italicized “*that*,” Joseph Smith would have suspected that a “that” was missing somewhere in this sentence. The most obvious place to put “that” would have been after “and it came to pass,” since that phrase is usually followed by “that” in the Book of Mormon as well as in the Bible.

Italicized Words or Phrases Replaced or Expanded — 4 Variants

How would each hypothesis explain the four instances in which italicized words are replaced or italicized phrases are expanded?

And the LORD have removed men far away **and for *there shall be*** a great forsaking in the midst of the land But yet in it ***there shall be*** a tenth and ***it they*** shall return and shall be eaten (2 Nephi 16:12–13)

Let us ... set a king in the midst of it ***even yea*** the son of Tabeal (2 Nephi 17:6)

In the first two instances, the Book of Mormon replaces italicized “*there be*” and italicized “*shall be*” both with “there shall be.” According to the Ancient Variants Hypothesis, Joseph Smith made these changes so the text would better express the meaning in the Nephite record. This explanation is not entirely satisfactory, since the difference in meaning is so minor that it would not seem to justify departing from the base text. According to the Italics Revision Hypothesis, Joseph Smith would have seen an opportunity to revise the KJV’s italicized phrases and taken it. But it is not clear what he would have been intending to accomplish in doing so. One could propose that he was trying to modernize the reading, but that motive would be unexpected under both of these hypotheses. The Missing Words Hypothesis provides a clear motive for these two variants. While translating, Joseph Smith would have seen the KJV text with the italicized words omitted:

And the LORD have removed men far away and a great forsaking in the midst of the land But yet in it a tenth

He would have been able to tell that a verb had been omitted either before or after “a great forsaking” and again either before or after “a tenth.” Since the context sets these events in the future, adding “there shall be” would have been an obvious option at both locations. Other

options would have been to add something like “shall occur” after “a great forsaking” or “shall remain” after “a tenth.” His decision to add “there shall be” may have been influenced by the fact that it fit well at both locations.

The Italics Revision Hypothesis would explain the next two variants, the replacement of italicized “*it*” with “they” and the replacement of italicized “*even*” with “yea,” the same. Understanding that the italicized words had no direct counterpart in the original language, Joseph Smith felt free to change them. He preferred to use “they” and “yea,” perhaps believing they were more correct, even though the replacements don’t actually change the meaning of the text. The Missing Words Hypothesis explains both variants well. While “translating” the first of these two passages, Joseph Smith would have seen this text:

a tenth and shall return and shall be eaten

He would have been able to tell that a noun or pronoun was missing before “shall return.” Since the previous verses refer to groups of people, he guessed “they,” which worked well enough, so he inserted it. When he got to the second passage, he would have seen this text:

set a king in the midst of it the son of Tabeal

Once again, he would have been able to tell that a word was needed before “the son of Tabeal.” “Yea” came to mind and worked well enough, so he inserted it. The Ancient Variants Hypothesis would explain the replacement of “it” with “they” as reflecting either a difference on the brass plates or an interpretation that was more clear. This hypothesis fails to provide a reason for the replacement of “*even*” with “yea,” however, since the two words are synonyms in this context and convey the sense of the passage with equal clarity.

Non-italicized Word Replaced — 1 Variant

One variant consists of the replacement of a non-italicized word (“and” with “for”):

And the LORD have removed men far away **and** for *there shall*
be a great forsaking (2 Nephi 16:12)

None of the three hypotheses provide an obvious explanation for the replacement of “and” with “for” since “and” is not italicized and the replacement does not substantially change or clarify the meaning.⁵⁷ This

57. Under the Ancient Variants Hypothesis, the source text presumably indicated “for” instead of “and” or had a word that could be translated as either

variant is probably best viewed in conjunction with the nearby addition of “shall” to italicized “*there be*.” It may have been an inadvertent or even intentional part of the revision at this location under any of the hypotheses. Similar replacements adjacent to italicized words are found elsewhere in the Book of Mormon’s biblical quotations, such as in the duplicate quotations of Exodus 20:4 in Mosiah 12:36 and Mosiah 13:12, discussed below.

Words Added — 4 Variants

The remaining four variants in these chapters each consist of the addition of a single word.

The first two instances of added words, in 2 Nephi 16:9, seem to muddle Isaiah’s message:

And he said Go and tell this people Hear ye indeed but they understand not and see ye indeed but they perceive not

The inclusion of “they” makes the reading somewhat awkward, with switching back and forth between second and third person and between the imperative and indicative moods. The most obvious potential reason for these two Book of Mormon variants is theological. As this passage reads in the KJV, the Lord is telling the people not to understand the truth. Such language in scripture is unexpected and could have motivated the additions of “they” to resolve the perceived problem. The Book of Mormon ultimately fails to provide a solution to this theological difficulty, however, since the next verse (v. 10), which is left unchanged in the Book of Mormon, has God doing the same thing. The Ancient Variants Hypothesis does not explain such an incomplete and awkward solution. Nor does the Italics Revision Hypothesis, since there are no italicized words in this verse to prompt editing by Joseph Smith.

The Missing Words Hypothesis provides a more rational explanation for these two variants. Since there are no italicized words in this verse, Joseph Smith would have visioned the text as it stands in the KJV:

And he said Go and tell this people Hear ye indeed but understand not and see ye indeed but perceive not

Confused by the theology implied in this passage, and knowing that words were frequently missing from the text he visioned, Joseph

“for” or “and.” It is unclear, however, why such a minor difference would be included in the Book of Mormon when it deviates from the base text (the KJV) and reduces the parallelism within the verse without providing any substantial change in or clarification of meaning. See note 16.

Smith would have suspected missing words as the cause of the apparent theological problem. He would have then made his best guess of what words were missing and supplied them. Since he was not using a physical Bible, he might not have been able to look ahead to verse 10 to see the context that might have discouraged him from making these edits.⁵⁸ When Joseph Smith got to verse 10 he would have been confronted with the same theological difficulty, but since it read smoothly, without any words apparently missing, he would have dictated it just as he saw it. In making emendations to the visioned text, according to the Missing Words Hypothesis, Joseph Smith was not trying to revise the biblical text, but rather to restore words he believed had been somehow dropped.

The other two instances of added words, in 2 Nephi 17:14–15, both serve to make adjacent phrases more parallel:

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign Behold a virgin shall conceive and **shall** bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel Butter and honey shall he eat that he may know to refuse the evil and **to** choose the good

The effect of increasing parallelism does not, by itself, point to a satisfactory explanation for these variants, since the net effect of Book of Mormon variants in these two chapters is to decrease parallelism, not increase it. The Ancient Variants Hypothesis fails to provide an explanation for these variants, since they neither change nor clarify the meaning. The Italics Revision Hypothesis fails to explain them since there are no italicized words that might have prompted editing by Joseph Smith. The Missing Words Hypothesis provides a clear motivation. Joseph Smith would have visioned the KJV text:

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel Butter and honey shall he eat that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good

58. The firsthand accounts of two individuals who were familiar with Joseph Smith's method of translating suggest that he could see only a line or two of text at a time. Joseph Knight recorded that "a sentence . . . would apper [sic] ... he would tell the writer and he would write it. Then ... the next sentence[sic] would Come and so on." "Joseph Knight, Sr., Reminiscence, Circa 1835–1847," in *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 4, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 17–18. David Whitmer recorded that Joseph's gift of translation was to "see the sentences in English, when he looked into the hat." David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ: By a Witness to the Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon* (Richmond, MO: printed by the author, 1887), 37.

Having an expectation that there were words missing from the text he was visioning, Joseph Smith would have scanned the text for locations where words might have been omitted. There are only two obvious locations in this passage: before “call” and before “choose.” The identities of the words he imagined to be missing, “shall” and “to,” would have also been obvious based on their occurrence in the parallel phrases. The addition of these words at locations unassociated with the KJV’s italicized words suggests that Joseph Smith was not reading from a physical Bible. If he had been reading from a physical Bible, even one that had the italicized words struck through, he would have known that there were no words missing before “call” and “choose.”

Overall, the Missing Words Hypothesis best explains the 29 variants in these two chapters, particularly in suggesting specific motives for editing of the KJV’s words.

Accounting for Italicized Words Retained in these Chapters

Each of the three hypotheses must not only explain why the KJV’s italicized words and phrases are often omitted, replaced, or expanded upon in the Book of Mormon, but also why in other instances they are left unchanged. There are 16 instances in the two sample chapters in which italicized words are left unchanged: “*is*” twice in 2 Nephi 16:3 “*which*” in 2 Nephi 16:6; “*there be*” in 2 Nephi 16:12; “*shall be*,” “*is*,” “*their leaves so*,” and “*shall be*” again in 2 Nephi 16: 13; “*is*” in 2 Nephi 17:8; “*is*” twice in 2 Nephi 17:9; “*is it*” in 2 Nephi 17:13; “*that*” and then “*is*” twice in 2 Nephi 17:18; and “*men*” in 2 Nephi 17:24.

The inconsistent treatment of the KJV’s italicized words is especially apparent with *be* verbs (usually appearing in the form of *is* or *am* in quoted Isaiah chapters). In his *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, Skousen notes that the KJV’s italicized *be* verbs are often, and apparently intentionally, omitted in the Book of Mormon.⁵⁹ Yet in most cases, italicized *be* verbs are left unchanged. One might propose that the Book of Mormon omits the italicized word when it isn’t essential to the grammar or meaning and retains it when it is. But such is not always the case in the two sample chapters. For example, consider the Book of Mormon’s quotation of Isaiah 6:3, in which the italicized *be* verbs are retained:

59. Regarding the omission of the KJV’s italicized *be* verbs, see Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 692–93, 670–71.

And one cried unto another and said Holy holy holy *is* the LORD of hosts the whole earth *is* full of his glory (2 Nephi 16:3)

The two instances of “*is*” in this verse could be omitted without doing too much damage to the grammar or sense of the text:

And one cried unto another and said Holy holy holy the LORD of hosts the whole earth full of his glory

Compare this hypothetical text to verse 5 of the same chapter, which omits two italicized *be* verbs (“*is*” and “*am*”) at greater cost:

Then said I Woe me for I am undone because I a man of unclean lips and I dwell (2 Nephi 16:5)

The Ancient Variants Hypothesis provides no help in explaining why the *be* verbs would be retained in verse 3 but omitted in verse 5. The Italics Revision Hypothesis also fails to explain such inconsistency in omitting italicized words. That hypothesis would have Joseph Smith intentionally omitting the italicized words in verse 5, causing obvious damage to grammar and sense, while keeping the italicized words in verse 3 that are less essential.

The Missing Words Hypothesis provides a rational explanation. If all of the italicized words were already omitted from the text Joseph Smith visioned, then their absence was the default situation. It required no intentionality on Joseph Smith’s part. The two italicized word are missing from verse 5 because Joseph Smith simply dictated what he saw without taking any action to revise it. This lack of action could have been due to any one of a number of factors such as lack of attention, momentary indifference born of fatigue, confusion as to what the missing words were or where they should go, or a momentary change of heart and decision to let the revealed word stand as it was given instead of trying to correct it.

The Book of Mormon’s inconsistency in handling the KJV’s italicized words is also evident in the next chapter. Verses 8 and 9 of Isaiah 7 begin with parallel statements, each with two instances of italicized “*is*” that serve the same functions in the two verses. Yet, the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 17:8–9) treats these two verses differently, dropping the second instance of “*is*” from verse 8 while retaining the parallel “*is*” in verse 9:

For the head of Syria *is* Damascus and the head of Damascus ***is*** Rezin (2 Nephi 17:8)

And the head of Ephraim *is* Samaria and the head of Samaria
is Remaliah's son (2 Nephi 17:9)

Similarly, italicized “*that*” serves an identical function in verses 18, 21, and 23 of Isaiah 7, which begin with parallel statements in both the English and the underlying Hebrew of the Masoretic Text. Yet, the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 17:18, 21, and 23) treats these three parallel statements differently, retaining the KJV’s “*that*” in the first, transposing it to an earlier location in the second, and dropping it altogether in the third:

And it shall come to pass in that day *that* the LORD shall hiss
(2 Nephi 17:17)

And it shall come to pass that in that day *that* a man shall
nourish (2 Nephi 17:21)

And it shall come to pass in that day *that* every place shall be
(2 Nephi 17:23)

These apparent edits are not only unhelpful and inconsistent, but they also needlessly reduce the parallelism among these phrases relative to the KJV and its underlying Hebrew. Once again, such inconsistency is acceptable under the Missing Words Hypothesis, but runs counter to the expectation, under the Ancient Variants Hypothesis, that Joseph Smith would be producing a text with “superior sense and clearness.” The Italics Revision Hypothesis doesn’t point to any obvious reason for such inconsistency.

While the Missing Words Hypothesis readily explains the inconsistency in the Book of Mormon’s treatment of the KJV’s italicized words in these two chapters, it has a greater challenge explaining the exact retention of some of the KJV’s italicized words and phrases that would at first glance seem to be difficult to recall or guess correctly. The following is the latter part of 2 Nephi 16:13, which is identical to the KJV of Isaiah 6:13:

as a teil tree and as an oak whose substance *is* in them when
they cast *their leaves* so the holy seed *shall be* the substance
thereof

According to the Missing Words Hypothesis, Joseph Smith would have had to recall from memory or correctly guess all of the italicized words in this passage. The italicized “*is*” should have been fairly easy to guess, since some form of *be* is obviously required at this location,

and the third person singular present best fits the context. It would have been more difficult to supply the phrase, “their leaves so.” Although it is possible that Joseph Smith was familiar enough with this verse from his previous experiences with the Bible that he was able to recall these words from memory, it seems unlikely, since this is not a well-known passage. There are, however, clues in the text that could have enabled him to guess this phrase. First, the trees in this passage are casting something. To our ears, it is not obvious whether they are casting acorns, leaves or even the “holy seed.” In Joseph Smith’s day, however, what a tree typically “cast” was leaves, so that would likely have been Joseph Smith’s first thought.⁶⁰ Second, the need for the word “their” could have been discerned given that “they” were doing the casting. Third, the word “as” that appears twice at the beginning of this passage suggests the possibility of “so” in the final clause. The italicized “shall be” should not have been difficult to guess, since the non-italicized phrase “shall be eaten” earlier in the verse sets this event in the future and provides a model for phrasing.

Another italicized phrase that at first might seem difficult to guess but that appears correctly in the Book of Mormon is in 2 Nephi 17:13 (Isaiah 7:13):

And he said Hear ye now O house of David *Is it* a small thing
for you to weary men but will ye weary my God also

A person who was not familiar with this passage would tend to guess “It is” instead of “Is it” as the missing italicized phrase. But Joseph Smith had probably heard this verse many times and easily reconstructed it while translating, since it introduces one of the most quoted passages in Christendom: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive.” Even if he had failed to recall the correct word order, his scribe could have remembered it and made the correction.

There is one other case of an italicized word appearing correctly in these two chapters that might at first glance seem improbable under the

60. To see evidence for this tendency, search the online *Google Books* database for “cast their leaves, cast their fruit, cast their seeds” (without the quotes) using the *Ngram Viewer* interface: https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=cast+their+leaves%2C+cast+their+fruit%2C+cast+their+seeds&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2Ccast%20their%20leaves%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2Ccast%20their%20fruit%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2Ccast%20their%20seeds%3B%2Cc0#t1%3B%2Ccast%20their%20leaves%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2Ccast%20their%20fruit%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2Ccast%20their%20seeds%3B%2Cc0.

Missing Words Hypothesis. The KJV's italicized "which" is retained in 2 Nephi 16:6 (Isaiah 6:6):

Then flew one of the seraphims unto me having a live coal in his hand *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar

With this italicized word missing from the text Joseph Smith saw, how would he have known to use the relative pronoun "which" rather than "that"? There are at least three plausible explanations for his use of "which" in this instance. It could have been a lucky guess. Since there are only two relative pronouns that fit, he would have had a fifty percent chance of getting the right one just by guessing. But there is a pattern in the Book of Mormon Isaiah chapters that better explains Joseph Smith's correct choice of "which." "Which" tends to be used at the locations of KJV italics and added words whenever the antecedent is not a person or persons.⁶¹ Seen through the lens of the Missing Words Hypothesis, this pattern indicates that Joseph Smith used "which" at this location because of the antecedent "coal" and his preference to use "which" in cases of non-human antecedents. It is also possible that Joseph Smith (or his scribe) was familiar enough with this verse from previously reading or hearing it that he remembered which relative pronoun was used.

Compared to these italicized words and phrases, the remainder of the KJV's italicized words that appear correctly in the Book of Mormon's version of Isaiah 6 and 7 would be relatively easy to guess for someone having any familiarity with the language of the King James Bible.

Implications of Later Editing of these Chapters

During typesetting for the initial printing of the Book of Mormon, the typesetter eliminated three of the variants in these two chapters, probably by reference to an open Bible. He restored "it" to "he laid ~~it~~ upon my mouth" (2 Nephi 16:7/Isaiah 6:7) and to "ask ~~it~~ either in the" (2 Nephi 17:11/Isaiah 7:11) and removed the added "that" from "it shall come to pass that in that day" (2 Nephi 17:21/Isaiah 7:21). When Joseph Smith edited the Book of Mormon for the 1837 edition, he apparently

61. "That" is replaced with "which" in 2 Nephi 7:11 (Isaiah 50:11) and 2 Nephi 12:14 (Isaiah 2:14); "which" is retained in 2 Nephi 16:6 (Isaiah 6:6), 2 Nephi 20:1 (Isaiah 20:1), and 2 Nephi 10:3 (Isaiah 20:3); "it" is replaced with "which" in 2 Nephi 17:23 (Isaiah 7:23); and "which" is used in an added sentence in 1 Nephi 20:14 (Isaiah 48:14). The one exception to this trend is the retention of "that" as the antecedent for "eggs" in 2 Nephi 20:14 (Isaiah 10:14). Joseph Smith's use of "that" in this instance may have been influenced by the appearance of "that" as a relative pronoun in reference to "none" in the same sentence.

either did not notice these reversals or did not object to them. In fact, his own editing restored four more of the italicized words that had been omitted from these Isaiah chapters. He restored “is” to “Woe *is* me” (2 Nephi 16:5/Isaiah 6:5), “am” to “I *am* a man” (2 Nephi 16:5/Isaiah 6:5) and “Here *am* I” (2 Nephi 16:8/Isaiah 6:8), and “that” to “*that* Resin king of Syria” (2 Nephi 17:1/Isaiah 7:1). His restoration of the italicized words suggests that the omission of these words was not appropriate (contra the Ancient Variants Hypothesis) and that he had not intended to omit them (contra the Italics Revision Hypothesis), but had simply failed to notice their absence when he first dictated these passages (in agreement with the Missing Words Hypothesis).⁶²

Ancient Manuscripts Support for Variants in these Chapters

John Tvedtnes conducted a study in which he investigated the Book of Mormon’s Isaiah variants for parallels in ancient manuscripts of Isaiah.⁶³ These ancient manuscripts included the Hebrew Masoretic Text from which the KJV was translated; Hebrew scrolls found at Qumran; ancient translations from the Hebrew, including the Aramaic

62. Editing for later editions of the Book of Mormon further reduced the variants in the Isaiah chapters, although most of the original variants are still present in the current (2013) edition. For example, in the earliest Book of Mormon text, italicized “is” was omitted from all six instances of the phrase “his hand *is* stretched out” in Isaiah quotations (in 2 Nephi 15:25; 2 Nephi 19:12, 17, and 21; 2 Nephi 20:4; and 2 Nephi 24:27). The “is” was restored in 2 Nephi 19:12 for the 1937 edition, and in all of the other passages for the 1920 edition. In contrast, in 2 Nephi 13:18 (corresponding to Isaiah 3:18), all 6 of the KJV’s italicized words were omitted in the earliest Book of Mormon text: “In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of *their* tinkling ornaments *about their feet* and *their* cauls and *their* round tires like the moon.” The first “*their*” was restored for the 1837 edition, but the other omitted words are still absent from the current edition.

63. Tvedtnes, *The Isaiah Variants*, 20–21. Carol F. Ellertson also did a study of Book of Mormon Isaiah variants, which she presented in her master’s thesis, “The Isaiah Passages in the Book of Mormon: A Non-aligned Text” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 2001), 43–178. Her approach and conclusions relating to ancient manuscript are similar to those of Tvedtnes. Donald W. Parry compares some Book of Mormon Isaiah variants with Isaiah of the Masoretic Text and the Great Isaiah Scroll, in “Harmonizing Isaiah: Combining Ancient Scriptures,” *Maxwell Institute Publications* 40 (2001), 55–60, 269–70, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/40>. He does not identify any support in these sources for the Book of Mormon variants. Parry more recently published a work in which he compares the variants in various ancient manuscripts of Isaiah. Donald W. Parry, *Exploring the Isaiah Scrolls and Their Textual Variants* (Leiden: Brill, 2019). This work does not discuss the Book of Mormon variants.

Targumim, the Syriac Peshitta, the Old Latin, the Latin Vulgate, and the Greek Septuagint; and quotations from the Septuagint in the New Testament. Of the 21 Book of Mormon variants in 2 Nephi 16 and 17 that he investigated, he found what he believed to be ancient manuscript support for only two: the addition of “they” before “understand” in 2 Nephi 16:9 and the addition of “they” before “perceive” later in the same verse.⁶⁴ The addition of “they” before these two verbs in the Book of Mormon requires that they be read in the indicative mood (“they perceive not”) rather than in the imperative mood (“Perceive not!”) of the KJV. The Septuagint, like the Book of Mormon, has “understand” and “perceive” in the indicative mood. Tvedtnes sees this parallel as ancient manuscript support for the Book of Mormon variants. There are reasons to believe, however, that these two variants in the Book of Mormon are independent changes unrelated to the variants in the Septuagint.

First, the Septuagint does not change the mood of “understand” and “perceive” in isolation. It has corresponding changes in the mood of “hear” and “see”: “Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive.”⁶⁵ The Book of Mormon lacks these corresponding changes.

Second, the actual difference between the Book of Mormon and the KJV here is one of pronouns — the addition of “they” — not of verbs. The addition of “they” primarily changes the point of view from second person (implied “ye”) to third person, and only secondarily changes the mood of the verbs. If the Book of Mormon were paralleling the Septuagint, it would have produced the indicative mood while keeping the point of view unchanged by adding “ye” instead of “they.”⁶⁶

64. Tvedtnes does not address nine of the 29 Book of Mormon variants: the omission of italicized “*am*” in Isaiah 6:5, the omission of italicized “*it*” in Isaiah 6:7, the replacement of “answered” with “said” in Isaiah 6:11, the omission of “it” in 2 Nephi 17:11, the addition of “shall” to 2 Nephi 17:14, the addition of “to” in 2 Nephi 17:15, the omission of “the rivers of” in 2 Nephi 17:18, the transposition of “that” in 2 Nephi 17:21, and the replacement of “it” with “which” in 2 Nephi 17:23. Except for the variants in 2 Nephi 17:18 and 7:23, which can readily be explained as errors of transmission of the English text, these Book of Mormon variants are generally consistent with the Hebrew behind the KJV. For “it” in relation to the underlying Hebrew of Isaiah 7:11, see Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 689–90.

65. This is the Septuagint as quoted by Paul in Acts 28:26. See also Matthew 13:14.

66. Although some New Testament adaptations of this verse use the third person, they are derived from the Septuagint, which uses the second person.

Third, the use of the indicative mood in 2 Nephi 16:9 of the Book of Mormon sets up a contradiction between that verse and the next, where the imperative mood of the KJV is retained. There is no such conflict in the Septuagint, which extends its use of the indicative into verse 10. This suggests that the use of the indicative in verse 9 in the Book of Mormon is secondary and unrelated to the use of the indicative in the Septuagint.

Fourth, the Hebrew underlying the Septuagint of the Isaiah chapters is widely believed to have been very close to the Hebrew underlying the KJV, with the Septuagint of Isaiah being, in places, a rather free translation of the underlying Hebrew.⁶⁷ Such appears to be the situation with Isaiah 6:9, which suggests that there may be no real Hebrew variant reflected in the Septuagint of this verse to contrast with the KJV, but only a varying translation of the same Hebrew that underlies the KJV.⁶⁸

Tvedtnes notes one other instance in these two chapters where there may, at first glance, seem to be ancient manuscript support for a Book of Mormon variant. The KJV has the active verb, “convert,” in 2 Nephi 16:10, while the Book of Mormon has the passive verb, “be converted.” The Septuagint and its New Testament derivatives, like the Book of Mormon, have the passive verb. That seeming support is illusory, however, since the Book of Mormon originally agreed with the KJV in having “convert.” Joseph Smith changed “convert” to “be converted” in his editing for the 1837 edition, probably either to make it parallel to “and be healed,” which immediately follows, or to better conform to modern usage. This false positive is a reminder that every parallel between the Book of Mormon and an ancient manuscript does not indicate derivation from a common textual source. Some parallels are to be expected by chance alone. In looking for Book of Mormon parallels in ancient sources, we must use the same methodological rigor and interpretative caution that we ask of those who look for Book of Mormon parallels in modern texts.

In addition to his search for variant support in ancient manuscripts, Tvedtnes addressed the possibility that Book of Mormon variants might reflect superior translation of the Hebrew behind the KJV. He found only one instance in these two chapters that he saw as superior translation in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon adds “shall” to “*there be* a great forsaking” in 2 Nephi 16:12, giving “there shall be a

67. Mirjam van der Vorm-Croughs, *The Old Greek of Isaiah: An Analysis of its Pluses and Minuses* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 1–14.

68. David C. L. Driedger, “Read Carefully but do not Understand: Isaiah 6:9–10 and the Ethics of Reading” (master’s thesis, Providence Theological Seminary, 2004), 50–65.

great forsaking.” Tvedtnes asserts that “by using a finite verb, BM [the Book of Mormon] is closer to MT [the Masoretic Text],” which can be translated more literally as “the forsaking shall be great.”⁶⁹ David Wright disputes Tvedtnes’s assertion that the Book of Mormon version is a better translation of the Hebrew behind the KJV.⁷⁰ In any case, the idea of superior translation would explain only one of the 29 Book of Mormon variants in these chapters, and the variant that it would explain is trivial.⁷¹

Based on the results of Tvedtnes’s analysis, there is little if any support from ancient manuscripts for the Book of Mormon variants in these two Isaiah chapters.⁷² This does not mean that there were no variants on the brass plates from which Nephi quoted. It is possible that any such variants were simply not preserved in any of the ancient manuscripts that Tvedtnes consulted. It could also be that it is not the Book of Mormon’s purpose, in quoting Isaiah, to present minor departures from the KJV that may have been present on the brass plates.

Advancements in Bible Translation

We can also address the question of whether Book of Mormon Isaiah is a superior translation by assessing its treatment of passages in the KJV that Bible translators have revised due to advances in biblical scholarship since the KJV was translated. The first major revision of the KJV was the Revised Version (RV), of which the New Testament was published in 1881 and the Old Testament in 1885. British and American scholars from various denominations contributed to the revision. Their objective was to “introduce as few alterations as possible into the Text of the Authorized

69. Tvedtnes, *The Isaiah Variants*, 42.

70. Wright, “Isaiah,” 194.

71. The idea that the Book of Mormon provides an independent and superior translation of Isaiah would also need to account for the fact that Book of Mormon Isaiah does not generally provide solutions for the more substantial and problematic translation difficulties in the KJV. An example from these chapters is 2 Nephi 17:15. The KJV has “Butter and honey shall he eat that he may know to refuse the evil and to choose the good.” This implies that eating butter and honey would instill moral discernment. Most modern translations render the Hebrew to avoid this absurdity.

72. For analysis of ancient manuscript support for variants in other chapters, see Tvedtnes, *The Isaiah Variants*. Tvedtnes provides a shorter version in “Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon,” in *Isaiah and the Prophets: Inspired Voices from the Old Testament*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1984), 165–78. Wright offers a critical response to Tvedtnes’s analysis in “Isaiah,” 157–234. Tvedtnes reviews Wright’s response in “Isaiah in the Bible,” 161–72.

Version consistently with faithfulness,” making only such revisions to the KJV that would more correctly or fully interpret the meaning of the source text, render parallel passages in a more uniform manner, or replace archaic vocabulary that was liable to be misunderstood. The revision of the Old Testament continued to rely on the Masoretic Text, but advances in biblical scholarship over the centuries since the KJV was produced, including improved understanding of Hebrew, presented the opportunity for a more accurate translation.⁷³ The most substantial revisions made to the KJV text of Isaiah 6 and 7, as given in the RV, are the following:

And the ~~posts of the door~~ foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, (Isaiah 6:4)

and ~~there be a great~~ forsaking the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land (Isaiah 6:12)

But yet in it ~~shall be~~ a tenth, and ~~it shall return and shall be eaten~~ And if there be yet a tenth in it, it shall again be eaten up (Isaiah 6:13)

as a ~~teil tree~~ terebinth, and as an oak, whose ~~substance is in them, when they cast their leaves~~ stock remaineth, when they are felled: so the holy seed shall be the substance is the stock thereof (Isaiah 6:13)

Butter and honey shall he eat, ~~that he may know~~ when he knoweth to refuse the evil, and choose the good (Isaiah 7:15)

For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land ~~that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken~~ (Isaiah 7:16)

upon all thorns, and upon all ~~bushes~~ pastures (Isaiah 7:19)

~~there shall not come thither the~~ thou shalt not come thither for fear of briers and thorns (Isaiah 7:25)

73. *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments; Translated Out of the Original Tongues: Being the Version Set Forth A.D. 1611, Compared with the Most Ancient Authorities and Revised* (Oxford, 1887), v-vi, x; <https://books.google.com/books?id=hqXYAAAAMAAJ>.

Most of these revisions have been retained in subsequent Bible translations in the KJV lineage of Bibles, such as the ESV, NASB, and NRSV, and are also supported by the most respected independent translations of the Masoretic Text, such as the NIV and NJPS.⁷⁴ The RV is essentially a corrected version of the KJV. If the Book of Mormon's rendering of Isaiah 6 and 7 constituted a more accurate translation than the KJV, it would be expected to differ from the KJV in ways that parallel at least some of these revisions. It does not. In every case it more closely follows the KJV. This suggests at least that the Book of Mormon's purpose in quoting Isaiah was not to correct translation errors in the English Bible. In particular, this assessment fails to support Roberts's belief that the many minor variants in Book of Mormon Isaiah are due to Joseph Smith's comparison of the KJV with his own translation from the plates and selection of the translation that gave "the superior sense and clearness."

General Book of Mormon Manuscript Evidence from the Critical Text Project

The remainder of this article will look more broadly at the Book of Mormon manuscript evidence beyond 2 Nephi 16 and 17.

As editor of the Book of Mormon Critical Text Project, Royal Skousen has spent much of the last three decades analyzing the original and printer's manuscripts of the Book of Mormon. Summaries of some of his findings are available online.⁷⁵ The findings generally support the witness accounts of translation. Specifically, there is ample evidence in the manuscripts of the following:

1. The original manuscript, including the quoted Bible chapters, was written from dictation rather than copying of another document.

74. The ESV, NASB, NRSV, NIV, and NJPS are more similar to the RV in all of these passages except for the following: in Isaiah 6:4, the NJPS is closer to the KJV, and the NIV is intermediate between the KJV and the RV; in the first half of Isaiah 6:13, the ESV, NASB, and NIV combine elements of the KJV and RV, and the NJPS is closer to the KJV; and in Isaiah 7:25, the NJPS is closer to the KJV.

75. Royal Skousen, "How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7, no. 1 (1998): 25–31, <http://criticaltext.byustudies.byu.edu/how-joseph-smith-translated-book-mormon-evidence-original-manuscript>; and Royal Skousen, "The Archaic Vocabulary of the Book of Mormon," *Insights* 25, no. 5 (2005): 2–6, <http://criticaltext.byustudies.byu.edu/archaic-vocabulary-book-mormon>.

2. Joseph Smith's dictation included precise and sometimes unusual spellings, suggesting that words were revealed to him, not merely ideas.
3. The vocabulary appears to derive mostly from the 1500s and 1600s, not from the 1800s, and includes word usage from this period that is not found in the King James Bible. Stanford Carmack has also presented evidence that the text is, for the most part, Early Modern English and is not the result of Joseph Smith's attempt to imitate the language of the King James Bible.⁷⁶
4. The manuscripts include consistent phraseology that suggests Joseph Smith was reading from a carefully prepared text rather than composing the English translation based on thoughts or impressions as he dictated.

Skousen summarizes his findings:

These new findings argue that Joseph Smith was not the author of the English-language translation of the Book of Mormon. Not only was the text revealed to him word for word, but the words themselves sometimes had meanings that he and his scribes would not have known, which occasionally led to misinterpretation. The Book of Mormon is not a 19th-century text, nor is it Joseph Smith's. The English-language text was revealed through him, but it was not precisely in his language or ours.⁷⁷

Skousen's findings suggest that Joseph Smith was not the translator of the Book of Mormon in the usual sense of the word, but dictated from a translation that had already been prepared by someone else. Applied to the Isaiah chapters, this would mean that Joseph Smith was not composing the text by reconciling his spiritual impressions with the text of an open Bible (as in the Ancient Variants Hypothesis) or working out his own revision of the Bible (as in the Italics Revision Hypothesis) but was more likely reading an adaption of Isaiah that had already been prepared by someone else. These major findings are most consistent with the Missing Words Hypothesis.

76. See, for example, Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209–62, and Stanford Carmack, "Joseph Smith Read the Words," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 41–64.

77. Skousen, "Archaic Vocabulary," 6.

Variants Involving English Polysemy

There are at least 15 variants in the Book of Mormon's Isaiah chapters that require that an English word from the KJV be reinterpreted in a way that is not consistent with the meaning of the Hebrew source from which the KJV was translated. (These variants are discussed in the following sections.⁷⁸) In other words, the English word is polysemous (has multiple meanings) in a manner that the Hebrew source of the KJV is not. Since these Book of Mormon variants are reliant on an alternate meaning of an English polysemous word, they are most reasonably interpreted as direct alterations to the English text rather than as variants in the ancient source text. In the biblical quotations from the Book of Mormon below, the polysemous English words are in small capital letters and the Book of Mormon variants that rely on their non-biblical meanings are in bold.

1 Nephi 20:3 (Isaiah 48:3) — 1 variant

I have declared the former things from the beginning and they went forth out of my mouth and I shewed them I **DID** shew them suddenly

In this passage in the KJV, “did” means “performed.” In the Book of Mormon’s quotation of the passage, “did” is an auxiliary verb without independent meaning.

1 Nephi 20:16 (Isaiah 48:16) — 1 variant

I have not spoken in secret from the beginning from the time that it **was there-am declared** have I spoken and

In this passage in the KJV, “was” means “took place.” In the Book of Mormon’s quotation of the passage, “was” is an auxiliary verb without independent meaning.

2 Nephi 7:2 (Isaiah 50:2) — 3 variants

WHEREFORE when I came **was there was** no man when I called yea was there was none to answer ... behold at my rebuke I dry up the sea I **MAKE** the rivers a wilderness and their fish **stinketh to stink**

78. Except for the variant in 2 Nephi 18:19 (Isaiah 8:19), these variants are all discussed in Wright, “Isaiah,” 174–76. The variant in 2 Nephi 23:3 (Isaiah 13:3) is also discussed in Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 222–23.

There are two polysemous words in this passage: “wherefore” and “make.” In this passage in the KJV, “wherefore” means “why.” In the quotation in the Book of Mormon, it means “therefore.” In the KJV, “make” means to transform something into something else. As quoted in the Book of Mormon, it retains this meaning relative to “river,” but gains the meaning of “cause” relative to “to stink.”

2 Nephi 12:10, 19, 21 (Isaiah 2:10, 19, 21) — 5 variants

Enter into the rock and hide thee in the dust **FOR** the fear of the LORD and **for** the glory of his majesty **shall smite thee** ... And they shall go into the holes of the rocks and into the caves of the earth **FOR** the fear of the LORD **shall come upon them** and **for** the glory of his majesty **shall smite them** when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth ... To go into the clefts of the rocks and into the tops of the ragged rocks **FOR** the fear of the LORD **shall come upon them** and **for** the glory of his majesty of his glory **shall smite them** when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth

In this passage in the KJV, the three instances of “for” all mean “because of” (a preposition). In the Book of Mormon, they mean “because” (a conjunction).

2 Nephi 15:4 (Isaiah 5:4) — 1 variant

What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it **WHEREFORE** when I looked that it should bring forth grapes **it brought it** forth wild grapes

In this passage in the KJV, “wherefore,” once again, means “why.” In the Book of Mormon, it means “therefore.”

2 Nephi 18:19 (Isaiah 8:19) — 1 variant

And when they shall say unto you Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto wizards that peep and ~~that~~ mutter should not a people seek unto their God **FOR** the living **TO hear from** the dead

There are two polysemous words in this passage: “for” and “to.” In the KJV, “for” means “on behalf of” and “to” means “unto.” As the passage is quoted in the Book of Mormon, “for” serves as a function word to indicate the purpose, and “to” is an infinitive marker.

2 Nephi 23:3 (Isaiah 13:3) — 1 variant

I have commanded my sanctified ones I have also called my mighty ones **FOR** mine anger *even is not upon* them that rejoice in my highness

In this passage in the KJV, “for” means “because of.” In the Book of Mormon’s quotation, it means “because.”

2 Nephi 27:30 (Isaiah 29:19) — 2 variants

The meek also shall **INCREASE** **and** *their* joy **shall be** in the LORD

In this passage in the KJV, “increase” means “make greater” (a transitive verb). In the Book of Mormon’s quotation, it means “become greater” (an intransitive verb).

The Explanatory Power of Each Hypothesis

Of the 15 variants in these biblical quotations, four involve the KJV’s italicized words or depend upon variants at those locations (one in 1 Nephi 20:16, two in 2 Nephi 7:2, and one in 2 Nephi 23:3). They are thus explained, at least in a general way, by the Italics Revision Hypothesis as products of Joseph Smith’s presumed belief that the italicized words had no counterpart in the original language and that he was, therefore, free to revise them. The other 11 variants are unexplained by the Italics Revision Hypothesis.

None of the 15 variants is easily explained by the Ancient Variants Hypothesis since they rely on peculiarities of the particular English words selected by the KJV translators.

Fourteen of the 15 variants involve the addition of words or the transposition of italicized words (only the variant in 2 Nephi 15:4 does not). They are thus explained, in a general way at least, by the Missing Words Hypothesis as products of Joseph’s belief that words were missing and needed to be supplied. Furthermore, the Missing Words Hypothesis illuminates specific motivations for supplying the presumed missing words. For example, while dictating the Book of Mormon’s quotation of Isaiah 2:19, he would have been looking at this text in vision:

And they shall go into the holes of the rocks and into the caves of the earth for fear of the LORD and for the glory of his majesty when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth

If Joseph Smith interpreted “for” as meaning “because” rather than the less common “because of,” it would have seemed obvious to him that a predicate was missing after “fear of the LORD” and again after “glory of his majesty.” He supplied phrases that seemed reasonable — “shall come upon them” and “shall smite them.” He then would have needed to add “the” after the first “for” and remove the second “for” in order to make the passage read smoothly. Since he would have been doing all this in his head instead of on paper, he may not have even been conscious of making the latter two edits. A misinterpretation of “for” would similarly explain the nearby variants in verses 10 and 21. His misinterpretation of polysemous words in the other passages, combined with an expectation of missing words, may have similarly motivated him to add words in the remaining passages.⁷⁹

79. While dictating the Book of Mormon’s quotation of Isaiah 8:19, Joseph Smith would have been looking at this text in vision (possibly without the punctuation): “And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?” The final phrase of this passage is awkward in the KJV, which could have prompted Joseph Smith to suspect that words were missing, and particularly that a verb was missing. The most obvious place for a verb would have been after the “to,” interpreted as an infinity marker. Given the context, “hear” would have been a reasonable guess for an expected missing verb at this location. While dictating the Book of Mormon’s quotation of Isaiah 13:3, he would have been looking at this text in vision: “I have commanded my sanctified ones I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger them that rejoice in my highness.” If Joseph Smith had, again, interpreted “for” as meaning “because” rather than the less common “because of,” it would have seemed obvious that a verb phrase was missing after “mine anger.” He made a reasonable guess and inserted “is not upon” as he dictated the passage. While dictating the Book of Mormon’s quotation of Isaiah 29:19, he would have been looking at this text in vision: “The meek also shall increase joy in the LORD.” If Joseph Smith interpreted “increase” as meaning “become greater” rather than “make greater,” it would have seemed to him that words were missing both before and after “joy.” He made reasonable guesses and inserted “and their” and “shall be” as he dictated the passage. While dictating the Book of Mormon’s quotation of Isaiah 48:3, Joseph would have been looking at this text in vision: “I have declared the former things from the beginning and they went forth out of my mouth and I shewed them I did suddenly and they came to pass.” It would have seemed obvious to him that one or more words were missing after “did.” He guessed “shew.” This guess was reasonable (but wrong) based on the presence of “shewed” earlier in the passage. While dictating the Book of Mormon’s quotation of Isaiah 48:16, Joseph Smith would have been looking at this text in vision: “I have not spoken in secret from the beginning from the time that it was there I and now the Lord God.” He would have guessed that words were missing somewhere around “there I,” although it would not have been obvious what the

Only the variant in 2 Nephi 15:4 (Isaiah 5:4) — the change from “brought it” to “it brought” — is unexplained by any of the three hypotheses. It could, of course, be an unintentional error of dictation, transcription, or copying of the manuscript. Alternatively, it may have been an intentional edit by Joseph Smith or his scribe to “correct” the text after interpreting “wherefore” to mean “therefore” instead of “why.”

Overall, the Missing Words Hypothesis best explains the variants reliant on polysemy of English words. The fact that several of these variants (five in 2 Nephi 12 and one in 2 Nephi 18) consist of words added at locations that are not associated with the KJV’s italicized words suggests that Joseph Smith was not reading from a physical Bible as he dictated. If he had been reading from a physical Bible, even one that had the italicized words struck through, he would have been able to see that there were no words missing at these locations and would have therefore

missing words were. He came up with a satisfactory solution and a reading that made better sense by replacing “there” with “declared have” and adding “spoken” after “I.” While dictating the Book of Mormon’s quotation of Isaiah 50:2, Joseph Smith would have been looking at this text in vision: “Wherefore when I came no man when I called none to answer ... behold at my rebuke I dry up the sea I make the rivers a wilderness their fish stinketh.” He would have suspected that words were missing after “I came” and “I called.” If he interpreted “wherefore” as meaning “therefore” (which it usually means in the Book of Mormon) instead of “why,” it would have then seemed obvious that the missing words at both locations were “there was.” Incorrectly believing that “make” refers to “fish” as well as “rivers,” he would have suspected that a connecting “and” was missing before “their fish” and seen a need to change “stinketh” to “to stink” in order to conform the text to his misinterpretation of “make.” There is a third apparent misinterpretation of “wherefore” in the Book of Mormon in 2 Nephi 9:51 (compare Isaiah 55:2). The Book of Mormon’s repeated misinterpretation of “wherefore” in these Bible quotations presents an additional problem for both the Italics Revision Hypothesis and the Ancient Variants Hypothesis. It suggests that the person responsible for these edits to the KJV’s language was not familiar with the usage of *wherefore* as an interrogative. (It also suggests the possibility that punctuation, including question marks that would have identified *wherefore* as an interrogative, was lacking from the text Joseph Smith was reading.) Yet, elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, *wherefore* is used as an interrogative (see 2 Nephi 29:08; and also 1 Nephi 4:3 as a possible instance of this usage), suggesting that the person responsible for the overall language of the Book of Mormon *was* familiar with this usage. In other words, there were two translators of the Book of Mormon, with one of them having a better understanding of this word than the other. The involvement of two people of differing language ability (the unlearned Joseph Smith and a prior translator) is consistent with the Missing Words Hypothesis but unexpected under the other two hypotheses.

had no reason under the Missing Words Hypothesis to add words. As noted above, the other two hypotheses, which assume an open Bible, provide no obvious explanation for these additions.

Repeated Quotations of Isaiah

Cases in which the Book of Mormon quotes the same biblical passage more than once can also serve as tests of the explanatory power of the three hypotheses. The Isaiah passages quoted multiple times in the Book of Mormon are presented below.⁸⁰ Differences from the KJV as well as the KJV's italicized words are indicated.

Isaiah 11:5–9 in 2 Nephi 21: 4–9 and 2 Nephi 30:9–15 — 3 variants

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together and a little child shall lead them And the cow and the bear shall feed their young ones shall lie down together and the lion shall eat straw like the ox And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den⁸¹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (2 Nephi 21: 4–9)

80. These are all of the repeated quotes from Isaiah based on Skousen's list of Isaiah quotations in the Book of Mormon in "Textual Variants," 369–71, 385–86, excluding Christ's obvious adaptations of Isaiah 52 in 3 Nephi 20 and 21 and Abinadi's short quote or paraphrase from Isaiah 53:7 in Mosiah 15:6. The latter is so short (14 words) that it is not clear whether it is intended as a quote or a paraphrase, especially since it differs from the way Abinadi had just quoted the same passage a few verses earlier. Neal Rappleye organizes the repeated Isaiah quotations in a blog post. Neal Rappleye, "Isaiah Variants within the Book of Mormon," *Studio Et Quoque Fide* (blog), January 9, 2014, <http://www.studioetquoquefide.com/2014/01/isaiah-variants-within-book-of-mormon.html>.

81. Although the 1769 KJV has "cockatrice' den" in Isaiah 11:14, some other KJV editions have "cockatrice's den" including the American Bible Society Bibles stereotyped by E. and J. White in New York from 1818 to 1829.

But And with righteousness shall **he the Lord God** judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked ... And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins **And then shall The wolf also shall** dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together and a little child shall lead them And the cow and the bear shall feed their young ones shall lie down together and the lion shall eat straw like the ox And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (2 Nephi 30:9–15)

Isaiah 49:22–26 in 1 Nephi 21:22–26 and 2 Nephi 6:6–7, 16–18
— 7 unique variants (9 total)

Thus saith the Lord GOD Behold I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles and set up my standard to the people and they shall bring thy sons in *their* arms and thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders And kings shall be thy nursing fathers and their queens thy nursing mothers they shall bow down to thee with *their* face **toward towards** the earth and lick up the dust of thy feet and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me **For** Shall the prey be taken from the mighty or the lawful captive delivered But thus saith the LORD Even the **captives captive** of the mighty shall be taken away and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered for⁸² I will contend with him that contendeth with thee and I will save thy children And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh **and** they shall be drunken with their own blood as with sweet wine and all flesh shall

82. Immediately after “prey of the terrible shall be delivered for” in 2 Nephi 6:17, the Book of Mormon adds “the mighty God shall deliver his covenant people. For thus saith the Lord.” Although this could be interpreted as a variant in Isaiah, the resumptive “for thus saith the Lord” suggests that it is rather an interruption in the quotation for commentary. I have therefore omitted it from the quotation as presented here. There is a much longer interruption after “they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”

know that I the LORD *am* thy Savior and thy Redeemer the Mighty One of Jacob (1 Nephi 21:22–26)

Thus saith the Lord GOD Behold I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles and set up my standard to the people and they shall bring thy sons in *their* arms and thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders And kings shall be thy nursing fathers and their queens thy nursing mothers they shall bow down to thee with *their* **face faces toward towards** the earth and lick up the dust of thy feet and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me [*interruption in the quotation*] **For** Shall the prey be taken from the mighty or the lawful captive delivered But thus saith the LORD Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered for [*interruption in the quotation*] I will contend with **him them** that contendeth with thee **and-I will save thy children** And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh and they shall be drunken with their own blood as with sweet wine and all flesh shall know that I the LORD *am* thy Savior and thy Redeemer the Mighty One of Jacob (2 Nephi 6:6–7, 16–18)

Isaiah 52:1–2 in 2 Nephi 8:24–25 and 3 Nephi 20:36–37 — 2 unique variants (3 total)

Awake awake put on thy strength O Zion put on thy beautiful garments O Jerusalem the holy city for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean Shake thyself from the dust arise **and** sit down O Jerusalem loose thyself from the bands of thy neck O captive daughter of Zion (2 Nephi 8:24–25)

Awake awake **again and** put on thy strength O Zion put on thy beautiful garments O Jerusalem the holy city for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean Shake thyself from the dust arise **and** sit down O Jerusalem loose thyself from the bands of thy neck O captive daughter of Zion (3 Nephi 20:36–37)

Isaiah 52:8–10 in Mosiah 12:22–24, Mosiah 15:29–31, and 3 Nephi 16:18–20 — 2 variants

Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice with the voice together shall they sing for they shall see eye to eye when the LORD shall bring again Zion Break forth into joy sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem For the LORD hath comforted his people he hath redeemed Jerusalem The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God (Mosiah 12:22–24)

Thy watchmen shall lift up **the their** voice with the voice together shall they sing for they shall see eye to eye when the LORD shall bring again Zion Break forth into joy sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem For the LORD hath comforted his people he hath redeemed Jerusalem The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God (Mosiah 15:29–31)

Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice with the voice together shall they sing for they shall see eye to eye when the LORD shall bring again Zion Break forth into joy sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem For the LORD hath comforted his people he hath redeemed Jerusalem The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of **our** God (3 Nephi 16:18–20)

The Explanatory Power of Each Hypothesis

There are 14 unique variants in these quotations of Isaiah. How well do the three hypotheses explain these variants?

The repeated Isaiah quotations in the Book of Mormon are a powerful test of the Ancient Variants Hypothesis. If the variants in these quotations reflected ancient differences on the brass plates, the same variants should appear in an Isaiah passage each time it is quoted. Such is not the case. Only three of the 14 variants are consistently present in repeated quotations of an Isaiah passage: the replacement of “toward” with “towards” and the addition of “for” to the quotes from Isaiah 49, and the omission of italicized “*and*” from the quotation from Isaiah 52. But even these variants provide little if any support for the Ancient Variants Hypothesis. The replacement of “toward” with “towards” is not likely to reflect an ancient variant since the two words are equivalent in

meaning. Nor is it likely that the omission of italicized “and” reflects an ancient variant, since the italicization of this word indicates it has no direct counterpart in the Hebrew source of the KJV.

Only the addition of “for” potentially supports the Ancient Variants Hypothesis. Even in that case, however, there is reason to doubt that “for” represents an ancient variant from the brass plates. “For” in 1 Nephi 21:24 appears as a supralinear edit in the original manuscript.⁸³ Although it is possible that Joseph Smith included the “for” in his original dictation of the passage but Oliver Cowdery accidentally omitted it and then made a correction, it is also possible that “for” was not part of the original dictation but was added as an afterthought by either Joseph Smith or Oliver Cowdery to increase the connectedness with the prior sentence.⁸⁴ In that case, “for” would not be an ancient variant but rather a modern edit. The corresponding added “for” in 2 Nephi 6:16 is readily explained as an adaptation of the quotation by Jacob to connect it to his own words. In fact, it may not be part of the Isaiah quotation at all, depending on how the passage is punctuated. The passage can be punctuated to exclude “for” from the quotation:

And they shall know that the Lord is God the Holy One of Israel. **For** “shall the prey be taken from the mighty ... and all flesh shall know that I the LORD *am* thy Savior and thy Redeemer the Mighty One of Jacob”

In quoting Isaiah, Jacob may have used “for,” not as part of the quotation, but rather as a transition word to introduce the quotation as supportive evidence for his assertion in the previous verse that “they shall know that the Lord is God the Holy One of Israel.” “For” is often used in the Book of Mormon in similar situations.⁸⁵ In fact, Jacob seems to be using “for” in this way just three verses later, at the beginning of 2 Nephi 7. He first presents a question in the voice of the Lord: “Have I put thee away or have I cast thee off forever?” He then answers it by

83. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 449.

84. But see Skousen’s evaluation in *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 449.

85. For examples of similar use of “for” as a conjunction at the beginning of a sentence or verse in the chapter just prior to the Isaiah quotation, see 1 Nephi 19:11 (“For thus saith the prophet, The Lord God surely”), 1 Nephi 19:20 (“For hath not the Lord been merciful”), 1 Nephi 19:21 (“For he surely did shew”), and 1 Nephi 19:24 (“For after this manner hath the prophet written”). For some other cases where “for” may have been added to provide connectedness, see 1 Nephi 20:10, 1 Nephi 20:12, 1 Nephi 21:15, and 2 Nephi 7:1.

quoting Isaiah chapters 50, 51, and part of 52, with “for” providing the connection between question and answer:

For “Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement . . . sit down O Jerusalem loose thyself from the bands of thy neck O captive daughter of Zion.”

It is also possible, of course, that Joseph Smith or Oliver Cowdery added “for” to increase the connectedness not only in 1 Nephi 21:24, but at this location as well. Thus, “for,” which is one of the most commonly used words in the Book of Mormon, may occur at both locations, not because it is an ancient Isaiah variant, but because it was added to the two passages independently. In any case, the Ancient Variants Hypothesis fails to explain almost all of the variants in these passages.

The Italics Revision Hypothesis doesn’t fare any better in explaining the 14 variants. It would account, in a general way, for only one of the 14 distinct variants: the omission of italicized “and” from Isaiah 52:2. None of the other variants in these quotations are explained by the Italics Revision Hypothesis since none involves italicized words. This hypothesis also falls short in another way. Presumably, according to this hypothesis, Joseph Smith intended his own revisions of Isaiah’s text to be believable as ancient variants. The lack of the consistent presence of most of the 14 variants in repeated quotations is certainly not the expected outcome of such an intended deception.

The Missing Words Hypothesis fares slightly better. It would explain three of the 14 distinct variants. It would readily explain the omission of italicized “and” from the quotations of Isaiah 52:2, since all italicized words would have already been omitted. It would also explain the addition of “again and” to one of the quotations of Isaiah 52:1 and the addition of “for” to both quotations of Isaiah 49:24 as Joseph Smith’s additions in response to his belief that words were missing at these locations.⁸⁶

The Missing Words Hypothesis, which assumes that all of the KJV’s italicized words were omitted from the text Joseph Smith visioned, would also need to explain how Joseph Smith could have correctly guessed,

86. In dictating a quotation of Isaiah 52:1, it is easy to see why Joseph Smith would have thought that “and” was missing after “awake awake” and needed to be added, but the addition of “again” is not as easily explained. It may have been a result of miscommunication between him and his scribe. After dictating “awake awake” he may have said “again,” not as part of his dictation, but to alert his scribe that there were actually two instances of “awake” in the text and he was not just repeating himself.

twice, the five italicized words that are still present in the repeated quotations. All are in the quotations from Isaiah 49:

they shall bring thy sons in *their* arms and thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders And kings shall be thy nursing fathers and their queens thy nursing mothers they shall bow down to thee with *their* face/faces ... and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD for they shall ... and all flesh shall know that I the LORD *am* thy Savior and thy Redeemer the Mighty One of Jacob

According to this hypothesis, while dictating these quotations, Joseph Smith would have been provided with the following text in vision:

they shall bring thy sons in arms and thy daughters shall be carried upon shoulders And kings shall be thy nursing fathers and their queens thy nursing mothers they shall bow down to thee with face ... and thou shalt know that I the LORD for they shall ... and all flesh shall know that I the LORD thy Savior and thy Redeemer the Mighty One of Jacob

The identities of the first four missing italicized words would have likely been obvious. The fifth missing italicized word, the “*am*” before “thy Savior,” might have been more difficult to discern. It would have probably been clear enough that “*am*” had been omitted from one of three possible locations: before “the LORD,” before “thy Savior,” or before “the Mighty One of Jacob.” How would Joseph Smith have known to put “*am*” in the second position? It’s possible that he was already familiar enough with this passage that the second location sounded better to him. Or he may have thought that the second position made better narrative or logical sense (people would be convinced that the Lord saves, rather than that the entity in question was the Lord or the Mighty One of Jacob). His placement of “*am*” at the second rather than the first possible location may also reflect a tendency to accept the visioned text as far as it made sense and delay the addition of words until a need became apparent, thus favoring later rather than earlier locations for insertion. Since “I the Lord” makes sense and is a common phrase in scripture, he would not have been inclined to alter it.

Overall, the Missing Words Hypothesis has greater explanatory power than the other two hypotheses, since it explains more variants.

Unexplained Variants

The remaining 11 variants in these repeated quotations, although not specifically explained by any of the three hypotheses, are not necessarily inconsistent with them.

The replacement of “face” with “faces,” “toward,” with “towards,” and “captives” with “captive” in the quotations from Isaiah 49 are typical of the kinds of errors of transmission that Stan Larson enumerated (specifically, his third category). Alternatively, they may have been attempts by Joseph Smith or Oliver Cowdery to modernize the wording (in the case of “toward”) or increase internal consistency (in the case of “captive”) or correct a perceived disagreement in number (in the case of “their face”). The replacement of “him” with “them” in one quotation from Isaiah 49 may have been a result of the scribe’s mishearing of “with him” as “with them.” In his analysis of Book of Mormon variants, Skousen notes that Joseph Smith, in dictating the Book of Mormon, “often pronounced unstressed ‘him’ and ‘them’ indistinguishably as /əm/.”⁸⁷ The omission of “and” from one of the quotations from Isaiah 49 and the replacement of “the” with “their” and omission of “our” from quotations from Isaiah 52 are also typical of the kinds of errors of transmission categorized by Larson (specifically, his first and third categories).

The variants in the quotation from Isaiah 11 in 2 Nephi 30 — the replacement of “But” with “And,” “he” with “the Lord God,” and “The wolf also shall” with “And then shall the wolf” — are probably best explained as Nephi’s adaptation of this passage. These variants are not in a quoted chapter that Nephi is reading from the brass plates, but rather in a smaller segment of Isaiah that he is integrating into his own prophecy. As such, it would not be unexpected that he would adapt the quotation to its new context.⁸⁸

87. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 656–60.

88. The “And” replacing “But” is at the very beginning of the quoted passage. At this location, “And” could be considered a transition word introducing the quotation rather than part of the quotation itself. In its context in Isaiah 11 in the KJV, the quoted passage begins with “But,” which is the appropriate conjunction to indicate contrast with the previous phrase: he will not judge “after the hearing of his ears **But** with righteousness shall he judge” (emphasis added). In the context of Nephi’s prophecy, however, “But” is not a suitable conjunction since the previous phrase does not have a contrasting meaning, so Nephi begins (or introduces) the quotation with “And” instead. In quoting the Isaiah passage, Nephi also replaces “he” in Isaiah’s text with “the Lord God” in order to identify the subject of Isaiah’s prophecy with “the Lord God,” who is the subject of Nephi’s

There are at least two reasonable explanations for the omission of “and I will save thy children” from the quotation from Isaiah 49 in 2 Nephi 6:⁸⁹

that contendeth with thee ~~and I will save thy children~~ And I
will feed them that oppress thee

Joseph Smith’s eye (while dictating) or his scribe’s eye (while copying the original manuscript) may have skipped from the “and I will” that begins this phrase to the “and I will” that immediately follows it, with the result that the intervening text was lost. It is also possible that Jacob omitted this portion of Isaiah because he did not feel a need to quote it.

Other Repeated Biblical Quotations

Besides the repeated quotations from Isaiah, there is one other obviously repeated biblical quotation in the Book of Mormon. In Mosiah 12:36, Abinadi quotes the second of the ten commandments, following Exodus 20:4. A few verses later, in Mosiah 13:12, he quotes the commandment again. He introduces his second recitation by saying that he is repeating himself (“And now ye remember that I said unto you...”). Yet, as they appear in the Book of Mormon, these repeated quotations differ from

prophecy. In his prophecy, Nephi is outlining a sequence of future events. By replacing “The wolf also shall” with “And then the wolf shall,” Nephi is able to properly set the conditions mentioned in this passage (peace and universal gospel knowledge) beyond the time of the conditions that he had just described (division and destruction). While the adaptation of quotations in this way is often signaled by the use of square brackets in modern literature, there was no such tool anciently. Nor did the ancients have the same expectation of precision in quoting that we have now. As Christopher Stanley notes in his study of Paul’s adaptation of Old Testament passages, “Modern notions of the inviolability of an author’s original text simply cannot be transferred to the ancient world.” Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 274. See pp. 267–337 for more on the common ancient practice of incorporating interpretive elements into quotations. For surveys of different ways Old Testament passages are used in the New Testament, see Martin Pickup, “New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament: The Theological Rationale of Midrashic Exegesis,” *JETS* 51, no. 2 (June 2008): 353–81; E. Earle Ellis, “How the New Testament Uses the Old,” in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 199–219; and Richard C. Oudersluys, “Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament,” *Reformed Review* 14, no. 3 (1961), 1–12.

89. See Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 576–78 for more discussion of this omission.

each other as well as from the KJV, with the differences concentrated at the locations of the KJV's italicized words:⁹⁰

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of *any thing* **that is** in the heaven above or **that things which** is in the earth beneath (Mosiah 12:36)

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of *any thing* **that things which** is in heaven above or **that which** is in the earth beneath (Mosiah 13:12)

The fact that these two Book of Mormon passages are explicitly presented as duplicate quotations yet differ from each other suggests that there has been some secondary editing of one or both passages.

The Ancient Variants Hypothesis provides no obvious explanation for the variants in these passages. If the variants reflected ancient variants from the brass plates, the same variants would appear at the same locations in both passages. They do not. Also, once again, these changes depart from grammatical norms and do nothing to clarify or change the meaning.

Although the variants in these two quotations from Exodus are broadly consistent with both the Italics Revision Hypothesis and the Missing Words Hypothesis due to their involvement of the KJV's italicized words, they provide greater support for the Missing Words Hypothesis for at least two reasons. First, if Joseph Smith were making intentional revisions to the biblical text, as the Italics Revision Hypothesis proposes, one would expect that he would try to be consistent, making the same revisions each time he quoted the same passage. This would be particularly expected in this instance, where the two quotations are explicitly presented as duplicate quotations and are near enough together that he could have easily compared them. In contrast, under the Missing Words Hypothesis, each time Joseph Smith saw a repeated passage, he would have made his best guess of what words were missing, and would not have necessarily guessed the same way each time, or come up with the same way to smooth the text. Second, the Italics Revision Hypothesis does not explain the addition of "the" before "heaven" in the

90. In the overall quotations from Exodus, as in the Isaiah quotations, variants tend to be concentrated at the locations of the KJV's italicized words. For example, in Mosiah 13:18, three of four italicized words are omitted: "but the seventh day **is** the sabbath of the Lord thy God **in-it** thou shalt not do any work thou nor thy son nor thy daughter thy manservant nor thy maidservant nor thy cattle nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates."

first instance of this passage, since the change has no connection with the KJV's italicized words. Under the Missing Words Hypothesis, Joseph Smith may have suspected a missing "the" at this location since "the" occurs before the parallel "earth" later in the passage.

The replacement of non-italicized "that" with "which" in both passages must also be explained. These replacements are not expected under the Ancient Variants Hypothesis since they do not change the sense or increase the clearness. Similarly, no motivation for these replacements is obvious under the Italics Revision Hypothesis.⁹¹ The Missing Words Hypothesis suggests a possible reason for these replacements. Under this hypothesis, Joseph Smith would have been making ad hoc edits in his head.⁹² He didn't have the luxury of a Bible to mark up or pen and paper to carefully compose an edit that he could then compare against the unedited text. Without these tools, it would have been difficult for him to ensure that he was not making unintentional changes, and he may not have even realized he was replacing "that" with "which" as he integrated new words into these verses.

The inconsistent editing of the two repeated quotations, along with the replacement of words with synonyms, suggests that the editing was ad hoc and not reflective of ancient variants on the brass plates or of a systematic attempt at Bible revision. The edits are most compatible with the Missing Words Hypothesis.

Conclusions

In this article, I have assessed the explanatory power of three hypotheses relative to the many minor variants in quoted biblical passages in the Book of Mormon. The Ancient Variants Hypothesis is the most widely accepted explanation for these variants among believers in the Book of Mormon. The Italics Revision Hypothesis is the dominant competing explanation described in Book of Mormon literature. The Missing Words Hypothesis is a newly presented explanation. The Missing Words Hypothesis best explains the variants in the two Book of Mormon Isaiah chapters that were sampled for this analysis, as well as the variants that

91. It could be argued that "that" was replaced with "which" in order to impart a more archaic sound to the text. But presumably, the objective of using archaic-sounding words would be to make the Book of Mormon more like the KJV, not less, as this instance does.

92. The other two hypotheses also leave open the possibility that he would have been editing in his head, although they provide an opportunity for marking up and then reading from a printed Bible.

are dependent on polysemy of English words and the variants in biblical passages that are quoted more than once. This hypothesis is also most compatible with descriptions of the translation process in the firsthand accounts of individuals who were present as Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon, as well as with the principal findings of Royal Skousen's monumental study of the Book of Mormon manuscripts. It is supported by an early historical source.

The results of this analysis do not support the idea that the many minor differences between Isaiah in the Book of Mormon and the KJV represent ancient variants from the brass plates. Nor do they suggest that Joseph Smith was working from an open Bible in which he could see the locations of the italicized words. Rather, they are more consistent with the idea that he was making ad hoc edits as he read and dictated a text from which he believed words were missing, and from which the KJV's italicized words had in fact been omitted by someone else. This idea, better than the other two hypotheses, explains the odd way the Book of Mormon treats the KJV's italicized words — omitting italicized words that are grammatically important in English, treating the same italicized word in parallel phrases differently, and replacing italicized words with synonyms. It also explains why many other words and short phrases have been inserted into the biblical quotations — Joseph Smith believed that words were missing but didn't always know the precise locations, so he sometimes added words at the wrong locations or overcompensated and added words when none were in fact missing.

The lack of support for the Ancient Variants Hypothesis in this study does not mean that there are no ancient variants in the Book of Mormon Isaiah chapters. Some of the longer Isaiah variants, such as the thematic additions to Isaiah 49 regarding “ye that are broken off ... that are scattered abroad...” (1 Nephi 21:1) and “the feet of them which are in the east...” (1 Nephi 21:13) are too long and complex to be readily explained as Joseph Smith's ad hoc editing in response to a belief that words were missing. Nor are they readily explained as attempts to modernize the language or as errors of dictation, transcription, or copying of the original manuscript. They are better explained as either ancient variants in Isaiah or as interpolations made by Nephi in order to liken the scriptures to his people and reinforce his theme of the scattering and restoration of Israel.⁹³

93. Just before quoting Isaiah 48 and 49, Nephi said that he was likening the scriptures to his people and invited us to liken them unto ourselves (1 Nephi 19:23–24). Nephi introduces Isaiah 48 and 49 as applying to those who are “broken off”

On the other hand, the Missing Words Hypothesis handily accounts for some of the more problematic variants in the Book of Mormon Isaiah chapters such as the addition of “red” before “sea” in 2 Nephi 19:1 (Isaiah 9:1), the replacement of italicized “*things*” with “sons” in 2 Nephi 8:19 (Isaiah 51:19), and the addition of “not” to 2 Nephi 12:9 (Isaiah 2:9), as well as some of the more salient instances of nonstandard grammar, such as “them that . . . remaineth” in 2 Nephi 14:3 (Isaiah 4:3) and “they dieth” in 2 Nephi 7:2 (Isaiah 50:2).⁹⁴ These, like the other variants discussed in this article that negatively affect the grammar, logic, or clarity of Isaiah’s message, may be among the “mistakes of men” referred to in the title page of the Book of Mormon. Their existence supports the Book of Mormon’s own portrayal of Joseph Smith as an unlearned reader of a revealed text (2 Nephi 27:19–20). The Book of Mormon invites us to acknowledge such mistakes and their human sources without condemning the “things of God” — the Book of Mormon as a whole.

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(1 Nephi 19:24). These variants fit well into the Book of Mormon’s theme of the restoration of the Jews (perhaps “them which are in the east”) and those of the House of Israel who are “broken off” and “scattered abroad,” and their establishment in their lands of promise (see, for example, 1 Nephi 10:12; 14:14; 15:7–20; 22:3–8; 2 Nephi 3:5; 9:2; 10:22; Jacob 5:30; Alma 13:22; 3 Nephi 5:24; 20:11–13; 29:1).

94. For a discussion of 2 Nephi 19:1, see Tvedtnes, *The Isaiah Variants*, 45, 115. For 2 Nephi 8:19 and 12:9, see Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 219–22; and Wright, “Isaiah,” 166–67, 177–78. The additions of “not” after “boweth” and after “himself” in 2 Nephi 12:9 are retained in the 2013 edition of the Book of Mormon but are rejected by Skousen as a likely unintentional error and an unnecessary emendation, respectively. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 656–60. Some of the other grammatical errors of agreement in number in the Book of Mormon Isaiah were more likely caused by the scribe’s mishearing of Joseph Smith’s dictation — for example, a mishearing of “with him” as “with them” in 2 Nephi 6:17 (Isaiah 49:25) and a mishearing of “have” as “hath” in 2 Nephi 8:16 (Isaiah 51:16).

SENSATIONALISM: A ONE-SIDED PERSPECTIVE

Susan Easton Black

Review of Benjamin E. Park, *Kingdom of Nauvoo: The Rise and Fall of a Religious Empire on the American Frontier* (New York City: Liveright Publishing, 2020). 336 pages. \$28.95 (hardback).

Abstract: While Benjamin Park shows promise as a writer and historian, his book, *Kingdom of Nauvoo*, opts for poorly sourced sensationalism instead of illuminating the joy of Nauvoo's true history.

Benjamin E. Park, an assistant professor of history at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas, has undertaken, in his first book on LDS history, to examine and explain the history of Nauvoo, Illinois. Park holds a bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University and a Ph.D. in Political Thought and Intellectual History from the University of Cambridge. As the author of *American Nationalisms*¹ and a piece writer for the *Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, and the *Houston Chronicle*, Park is at the beginning of what could be an illustrious career. Through the years, works of Benjamin Park may fill library shelves and lead to multiple invitations to speak to receptive audiences, such as his invitation to speak earlier this year to the Maxwell Institute at Brigham Young University.²

I was pleased The Interpreter Foundation invited me to review *Kingdom of Nauvoo*. The promise of writing a short review gave me reason to pause from my life's ventures to read yet another book on my favorite travel destination. I saw myself reading the works of a new, rising historian—a budding Richard Bushman, in his own right. Park,

1. Benjamin E. Park, *American Nationalisms: Imagining Union in the Age of Revolutions, 1783–1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

2. Park spoke about his book on February 28, 2020. See <https://mi.byu.edu/events/2-28-lecture-park/>.

having a publisher that requires a literary agent, captured my attention. His publisher, Liveright, is a division of the W. W. Norton & Company of New York City, a publishing house owned by its employees and known for its anthologies and textbooks, not for studies of Joseph Smith and the merits of Mormonism. A professor away from Utah and a publisher whose publications are not readily seen in the Deseret Book or Seagull bookstores looked like a huge win to me.

Putting aside the cares of the day, I blocked out an afternoon and sat down to read. I was delighted to find that Benjamin Park has a flair for writing. His words are accessible to scholar and lay reader alike, a rare talent indeed.

But what of the content of *Kingdom of Nauvoo*? The emphasis on polygamy, Council of Fifty, and denigrating quotes and thoughts attributed to Joseph Smith that went unsourced left me feeling sorry for the young author and wondering who had been his mentor. I found myself wishing I was at my home in Nauvoo, having an afternoon with the author at the site where the Council of Fifty once met, talking about the individuals who attended their meetings and reviewing with him some of their journals. I wanted to show him the parade grounds of the Nauvoo Legion, the tucked-away graveyards, and Emma's rentals. I wanted the author to see the remains of small Latter-day Saint settlements in and around Nauvoo and the Mississippi River at dusk. Most of all, I wanted to share with the author additional facts and clear up the speculations in his work that mar the publication and his future career.

The bottom line is that I came away from my first read of *Kingdom of Nauvoo* knowing the author missed the joy of Nauvoo's true history as he reached for sensational topics that sell in today's market — polygamy and the Council of Fifty. I asked myself why this author, with an academic background from Brigham Young University and a bright academic future, aligned himself with scholarship that degrades a prophet of God. I came up with no answer.

The difference between young Benjamin Park and myself is more than longevity in the field of Latter-day Saint Church history. It is perspective. In his prologue, Park begins, "A gloomy pall hung over the Mormon city of Nauvoo when Joseph Smith and his closest allies gathered to replace the American Constitution" (2). This sensationalistic beginning hooks readers into moving on to succeeding chapters, but it starts the book on a faulty premise. The author has taken a leap that more cautious historians in yesteryear rejected. The author acknowledges that the "proposed Mormon constitution was incomplete and required further revision" (2)

but does not hesitate to conclude it was still a constitution to replace the U.S. Constitution.

Without much of an introduction to the topic, the author jumps to the issue of polygamy, which has been sensationalized in tabloids for generations. Because of curiosity and sexual innuendos presented as facts in *Kingdom of Nauvoo*, small circles of supposed intellectuals will find the book a page-turner and reason enough to malign prophetic teachings. But the able scholar, the one who has gone beyond the internet to the library and small repositories, will quickly see that the author uses few dates, his documentation is infrequent and causes the reader to search for sources to quotation marks, and his summaries are superficial.

As I reread *Kingdom of Nauvoo*, I reminded myself that two people can read the same document and reach divergent opinions; it is a matter of perspective. When perspective guides history, the picking and choosing of facts must support perspective. When facts don't support perspective, too often they are discarded. The better historian studies the sources to find truth and then perspective follows. The author would have been wise to follow the latter course.

Can it really be concluded that the Council of Fifty was formed in reaction to tensions and the threat of violence by suspicious outsiders? Was Nauvoo an "asylum" for God's chosen people? Is the law of plural marriage and clandestine domestic arrangements synonymous? Did Joseph Smith get his ideas from popular theologian Thomas Dick or mystical elements from Emanuel Swedenborg? Did stories of adultery, fornication, and other illicit sexual dalliances fill Nauvoo's civic and ecclesiastical courts? I think not.

No matter the talent of the author, historians know their writing is only as good as the facts presented. Like the works of all historians, this author's work will be surpassed. But in the end will the reader view Benjamin Park as a scholar? Truth edifies the writer and the reader. On which page should I have been edified in *Kingdom of Nauvoo*? Where is the author's knowledge that Joseph Smith was a prophet and the Lord revealed his words to him? To take out faith, a belief that God speaks to his prophet, and the sacrifice of thousands of early Latter-day Saints to build up Nauvoo (and their reason why) is to miss the mark.

May this author present truth in his next work. Anything less will not serve him or his readers well.

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TEMPLES ALL THE WAY DOWN: SOME NOTES ON THE *Mi'raj* OF MUHAMMAD

Daniel C. Peterson

Abstract: *In this article, Daniel C. Peterson describes the famous “night” journey that Muhammad allegedly made from Arabia to Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem through the heavens and into the presence of God. His ascension through various gates of heaven, passing by the gatekeepers, is compared with biblical and Latter-day Saint teachings. Elements of the dream strongly resemble the biblical description of the Garden of Eden with its two special trees.*

[Editor’s Note: Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.

See Daniel C. Peterson, “Temples All the Way Down: Some Notes on the *Mi’raj* of Muhammad,” in *Ancient Temple Worship: Proceedings of The Expound Symposium 14 May 2011*, ed. Matthew B. Brown, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Stephen D. Ricks, and John S. Thompson (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 195–216. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/ancient-temple-worship/>.]

The *mi’raj* of Muhammad is the famous “night journey” that the Prophet of Islam allegedly made from Arabia to Jerusalem (a part of the journey that is sometimes distinguished under its own title, as the *isra’*), and from Jerusalem through the heavens and into the presence of God.

The narrative of the *mi'raj* has long attracted the attention of Islamic miniaturists and illustrators (in, for example, the famous Turkish *Miraj Nameh* ["Book of the Mi'raj"] preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France). Moreover, it has served, in more or less allegorical form, as a model for many Sufi accounts of the mystical ascent to union with the divine and perhaps even for certain Neoplatonic cosmologies (e.g., those of al-Farabi, al-Kirmani, and Ibn Sina or Avicenna) in the Islamic tradition.

Allusions to the *mi'raj* in the Qur'an are, at best, sparse and rather obscure. There are, for example, two verses in the 17th chapter — known in Arabic as *Surat al-Isra'* ("the chapter of the *isra'*") because of them — that seem to refer to the story. Here is one such passage:

Exalted be He who took His servant [*asra bi-'abdihi*] by night
from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa, whose
surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs.
Truly, He is the Hearer, the Knower.¹

This verse is typically taken to refer to a journey from Mecca to Jerusalem. The term *masjid* is the common Arabic equivalent of the English *mosque*, which ultimately derives from its pronunciation in the Egyptian dialect of Arabic (*masgid*). The Arabic *sajada* corresponds to the English verb *to bow* or *to prostrate oneself*, and a *masjid* (from the same three-consonant root, *s-j-d*) is a place where such prostration occurs. Thus, more broadly, it indicates a place of prayer and worship, or a shrine.

It is striking for my present purposes that Muhammad's journey is, thus, portrayed as having occurred between at least two shrines, sanctuaries, or places of worship.

Al-Masjid al-Haram (roughly, "the sacred mosque") is the term still used to refer to the Grand Mosque at Mecca, centered on the famous Ka'ba. Although this shrine was, of course, much less spectacular than is today's enormous architectural complex, it pre-dates Muhammad. By contrast, the phrase *Masjid al-Aqsa* cannot refer to the building on Jerusalem's Temple Mount called the Al-Aqsa Mosque (and sometimes known — presumably by reason of its location, since it is, otherwise, a mosque essentially like any other — as *al-bayt al-muqaddas* or "the Holy House"), because that structure was built in AD 705 by the Umayyad caliph al-Walid, more than 70 years after Muhammad's death.² Nonetheless, the phrase almost certainly pertains to Jerusalem or to some place within Jerusalem — and very likely to the Temple Mount.³

Only one other Qur'anic passage, a set of six verses in the 53rd chapter that I will discuss below, seems to relate in any very clear way to the story of the *mi'raj*. So the bulk of the tradition about Muhammad's "night journey" comes from extra-Qur'anic sources, from the so-called *hadith* or "traditions" literature. (*Hadith* — the word is actually singular in Arabic, but, when used in English, often functions as a collective or a plural — are reports of the sayings or actions of the Prophet or his "Companions" that are used to flesh out, elucidate, and supplement the Qur'an as a source of Islamic history, doctrine, practice, and legal precedent.)

I will be drawing upon three major versions of the story. (There are others; this essay represents merely a preliminary summary of a solid but non-exhaustive sample of the relevant sources.) The first is that found in the standard biography of Muhammad compiled in the eighth century by Ibn Ishaq and edited by Ibn Hisham (d. AD 828 or 833).⁴ The second and third occur, quite separately, in the quasi-canonical collection of *hadith* reports assembled by al-Bukhari in the ninth century.⁵

There are variations in the story of the *mi'raj* as it occurs in the several sources. I will call attention to one or two of these. I will not, however, be paying any notice to the different tradents to whom we owe what we have of the account. That is not the focus of this article, though it is a worthy subject. Instead, I will be looking at the basic narrative, in something of a harmonized version.

I am also not concerned in this essay with the question of whether or not Muhammad really ascended through the seven heavens, nor even with whether he actually claimed to have done so. It is beyond dispute that, in either case, such an ascent — comparable to other ascension stories from around the world — was being ascribed to him by no later than the eighth century — which is to say by, at the very most, a century or a century and a half after his death. (And those ascriptions claim to rest on the testimonies of Muhammad's contemporaries and associates.) Whether true or not, the story becomes an indisputable window into concepts existing in Arabia and the newly established Islamic empire at a very early time.

The episode of the *mi'raj* typically commences in Muhammad's home town of Mecca, or near it, and is usually dated to a time prior to his *hijra* or "emigration" from Mecca to Medina — the seminal event that serves as the beginning point of the Islamic religious calendar.⁶

"While I was at Mecca," the Prophet is represented as saying,

the roof of my house was opened and Gabriel descended, opened my chest, and washed it with Zam-zam water. Then he brought a golden tray [*tist*; perhaps better, a “basin”] full of wisdom and faith and, having poured [*afragha*] its contents into my chest, he closed it. Then he took my hand and ascended with me [*‘araja bi*] to the nearest heaven.⁷

Another account says simply that the Prophet was “at the House [*‘inda al-bayt*] in a state between sleep and wakefulness.”⁸ The use of the definite article *the* or *al-* suggests that the “house” in question wasn’t Muhammad’s private dwelling but, rather, the immediate environs of *the* house, al-Masjid al-Haram. (The translator’s capitalization of the word *house* signals his judgment, too, that this is so.)

The motif of a washing followed by the application of something that is, at least metaphorically, liquid is striking here. It seems to represent something of an initiatory or preparatory ritual. It is also noteworthy that the water used for the washing comes from Zam-zam or Zamzam, a well that is located within the sacred precincts of al-Masjid al-Haram in Mecca.

The “nearest heaven,” to which the Prophet is first taken, is *al-sama’ al-dunya*. The word *dunya* is a feminine comparative adjective that means “nearer/closer” or “nearest/closest” but that also commonly functions in Arabic as a noun referring to this world, the ordinarily and literally mundane world, as opposed to the next world or afterlife (*al-akhira*, “the last”).⁹ So this nearest heaven represents the boundary or border that marks our world (*al-dunya*) off from the heavenly world.

But Muhammad seems not to have gone directly from the vicinity of Mecca into the heavens. (Certainly, that is so in other accounts.) First, he went to Jerusalem. “Then the apostle was carried by night from the mosque at Mecca to the Masjid al-Aqsa, which is the temple [*al-bayt al-maqdis* or *al-bayt al-muqaddas*] of Aelia.”¹⁰ (But, as I’ve indicated, this cannot refer to the mosque of that name, which had not yet been built.)

The terms translated by A. Guillaume here as “the mosque at Mecca” and “the Masjid al-Aqsa” are, just as they are in the Qur’anic passage cited above, precisely parallel in the Arabic: respectively, *al-masjid al-haram* (“the sacred mosque”) and *al-masjid al-aqsa* (“the furthest mosque”). The places share in common the nature of what Rudi Paret calls a “Gebetsstätte” or “place of prayer.”¹¹

Aelia or, more fully, *Aelia Capitolina* was the Roman city built by the Emperor Hadrian in the early second century on the site of Jerusalem, which had been in ruins since AD 70, following the First Jewish Revolt.

The name came from Hadrian's *nomen gentilicum* or family name, *Aelius*, coupled with an indicator that the new city was dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus — to whom Hadrian erected a temple on the platform where the Jewish temple had previously stood. The construction of this temple and city contributed significantly to the Second Jewish Revolt (AD 132–136), led by Simeon Bar Kokhba.

The name *Aelia* persisted in medieval Arabic, which preferred it to any form of the word *Jerusalem* — just as, today, Arabs prefer *al-Quds* (literally, something like “the Holiness”) or even, much less commonly, *Bayt al-Maqdis* (“the Holy House”) over *Urushalima*, which is the standard term in modern Arabic Bibles but which is attested at least as far back as the early second millennium before Christ.

But how did Muhammad travel from Arabia to Palestine?

Buraq, the animal whose every stride carried it as far as the eye could reach, on which the prophets before him used to ride, was brought to the apostle and he was mounted on it. His companion (Gabriel) went with him to see the wonders between heaven and earth, until he came to Jerusalem's temple [*bayt al-maqdis* or *bayt al-muqaddas*]. There he found Abraham the friend of God, Moses, and Jesus assembled with a company of the prophets, and he prayed with them.¹²

“He prayed with them” [*salla bihim*] could be more precisely rendered, because of its causative *bi-*, as “he led them in prayer.” However, the Prophet's role is brought out even more clearly in another, distinct, account that appears a few lines further in the text:

The apostle and Gabriel went their way until they arrived at the temple of Jerusalem. There he found Abraham, Moses, and Jesus among a company of the prophets. The apostle acted as their imam in prayer [*fa-ammahum rasul Allah ... fa-salla bihim*; literally, “The messenger of God acted as their imam ... and led them in prayer”].¹³

The term *imam* is cognate with the Arabic preposition *amama* (“in front of”). During liturgical prayer (*salat*) in a mosque, the imam positions himself before the congregation, which is lined up in rows and segregated by gender, and carries out the various ritual actions required for worship. Members of the congregation follow him, so that all perform the actions (prostrations and other movements) more or less in unison.¹⁴

This is the role that Muhammad is said to have carried out, leading all of his prophet predecessors in the motions of prayer and worship in the temple precincts of Jerusalem.

Here is a separate account of the beginning of the *mi'raj*:

While I was sleeping in the Hijr Gabriel came and stirred me with his foot. I sat up but saw nothing and lay down again. He came a second time and stirred me with his foot. I sat up but saw nothing and lay down again. He came to me the third time and stirred me with his foot. I sat up and he took hold of my arm and I stood beside him and he brought me out to the door of the mosque and there was a white animal, half mule, half donkey, with wings on its sides with which it propelled its feet, putting down each forefoot at the limit of its sight, and he mounted me on it. Then he went out with me, keeping close to me.¹⁵

The threefold repetition in this story is noteworthy. It is directly comparable with the traditional story of Muhammad's prophetic call and with Joseph Smith's account of the visit of Moroni, both of which prominently involve threefold repetition.¹⁶

Umm Hani', the daughter of Muhammad's uncle Abu Talib whose given name was Hind, is reported as saying that:

The apostle went on no night journey except while he was in my house. He slept that night in my house. He prayed the final night prayer, then he slept and we slept. A little before dawn the apostle woke us, and when we had prayed the dawn prayer he said, "O Umm Hani', I prayed with you the last evening prayer in this valley, as you saw. Then I went to Jerusalem and prayed there. Then I have just prayed the morning prayer with you as you see."¹⁷

She advised him to say nothing publicly about this claim, because, she feared, the Meccans would regard him as a liar. He ignored her advice and, of course, they asked him for proof. He told them specific details about caravans over which he had passed during his journeys between Jerusalem and Arabia, and those details were soon confirmed.¹⁸ (He is also said to have provided descriptions of the three named prophets.)¹⁹

The Meccans are reported, plausibly enough, to have mocked Muhammad's claim that he had been to Jerusalem and back overnight, and even some of the Muslims themselves are said to have lost their faith.

But Abu Bakr, who had been to Jerusalem during his career as a caravan trader, confirmed the details of Muhammad's description of the city.²⁰

But it isn't absolutely clear, even if we assume that Muhammad really claimed to have experienced the *mi'raj*, that his journey was intended to be taken as a literal, physical one. At a minimum, the preserved accounts indicate that some Muslims sought to minimize the apparent outlandishness of the story by insisting that, physically speaking, he hadn't traveled at all. For instance, his youngest wife, 'A'isha, a major source of *hadith* reports altogether (some of which, at least, show a clear tendency toward anti-literalism), allegedly said that "The apostle's body remained where it was but God removed his spirit by night."²¹

The matter is reminiscent of the apostle Paul's ambivalence about the nature of what may have been his own ascent into the heavens several centuries earlier:

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.²²

"After the completion of my business in Jerusalem," Muhammad is reported to have recalled, "a ladder [*mi'raj*] was brought to me finer than any I have ever seen. It was that to which the dying man looks when death approaches."²³

It is impossible here not to be reminded of the story of "Jacob's ladder" (*sulam yaakov*) in Genesis 28:

And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder [*sulam*] set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and

thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.

And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God [*bayt Elohim*], and this is the gate of heaven [*shaar ha-shamayim*; literally, “gate of the heavens”].

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel [*bayt El*; “house of God”]: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.²⁴

The *sulam* or “ladder” of Jacob could just as easily be rendered in English as “staircase.” (In Arabic, a Semitic language cognate with Hebrew, *sullam* is the most common word for “stairs.”) A similar semantic range exists for the “ladder” or *mi’raj* that is brought to Muhammad. Although it has come over the centuries to refer to the story of his night journey from earth into the heavens, the basic, primary, sense of the Arabic term *mi’raj* is “means of ascent.” It can refer either to a ladder or to a staircase.²⁵

Jacob’s dream ... revealed Bethel as a temple in embryo: the concepts of the day visualized a *stairway* (the rendering *ladder* seems less appropriate) linking a heavenly temple with the earthly temple where God (or gods, in pagan religion) deigned to meet His worshippers and receive their offerings. The *angels* go to and fro at His bidding in their tasks and ministrations (cf. John 1:51).²⁶

“The word ‘place’ (*maqom*),” says a Catholic commentary, “occurring five times in the passage, has a cultic significance here; Jacob came to a Canaanite sanctuary.”²⁷ Says another, “The place’ (three times with the article),” observes another, suggests “a holy place.”²⁸ (Perhaps not coincidentally, at the front door of the Ka’ba, within the sanctuary of

Mecca's al-Masjid al-Haram, is the *Maqam Ibrahim*, the "station" or "place" of Abraham.) But this scarcely exhausts Bethel's temple connections in Jacob's story. The ladder or staircase was "possibly occasioned by the staged towers of Babylonia (ziggurats), the summits of which represented the gods' true dwelling place."²⁹ Thus, Bethel becomes "the meeting place of heaven and earth, between God and man."³⁰

In the subsequent history of the Hebrews, Bethel became an important center of the cult for the northern Kingdom of Israel following the break-up of the united kingdom of David and his son Solomon. Jeroboam, the first of the northern kings, put golden calves both at Dan, on the northern border of his kingdom, and at Bethel, on its southern boundary. (He appointed non-Levitical priests to serve them, a harbinger of the kingdom's heretical ways to come.)³¹

"My companion mounted it with me," says the Prophet Muhammad of the *mi'raj*,

until we came to one of the gates of heaven called the Gate of the Watchers [*bab al-hafaza*]. An angel called Isma'il was in charge of it, and under his command were twelve thousand angels, each of them having twelve thousand angels under his command.³²

There is, in the narratives of the *mi'raj*, a caretaker or watchman assigned to each of the gates of heaven. (The term *bab al-hafaza* might better be rendered "gate of the guardians.") Permission must be sought in order to enter, and at least some sort of formulaic question-and-answer procedure, accompanied by a blessing of health or life, is required. According to the accounts preserved by al-Bukhari, the same questions, answers, and greeting occur at each of the seven heavens.³³

When Gabriel took him up to each of the heavens and asked permission to enter he had to say whom he had brought and whether he had received a mission and they would say "God grant him life, brother and friend!" until they reached the seventh heaven.³⁴

The verb translated "received a mission" is either *qad ba'atha* or, in a textual variant, *bu'itha ilayhi*.³⁵ The root *b-ʿ-th* is connected with being sent out or dispatched, and, here, presumably refers to Muhammad's having been called as a prophet.

The notion that there are watchmen at the gates of the heavens whose permission must be obtained before Muhammad can pass, and

that Muhammad's ascension is linked with the transition from earth to heaven that, at least potentially, will be undergone by all mortal humans, suggests that every human may eventually need to ascend via *mi'raj*. It's not a great leap from that idea to the thought that perhaps all will even need to undergo the same sort of testing that occurs when Muhammad and Gabriel seek admission to the various heavens during their ascent toward the presence of the Lord.

It is difficult, in this context, not to think of Brigham Young's definition of the endowment given in the Latter-day Saint temple. "Your endowment," he said,

is to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell.³⁶

President Young taught this concept on numerous occasions. I offer a sampling of his other comments on the topic. "Will you abide our counsel?" he asked:

I say again, my soul for any man's, if they will abide our counsel, that they will go right into heaven. We have the signs and token to give to the porter at the door, and he will let us in.³⁷

President Young's use of the term *porter* is of interest here. We commonly think of a porter as someone who carries things. (Think of related words such as *portable*, *transport*, and *teleportation*.) This is an entirely legitimate meaning of the word, which derives from the Anglo-Norman *portour* and the Old French *portior*. Both stem from the Latin *portare* ("to carry"). But the Anglo-Norman word apparently represents a coalescence of two distinct Old French terms — not only *portior* but the very similar *portier*. And *portier* comes from the Late Latin *portarius* ("gatekeeper"), which is a derivative from *porta* ("gate"). Thus, most of the colleges at such medieval establishments as the universities of Oxford and Cambridge have "porters," whose role is to control entrance to those colleges and to provide them with security. So too, in the Roman Catholic Church, a "porter" is a member of the lowest of the four minor priesthood orders. His responsibility was to guard the church, open and close its doors and those of its sacristy and baptistery, and, at some periods, to

ensure that no unbaptized persons entered the church during Eucharistic services.

These other meanings for the term *porter* provide appropriate background for Brigham Young's use of the word:

I and my brethren have received our endowments, keys, blessings — all the tokens, signs, and every preparatory ordinance, that can be given to man, for his entrance into the celestial gate.³⁸

When we talk of the celestial law which is revealed from heaven, that is, the Priesthood, we are talking about the principle of salvation, a perfect system of government, of laws and ordinances, by which we can be prepared to pass from one gate to another, and from one sentinel to another, until we go into the presence of our Father and God.³⁹

He has taught you how to purify yourselves, and become holy, and be prepared to enter into His kingdom, how you can advance from one degree to another, and grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth, until you are prepared to enter the celestial kingdom; how to pass every sentinel, watchman, and gate keeper.⁴⁰

All the riches, wealth, glory and happiness that we shall ever possess in heaven will be possessed on and around this earth when it is brought up into the presence of God in a sanctified and glorified state; and the sanctified ones who enter through the gate and pass the sentinel into the New Jerusalem, and into the presence of the Father and the Son, are the ones who will inherit the new heavens and the new earth in the presence of God, for here is the eternity, the glory and the power.⁴¹

Those who are counted worthy to dwell with the Father and the Son have previously received an education fitting them for that society; they have been made fully acquainted with every password, token and sign which have enabled them to pass by the porters through the doors into the celestial kingdom.⁴²

It is absolutely necessary that the Saints should receive further ordinances of the house of God before this short existence shall come to a close, that they may be prepared and fully able to

pass all the sentinels leading into the celestial kingdom and into the presence of God.⁴³

And Brigham Young wasn't alone in teaching this concept of the passage into the heavens. "Joseph always told us," said his first counselor in the First Presidency, Heber C. Kimball,

that we would have to pass by sentinels that are placed between us and our Father and God. Then, of course, we are conducted along from this probation to other probations, or from one dispensation to another, by those who conducted those dispensations.⁴⁴

When President Kimball refers to "those who conducted those dispensations," one is reminded of the various prior prophets who occupy the several heavens of Muhammad's *mi'raj*.

Orson Pratt, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, taught that:

We shall enjoy all that has been put upon our heads, and, through the Priesthood, and signs and tokens that have been revealed, come forth in the first resurrection, and pass by the sentinels and the Gods that stand to keep the way of eternal lives.⁴⁵

His fellow apostle Orson Hyde took a strikingly specific view of the matter, including the departed Prophet Joseph Smith himself among the guardians of the worlds to come:

I tell you, Joseph holds the keys, and none of us can get into the celestial kingdom without passing by him. We have not got rid of him, but he stands there as the sentinel, holding the keys of the kingdom of God; and there are many of them beside him. I tell you, if we get past those who have mingled with us, and know us best, and have a right to know us best, probably we can pass all other sentinels as far as it is necessary, or as far as we may desire. But I tell you, the pinch will be with those that have mingled with us, stood next to us, weighed our spirits, tried us, and proven us: there will be a pinch, in my view, to get past them. The others, perhaps, will say, If brother Joseph is satisfied with you, you may pass. If it is all right with him, it is all right with me.⁴⁶

According to the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord indicated to Joseph Smith that those who enter into eternal or temple marriage, if they live up to the covenants they have taken upon themselves,

shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fullness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.⁴⁷

The divergences between the Mormon and Islamic worldviews are significant, of course, but so, it seems to me, are the parallels in these accounts of how one enters the presence of the Lord.

“When I reached the nearest heaven,” Muhammad is quoted as relating to his followers,

“Gabriel said to the gatekeeper of the heaven [*khazin al-sama'*], ‘Open (the gate).’ The gatekeeper asked, ‘Who is it?’ Gabriel answered: ‘Gabriel.’ He asked, ‘Is there anyone with you?’ Gabriel replied, ‘Yes, Muhammad is with me.’ He asked, ‘Has he been called [*ursila ilayhi*]?’ Gabriel said, ‘Yes.’ So the gate was opened and we went over into the nearest heaven.”⁴⁸

Another account, very slightly different, describes Gabriel and Muhammad’s approach to the first heaven this way:

When I reached the nearest heaven, Gabriel said to the heavenly gate-keeper [*khazin al-sama'*; literally, “treasure-keeper of the heaven”], “Open the gate.” The gate-keeper asked, “Who is it?” He said, “Gabriel.” The gate-keeper, “Who is accompanying you?” Gabriel said, “Muhammad.” The gate-keeper said, “Has he been called [*qad ursila ilayhi*]?” Gabriel said, “Yes.” Then it was said, “He is welcomed. What a wonderful visit his is!”⁴⁹

The term *khazin al-sama'* (translated here as “the gatekeeper of the heaven”) could perhaps more accurately be rendered “the treasure-guardian of the heaven.” A *khazna*, *khazana*, *khazina*, or *makhzan* is a “treasure house” or “vault” or “storehouse.”⁵⁰

“When Gabriel brought me in,” the Prophet relates, “Isma‘il asked who I was, and when he was told that I was Muhammad he asked if I had been given a mission, and on being assured of this he wished me well.”⁵¹

In the course of the *mi'raj*, responding to a request from Muhammad, Gabriel orders an angel named “Malik, the Keeper of Hell,” to show that place to Muhammad. “Thereupon he removed its covering and the flames

blazed high into the air until I thought they would consume everything. So I asked Gabriel to order him to send them back to their place which he did.”⁵² At that or another point, Muhammad sees several graphic punishments, rather like those in Dante’s *Inferno*, for usurers, adulterers, those who devoured the wealth of orphans, and unfaithful wives.⁵³

In the lowest heaven, Muhammad sees a man whom Gabriel identifies as “your father Adam” where he sits “reviewing the spirits of his offspring” as they arrive from their sojourns in mortality.⁵⁴ “Then he ascended with me (*‘araja bi*) till he reached the second heaven and he (Gabriel) said to its gatekeeper [*khazinihi*], ‘Open (the gate).’ The gatekeeper said to him the same as the gatekeeper of the first heaven had said and he opened the gate.”⁵⁵ Jesus and his cousin John the Baptist are in the second heaven. Joseph of Egypt, the son of Jacob, is in the third heaven. “Then to the fourth heaven and there was a man called Idris. ‘And we have exalted him to a lofty place.’” Aaron is in the fifth heaven, and Moses is in the sixth.⁵⁶

The quotation about Idris, who is generally identified as Enoch, being “exalted ... to a lofty place” is from Qur’an 19:57, in which God, speaking in the first person plural, apparently refers to the translation of that biblical patriarch.⁵⁷

Muhammad has, by this point, reached the highest of the heavens. It’s noteworthy that his ascent has always been toward the presence of God, which seems pretty clearly to imply spatial location for the deity. (In Jacob’s vision of the ladder or staircase, “the Lord stood above it.”) It’s a very specific place. And, there, Muhammad sees a kind of celestial palace or, perhaps better, a celestial shrine or place of prayer — the heavenly prototype, presumably, of all earthly sanctuaries:

Then I was shown al-Bait al-Ma’mur (i.e., Allah’s House) [*al-bayt al-ma’mur*; literally, “The Inhabited House”]. I asked Gabriel about it and he said, “This is Al Bait ul-Ma’mur [*al-bayt al-ma’mur*] where 70,000 angels perform prayers daily, and when they leave they never return to it (but always a fresh batch comes into it daily).”⁵⁸

“Then,” another account has it:

to the seventh heaven and there was a man sitting on a throne at the gate of the immortal mansion [*al-bayt al-ma’mur*; literally, “the inhabited house”]. Every day seventy thousand angels went in not to come back until the resurrection day This was my father Abraham.⁵⁹

Note, here, yet another “house” or *bayt*. Recall too, again, the ancient conceptual background to Jacob’s ladder:

Jacob’s dream ... revealed Bethel as a temple in embryo: the concepts of the day visualized a *stairway* (the rendering *ladder* seems less appropriate) linking a heavenly temple with the earthly temple where God (or gods, in pagan religion) deigned to meet His worshippers and receive their offerings. The *angels* go to and fro at His bidding in their tasks and ministrations (cf. John 1:51).⁶⁰

There follows a curious incident indicating the existence of something at least resembling marital relationships in the postmortal life:

Then he took me into Paradise [*al-janna*; literally, “the garden”] and there I saw a damsel with dark red lips [*la’sa*] and I asked her to whom she belonged, for she pleased me much when I saw her, and she told me “Zayd b. Haritha.” The apostle [i.e., Muhammad, upon his return] gave Zayd the good news about her.⁶¹

In the *hadith* collection of al-Bukhari, one of the accounts of the *mi’raj* of Muhammad that I’ve been using comes in a chapter entitled “The Book of Prayer.” We now come to the reason for that placement.

While Muhammad is in the highest heaven, “there the duty of fifty prayers a day was laid upon him.”⁶² But Muslims perform liturgical prayers only five times daily. What is the origin of that much lower number?

On his way back down from the highest heaven (and, plainly, away from the literal place where God is), Muhammad encounters Moses:

He asked me how many prayers had been laid upon me and when I told him fifty [each day] he said, “Prayer is a weighty matter and your people are weak, so go back to your Lord and ask him to reduce the number for you and your community”. I did so and He took off ten. Again I passed by Moses and he said the same again; and so it went on until only five prayers for the whole day and night were left. Moses again gave me the same advice. I replied that I had been back to my Lord and asked him to reduce the number until I was ashamed, and I would not do it again.⁶³

A variant account tells the story somewhat differently. But notice that, in both accounts, God is implicitly regarded as having specific spatial

location, such that Muhammad is able to enter the divine presence, leave it, and return to it several times:

Then Allah enjoined fifty prayers on my followers. When I returned with this order of Allah, I passed by Moses who asked me, "What has Allah enjoined on your followers?" I replied, "He has enjoined fifty prayers on them." Moses said, "Go back to your Lord (and appeal for reduction) for your followers will not be able to bear it." (So I went back to Allah and requested for reduction) and He reduced it to half. When I passed by Moses again and informed him about it, he said, "Go back to your Lord as your followers will not be able to bear it." So I returned to Allah and requested for further reduction and half of it was reduced. I again passed by Moses and he said to me: "Return to your Lord, for your followers will not be able to bear it." So I returned to Allah and He said, "These are five prayers and they are all (equal to) fifty (in reward) for My Word does not change." I returned to Moses and he told me to go back once again. I replied, "Now I feel shy of asking my Lord again."⁶⁴

I conclude with an account of one of the most remarkable (and enigmatic) elements of the *mi'raj* story: "Then Gabriel took me till we reached [*intaha*] Sidrat al-Muntaha (lote tree of the utmost boundary) which was shrouded in colours, indescribable."⁶⁵ It seems, as we shall see, that this occurs in Paradise: "Then I was admitted into Paradise [*al-janna*; literally, "the garden"] where I found small (tents or) walls (made) of pearls [*haba'il al-lu'lu'*] and its earth [*turabuhu*; "its soil/dust"] was of musk."⁶⁶

It needs to be remembered that the word *paradise* derives, ultimately, from the Avestan or Old Eastern Iranian root *pairi.daeza*, which referred to a "walled enclosure" (from *pairi* ["around"] and *diz* ["to build a wall"]). In classical Greek, it came to refer to a royal estate or a park for animals. It is a protected garden.

Muhammad's experience with this paradisiacal tree seems to be alluded to in Qur'an 53:

And he certainly saw him/Him in another descent, at the Lote-Tree of the Boundary. Near it is the Garden of Refuge [*jannat al-ma'wa*], where there covered the Lote-Tree that which covered it. The sight [of the Prophet] did not swerve, nor did it transgress. He surely saw the greatest of his Lord's signs.⁶⁷

One of the passages in al-Bukhari preserves this purported first-person account:

Then I was shown Sidrat al-Muntaha (i.e. a tree in the seventh heaven) ... and four rivers originated at its root, two of them were apparent and two were hidden. I asked Gabriel about those rivers and he said, "The two hidden rivers are in paradise, and the apparent ones are the Nile and the Euphrates."⁶⁸

This episode is plainly reminiscent of the Garden of Eden:

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;

And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.

And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.

Strikingly, as I have pointed out elsewhere, the Qur'anic version of the Garden of Eden narrative, which is very like that of the Bible, mentions not two trees, but only one: "the tree of eternity."⁶⁹ I conclude now as I concluded then:

Consistent with the principle that eschatology (or 'last things') often recapitulates protology (or 'first things'), I think we may, in the lotus tree of the boundary, be seeing the Edenic tree of life yet again. Muhammad ascended to the garden from which

Adam and Eve fell. It is the same garden to which the righteous may aspire.⁷⁰

As T. S. Eliot expressed it in his *Four Quartets*:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.⁷¹

Notes

1. Qur'an 17:1 (my translation). The third-person masculine singular compound verb *asra bi-* is a finite form derived from the same triconsonantal root as *isra'*, which is its verbal noun or *masdar*. I will briefly allude to the other verse from this chapter in what follows below.
2. Owing to at least two earthquakes and several major renovations in medieval times, the current structure on the site is, on the whole, somewhat more recent still.
3. See Rudi Paret, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1980), 295-296. Paret points in particular to the phrase that I've translated as "whose surroundings We have blessed," comparing it to Qur'an 7:137 and 21:71, 81, which definitely allude to the Holy Land, and to Qur'an 34:18, which probably does. On the latter passage, compare Rudi Paret, *Der Koran*, 3d ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1979), 300, where, in his translation of the verse, he includes the parenthetical comment "*damit ist wohl Palästina gemeint*."
4. I will be using A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1967) [hereafter, "Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*"], along with the Arabic original text published by Mustafa al-Suqa, Ibrahim al-Abyari, and 'Abd al-Hafiz Shalabi, eds., *Al-sira al-nabawiyya li-ibn Hisham* (Cairo: Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1955) [hereafter, "Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*"].
5. I will be using Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari, Arabic-English*, 3d rev. ed. (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1979) [hereafter, *Sahih al-Bukhari*]. As its title indicates, this is a bilingual edition containing the Arabic original as well as an English translation.

6. Accordingly, that dating system is known as the “*hijri* calendar.” There are many biographies of the founder of Islam. Among them, Daniel C. Peterson, *Muhammad: Prophet of God* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007), is probably not the worst.
7. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:211; compare 4:287. The Arabic verb translated here as “ascended” is based on the same three-letter root as the term *mi’raj*.
8. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 4:287.
9. Thus, for example, in Egyptian colloquial Arabic pronunciation, one says *iddinya harr* (“it’s hot”; literally, “the world is hot”) and *iddinya bitmattar* (“it’s raining”; literally, “the world is raining”).
10. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 181; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 1:396.
11. Paret, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz*, 296.
12. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad* 182; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 397. *Buraq* is cognate with the verb *baraqa* (= English “to flash,” “to sparkle”) and the noun *barq* (“lightning”).
13. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 182; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 398.
14. For an excellent basic manual on Islamic ritual prayer, see Mustafa Umar, *How to Pray: A Step-by-Step Guide to Prayer in Islam* (Seattle: CreateSpace, 2011).
15. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 182. The Hijr is an area within the sacred precinct in Mecca (i.e., within al-Masjid al-Haram) that is directly adjacent to the Ka’ba. At *Sahih al-Bukhari* 4:287, *Buraq* is described as “a white animal, smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey.”
16. Muhammad’s prophetic call is discussed in Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, “The Throne Theophany/Prophetic Call of Muhammad,” in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 323-337; Peterson, *Muhammad: Prophet of God*, 49-64.
17. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 184.
18. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 184.
19. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 183-184.
20. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 182-183.
21. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 183.
22. 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. All biblical quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.
23. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 184-185; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 403. Again, this clashes with the account already cited above, from *Sahih*

al-Bukhari 1:211, according to which it was while Muhammad was at home in Mecca that “Gabriel descended” and then “took my hand and ascended with me to the nearest heaven.” One possible way of looking at the *mi’raj* in this sense would be to compare it with the famous “tunnel” often described in accounts of near-death experiences. As Allan Kellehear, *Experiences near Death: Beyond Medicine and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), and others have shown, other items often play the same role as the tunnel, especially in reports from cultures where tunnels are rare or unknown.

24. Genesis 28:10-19.
25. The fact that the *mi’raj* is “brought to” Muhammad needn’t imply the portability of a ladder; the Arabic verb can equally mean “offered to” or “presented to.”
26. H. L. Ellison and D. F. Payne, “Genesis,” in F. F. Bruce, ed., *The International Bible Commentary* (Basingstoke and Grand Rapids: Marshall Pickering/Zondervan, 1986), 133. See also James L. Mays, ed., *Harper’s Bible Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 104. Reginald C. Fuller, ed., *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Nelson, 1975), 198, proposes not only “stair” but “ramp.”
27. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 29.
28. Fuller, *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 198.
29. Brown, et al., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 29.
30. Fuller, *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 198.
31. See 1 Kings 12:25-33.
32. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 185; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 403.
33. See *Sahih al-Bukhari* 4:287-289.
34. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 186; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 407.
35. See Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 407, note 6.
36. *Journal of Discourses* 2:31.
37. *History of the Church* 7:240.
38. *Journal of Discourses*, 1:278.
39. *Journal of Discourses*, 2:139.
40. *Journal of Discourses*, 2:315.
41. *Journal of Discourses*, 10:35.
42. *Journal of Discourses*, 10:172.
43. *Journal of Discourses*, 12:163-164.

44. *Journal of Discourses*, 6:63
45. *Journal of Discourses*, 8:106.
46. *Journal of Discourses*, 6:154-155.
47. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
48. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:211.
49. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 4:287. The passive verb *ursila* is derived from the same root (*rsl*) that is used to denote Muhammad as a “messenger” or “apostle,” and, in Arabic editions of the New Testament, to refer to Christ’s apostles.
50. The English word *magazine* derives from *makhzan*, probably by way of a “powder magazine.”
51. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 185.
52. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 185.
53. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 185-186. It has, in fact, been suggested by several scholars that the *mi’raj* stories had some influence on Dante’s *Divina Commedia*, which, of course, is itself a classic ascension story.
54. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 185. I have corrected Guillaume’s “our father Adam” according to the Arabic at Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira* 405. Compare *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:211-212; 4:287.
55. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:212.
56. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 186. Another account has *Abraham* in the sixth heaven. 1:212
57. See Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5; Doctrine and Covenants 107:48-49; Moses 7:68-69. The pseudepigraphic Enoch literature represents another rich vein of ascension materials.
58. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 4:289. The irregular transliterations are artifacts of the translation by Muhammad Muhsin Khan; there are no differences in the original Arabic.
59. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 186. In the Arabic original, at Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 407, Gabriel identifies him to Muhammad as “your brother Abraham.”
60. Ellison and Payne, “Genesis,” 133. See also Mays, *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, 104. Fuller, *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 198.
61. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 186; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 407. Zayd b. Haritha was an early convert to Islam, and ultimately one of its earliest martyrs, who was, for a time, considered Muhammad’s adopted son.
62. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 186.

63. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 186-187. For the sake of clarity, I've inserted "every day" from the Arabic of Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira* 407. Guillaume's translation here is rather paraphrastic, but it alters nothing substantial.
64. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:213-214.
65. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:214.
66. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:214.
67. Qur'an 53:13-18 (my translation).
68. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 4:289.
69. Daniel C. Peterson, "The Qur'anic Tree of Life," in John W. Welch and Donald W. Parry, eds., *The Tree of Life: From Eden to Eternity* (Provo: Maxwell Institute, 2011), 193-216.
70. Peterson, "The Qur'anic Tree of Life," 215-216.
71. T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1943), 59.

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FOUR IDOLATROUS GODS IN THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

John Gee

Abstract: *Although unknown as deities in Joseph Smith's day, the names of four associated idolatrous gods (Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, and Korash) mentioned in the Book of Abraham are attested anciently. Two of them are known to have connections with the practices attributed to them in the Book of Abraham. The odds of Joseph Smith guessing the names correctly is astronomical.*

Among the specifics given in the Book of Abraham are the names of five deities worshipped in Ur of the Chaldees identified as “the god of Elkenah, and the god of Libnah, and the god of Mahmackrah, and the god of Korash, and the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt” (Abraham 1:6). The Book of Abraham also informs us a little about the organization of the cult of “these dumb idols” by noting that “the priest of Elkenah was also the priest of Pharaoh” (Abraham 1:7). Up to this point we have had very little knowledge about these particular deities outside of the text of the Book of Abraham itself.¹ In this article I examine what can be known about the first four deities mentioned.

Methodological Notes

Obviously the preferred situation would be that one could find these proper names attested both in the correct time and place.² This desideratum is easier said than done. There are relatively few extant

1. For exceptions, see Kevin L. Barney, “On Elkenah as Canaanite El,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 19, no. 1 (2010): 22–35.

2. John Gee and Stephen D. Ricks, “Historical Plausibility: The Historicity of the Book of Abraham as a Case Study,” in *Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scriptures*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2001), 66–69.

sources from Abraham's approximate time and place. Ancient sources from Abraham's day were written for the needs and purposes of the people in Abraham's day; they were not written to answer our questions. Information pertaining to our concerns comes only, if it come at all, as incidental mentions in the text. The likelihood of their appearing increases with the number of texts available. Since the amount of relevant information is small, so are the chances of that information answering the questions we may have. We may want, for example, to know how many people lived in Abraham's Ur, but texts from Abraham's day usually do not deal directly with population sizes of towns.

Time

Based on the Book of Abraham, Abraham seems to have lived in a time when Egyptians were in the northern Levant. The only time when that appears to be the case is between the reigns of the Pharaohs Sesostri II (1871–1864 BC) or Sesostri III (1863–1825 BC) on one end and Amenemhet III (1843–1798 BC) on the other end.³ This is a period of at most seventy years, and it coincides with the Middle Bronze II period archaeologically. Because this time period is rather narrow and we actually have no written records from the northern Levant at that time, we must widen our scope chronologically by assuming *cultural continuity*.

Cultural continuity relies on the widespread human inertia not to change what works. Many practices, institutions, and beliefs can persist for hundreds, sometimes even thousands, of years without significant change. The longer time between two attestations of a cultural practice, the greater the chance of its having changed between them.

Place

Abraham's hometown of Ur seems to be located in the area of modern southern Turkey or northern Syria:⁴ The homeland (*môladâ*) in which

3. Gee and Ricks, "Historical Plausibility," 69; Kerry Muhlestein and John Gee, "An Egyptian Context for the Sacrifice of Abraham," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 20, no. 2 (2011): 74, 77 n. 25; John Gee, *An Introduction to the Book of Abraham* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2017), 101. I am following the dates of Rolf Krauss, "Lunar Dates," in *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, ed. Erik Hornung, Rolf Krauss, and David A. Warburton (Leiden, DEU: Brill, 2006), 427; and Thomas Schneider, "The Relative Chronology of the Middle Kingdom and the Hyksos Period (Dyns. 12–17)," in *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, 174.

4. Gee, *Book of Abraham*, 98–101.

the Ur of the Chaldees that Abraham fled (Genesis 12:1) is the same homeland (*môladâ*) in Aram-Naharin (Genesis 24:10) to which he sent his servant to find his son a wife (Genesis 24:4, 7). Aram-Naharin is located in modern-day northern Syria or southern Turkey rather than Mesopotamia. The names in the Abraham narrative are also linked to that area.⁵

Although it has been suggested that the site of Oylum Hüyük in the Kilis plain has been connected with the Olishem mentioned in the Book of Abraham,⁶ this identification has been contested from both directions: on the one hand Oylum Hüyük has been proposed to be Țașșuwa instead;⁷ and on the other hand Gaziantep (alternately Oylum) has been proposed to be Olishem with Tilbeșar as Țașșuwa.⁸ Neither proposed identification of Oylum Hüyük, as Ullišum or Țașșuwa, is certain. Locating Ur somewhere in the Kilis or Sajur plain is a reasonable proposal that can be provisionally accepted until more information either confirms or falsifies it. It is located about 165 kilometers (100 miles) west of Harran, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) west of Carchemish, and about the same distance north of Aleppo. The Kilis plain contains thirty-eight known or suspected Middle Bronze II sites.⁹ Of the known ones, seventeen are small (1–3 hectares), ten are medium sized (4–6) hectares, two are large (7–10 hectares), and one, at 17 hectares, is massive: Oylum Hüyük.¹⁰ Using the typical estimate of one hundred people per acre (2.47 hectares),¹¹ the small sites would have a population of about a hundred

5. Douglas Frayne, "In Abraham's Footsteps," in *The World of the Aramaeans I*, ed. P. M. Michèle Daviau, John W. Wevers, and Michael Weigl (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 216–36.

6. Atilla Engin, "Oylum Höyük İçin Bir Lokalizasyon Önerisi: Ullisum / Ullis / İllis," in *Armizzi: Engin Özgen'e Armağan*, (Ankara: Asitan Kitap, 2014), 129–45. For an evaluation of the claims, see John Gee, "Has Olishem Been Discovered?" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 22, no. 2 (2013): 104–7.

7. Ahmet Ünal, "A Hittite treaty tablet from Oylum Höyük in southeastern Turkey and the location of Țașșu(wa)," *Anatolian Studies* 65 (2015): 19–34.

8. Alfonso Archi, "Egypt or Iran in the Ebla Texts ?" *Orientalia* 85, fasc. 1 (2016): 26–27.

9. Atilla Engin and Barbara Helwing, "The EBA-MBA Transition in the Kilis Plain," in *Looking North: The Socioeconomic Dynamics of Northern Mesopotamian and Anatolian Regions during the Late Third and Early Second Millennium BC*, ed. Nicola Laneri, Peter Pfälzner, and Stefano Valentini (Wiesbaden, DEU: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), 99.

10. Engin and Helwing, "EBA-MBA Transition," 98–100.

11. William G. Dever, *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel: Where Archaeology and the Bible Intersect* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans,

people, the medium-sized sites would have about two hundred people, and the large sites three or four hundred people; Oylum Hüyük would have had about seven hundred inhabitants.

In the ancient Near East, deities could be either local, regional, or super-regional. Local deities are particular to a specific location. When deities are shared with other locations in an area, then they are regional deities. Those that transcend a particular region can be termed super-regional deities. If the deities mentioned in the Book of Abraham are strictly local deities, then they will be found only if the precise location of Abraham is discovered. Since the precise location is not known, the only chance to find the deities is if they are regional or super-regional deities.

Understanding the Labels

At the general time and place, the phrase “god of X” can mean a variety of things. The following are known usages from the time.

Person: In one Mari letter, Išḫi-Adad refers to the “DINGIR ša a-bi-ia” “the god of my father,”¹² showing that the name mentioned after the god can refer to the owner or possessor of the deity. Other letters mention “DINGIR ša be-lí-ia”¹³ or “DINGIR-lum ša be-lí-ia”¹⁴ “the god of my lord.” The Book of Abraham’s “god of Pharaoh” (Abraham 1:6) seems to fit this pattern.

Place: Mari letters refer to the “DINGIR.MEŠ ša a-li-šu” “the gods of his city,”¹⁵ which shows that it is possible for a specific place to be mentioned. Likewise, Idrimi refers to the “DINGIR.MEŠ ša URU

2012), 72.

12. ARM 5 20 16, in Georges Dossin, *Correspondance de Iasmaḥ-Addu* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1952), 36.

13. ARM 26/1 190 7', in Dominique Charpin and J.-M. Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1988), 1:372.

14. ARM 26/2 315 58, 26/2 289 27, in Dominique Charpin, Francis Joannés, Sylvie Lackenbacher, and Bertrand Lafont, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1988), 2:78, 217. Cf. DINGIR.MEŠ ša be-lí-ia; ARM 26/2 401 6, in Charpin, Joannés, Lackenbacher, and Lafont, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1:243; ARM 26/2 542 15, in Charpin, Joannés, Lackenbacher, and Lafont, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1:2, 535; DINGIR.MEŠ ša be-lí; ARM 26/2 436 16, in Charpin, Joannés, Lackenbacher, and Lafont, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1:341.

15. ARM 26/1 156 22, in Charpin and Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1:323; ARM 26/2 401 5, in Charpin, Joannés, Lackenbacher, and Lafont, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1:243.

A-la-la-aḥ^{ki}” “the gods of the city of Alalah,”¹⁶ as well as the “*i-lam ma-at Ḫu-ri-ib-te^{ki}*” “the god of the country of Ḫuribte.”¹⁷ This can be extended to use the name of a god applied to a specific place, like “*dDa-gan ša Ū-ra-aḥ^{ki}*” “Dagan of Urah.”¹⁸

It is not unusual for each location to have its own set of deities worshipped there. This can be shown in a Hittite cult inventory which lists the locations and the deities worshipped there, only portions of which we list here:¹⁹

Town	Deities
Šananauya	Ištar/Šawuška
Ušḫaniya	Storm God (^d 10) Sun Deity (^d UTU-uš)
Kipitta	Sun Deity (^d UTU-AŠ)
Uḫḫiuwa	War god (^d ZA-BA ₄ -BA ₄)
Kapitatamna	[Storm] God (^d [10])
Liššina	Storm God (^d 10)
Uwalma	Gods (DINGIR.MEŠ)
Tenizidaša	Pirwa
Piddaniyaša	Pirwa
[Ma]lidaškuriya	Nanaya
Kalašmitta	Stag God (^d KAL) Ala
Tamettaya	Storm god of the gate-house (^d 10 KI.LAM) ²⁰ Anzili
Durmitta	Gods (DINGIR.MEŠ)

16. Inscription of Idrimi, line 88, Edward L. Greenstein and David Marcus, “The Akkadian Inscription of Idrimi,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 8, no. 1 (January 1976): 66–67.

17. Inscription of Idrimi, line 14, in Greenstein and Marcus, “The Akkadian Inscription of Idrimi,” 64.

18. ARM 21 333 70’.

19. KBo 12.53+, in Michele Cammarosano, *Hittite Local Cults* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 276–85.

20. For the interpretation of this Sumerogram, see Itamar Singer, *The Hittite KI.LAM Festival* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), 1:46, 115.

Some towns have more than one chief deity, and some deities are worshipped in more than one place, but the list gives an idea of the geographic variation in worship.

Attribute: The autobiography of Idrimi twice uses the expression “DINGIR.MEŠ ša AN ù KI” “the gods of heaven and earth.”²¹ This expresses more an attribute than a specific place. This can also be seen in the Mesopotamian god lists where successive lines of one give “AN šá LÚ,” “AN šá SAL,” “AN šá LUGAL,” and “AN šá par-ši” “the god of men, the god of women, the god of the king, the god of the official.”²²

Name: In cuneiform the names of deities are usually prefixed with the Sumerian sign DINGIR (conventionally abbreviated ^d, although in the original cuneiform writing there is no distinction between writing a phonetic sign, a logogram, or a determinative).²³ Determining when the sign should be read as a determinative and when it should be read as a logogram is not always a trivial or easy matter.²⁴ While this sign is not always read, it is, for example, possible to read the construction ^dDa-gan as “the god Dagan” or “the god of Dagan,” even though this is not the usual way to understand this construction.

The English word *god*, however, might not translate as the equivalent of DINGIR. In Joseph Smith’s day, the word *god* could specifically refer to “a false god; a heathen deity; an idol,”²⁵ which is clearly the way it is used in Abraham 1:6. In cuneiform writing systems of Abraham’s day, when the idol was referred to, the term sign ALAM was used rather than DINGIR. Thus the eighth year of Zimrilim was called “MU Zi-im-ri-li-im ALAM ^dḪa-at-ta ú-še-lu-ú” “the year Zimrilim erected the god of Ḫatta.”²⁶

21. Inscription of Idrimi, lines 95 and 98, in Greenstein and Marcus, “The Akkadian Inscription of Idrimi,” 66, 68.

22. Anu ša amēli 1–4, in Richard L. Litke, *A Reconstruction of the Assyro-Babylonian God-Lists*, AN: ^dAn-nu-um and AN: Anu šá Amēli (New Haven, CT: Yale Babylonian Collection, 1998), 228. The same sign is read both AN and DINGIR; Rykle Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon* (Münster, Germany: Ugarit-Verlag, 2004), 248–50.

23. John Huehnergard, *A Grammar of Akkadian* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 111–12; Richard Caplice and Daniel Snell, *Introduction to Akkadian* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2002), 5–7.

24. See Robert M. Whiting, “The Reading of the Name DINGIR-šu-i-li-a,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 97, no. 2 (1977): 171–77; Charpin and Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1:415–16.

25. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844), s.v. god.

26. E.g., ARM 25 26.

Transliteration

The Book of Abraham uses the Hebrew transliteration system that Joseph Smith learned from Josiah Seixas.²⁷ It was the standard transliteration system used in English-speaking countries in the nineteenth century. It differs from the transliteration systems used today and had a number of disadvantages. One of these is that it creates ambiguities, because combinations of letters can stand for different phonemes in the original languages. Such ambiguities are common in transliteration systems both anciently and in modern times. The following table shows the differences between the transliteration system of Seixas and the system used today:

Hebrew Letter	Current Transliteration	Seixas Transliteration
א	ʾ	
ב	b	b
ג	g	g
ד	d	d
ה	h	h
ו	w	v
ז	z	z
ח	ḥ	kh
ט	ṭ	t
י	y	y
כ	k	k
ל	l	l
מ	m	m
נ	n	n
ס	s	s
ע	ʿ	gn
פ	p	p, f
צ	ṣ	ts
ק	q	k

27. It may be found in J. Seixas, *Manual Hebrew Grammar for the Use of Beginners*, 2nd ed. (Andover, MA: Gould and Newman, 1834), 5.

Hebrew Letter	Current Transliteration	Seixas Transliteration
ר	r	r
ש	š	sh
ש		s
ת	t	t

As the table shows, the Seixas system is ambiguous in a number of cases where different letters have the same transliteration. This needs to be kept in mind when dealing with the transcriptions of foreign terms in the Book of Abraham. In this article I distinguish between Book of Abraham and contemporary attestations by preserving the spelling from the respective sources.

Context

While identifying a facet about the text and showing that it occurred in the time of Abraham argues for the historical authenticity of the text, one should not stop there. It is important not just to identify names in extra-canonical sources but to use those sources to learn something more about the deity. More information can not just argue for historical authenticity but can elucidate facets of the text that might not be otherwise apparent.

Elkenah

A variety of identifications for Elkenah have been proposed,²⁸ but the most likely is some form of Hebrew El-qoneh (ʾl qnh), “the god who creates.”

The Karatepe inscription is a bilingual inscription in Hieroglyphic Luwian and Phoenician. In the inscription the Luwian Ea is equated with the Phoenician ʾlqn ʾrs, “the god who created the earth.”²⁹ The Hittite form of this name is Elkunirša.³⁰ The Hittites preserved a myth, supposedly

28. See Barney, “Elkenah as Canaanite El,” 26–29; Gee and Ricks, “Historical Plausibility,” 75.

29. KARATEPE 1 §LXXIII, in John D. Hawkins, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions: Volume I: Inscriptions from the Iron Age* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 1.1:58.

30. B. H. L. van Gessel, *Onomasticon of the Hittite Pantheon* (Leiden, DEU: Brill, 1998), 1:63.

Canaanite,³¹ about this god. According to that myth, Elkunirša lived at the headwaters of the Euphrates river.³² The myth, as such, is lamentably fragmentary, but has been summarized as follows:

“Ašertu, the wife of Elkunirša, attempts to seduce Ba‘al. The Storm-god reveals everything to her husband and insults her on his inspiration. Thirsting revenge, Ašertu regains the favor of her husband, who then lets her do whatever she like with Ba‘al. The goddess Anat now comes on the scene. Having overheard the conversation between Elkunirša and Ašertu, she warns Ba‘al. Here the text breaks off. Elkunirša is the Hittitized form of the Semitic phrase ‘El Creator of the Earth.’”³³

The myth contains intriguing passages, such as one character (Ašertu) saying to another, (Ba‘al) “Come sleep with me”; and when the offer was refused, responding, “Else I will press you down with my [word] and [stab] you with my [. . .]”³⁴ The restoration of “stab” comes from a parallel passage in the story. This passage echoes the passage in the Book of Abraham in which “this priest [of Elkenah (see Abraham 1:7)] had offered upon this altar three virgins at one time, who were the daughters of Onitah, one of the royal descent directly from the loins of Ham. These virgins were offered up because of their virtue; because they would not bow down to worship gods of wood or of stone, they were killed upon this altar, and it was done after the manner of the Egyptians” (Abraham 1:11). Most Anatolian myths are closely connected to rituals.³⁵ The tablet from Böghazköy offers the mythic justification, while the Book of Abraham focuses on the ritual. The Book of Abraham specifies that the ritual, unlike the myth’s stabbing, was “done after the manner of the Egyptians,” and so it must have differed from the simple stabbing of the myth.

This deity is thus attested over a wide area, from Böghazköy to the headwaters of the Euphrates and down past Cilicia into Canaan. He is

31. Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., trans., *Hittite Myths* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 69–70.

32. Hoffner, *Hittite Myths*, 69.

33. Maciej Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor* (Warsaw, Poland: Academic Publications Dialog, 1995), 128.

34. Translation in Hoffner, *Hittite Myths*, 69. For the text, see Heinrich Otten, “Ein kanaanäischer Mythos aus Boğazköy,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientalforschung* 1 (1953): 126.

35. Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 106.

also attested over a wider temporal range. His myth is also associated with a choice between immorality or death.

Libnah

Two god lists from Ugarit attest a specific set of deities called the “gods of Labana” (Akkadian: DINGIR.MEŠ la-ab-a-na; Ugaritic: il lb[-]n).³⁶ This has been taken as meaning “the gods of Lebanon,”³⁷ but others have been less certain about the translation.³⁸ There are two canonical god lists from Ugarit, a short one and a long one,³⁹ and the gods of Labana appear on the long one, suggesting that they are not main deities worshiped at Ugarit.

The alternate spelling that appears in some manuscripts of the Book of Abraham but was corrected in the printed edition, Zibnah,⁴⁰ is attested in the Hittite pantheon as Zappana.⁴¹ In Hittite usage of the cuneiform writing system, some “signs whose initial consonant is a stop can have either a voiced or voiceless interpretation,” while those that end in a stop “do not indicate whether the final stop is voiced or voiceless”; so “when transcribing syllabically written Hittite words, Hittitologists normally transliterate the obstruent according to the value of the cuneiform sign most favored by the tradition of Hittitologists.”⁴² In other words, the transcriptions are traditional, and what is transcribed as a voiced consonant may actually be voiceless and vice versa. Thus the Hittite deity could as easily be Zabbana.

36. RS 92.2004, line 35, and RS 24.643, line 43 (=KTU 1.148.43), in Dennis Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 18–19; Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani und anderen Orten*, 3rd ed. (Münster, Germany: Ugarit Verlag, 2013), 153.

37. Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson, 3rd ed. (Leiden, Germany: Brill, 2015), 487.

38. Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, 19.

39. G. del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit*, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 68–69.

40. Brian M. Hauglid, *A Textual History of the Book of Abraham: Manuscripts and Editions* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2010), 26 n. 30.

41. van Gessel, *Hittite Pantheon*, 1:575.

42. Harry A. Hoffner Jr. and H. Craig Melchert, *A Grammar of the Hittite Language* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 1:16.

Mahmackrah

There are two possible ways to take this name: as the name of a deity or as a place name. The two possibilities will be discussed in that order, by considering it first as the name of a deity.

Previous attempts to equate Mahmackrah with the Mesopotamian deity ^d*Ma-mi-ḫi-rat*⁴³ foundered because in the first place the name had been misread and was actually Mami-šarrat (^d*Ma-mi-šar-rat*) and thus not a close match phonetically; and in the second place because it was not the name of a deity but of a canal.⁴⁴ Some relation to Hebrew *mimkar* “merchandise” has also been suggested.⁴⁵

The name of a deity that is at least somewhat close to that of Mahmackrah was found at Beth-Shan in 1927.⁴⁶ It was found in Level IX of the tell, and is associated with a scarab of Thutmosis III,⁴⁷ which would date it to the Eighteenth Dynasty of the Egyptian New Kingdom, which, in fact, is the standard date assigned to it by archaeologists.⁴⁸ The deity is speculated to have been imported into the land of Israel from northern Mesopotamia during Amorite incursions at the end of the Early Bronze Age and thus part of the landscape during the time of Abraham.⁴⁹

The god of Beth-Shean is written *Mkr* (or *M^ck3r3*).⁵⁰ This may be a variation of *m^cq3rw* (alternately *m^cqwrwiw*), which is a type of vessel. The word is thought to be related to Ugaritic *mqrt*, which is “a container or pot,”⁵¹ or to Akkadian *maqārtu*, which is some sort of vessel.⁵² The

43. John M. Lundquist, “Was Abraham at Ebla? A Cultural Background of the Book of Abraham (Abraham 1 and 2),” in *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 2: The Pearl of Great Price*, eds. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985), 232.

44. Gee and Ricks, “Historical Plausibility,” 91–92 n. 108.

45. Ibid., 75.

46. Henry O. Thompson, *Mekal: The God of Beth-Shan* (Leiden, DEU: E. J. Brill, 1970), 22–23.

47. Ibid., 26–27.

48. Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 1:242; Amihai Mazar, “Beth-Shean,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1:306.

49. Thompson, *Mekal*, 172–73.

50. Alexis Mallon, “Une nouvelle stèle égyptienne de Beisan (scythopolis),” *Syria* 9, no. 2 (1928): 127; Thompson, *Mekal*, 180, plate V; Christian Leitz, *Lexikon der Ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2002) 3:458.

51. del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín, *Dictionary of Ugaritic*, 561.

52. CAD M1:240, s.v. *maqārtu*.

prefixed element might be the demon ^dMÁ attested at Ugarit,⁵³ or perhaps a Hurrian prefix.⁵⁴ The use of the Egyptian *q* to write a Semitic *k* and the reverse (*k* for *q*) are rare, but attested.⁵⁵ The point, however, is moot, since both would have been rendered as a *k* or *ck* in Joseph Smith's transliteration system.⁵⁶ Modern scholars have often assumed that the *r3* that ends the name in the Egyptian script is trying to transcribe a Semitic *l*, which it can do, but it more often transcribes a Semitic *r*.⁵⁷

The other possibility is that Mahmackrah is a place name. A location with a name close to Mahmackrah is known from Abraham's time in the general area of Haran. The Assyrian king, Šamši-Adad, writes to Išmaḥ-Adad that there is a revolt in Zalmaqum, a larger area of which the territory of Haran is a part, and that he is going with his army to suppress the revolt. On the way, an addition to his army has met him at Mammigira.⁵⁸ So this was a place in between Šubat-Enlil (modern Tell Leilan, Syria) and Haran (modern Şanlıurfa, Turkey).⁵⁹ A contemporary itinerary shows that it was seven days' travel from Šubat-Enlil to

53. RS 25.420+440C+445+447+456+459C II 23, in Walter Farber, *Lamaštu: An Edition of the Canonical Series of Lamaštu Incantations and Rituals and Related Texts from the Second and First Millennia B.C.* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 92. The canonical series of Lamaštu is broken at this point, so we are unable to determine at this time the Akkadian equivalent. The deity is male and the female of the pair is ^dAma-za-ka-nu-ta. The writing of MÁ normally means "boat" (Akkadian *eleppu*); Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*, 205–6. Exactly what it means in this particular passage is unclear.

54. In which case, it could mean "this." N. Nozadze, *Vocabulary of the Hurrian Language* (Tbilisi, Georgia: Society of Assyriologists, Bibliologists and Caucasiologists, 2007), 236–37. For a slightly different view (as "he") see Ilse Wegner, *Hurritisch: Eine Einführung*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 2007), 180; Dennis R. M. Campbell, *Mood and Modality in Hurrian* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 295; Johannes Friedrich and Annelies Kammenhuber, *Hethitisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1952), 4:317. The lexeme is missing from Emmanuel Laroche, *Glossaire de la Langue Hourrite* (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1976–77).

55. James E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 436.

56. Seixas, *Manual Hebrew Grammar*, 5.

57. Hoch, *Semitic Words*, 435.

58. ARM 1 10, in Georges Dossin, *Correspondance de Šamši-Addu et de ses fils* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1950), 38–42.

59. The two places are about 240 km apart in an almost direct east-west line from each other.

Mammigira and another three days to Haran.⁶⁰ The cuneiform writing of the place, Ma-am-ma-gi-ra^{ki}, could also be read Ma-am-ma-qí-ra^{ki}, which would end up as Mammackirah in Joseph Smith's transliteration system. In a presumably later letter of Šamši-Adad, he asks Išmaḥ-Adad to install himself at Mammigira.⁶¹ Another letter from Šamši-Adad says that Suda, which is a part of Zalmaqum, is in the area of Mammigira.⁶² The letters concern military affairs, so no deities that might be worshipped at Mammigira are mentioned.

Korash

Of the various deities, perhaps the one we have the most information on is Korash, known among the Hittites as Kurša,⁶³ which is conventionally translated as “hunting bag.”⁶⁴ It was typically “made of appropriately prepared sheepskins and sometimes even decorated,”⁶⁵ but “leather, wood, and reed” are all attested materials for a Kurša.⁶⁶ The bag “functions as the symbol of a deity and is therefore treated as a god.”⁶⁷ It seems to have been “worshipped as an impersonal deity.”⁶⁸ The Hittites used “implements associated with a particular god as the actual cult representation of that god.”⁶⁹ Some of the tablets mentioning Kurša are in Middle Hittite script,⁷⁰ which seems to be a couple hundred years after

60. YBC 4499 24–33, in William W. Hallo, “The Road to Emar,” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 18, no. 3 (1964): 60, 63–64.

61. ARM 1 53, in Dossin, *Correspondance de Šamši-Addu*, 108–10.

62. ARM 1 97, in Dossin, *Correspondance de Šamši-Addu*, 168–70.

63. For the writing of both [o] and [u] with cuneiform signs read with *u*, see Wegner, *Hurritisch*, 43–44. The form of the name *Kurša* is the absolute form of the word, which occurs only three times, usually with case endings; van Gessel, *Hittite Pantheon*, 1:267–71. The Hittite case system may be causing syncope on the root; see Hoffner and Melchert, *Grammar of the Hittite Language*, 32–33.

64. Gregory McMahon, *The Hittite State Cult of the Tutelary Deities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 143, 250–54; Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 76.

65. Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 76.

66. McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 165, 251; Maciej Popko, *Kultobjekte in der hethitischen Religion (nach keilschriftlichen Quellen)* (Warszawa, Poland: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1978), 109.

67. McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 252.

68. Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 76, 111; Popko, *Kultobjekte in der hethitischen Religion*, 108.

69. McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 143.

70. *Ibid.*, 143–44.

Abraham,⁷¹ but it is known also from Old Hittite sources.⁷² For example, there is an Old Hittite mythic fragment in which “the bee is the goddess’s messenger bringing the lost *kurša*.”⁷³ The term also appears in New Kingdom Egypt.⁷⁴

Kurša could be a form of Zithariya,⁷⁵ “the chief god of the lands occupied by the Kaška people,”⁷⁶ but it could also represent a male deity written with the LAMMA sign,⁷⁷ which had readings of either *annari* or *innara*.⁷⁸ He was a tutelary deity,⁷⁹ which means that he was one of a number of “guardian spirits over personal well-being, nature, the home, a sacred locus, a particular activity, etc.” that served some sort of protective function.⁸⁰ Though Zithariya had “an extremely close connection” with Kurša, they were not always identical.⁸¹

Zithariya is a well-attested Hittite deity,⁸² but he seems originally to have been a Hattic deity from Ḫatenzuwa.⁸³ “Zithariya has his own temple and a festival, and is sufficiently important to the king’s safety that he is taken on campaign.”⁸⁴ He was evoked as a divine witness in a number of treaties: between Suppiluliuma I and Huqqana of Hayasa,⁸⁵ between

71. Billie Jean Collins, *The Hittites and Their World* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 38, 42–46.

72. Popko, *Kultobjekte in der hethitischen Religion*, 109.

73. Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 82.

74. Thomas Schneider, “Fremdwörter in der ägyptischen Militärsprache des Neuen Reiches und ein Bravourstück des Elitesoldaten (Papyrus Anastasi I 23, 27),” *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 35 (2008): 192; Hoch, *Semitic Words*, 332–33.

75. KUB 55.43, lines 1 and 5, in McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 144–45, cf. lines 20–21 on pages 146–47.

76. Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 87, 89–90.

77. *Ibid.*, 90.

78. Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 89; Christel Rüster and Erich Neu, *Hethitisches Zeichenlexikon: Inventar und Interpretation der Keilschriftzeichen aus den Boğazköy-Texten* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 1989), 187.

79. Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 89.

80. McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 2–3.

81. *Ibid.*, 20–21.

82. van Gessel, *Hittite Pantheon*, 1:593–97.

83. McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 19–20.

84. *Ibid.*, 22.

85. Gary Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 24; Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J. N. Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), 1:442–43.

Suppiluliuma I and Shattiwaza of Mittanni,⁸⁶ between Suppiluliuma I and Tette of Nuhashshi,⁸⁷ between Mursili II and Tuppi-Teshup of Amurru,⁸⁸ between Mursili II and Niqmepa of Ugarit,⁸⁹ between Mursili II and Manapa-Tarhunta of the Seha River land,⁹⁰ between Tudkhaliya IV of Hatti and Ulmi-Teshup of Tarhuntassa,⁹¹ and between Tudhaliya IV and Kurunta of Tarhuntassa.⁹² One treaty was even set up on a bronze tablet in his temple.⁹³ The purpose of the divine witnesses was to carry out the blessings for obedience or curses for disobedience to the treaty. He received offerings individually and along with other deities.⁹⁴ For example, if Huqqana violated his agreement with Suppiluliuma, then “these oath deities will not leave you alone, nor on your account will they leave alone that man to whom you go over. They shall destroy him. And the oath gods shall not neglect⁹⁵ this matter in regard to both of you, and they shall not make it permissible for both of you. They shall destroy both of you together and thereby fulfill the wishes of My Majesty.”⁹⁶ “If you, Prince Shattiwaza, and you Hurrians do not observe the words of this treaty, the gods, lords of the oath, shall destroy you [and] you

86. KBo 1.1 v.44, in H. H. Figulla, E. Forrer and E. F. Weidner, *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi* (Leipzig, Germany: J. C. Hinrichs, 1923), 7; Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 43, 47; Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant*, 1:376–77.

87. KBo 1.4 IV.11, in Figulla, Forrer and Weidner, *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi*, 1:20; Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 53; Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant*, 1:414–15.

88. Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 58; Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant*, 1:478–79.

89. Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 63; Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant*, 1:490–91.

90. Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 81; Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant*, 1:534–35.

91. KBo IV.10 54, in Figulla, Forrer and Weidner, *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi*, 4:57; Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 106; Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant*, 1:638–39.

92. Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 116; Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant*, 1:624–25.

93. Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 117.

94. McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 21–22.

95. Kitchen and Lawrence translate as “forgive.” The Hittite verb is tar-na-an-zi, which basically means “to let go”; Friedrich, *Hethitisches Wörterbuch*, 21516.

96. Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 25; Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant*, 1:444–45.

Hurrians, together with your land, your wives, and your possessions.”⁹⁷ Total destruction was the usual curse.⁹⁸ He was also invoked in other oaths.⁹⁹ Though known as a tutelary deity¹⁰⁰ and the best attested of the tutelary deities,¹⁰¹ and thus in charge of protection, he could also be involved in destruction. Zithariya was also involved in both the Great Substitution Ritual and the Ritual at an Enemy Border.¹⁰² In the latter ritual, Zithariya received an offering of an extra sheep.¹⁰³

As an object, the kurša “was taken along on military expeditions and upon returning was ceremoniously brought back into his temple in the capital.”¹⁰⁴ Given that it was made of perishable materials and was prone to decay when handled, the Kurša had to be renewed and rededicated occasionally. We have a ritual for the renewing of the Kurša.¹⁰⁵ It involved eating bread, drinking some liquid, singers, and something called “dog-men.”¹⁰⁶ The term for dog-men is a literal rendering of the Sumerian signs LÚ.MEŠ UR.GI₇¹⁰⁷; it can mean “hunter” in some contexts, but was also used in cultic contexts,¹⁰⁸ such as the festival of the crocus (AN.TAḪ.ŠUM),¹⁰⁹ which took place in the spring.¹¹⁰ The dog-men drove sheep into the temple for offerings connected with oracles,¹¹¹ and they were involved in sacrificing a goat.¹¹² They are also involved in the construction of the

97. Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 43; Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant*, 1:378–79, 384–85.

98. Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant*, 1:416–17, 480–81, 490–91; 626–27; 638–41.

99. Jared L. Miller, *Royal Hittite Instructions and Related Administrative Texts* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 146–47, 310–11.

100. Collins, *Hittites and their World*, 173.

101. McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 19.

102. *Ibid.*, 21.

103. *Ibid.*, 21.

104. Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, 87.

105. KUB 55.43, in Helmut Freydank, *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi, Heft LV* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985), 29, 31–33, 35; translation in McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 144–57.

106. KUB 55.43 ii 1–12, in Freydank, *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi, Heft LV*, 31; translation in McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 146–49; cf. 183–86.

107. For UR.GI₇ as *kalbu* “dog,” see Miguel Civil, *MSL XIV* (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1979), 101; Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*, 432.

108. McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 268–69.

109. *Ibid.*, 262.

110. Collins, *Hittites and their World*, 162–63.

111. KUB 22.27 iv 17, in McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 269.

112. KBo 13.179:11’–12’ in McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 269; transliteration and translation on pp. 165–66.

Kurša containers.¹¹³ They are noted for their ceremonial dress.¹¹⁴ The role of these dog men in the ceremony is described by the Hittite verb *wappiya-*, which is the same verb that is used to describe a dog making noise, but also a particular aspect of Hittite ritual activity.¹¹⁵ (In one festival Zithariya also has “cult functionaries who bark” like Kurša.)¹¹⁶

Kurša could also be a witness on treaties and enforce the curses for disobedience.¹¹⁷ In these cases he is listed alongside Zithariya and thus is not syncretized or conflated with him.

One of the things that make the Hittite evidence interesting is the presence of the dog-men, which seems to be reflected in the standard Egyptological insistence that figure 3 in Facsimile 1, identified as “the idolatrous priest of Elkenah,” should have a jackal’s or dog’s head.

Conclusions

Tentative identifications can be provided for all four of the deities mentioned in the first chapter of the Book of Abraham. Three (Elkenah, Libnah, and Korash) are close phonetically. Three (Elkenah, Libnah, and Korash) are close geographically to the site of Abraham’s sacrifice; the other (Mamackrah) is attested a bit farther away (although if it is a place name then it is closer). Two (Elkenah and Korash) are superregional deities whose geographical attestation covers Abraham’s homeland. As there are few sources from the region in Abraham’s day (Middle Bronze Age), all of them are attested in the Late Bronze Age with indications that at least one of them (Korash) goes back to the Middle Bronze Age. For two (Elkenah and Korash), we can currently discuss more than their names. The ability to do so shows the importance of going past the simple identification of a name where possible.

For those deities for whom we have more information than just their name, one (Elkenah) seems to be involved in a ritual in which individuals were asked to engage in sexual immorality or face death, which parallels Abraham 1:11. One (Korash) is involved in cursing those seen as disobedient to the king, who were destroyed, which parallels Abraham 1:5–13.

This might seem like a meagre amount of information, but it represents a significant step forward in research on the Book of Abraham.

113. McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 186.

114. Singer, *The Hittite KILAM Festival*, 1:130.

115. McMahon, *Hittite Tutelary Deities*, 262–63.

116. *Ibid.*, 21.

117. Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant*, 414–15; 534–35; 624–25.

Twenty years ago almost none of this was known. It was certainly not known when Joseph Smith published the Book of Abraham.

What are the odds of Joseph Smith guessing right? A number of factors complicate the calculation, so only a simplified calculation will be done. Joseph Smith provided four names, two of two syllables and two of three syllables. Using the twenty-two unique consonants provided by the Seixas transliteration system, a CVC syllabic structure (since one of the Seixas consonants is a null value), and five vowels, there are 2420 possible syllable combinations; but because the vowels were not always written and frequently changed in dialects, we drop them, for a total of 484 syllable combinations. Since there are ten syllables in the names Joseph Smith provided, this is a total of 7.05×10^{26} different possible combinations. The Mesopotamian god list AN: ^dA-nu-um lists 2130 non-unique deities.¹¹⁸ Multiplying the number by five to account for deities not included in the Mesopotamian list, and taking the ratio of the two numbers, gives us a very rough estimate of the chance of randomly putting together syllables into four correct ancient deities' names of one in 6.62×10^{22} . By comparison, the odds of winning the Powerball lottery by buying a single ticket are merely one in 292 million (2.92×10^6).¹¹⁹ The odds of winning the Powerball lottery two weeks in a row are one in 8.52×10^{16} . The odds of winning three weeks in a row are one in 2.49×10^{25} . Though only a crude calculation of the odds, it gives some idea how difficult it would be for Joseph Smith to simply guess correctly.

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118. Litke, *A Reconstruction of the Assyro-Babylonian God-Lists*, AN: ^dAn-nu-um and AN: Anu ša Amēli, 372 from Tablet I, 423 from Tablet II, 285 from Tablet III, 296 from Tablet IV, 314 from Tablet V, 314 from Tablet VI, and 126 from Tablet VII. These are not unique names (many are duplicates) and explanatory lines are also included.

119. "One in 292 Million," *Wall Street Journal*, updated August 18, 2017, <http://graphics.wsj.com/lottery-odds/>.

Perspicities, Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt, Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Journal of Egyptian History, Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities, *Lingua Aegyptia*, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur*, and *Interpreter*. Among others, his scholarship has been published by American University of Cairo Press, Archaeopress, Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, E. J. Brill, Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Near Eastern Studies, Czech Institute of Egyptology, Deseret Book, de Gruyter, Harrassowitz, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Macmillan, Oxford University Press, Peeters, Praeger, Religious Studies Center, and the Society of Biblical Literature. He has published three books, edited eight books, and edited an international multilingual peer-reviewed professional journal. He served twice as a section chair for the Society of Biblical Literature.

THE LADY AT THE HORIZON: EGYPTIAN TREE GODDESS ICONOGRAPHY AND SACRED TREES IN ISRAELITE SCRIPTURE AND TEMPLE THEOLOGY

John S. Thompson

Abstract: *John S. Thompson explores scholarly discussions about the relationship of the Egyptian tree goddess to sacred trees in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the temple. He describes related iconography and its symbolism in the Egyptian literature in great detail. He highlights parallels with Jewish, Christian, and Latter-day Saint teachings, suggesting that, as in Egyptian culture, symbolic encounters with two trees of life — one in the courtyard and one in the temple itself — are part of Israelite temple theology and may shed light on the difference between Lehi’s vision of the path of initial contact with Tree of Life and the description of the path in 2 Nephi 31 where the promise of eternal life is made sure.*

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See John S. Thompson, “The Lady at the Horizon: Egyptian Tree Goddess Iconography and Sacred Trees in Israelite Scripture and Temple Theology,” in *Ancient Temple Worship: Proceedings of The Expound Symposium 14 May 2011*, ed. Matthew B. Brown, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Stephen D. Ricks, and John S. Thompson (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 217–42. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/ancient-temple-worship/>.]

In the last few decades, a flurry of scholarly debate pertaining to manifestations of female sacred tree motifs in the iconography and extra-biblical texts of ancient Israel and surrounding nations has raised many questions concerning how one should understand Israelite religion and Biblical passages such as Deuteronomy 16:21, 2 Kings 23:4-7, Proverbs 3:18, and Isaiah 17:8 among many others.¹ Daniel Peterson extended this debate to the Book of Mormon by pointing out the record's claim that Lehi and Nephi, father and son living in the Jerusalem culture of the late 7th century BCE, both saw visions of a divine tree whose fruit was white and "desirable to make one happy," and then Nephi, in response to know the meaning of the tree, saw a vision of a virgin who later held a child in her arms (1 Nephi 8:10-11; 11:8-20).² Nephi describes the appearance of both the tree and the virgin using the same terminology (both are "exceedingly" "fair," or "beautiful," and "white"),³ leaving the reader with the impression that the two are somehow related. Margaret Barker noted that the details in and surrounding the tree visions of Lehi and Nephi fit comfortably within the context of late seventh century BCE.⁴

Much of the debate has focused on the extent to which these connections between sacred trees and women reflect the actual theology and worship of ancient Israelite religion. While the biblical text appears to condemn the Israelites for worshipping any deity besides the god of Abraham, including female deities connected to tree-related iconography, both the Bible and the Book of Mormon depict sacred trees as female in a positive light as well.

These positive views of female sacred trees in scripture and extra-biblical texts as well as what appear to be tree goddess figures in the archeological record of Israel has caused some scholars, such as William Dever, to postulate that the Israelite religion had at one time, in its earlier periods, some polytheistic understandings, including a divine female, who continued in the later periods among the less centrally controlled "folk" religions of ancient Israel.⁵ Barker reasons that these earlier, pre-exilic understandings of both male and female "hosts of heaven" were central to Israelite temple theology but appear to have been excised from or suppressed in the later centralized religion in Jerusalem through such movements as the Deuteronomist school and Josiah's reforms.⁶ Scholars such as these are providing intriguing and well-developed reasons for the fragmentary persistence of female divine trees and goddess figurines in the texts and artifacts of ancient Israel, even though the later central religion and its official records appear to have developed polemics against such.

In contrast, Jeffrey Tigay's monograph that surveys proper names in Hebrew inscriptions calls for caution among scholars who assume the Israelites had earlier practiced full-blown polytheistic worship, for the evidence shows that few of the theophoric names of the ancient Israelites mention other gods.⁷ Steven Wiggins effectively argues for the difficulties of drawing any real conclusions concerning Israelite worship, whether strictly monotheistic or polytheistic, based on the current evidence.⁸ The debate concerning the nature of Israelite religious history will likely continue for some time, and whether the ancient Israelites worshipped or at least acknowledged female deities in pre-exilic periods will be central to truly understanding their religious history and theology as well as the Christianity that grew out of it.

Because of the tree-centric nature of the divine feminine in the texts and images of the Israelite sources, most of the comparative studies have collected images and focused upon the simple fact that other cultures of the ancient Near East had goddesses appearing in connection with divine trees as well. This study will attempt to go a step further and explore the iconographic specifics surrounding these images, especially in Egypt, during the time-period of Israel's kingdom and discuss any insights these specifics may provide concerning the use of female sacred trees in Israelite texts and temple theology.

Egyptian cultural influence in Israel was at one of its high points during the late seventh century BCE, a highly relevant era, scholars believe, for the formation of many Old Testament books.⁹ The Book of Mormon claims its origins in Jerusalem during that time-period as well and mentions some of this Egyptian influence.¹⁰ Additionally, recent research is demonstrating that the Old Testament temple tradition has much more in common with the Egyptian temple tradition scholars have assumed, even from a very early date.¹¹ Consequently, a comparative approach between these two cultures may be fruitful. Of course good scholarship requires that iconographic specifics be analyzed and understood within the context of their own culture to correctly ascertain their meaning within that culture and cautions against "over-reaching" conclusions (e.g., assuming that parallel symbols in two different cultures have parallel meaning or assuming the direct influence of one culture on the other); however, swinging the pendulum too far the other way and ignoring the broader cultural milieu in which a society existed may limit one's ability to fully understand the texts or images that society produced.

A careful analysis of the iconographic specifics related to female divine trees in ancient Egyptian scenes illuminates the following details:

1. They appear mostly in places of transition, such as at the western and eastern horizons or at courtyard entrances to temples and tombs;
2. They frequently appear as sources of water for drinking, in addition to sources of fruit for eating;
3. They often appear with labels designating them as mothers and may even appear nursing a child; and
4. They can also appear in connection with concepts of cleansing or purifying.

These same four details appear in Israelite sources concerning sacred trees as well, providing additional facets to consider when seeking to understand the meaning of female sacred trees in Israelite texts and temple theology. Particularly, the comparative material suggests that the divine trees in the Israelite sources may have more than one meaning and appear in more than one location in the temple or cosmic landscape.

Four Specifics in the Iconography of Egyptian Tree Goddesses

From the early Old Kingdom, Egyptian female deities were associated with trees. In the Old Kingdom cult centers at Memphis and at Kom el-Hisn, Hathor was referred to as the *nb.t nh.t rs.t* “lady of the southern sycamore,” a type of fig tree,¹² and *nb.t jmAw* “lady of the Date Palms,” and Saosis, the wife of Atum in some myths, was closely related to the acacia tree.¹³ Male gods also appear next to or under trees from the earliest texts,¹⁴ but Buhl points out that although “there may have been reliefs or statues of [male] deities with their sacred animals in the shelter of a sacred tree serving as a place of worship for the Egyptians, such gods were not regarded as tree deities.”¹⁵

Associations of sacred trees with female deities also appear in the New Kingdom and later — the time period in which the nation of Israel was formed and existed. During this period, artists depicted Egyptian female deities either merged with a tree in some way, superimposed on a tree, emerging from a tree’s branches, standing beside a tree, or having a tree-related headdress or other iconography.¹⁶ The following analyzes the four details that occur frequently in those scenes related to the tree goddesses in Egypt:

1. Egyptian Tree Goddesses Appear Mostly at Places of Transition

In the texts and iconography, Egyptian tree goddesses most often appear in relation to both the western and eastern horizons, where the sun sets

and then rises respectively. They also appear in relation to the entrances of temples or tombs. This is not surprising since ancient Egyptian temples and tombs have a close association with the horizon.¹⁷ Indeed, the Great Pyramid's ancient name is Khufu's Horizon.

In Egyptian theology, one first encounters a tree goddess in the western horizon, at the beginning of the afterlife journey.¹⁸ One of the more common scenes of tree goddesses on the Theban tomb-walls of the New Kingdom era is an illustration of Book of the Dead 59, a text that typically occurs near the beginning or first hour of the netherworld journey. Such a scene appears in the tomb of Sennedjem, where he and his wife meet a tree goddess pouring a libation Figure 1.¹⁹



Figure 1: Sennedjem and his wife meet a tree goddess pouring a libation in front of a tomb entrance

That such a meeting occurs near the beginning of the netherworld journey can be seen in the art, for the tree goddess seems to appear outside, near the entrance of the temple tomb that is below the couple and into which they will journey.

Figure 2 appears to personify the west as a tree goddess (denoted by the hieroglyph for the west above her head) pouring water at the horizon mountain from which Hathor, as a cow, emerges to greet him. All of this takes place in front of what appears to be a tomb chapel entrance depicted in the lower left.²⁰

Sometimes artists will depict the tree coming out of an object that looks like the standard hieroglyph for a horizon mountain (see Figure 3, Figure 6, and Figure 9).²¹



Figure 2: A tree goddess pouring water at the horizon mountain from which Hathor, as a cow, emerges to greet him



Figure 3: Hathor as tree-goddess in an object shaped as the hieroglyph for mountain, suggesting the horizon

Figure 4, from the tomb of Amenemope, has the tree goddess pouring water while growing from the waters of a pool.²² Nearby, the initiate is embraced by the goddess of the west at the horizon mountain and in front of the tomb chapel entrance.

On a pillar in the middle of a chamber belonging to Thutmose III, surrounded by the twelve hours of the underworld journey depicted on the walls, a tree nurses a child (Figure 5).²³ That the king is portrayed as a young child and the tree is placed in the center of the room may suggest that this scene was understood as representing the beginning of the netherworld journey prior to passing through the twelve hours of the night in the surrounding depictions.

The Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts of Pepy I may prefigure these scenes. When the deceased king comes to his mother-goddess in the



Figure 4: The initiate embraced by the goddess of the west at the horizon mountain, in front of tomb chapel entrance

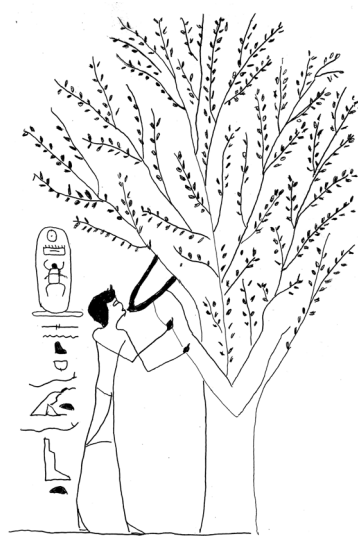


Figure 5: Thutmose III nursed by his mother, Isis as tree-goddess

netherworld journey, she says to her son “accept my breast and suck from it ... that you may live.” “Though you are small ... you shall go forth to the sky as falcons. ...” The text continues, “This Pepi will go to the sky ... to the high mounds and to yonder high sycamore in the east of the sky, the bustling one atop which the gods sits.”²⁴ This text indicates that the movement for the deceased, newly born in the netherworld, is to leave from nursing upon his mother in the west (i.e., the western tree goddesses) and journey to the eastern sycamore. The gods, as well as the deceased in other sources, sit in the top of this eastern tree like birds.²⁵ Book of the Dead 64 has the deceased exclaiming about this eastern sycamore, “I have embraced the sycamore and the sycamore has protected me.”

Figure 6, from the Temple of Dendera, depicts Hathor’s face between the mountains of a horizon glyph. Tree motifs appear in connection with the mountains and the newly born sun’s rays shining down, suggesting this is the eastern horizon.²⁶

2. Sacred Trees as Sources of Water

A frequent detail occurring in the female divine tree scenes is the pouring out of liquid for the recipient(s) who approaches the tree. Again, Figure 1 appears in the nineteenth dynasty tomb of Sennedjem in Deir el-Medineh, originally a vignette for Book of the Dead 59, and portrays the goddess Nut, with her lower torso merging with a



Figure 6: Hathor's face at the mountain of the eastern horizon, with the newly born sun's rays shining down



Figure 7: Ma'at as tree goddess pours water into the hands of the deceased for drinking

of an earlier period (Figure 10).³¹ Not only does the scene depict branches emerging from the goddess' body, but traces of a plant emerging from the vessel are preserved as well.

3. Sacred Trees as Mothers

In Figure 11, Nut is shown standing in the midst of a tree, offering a tray of figs and water from a *hes*-jar and is described as the one who gave birth to or is "the mother of the great gods."³² Labels declaring

tree trunk, not only presenting a tray of fruit and other goods but also pouring water from a *hes*-jar into the hands of the deceased.

That the water is for drinking and not merely caught in the hand is made clear from images such as Figure 7 where the tree goddess, in this case Ma'at, offers a tray of goods and pours water into the hand of the recipient which is held up to the mouth.²⁷ Figure 2 clearly has the water flowing across the hands and into the mouth of the recipient.²⁸

In addition to flowing vases, tree goddesses are often depicted in relation to pools of water as seen in Figure 8 wherein the goddess emerges from a tree pouring water that grows near a pool complete with fishes, lotus plants, and a boat shrine.²⁹ Figure 9 and others demonstrate that not only the tree goddess' vase but also the closely associated pools of water can be sources for drinking.³⁰

Tree goddesses with flowing vessels are also attested in other Near Eastern art such as this seal impression from Mesopotamia

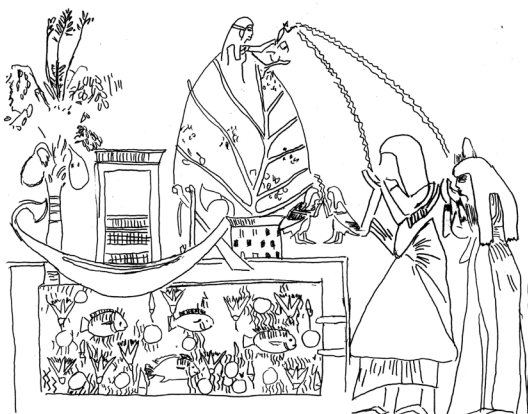


Figure 8: A tree goddess pours water as she emerges from a tree growing near a pool



Figure 9: Both the vase of the tree goddess and the associated pools of water as sources for drinking

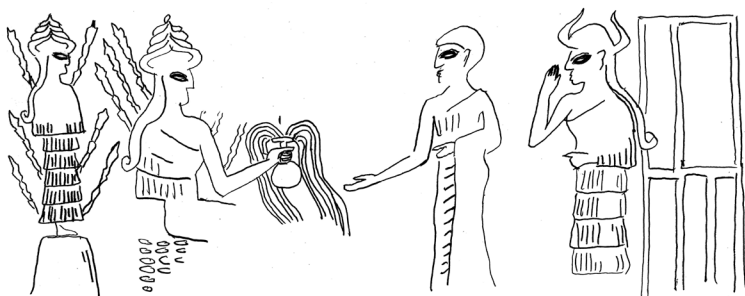


Figure 10: Mesopotamian cylinder seal depicting a flowing vase and plants emerging from the body of the goddess



Figure 11: Nut, described as the mother of the gods, offers figs and water



Figure 12: A female nursing a child among tree branches



Figure 13: Streams of water are not only for drinking, but fall in front of and behind the individual, suggesting purification

the motherhood of these tree goddesses are common.

Figure 5, mentioned earlier, depicts the king suckling at the breast of an anthropomorphized tree, the text indicates that the tree is “his mother, Isis.” A fragmentary image depicting a female nursing among tree branches may relate (Figure 12).³³

4. Sacred Trees That Cleanse or Purify

Some scenes from Egypt portray the goddess not only pouring a libation of water for drinking, but the streams also appear to fall in front of and behind the individual as in Figure 13 from the tomb of Pashedu in the Valley of the Kings.³⁴

Figure 14 portrays the streams poured over the top of the head from behind which, in the Egyptian canons of iconography, is a representation of purification.³⁵

That the goddesses are typically shown pouring water from a *hes*-jar in all the examples is also significant for such jars are typically used for ritual purification throughout Egyptian history.

A common placement of the scenes of tree goddesses in the New Kingdom tombs is next to offering tables. For example, in the Tomb of Nakht, the goddess,



Figure 14: Streams poured over the top of the head of the individual, suggesting his purification

with a sycamore emblem on her head, appears twice, flanking both sides of an offering table.³⁶ In later periods, the goddess appears directly on offering tables with libation areas and Book of the Dead 59 carved thereon as well.³⁷ Libation is the first rite of the royal and non-royal offering lists from the earliest of times and is made for the purpose of purifying the deceased.

Likewise, in Mesopotamia, Figure 15 from Mari portrays goddesses with vases from which plants and flowing water emerge in a preparatory purification area below where the recipient, who is shown in the above, more sacred, chamber, was first cleansed.³⁸

The Four Specifics in the Israelite Sources

1. Sacred Trees as Sources of Water

Like the Egyptian tree goddesses, divine trees in Israelite sources are also closely associated with sources of water. Genesis 2:8-9 indicates a tree of life came “out of the ground ... in the midst of the garden” but then immediately indicates that a river also “went out of Eden to water the garden.” The text indicates that the river parted “from thence” (i.e., from the garden) into four heads, likely a representation of the waters flowing into the cardinal directions.

It is unclear from the sources whether the river should be understood as flowing out of the garden in a single stream before it parts into four heads or parting near its source within the garden and then flowing out in multiple streams. The garden of Eden imagery of Ezekiel 47 seems to



Figure 15: Investiture Panel from Mari portraying goddesses in a purification area holding vases with flowing water and plants

have a single river flowing east out of the temple; however, the garden of Eden imagery in chapter 31 has a deep spring coming up into rivers (plural) around the mighty tree and flowing out in multiple streams to the other “trees of Eden, that were in the garden” (Ezekiel 31:3-9). Ben Sira also speaks of streams flowing within the garden. Genesis Rabbah XV indicates that the waters “branched out in streams under the tree of life,” suggesting many rivers within the garden as well.

If the river of Genesis 2 parts into the four cardinal directions prior to leaving the garden, then the garden would be understood as the high place since the water flows downhill in each direction. Further, if the water parts and leaves the garden in the cardinal directions, then the declaration that the river *first* went “out of Eden to water the garden” must be understood as a spring or fountain. Ezekiel 31:4, 47:1, and Revelation 22:1 certainly portray it as such, coming up as a spring from the deep, from under the threshold of the temple, or from beneath the throne and tree.

While both a tree and fountain/river exist in the garden of Eden of Genesis, the relationship between the two, while explicit in the Egyptian images, is not readily apparent in the Genesis account. Other Israelite sources do specify some relationship between these two. In Ezekiel 31, the fountain or spring from the deep causes the great tree to grow

mightier than all the other “trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God.” Genesis Rabbah XV 6 mentions that the waters branched out “under” the tree. Likewise, the tree in Revelation 22 can be understood as having its roots in and around the river.

Closer to the Egyptian examples, which combine the tree and flowing water in the image of the goddess, the text in Ben Sira has the tree speaking as if she is both a source of fruit and water: “Come to me ... and eat your fill of my fruit, those who eat of me will hunger for more, and those who drink me will thirst for more.” Likewise, the Book of Mormon tracks closer to the Egyptian examples and blurs the distinction between tree and fountain. Nephi indicates that the rod of iron led to the “fountain of living waters,” and then immediately adds “or to the tree of life,” both, he explains, represent the same thing, even God’s love (1 Nephi 11:25).³⁹ Alma’s tree of life grows up from a seed “planted in the heart” (Alma 32:28) and appears to be a fountain also. It not only satisfies hunger, but it quenches thirst: “and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst” (Alma 32:42).

The Egyptian examples explicitly show those who approach the tree goddess are drinking the water she pours out. The biblical examples do not appear to focus on one approaching a divine tree to drink. However, both the aforementioned examples, i.e., Ben Sira and Alma 32 in the Book of Mormon, explicitly mention drinking as a purpose for coming to the tree. Additionally, Alma 5:34 has God saying: “Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely.”

2. Sacred Trees As Mothers

Much of the tree goddess examples attested in the ancient Near East emphasizes their sexual nature as consorts to male deities; however, the Egyptian examples emphasize their roles as mothers, rather than sexual consorts. The only Old Testament reference that directly equates trees with motherhood is in Ezekiel 19:10-11 wherein the “mother,” as a vine, is “planted by the waters” and is “fruitful.” Her rods are described as “strong” and are “for scepters of them that bear rule.” The early Christian reflection of this idea in Revelation 12 speaks of the lady, clothed in the sun, who is a mother giving birth to a royal child who rules with a rod of iron.⁴⁰

Interestingly, the vision of Nephi in the Book of Mormon not only equates the tree of life to a virgin mother who gives birth to a child, but

upon closer reading, the child of Nephi's vision, like the child in Ezekiel 19 and Revelation 12, appears as a king ruling with a rod of iron. When Nephi desires to know the meaning of the tree that his father Lehi saw, he was shown a vision of a virgin who is described as the "mother of the son of god ... bearing a child in her arms" (1 Nephi 11:18-20). This vision immediately gives way to another vision of this "Son of God going forth among the children of men; and I saw many fall down at this feet and worship him" (1 Nephi 11:24). That people fall down and worship at the Son of God's feet suggests royalty, causing Nephi to exclaim "I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life" (1 Nephi 11:25). Nephi's child is the son of both God and of the virgin tree, and the rod of iron is the son's scepter.

Elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, Nephi's brother, Jacob, quotes an ancient prophecy by a figure named Zenos, who refers to a great central olive tree in a vineyard as the "mother tree" (Jacob 5:54-60). Other trees are formed from her branches, and the resulting branches of the other trees are eventually grafted back into the mother tree.

3. Sacred Trees at Places of Transition

One encounters the Egyptian tree goddess who pours water at the western horizon — near the entrance to the netherworld — prior to an ascent to the tree goddess in the eastern horizon. Likewise tree and water motifs appear in connection with Israelite sacrificial altars and courtyards, outside the entrance of temples, prior to one entering or ascending to the full tree of life in the Holy of Holies or in the heavenly city (Revelation 22:2).

Abraham builds an altar (a built altar suggests a sacrificial altar) at the oak of Moreh where God had appeared unto him in Genesis 12:6 and later plants a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba where he calls upon the name of God in Genesis 21:33. Deuteronomy explicitly forbids an *asherah*, a tree-like motif, from being erected near the altar (Deut. 16:21-22), indicating that some are want to put one there. Joshua set up a covenant stela under a tree near the temple (Joshua 24:26). Psalms 92:12-14 (cf. 52:8) likens the righteous to trees planted and flourishing in the courts of the temple. These examples suggest the possibility that tree motifs were erected in the Israelite temple courtyards in connection with the altar and before the door of the temple. Indeed, Ezekiel's fountain of water comes up not

in the Holy of Holies but from beneath the threshold of the temple's door and flows to the trees of life outside the temple (Ezekiel 47:1, 7, 12).

A combination tree and water motif is built into the courtyard design of Solomon's temple. The brazen sea was not just a large bowl of water, but a bowl with gourd-shaped knobs all around and shaped like a lily blossom (1 Kings 7:23-26). Further, the pillars on the porch, flanking the door of the temple, had capitals that were also lily-shaped, with pomegranates hanging from them (1 Kings 7:18-22). Could these objects represent some sort of initial interaction with a divine tree motif preparatory for entering the temple, in likeness of the western tree goddess in Egyptian culture? Indeed, Book of the Dead 59, the text that most often accompanies the western tree goddess vignettes, alludes to the Hermopolitian myth concerning the birth of the sun. Versions of this myth portray the sun rising from a lotus blossom that itself was the first to rise out of the primordial waters, again connecting waters of new birth, a beginning, with a tree motif.

The tree/fountain of life in Lehi and Nephi's visions, at first glance, appears to be at the end of a journey, at the end of the path. However, the fact that some of the numberless people from the field representing "a world" (1 Nephi 8:20-21) arrive at the tree, partake, and then leave due to the mocking of those in the great and spacious building suggests that not all trees of life are at the full end of one's eternal journey. Likewise, one can partake but then forsake the "the fountain of Wisdom" in the Book of Baruch 3.10-13. These examples suggest an initial interaction with a tree of life that likely represents or foreshadows, but is actually different from, the tree of life at the full end of one's journey.

4. Sacred Trees Relative to Cleansing or Purification

Not only do the waters of the Egyptian tree goddesses give life and refreshment to the netherworld traveler, but they also appear to purify as the streams fall around the individual. Likewise, the Israelite priests washed in the water of the lily-shaped laver near the tree-shaped pillars in the temple courtyard prior to their service within (see Exodus 30:19-21; 40:30-32).

An Abrahamic narrative outlines a custom that may echo the ritual act of washing at the door of the temple. Not only does Abraham call upon and encounter God in relation to trees as noted above, in Genesis 18 Abraham, dwelling among the oaks of Mamre and sitting in the doorway of his tent, welcomes three holy men by stating, "Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves

under the tree” (Genesis 18:4). While this can be understood simply as an act of desert community hospitality, the act of washing and resting under a tree at the door of a house as part of a journey certainly reflects the ritual material as well.⁴¹

That initial rituals, prior to entering temples, can be associated with divine trees/fountains is more clearly seen in the Gnostic *Trimorphic Protennoia* that declares baptism occurs in the fountain of living waters: “the baptizers ... immersed him in the spring of the water of life.”⁴² Indeed, Alma connects partaking of the tree of life with baptism explicitly: “... unto those who do not belong to the church I speak by way of invitation, saying: Come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life” (Alma 5:62). It is difficult here to ascertain if Alma is saying that baptism precedes partaking of the tree of life or that baptism is the equivalent to partaking of the tree of life. In light of the broader cultural parallels, the latter is a strong possibility.

Conclusions

The Egyptians viewed their ascent into heaven as a journey or progression that begins at the western horizon. This horizon corresponds with mortal death (the setting of the sun) but was also viewed as a birth into a new life in the hereafter — the horizon was a place of transition. At this initial transition point, the deceased encounters the Lady of the West. Because the deceased is being reborn into a new life, the goddess, depicted as a tree pouring water and growing near garden pools, is labeled as a mother figure and even nurses her child.⁴³ Since the sun and the world, as the ancient Egyptians portrayed it, came out of the primordial waters of Nun, just as a baby comes from a watery womb, the mother-goddess is closely associated with waters of life.

As a baby who comes forth from the waters of the womb is considered pure, so the deceased is pure when born into the hereafter as symbolized in the streams of water the tree goddess pours that surround the individual. The deceased also drinks from the water she pours or from the milk of her breast in order to live and have power to make the coming journey as PT 470 and BD 59 state.

A netherworld birth, nourishing/nursing, and purity would explain the appearance of a woman as a mother who nurses or pours water and purifies at horizon-mountains or at entrances to tombs. Her equation to trees and fountains may be natural in the context of a desert community where the very symbols of life are the oasis of trees that indicate

life-giving water and shade from the heat of day. However, this initial birth is not the final destination. There is an ascension, “as falcons,” to the eastern horizon where the “high sycamore” tree goddess is met and embraced, suggesting another transition or birth, even a resurrection, where the deceased is illuminated as the dawning rays and can rise with the sun-god, Re.

The symbolism of this journey or ascension into the sky becomes intertwined with the main offering ritual sequence of the temples and tombs in ancient Egypt, forming their temple theology. The western tree goddesses, in the New Kingdom tombs and later, appear in connection with the tomb chapel offering tables having libation vessels and food depicted thereon and thus relate her to the sequence of rites performed therein. The initial part of this sequence includes a libation of water, an opening of the mouth, eyes, ears, and nose by means of a natron-washing, followed by a small meal offering. Indeed, the ancient Egyptians viewed these initial rituals as a birth, so the presence of a mother figure would be expected.⁴⁴

In the Israelite temple theology, there appears to be a similar pattern. The sources above indicate that the courtyard of the temple may be one location that a divine tree motif in ancient Israel once appeared. Trees seem to appear in connection with sacrificial altars in the Abraham material, in Deuteronomy, and other Old Testament sources, just as they appear in connection with offering tables in the Egyptian theology.

Being in the courtyard of the Israelite temple, the tree motif would be closely associated with the waters of the laver that appeared there as well, a place where priests were purified prior to their ascension into the temple, just as the tree goddesses in Egypt poured water and purified the deceased prior to entering the horizon or tomb. Indeed, the laver in the courtyard of Solomon’s temple had plant-like décor tying the two symbols of water and vegetation together as in the Egyptian material.

The courtyard tree motif stands in contrast to the tree or trees inside the temple.⁴⁵ Similar to the Egyptian worldview, the Israelite temple has a tree near the beginning as well as near the end of the spiritual progression. Judging by the greater Near Eastern background, a tree/fountain motif indicates a place or time of transition as part of the general ascent. Consequently, a tree/fountain motif in the courtyard as well as inside the Israelite temple might represent differing levels of ascent or transition. The trees are feminine in both the Israelite and greater Near Eastern tradition because they are viewed as mothers that facilitate these

transitions from a lower to a higher order, as a birth from one life to another as one ascends to God.

The Early Christian church certainly seems to view the courtyard as a place of rebirth. Matthew's Jesus interprets the two messengers in Malachi 3:1 as John the Baptist and himself (Matthew 11:10; cf. Matthew 3:1-11). John is the Aaronic messenger in the courtyard, who prepares the way, while Jesus is the Melchizedek priest and messenger of the covenant who will "come to his temple." John prepared the way to the temple by teaching repentance and baptism, a ritual that Jesus declares is one of being "born of water" (John 3:5). In contrast, Jesus administers the blessings of the covenant inside the temple, which John declared would include an additional baptism of the Holy Ghost, which Jesus also called being "born of ... the spirit" (John 1:33; cf. John 3:5). Like the Egyptian theology of at least two births, one of water in the western horizon and the other in the east with the blaze of the sunrise, the Christian temple theology also promises at least two births — one in the courtyard of water and the other of fire in the temple. Such an understanding may provide reasons for finding cultic reflections of a mother tree of water in the courtyard followed by a mother tree of oil in the temple.

Although Israelite culture and texts recognized that the cultural trees of life and fountains of water were women. Jesus does declare that he is the ultimate tree and fountain, and that we, by association, are to be children born of him. For example, Jesus declares in John 15:1-2 that he is the true vine and we are to be his fruit-bearing branches. Likewise, Nephi speaks of Jesus as the "true vine" and "olive tree" just before discussing with his brothers the meaning of the tree of life in 1 Nephi 15:15-21. In John 4:7-26, Jesus says "Give me to drink" when approached by a woman at the well of Jacob in Samaria. She is the life-giver, the pourer of water, in this opening moment of the narrative. However, as the dialogue progresses, Jesus reverses the roles and places himself as the water-giver. "If thou knew the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." This water is equated by Jesus with the waters of everlasting life that forever quench thirst, making a strong connection to the tree of life motif which quenches thirst in like manner as noted before: "Whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The point here is that Jesus has reversed the roles and usurped the symbols of the tree/fountain of life that are culturally associated with womanhood.

But this makes perfect sense to Christianity, for Jesus declares that birth is a central symbol of the atonement and his redeeming power whereby he becomes a symbolic mother to all who are “born again” of him (see John 3:1-3; Moses 6:59; Mosiah 5:7). The difficulty some might have in believing that Jesus would adopt symbols that were culturally associated with womanhood due to gender differences should remember that Jesus also likens himself to a mother hen who gathers her chicks under her wing to nourish them in Matthew 23:37; 3 Nephi 10:4-6; D&C 10:65; cf. Psalms 91:4. Consequently, baptism and the closely related ordinance of the sacrament can be viewed as a tree of life to those who partake, for these rituals represent at once a watery purification, spiritual nourishment, rebirth, the beginning of a journey, and preparatory for entering the temple, even though they also contain within their meaning the idea of “having arrived” at eternal life, resurrection, the sabbath rest, etc. This is possible, because in these initial moments and rituals, the symbols are affirming the promise that “if ye entered by the way ye would receive” (2 Nephi 31:18). In other words, we get to partake of the tree of life at the beginning of new spiritual life, for it anticipates and affirms God’s promise that we shall partake of it fully in the heavenly city at the end of our journey.

In spite of Jesus’s usurpation of the Lady’s symbols, there is still deep acknowledgement in John’s gospel of woman’s original connection to these divine motifs. In the transition of Jesus from mortality to resurrected Lord, John constantly portrays women overseeing this grandest of events. It is a woman, Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who anoints Jesus with costly oil. An act that Jesus declares was related to his burial (John 12:1-7). At the moment of his death, John portrays Jesus calling attention to his mother — “Woman, behold thy son!” and to his disciple “Behold, thy mother!” (John 19:25-27). The very next moment John records Jesus saying, “I thirst” (John 19:28). Could John have understood in this moment the irony of Jesus’ mother, the supreme mortal personification of the tree of life and living water, standing helpless while her royal son — he who wields the proverbial rod of iron (Revelation 2:27) — dies on a man-made tree of torture and received vinegar instead of cool, living water?

John’s description of the actual burial and resurrection can also be read as a birth scene, for Jesus’ body was placed in a garden of trees, in a virginal tomb “wherein was never man yet laid” (John 19:41), and Jesus presumably comes forth naked, indicated by his linens left neatly folded behind as if to call attention to that very point.

Finally, it is a woman who is the first to see the newly “born” Son of God (John 20:11-18). True to the Near Eastern background, a woman is present at the moments of cosmic transition, whether real or in ritual.

If, as in the Egyptian culture, there are symbolic encounters with two trees of life in the course of the Israelite temple theology, one in the courtyard in relation to purification preceding the arrival at the full tree of life inside the temple. Then the possibility that there are two paths leading to each tree, an initial path outside the temple and a second one inside, needs exploring as well. Indeed, the Egyptians have a concept of the Two Ways or Paths that lead to eternal life. Could it be that the path of Lehi’s vision is a representation of the path taken by those people of the world who are seeking to make their first initial contact with the promise of eternal life, whereas 2 Nephi 31 speaks of another path on which one must press forward, after baptism, in order to make that promise sure? Exploring these paths will have to await a future time.

Notes

- 1 See, for examples, John Day, “Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105, no. 3 (1986); Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990); William G. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research, Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990); Richard J. Pettey, *Asherah: Goddess of Israel, American University Studies. Series 7, Theology and Religion v. 74* (New York: P. Lang, 1990); Othmar Keel, *Das Recht Der Bilder Gesehen Zu Werden: Drei Fallstudien Zur Methode Der Interpretation Altorientalischer Bilder, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 122 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1992); Steve A. Wiggins, *A Reassessment of ‘Asherah’: A Study According to the Textual Sources of the First Two Millennia BCE, Alter Orient Und Altes Testament Bd. 235* (Kevelaer: Verlag Butzon & Bercker, 1993); Christian Frevel, *Aschera Und Der Ausschliesslichkeitsanspruch Yhwhs : Beiträge Zu Literarischen, Religionsgeschichtlichen Und Ikonographischen Aspekten Der Ascheradiskussion, Bonner Biblische Beiträge* (Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995); Othmar Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*

- in *Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998); Judith M. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess*, *University of Cambridge Oriental Publications* 57 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed., *The Biblical Resource Series* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2002); John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Izak Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess: The Iconography of the Syro-Palestinian Goddesses Anat, Astarte, Qedeset, and Asherah c. 1500-1000 BCE*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 204 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004); William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?: Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2005); Steve A. Wiggins, *A Reassessment of Asherah with Further Considerations of the Goddess*, (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007).
- 2 Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8-23," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo: FARMS, 1998), 191-243; "A Divine Mother in the Book of Mormon?" (paper presented at the Academy of Temple Studies conference on *Mormonism and the Temple: Examining an Ancient Religious Tradition*, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, 2012).
 - 3 "White" here may be a reference to luminosity or brightness as opposed to color. For example, Hebrew *tsach* means white, dazzling, glowing, clear, bright. Likewise, the Greek *leukos* means white, light, bright, brilliant.
 - 4 Margaret Barker, "Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion," *Brigham Young University Studies* 44:4 (2005): 69-82.
 - 5 Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?: Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*.
 - 6 Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord* (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), Chapter 1.
 - 7 Jeffrey H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions*, *Harvard Semitic Studies* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1986).
 - 8 Steve A. Wiggins, "Of Asherahs and Trees: Some Methodological Questions," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 1:1 (2001): 158-87. Ironically, the field of Egyptology grappled with this same

issue in the early twentieth century: “Monotheism or polytheism? This has been the great issue in Egyptology since the discovery of the first Egyptian texts. The survey I have given here shows that both answers have their justification; it also shows that the proponents of both use these concepts like slogans, yet neither concept can characterize the true individuality of Egyptian religion.” Karl Beth, „El Und Neter,“ *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 36 (1916): 183. Translated by John Baines in the classic monograph concerning this issue Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982).

- 9 For evidence concerning Egypt’s influence in the Syria-Palestine area see Gregory D. Mumford, “International Relations between Egypt, Sinai, and Syria-Palestine During the Late Bronze Age to Early Persian Periods (Dynasties 18-26: ca. 1550-525 BCE): A Spatial and Temporal Analysis of the Distribution and Proportions of Egyptian(-izing) Artifacts and Pottery in Sinai and Selected Sites in Syria-Palestine” (Toronto, Ontario, 1998).
- 10 John S. Thompson, “Lehi and Egypt,” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2004), 259-76. Certainly the many centuries that follow the time-period of Lehi in the Book of Mormon would have given ample opportunity for changes to be introduced into their culture and thus call into question any comparison of Near Eastern culture in Lehi’s day to later periods in the Book of Mormon; however, one should not underestimate the ability of the written word to preserve much of the teachings, theological concepts, symbols, and religious culture from Lehi’s day down to Moroni either, especially among those who remained close to the teachings preserved in the Brass Plates as well as their own records. See, for example, Daniel L. Belnap, “‘Even as Our Father Saw’: Lehi’s Dream as Nephite Cultural Narrative,” in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo and Salt Lake City, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University and Deseret Book, 2011), 214-39.
- 11 For a recent study on similarities between the earliest ritual sequence in ancient Egypt with the Old Testament temple tradition see John S. Thompson, “The context of Old Testament temple worship:

- Early ancient Egyptian rites.” In *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament*, edited by David Rolph Seely, Jeffrey R. Chadwick and Matthew J. Grey. *The 42nd Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (26 October, 2013) (Provo and Salt Lake City, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University and Deseret Book, 2013), 156-83.
- 12 That a fig tree can be viewed as divine may inform the meaning of the fig leaf aprons mentioned in the Genesis account of Adam and Eve. Putting on the leaves of a divine tree while in transgression, being the symbolic equivalent of being saved in sin, would be offensive to God. Likewise, God places cherubim and a flaming sword to prevent Adam and Eve from partaking of the tree of life while in their sins, because obtaining eternal life while in sin would make God’s law and righteousness void or meaningless (see Alma 12:23; 42:5, 13). Jesus’ cursing of a fig tree to die for wearing leaves (i.e., divinity) without fruit provides a New Testament echo of Adam and Eve, who put on fig leaves while in transgression (i.e., fruitless) and were also cursed to die.
 - 13 Marie-Louise Buhl, “The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 6:2 (1947): 86.
 - 14 For examples, see PT 254, 294, 347. See particularly PT §436a-b and PT §994b-d.
 - 15 Buhl, “The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult,” 87. The cultural practice of worshipping under sycamore trees in Egypt may inform Jesus’ vision of Nathaniel sitting under a fig tree as a sign of his guilelessness (John 1:48). Nathaniel appears to have been seen by Jesus doing something private yet godly (praying, reading scripture, etc.) under the tree that revealed his true character as one without hypocrisy.
 - 16 See typologies in Orly Goldwasser, *From Icon to Metaphor: Studies in the Semiotics of the Hieroglyphs*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 142 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 1995); Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, *New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible*, 36-37.
 - 17 Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 60-62.
 - 18 Similarly, a tree of life in later Greek Orphism is also encountered upon one’s initial entrance into the netherworld prior to further journeying. For a discussion of Orphism and its possible cultural connections with the Book of Mormon, see C. Wilfred Griggs,

- “The Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book,” in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1982), 75–102.
- 19 Based on wall painting in Tomb of Sennedjem (TT1), Deir el-Medina, Thebes.
 - 20 Based on drawing in Keel, *Das Recht Der Bilder Gesehen Zu Werden: Drei Fallstudien Zur Methode Der Interpretation Altorientalischer Bilder*, abb. 94.
 - 21 Based on drawing in *ibid.*, abb. 85.
 - 22 Based on drawing in *ibid.*, abb. 54.
 - 23 Based on wall painting in the Tomb of Tuthmosis III, Valley of the Kings, Thebes.
 - 24 PT 470
 - 25 Perhaps giving greater meaning to the fowl that lodge in the branches of Ezekiel’s tree and Jesus’ mustard seed plant (see Ezekiel 31:6, Mark 4:32).
 - 26 Based on drawing in W. Westendorf, „Altägyptische Darstellungen Des Sonnenlaufes Auf Der Abschüssigen Himmelsbahn,“ *MÄS* 10 (1966): Abb. 51.
 - 27 Based on drawing in Keel, *Das Recht Der Bilder Gesehen Zu Werden: Drei Fallstudien Zur Methode Der Interpretation Altorientalischer Bilder*, abb. 95.
 - 28 Based on drawing in *ibid.*, abb. 94.
 - 29 Based on drawing in *ibid.*, abb. 53.
 - 30 Based on drawing in *ibid.*, abb. 68, cf. abb. 49, 57, 58, 66a for other examples of drinking from a pool.
 - 31 Based on drawing in *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible*, fig. 6.
 - 32 Based on drawing in *Das Recht Der Bilder Gesehen Zu Werden: Drei Fallstudien Zur Methode Der Interpretation Altorientalischer Bilder*, abb. 91.
 - 33 Based on drawing in *ibid.*, abb. 41.
 - 34 Based on wall painting in the Tomb of Pashedu (TT3), Valley of the Kings, Thebes.
 - 35 Keel, *Das Recht Der Bilder Gesehen Zu Werden: Drei Fallstudien Zur Methode Der Interpretation Altorientalischer Bilder*, abb. 60. Cf. Alan Henderson Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Griffith Institute Ashmolean Museum, 1957), Sign list, A6.

- 36 Norman de Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Nakht at Thebes* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1917), Pl. X.
- 37 Buhl, "The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult," 92-93.
- 38 Based on drawing in Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible*, fig. 8. For a more complete discussion of this image see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Ronan James 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.
- 39 Nephi later explains to his brothers that the tree their father saw was "a representation of *the* tree of life" (1 Nephi 15:22. Emphasis added), likely connecting his father's dream/vision to the tree in the Garden of Eden. Both the Genesis and 1 Nephi narratives have fruit trees and fountains of life, both have paths that lead to the tree ("the way" (Genesis 3:24) and "the straight and narrow path" (1 Nephi 8:20), both have symbols of god's word or justice in relation to the path (a rod and sword — arguably both are "flaming" — compare Genesis 3:24 with 1 Nephi 15:23-24, 30). Both narratives also have equivalent symbols opposing the tree/fountain of life (i.e., the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the great and spacious building/fountain of filthy water — all which relate to the "Fall," death, and hell — Genesis 2:17, 1 Nephi 11:36; 12:16), both have forbidden paths (the flaming sword turned "every way" to keep "the way" in Genesis 3:24 compares with 1 Nephi 8:28, 32), and both have symbols of temptation in opposition to the sword and rod (the serpent and the mists of darkness).
- 40 See Psalms 2, 110 for other Old Testament imagery of the royal son wielding a rod. See also Margaret Barker, "The Woman Clothed with the Sun in the Book of Revelation," paper given at the 2013 conference of the Academy for Temple Studies entitled *The Lady of the Temple*. October 23, 2013 in Logan, Utah. Online version found at <http://www.templestudies.org/home/2013-the-lady-of-the-temple-conference/papers/>. Last accessed Saturday, September 27, 2014.
- 41 The miracle of Jesus at Cana may reflect this idea as well, for the water he turns to wine was water traditionally kept near the doorway for the "the purifying of the Jews" (John 2:6).
- 42 *Trimorphic Protennoia* CG XIII. 1 45, 48.
- 43 A common motif portrayed under the lid of coffins or sarcophagi in ancient Egypt is the goddess Nut, whose body, when the lid is

placed on the coffin or sarcophagus, stretches out over the deceased. The deceased's burial, then, was viewed by the ancient Egyptians as being in her embrace or in her womb from which he or she is born into the netherworld.

- 44 See Ann M. Roth, "The Peseshkef and the 'Opening of the Mouth' Ceremony: A Ritual Birth and Rebirth," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 78 (1992): 113-47.
- 45 For a discussion of tree motifs in the Holy Place versus the Holy of Holies, see Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, 2, 253.

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

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

Abstract: *This article highlights the striking resemblances between Moses 1 and a corresponding account from the Apocalypse of Abraham (ApAb), one of the earliest and most important Jewish texts describing heavenly ascent. Careful comparative analysis demonstrates a sustained sequence of detailed affinities in narrative structure that go beyond what Joseph Smith could have created out of whole cloth from his environment and his imagination. The article also highlights important implications for the study of the Book of Moses as a temple text. Previous studies have suggested that the story of Enoch found in the Pearl of Great Price might be understood as the culminating episode of a temple text woven throughout chapters 2–8 of the Book of Moses. The current article is a conceptual bookend to these earlier studies, demonstrating that the account of heavenly ascent in Moses 1 provides a compelling prelude to a narrative outlining laws and liturgy akin to what could have been used anciently as part of ritual ascent within earthly temples.*

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”¹ and a foundational text for Islamic scripture,² 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.”³ 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.”⁴ 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.⁵ 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.⁶

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.”⁷ 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.⁸

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.⁹

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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹

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.¹² 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”¹³ (as well as the gentler term “midrash”¹⁴) to the Book of Abraham and the Book of Moses.¹⁵ 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?”¹⁶ 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,”¹⁷ even when existing manuscripts were written much later and, not infrequently, have come to us in a form that is riddled with the ridiculous.¹⁸ 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.”¹⁹

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.”²⁰ Surprisingly, we found that *ApAb* repeated similar phrases in analogous contexts.²¹ 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.²² 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.²³

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?²⁴ 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.²⁵

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;²⁶
- 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.²⁷

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.²⁸ 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,²⁹ the specific resemblances are weak and limited to a small fraction of the *Moses 1* narrative.
- **Are the resemblances densely or sparsely distributed?**³⁰ "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”³¹) 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.³²

- **How much of the entire narrative is spanned by the resemblances?**³³ **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.³⁴ 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?**³⁵ 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,”³⁶ 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.³⁷ 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.³⁸

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.”³⁹ 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.”⁴⁰ 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”⁴¹ in antiquity. And, importantly, in doing so “we must not succumb either to ‘parallelomania’ or to ‘parallelophobia.’”⁴²



Figure 1. Joseph Brickey: *Moses Seeing Jehovah*.⁴³

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.⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵

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* temple⁴⁶ — the “completion or fulfillment” of the “types and images” found in earthly ordinances.⁴⁷ In such encounters, individuals may experience a vision of eternity,⁴⁸ participate in worship and song with the angels,⁴⁹ and have certain blessings conferred upon them that are “made sure”⁵⁰ by the voice of God Himself. They may also acquire membership and a mission as a member of the divine council,⁵¹ as is outlined with specific reference to Moses 1 in Stephen O. Smoot’s helpful exploration of this topic.⁵²

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.⁵³ 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.⁵⁴

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.⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶

Though probably written in the first century CE, the work was not “introduced to Western readers” until 1897, through the German translation of Bonwetsch.⁵⁷ 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. Haug and published in the Church's *Improvement Era* magazine in 1898.⁵⁸

Building on the earlier work of Hugh Nibley,⁵⁹ Jared Ludlow,⁶⁰ and Douglas Clark,⁶¹ Bradshaw and Larsen⁶² previously identified *ApAb* as a promising candidate for detailed comparison with Moses 1.⁶³ 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.”⁶⁴ 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.⁶⁵

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.⁶⁶ The frequency of resemblances of *ApAb* to Moses 1 in a given section is represented by a number.

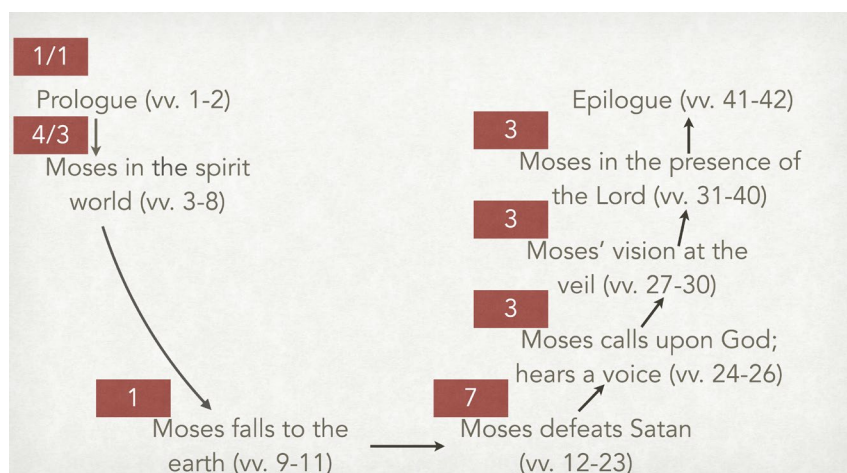


Figure 2. Number of resemblances with *ApAb* chapters 9-23 superimposed on the narrative structure of Moses 1.

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.⁶⁷ 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.’”⁶⁸ 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 1891.⁶⁹ Though a reproduction of one of the facsimile images was used previously in an article by Hugh Nibley,⁷⁰ 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 2009.⁷¹ 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.⁷² In Figure 3, Abraham appears with a group of sacrificial animals.⁷³ 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.⁷⁴



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.⁷⁵ While his anthropomorphic aspects feature high-priestly imagery, his pteromorphic aspects are those of a griffin⁷⁶ — a mythical creature that combines the form and powers of a falcon⁷⁷ 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”⁷⁸).⁷⁹

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.”⁸⁰ 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.⁸¹

Of possible relevance, however, is Hugh Nibley's reminder that both *ApAb* and the *Testament of Abraham*⁸² “are full of Egyptian matter.”⁸³ 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”⁸⁴ — 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.⁸⁵ 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 Horus⁸⁶) in order to usurp the role of the “true” Horus.⁸⁷

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”⁸⁸ 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,⁸⁹ 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).⁹⁰

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



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
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)

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).⁹² 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.”⁹³ Though this detail is not explicitly mentioned in the Book of Moses, it is not unreasonable to presume a similar setting.⁹⁴

Moses 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)

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

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 Creation⁹⁶ and in the destruction of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea.⁹⁷ Significantly, Moses will later "be made stronger than many waters ... as if thou wert God."⁹⁸

Both "Endless" (Book of Moses) and "primordial"⁹⁹ (*ApAb*) are related to the characterization of God as being "without beginning of days or end of years." "Endless"¹⁰⁰ 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."¹⁰¹ Such imagery recalls the description in Latter-day Saint scripture of God's course as "one eternal round."¹⁰²

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,"¹⁰³ describing them as "great things" that are "kept"¹⁰⁴ (or "hidden"¹⁰⁵). These ancient descriptions resonate with the Book of Mormon prophet Ether's mention of "*greater things*, the knowledge of which is *hid up*."¹⁰⁶ In Jewish tradition, such "secrets" include both a knowledge of "the system by which the whole cosmos is put together"¹⁰⁷ (what the Lord describes to Moses as "the workmanship of my hands"¹⁰⁸) and also the revelation of what God is about to do¹⁰⁹ (i.e., the things that will be shown in vision to Moses and to Abraham¹¹⁰).

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.¹¹¹

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"¹¹² on Moses might be seen as ratifying the prophet's membership in the divine council.¹¹³ 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.¹¹⁴

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

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

	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)

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 realm¹¹⁸ — and “all the children of men which are, and which *were* created.”¹¹⁹ Likewise, in *ApAb*, Abraham is shown “a great crowd of men, and women, and children” before they “came into being.”¹²⁰ 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,”¹²¹ 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.”¹²² Rubinkiewicz is careful to clarify that the term used for “picture” likely refers to something more like a “model” or “likeness”¹²³ of heaven and earth than a photographic reproduction.¹²⁴ He observes that “the idea that the model of the created world existed before Creation is widespread in the apocryphal literature.”¹²⁵

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*."¹²⁶ In biblical cosmology, circles are used to "indicate the horizon where the earth comes together with the sky."¹²⁷

In light of Hugh Nibley's extensive analysis of circular depictions of the cosmos,¹²⁸ 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,'¹²⁹ in which the human race, God's people and the others,¹³⁰ confront each other beneath or within the circle of the starry heavens, on opposite halves of the picture":¹³¹

[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."¹³²

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."¹³³

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."¹³⁴ Significantly, these figures correspond to "the canopic figures, figure 6 on [Book of Abraham] Facsimile 2."¹³⁵ 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"¹³⁶) "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)."¹³⁷

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 6208.¹³⁸

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.¹³⁹ Likewise, in *ApAb* (and within other Jewish and Islamic accounts in similar fashion¹⁴⁰), a premortal group of spirits shown “on the right side ... of the portrayal”¹⁴¹ is “set apart ... to be born of [Abraham]” and to be called “[God’s] people.”¹⁴²

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.’”¹⁴³ 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.”¹⁴⁴

Moses Falls to the Earth

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
Fall and loss of strength	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.¹⁴⁵ 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.”¹⁴⁶

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.¹⁴⁷ The drawing depicts Abraham being raised up out of sleep — or perhaps death¹⁴⁸ — by the hand of Yaho’el, who, using the right hand, lifts him firmly by the wrist.¹⁴⁹ The rays emanating from the hand of God¹⁵⁰ 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.”¹⁵¹



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 gesture¹⁵² 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.*¹⁵³

Note that Jesus is depicted as having two right hands, consistent with related accounts of God in Jewish Midrash.¹⁵⁴

Moses Defeats Satan

Satan disrupts the worship of God. Recalling Satan's encounter with Christ in the wilderness,¹⁵⁵ 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*.”¹⁵⁶

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

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
Satan disrupts the worship of God	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)
Satan's identity is questioned	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)
Satan contrasted with the prophet	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.¹⁵⁹ 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 humiliateingly exposed.¹⁶⁰

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



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

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.”¹⁶⁵ 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).¹⁶⁶ 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.¹⁶⁷

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

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
Satan told to depart and cease his deception	Get thee hence, Satan; deceive me not (1:16)	Depart from [Abraham]! You cannot deceive him (13:12–13)
The prophet received the glory that Satan lost	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)
Satan told to depart a second time	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.”¹⁷⁰ 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 Abraham¹⁷¹ and that his erstwhile glory will be exchanged for Adam's bodily “corruption.”¹⁷²

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' translation, “Get away from me!”¹⁷³

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!”¹⁷⁴ 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!”¹⁷⁵ To ward off further danger, the angel gives Abraham a stern warning: “Answer him not! ... lest his [i.e., Satan's] will affect you.”¹⁷⁶ In the Book of Moses, the goal of Satan's demand is expressed more directly: “Worship me.”

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
Satan’s final attempt to win the prophet’s worship	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)
Satan’s definitive departure following the invocation of the name of the Son of God	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.¹⁷⁷

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.¹⁷⁸ 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.”¹⁷⁹

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.¹⁸⁰ 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.¹⁸¹ As in earlier illustrations, Yaho’el holds Abraham firmly by the wrist, using the right hand.¹⁸²

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.”¹⁸³ Nephi later said that “upon the *wings of his Spirit* hath my body been carried away upon exceedingly high mountains,”¹⁸⁴ imagery that is arguably similar to the *ApAb* description of Abraham being raised up to heaven on the wings of a bird.¹⁸⁵

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 Begotten¹⁸⁶ (a motif that precedes baptism in some ancient Christian sources¹⁸⁷), Moses was immediately afterward “filled with the Holy Ghost.”¹⁸⁸

Further support for this idea is found in the fact that the description of Moses being “caught up”¹⁸⁹ (as Nephi was “caught away”) is phrased in what is sometimes termed the “divine passive.”¹⁹⁰ This syntactic form implies that his ascent was accomplished by God’s power and not his own.¹⁹¹ 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.¹⁹²



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.¹⁹³ 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.¹⁹⁴

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.”¹⁹⁵ 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”¹⁹⁶ 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,¹⁹⁷ 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.¹⁹⁸

	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.”¹⁹⁹ Isaac, depicted behind the scene of his near sacrifice and clad in white clothing marked with reddish clavi,²⁰⁰ is shown entering behind the veil of a tent sanctuary at the top of Mount Moriah.²⁰¹ This reading is supported by Jewish and early Christian texts suggesting that, in the *Akedah*, Isaac literally died, ascended to heaven, and was resurrected.²⁰² 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.²⁰³ The disembodied hand, a visualization of God’s body in “*pars pro toto*”²⁰⁴ (i.e., the part shown representing all the rest) and of His heavenly utterance from behind the veil (i.e., the *bat kōl*²⁰⁵), is shown above the scene of the arrested sacrifice and to the immediate left of the tent sanctuary.²⁰⁶

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.”²⁰⁷ In that account, the prayer of the brother of Jared is answered first with a divine voice,²⁰⁸ then with seeing the finger of the hand of the Lord,²⁰⁹ and finally with a view of the “body of [His] spirit.”²¹⁰

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.²¹¹ 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.²¹²

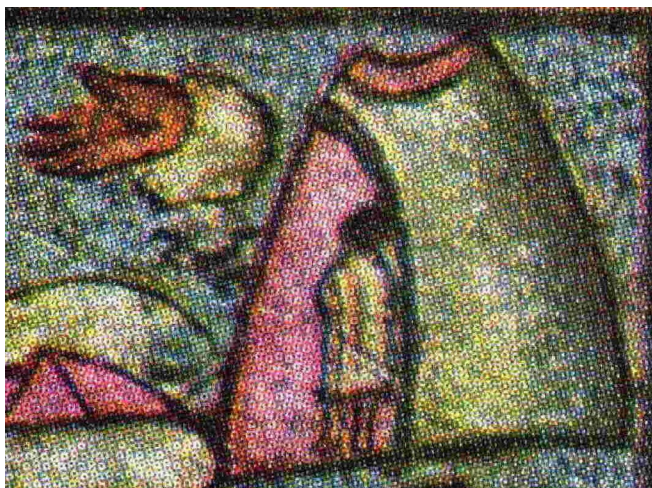


Figure 11. Detail from the Torah shrine of the Dura Europos synagogue.²¹³

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.”²¹⁴ His experience parallels that of Adam and Eve, when they also “called upon the name of the Lord” in sacred prayer.²¹⁵ 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,”²¹⁶ for they were shut out from his presence.²¹⁷ The “way toward the Garden of Eden” is, of course, the path that terminates in “the way of the Tree of Life.”²¹⁸ 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.²¹⁹ 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.”²²⁰

To our surprise, we discovered that *ApAb* repeats variants of a similar phrase (e.g., “And while he was still speaking”²²¹). 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*²²² — 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.²²³

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,²²⁴ namely as “a kind of ‘visionary screen.’”²²⁵ After the vision closes, Moses stands “in the presence of God” and talks with him “face to face.”²²⁶

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.²²⁷ 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.²²⁸ 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.”²²⁹

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 prayer²³⁰ and exchanges of words at the veil are variously described in Egyptian ritual texts,²³¹ Jewish pseudepigrapha,²³² and the Book of Mormon.²³³ 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.”²³⁴

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.²³⁵ Unlike other pseudepigraphal accounts of heavenly ascent, *ApAb* “treats the [hymn] sung by the visionary *as part of the means of achieving*

ascent.”²³⁶ 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.”²³⁷ Then, “while [he] was still reciting the [hymn],” the veil opens and the throne of glory appears to his view.²³⁸



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

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.”²⁴¹ 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 1.²⁴²

“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.”²⁴³ 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.”²⁴⁴ “The heavenly light is of dazzling brilliance, the divine voice is like thunder.”²⁴⁵ 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.”²⁴⁶ Elsewhere, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Matthew L. Bowen²⁴⁷ 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.”²⁴⁸ 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.²⁴⁹ 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.”²⁵⁰ Moreover, as God explains the significance of Moses’ name, He links it with one of His own titles: “Almighty.”²⁵¹ Fittingly, the divine name of “Almighty”²⁵² in Moses 1:4, 25 recalls the demonstration of God’s power over the waters of chaos as the first act of Creation.²⁵³

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.²⁵⁴ Moreover, E. R. Goodenough summarizes Philo’s view on the deification of Moses in ancient Jewish tradition as follows:²⁵⁵

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.”²⁵⁶

Moses’s Vision at the Veil

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
The prophet beholds the earth	Moses cast his eyes and beheld the earth (1:27)	“Look now beneath your feet at the expanse and contemplate the creation” (21:1)
The inhabitants of the earth	he beheld also the inhabitants thereof (1:28)	and those who inhabit it (21:1)
The prophet questions God	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.”²⁵⁷ Now, after ascending to heaven, he “cast his eyes” down to see the earth and all of its inhabitants.²⁵⁸ Similarly, Abraham is told, “Look now beneath your feet at the expanse [i.e., veil²⁵⁹] and contemplate the creation and those who inhabit it.”²⁶⁰

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.”²⁶¹ 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*”²⁶² 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).²⁶³

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.”²⁶⁴

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.²⁶⁵ Moroni taught that those with perfect faith cannot be “kept from within the veil”²⁶⁶ (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.²⁶⁷

Consistent with Jewish,²⁶⁸ Islamic,²⁶⁹ and other²⁷⁰ 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”²⁷¹ of eternity that has been worked out before the Creation, are usually described as being depicted *inside* the heavenly veil.²⁷²

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?”²⁷³ 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]?”²⁷⁴) and later the other about the origin of evil in humankind (“Eternal, Mighty One! Why did you ordain it to be so?”²⁷⁵).

Moses will receive a partial answer to his question about “by what” God made these things through a vision of the Creation.²⁷⁶ He will also be told something about “why these things are so.”²⁷⁷ 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.²⁷⁸ 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.²⁷⁹

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

Moses in the Presence of God

	Book of Moses	Apocalypse of Abraham
God's purpose and will are His own	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)
Seeing the Lord face to face	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>)
Vision of the Creation, the Garden of Eden, and the Fall	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,”²⁸¹ 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”²⁸²) 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*.”²⁸³

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,”²⁸⁴ the fourteenth-century Christian illustrator of the *Codex Sylvester* seems to have had no qualms about representing God visually.²⁸⁵

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



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.”²⁹⁰

Beneath the throne are fiery seraphim and many-eyed “wheels” praising God. The throne is surrounded by a series of heavenly veils²⁹¹ 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.²⁹²

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,²⁹³ *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.”²⁹⁴ The Lord’s voice commanded Abraham to “look,” and a series of heavenly veils were opened beneath his feet.²⁹⁵ As in Moses chapters 2–3, Abraham is shown the heavenly plan for creation — “the creation that was depicted of old²⁹⁶ on this expanse” (21:1²⁹⁷), 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).”²⁹⁸ When Abraham is told again to “Look ... at the picture,” he sees Satan inciting the Fall of Adam and Eve (23:1–14),²⁹⁹ just as Moses saw these events following his own heavenly ascent (Moses 4).³⁰⁰

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.³⁰¹

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.³⁰² 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.”³⁰³

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.³⁰⁴ 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.³⁰⁵

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’s³⁰⁶ 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.³⁰⁷

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.³⁰⁸ “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.”³⁰⁹ Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that was ever written on the subject.”³¹⁰

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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.
- 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-enech-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, 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 *haji* 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 outsize 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’ān 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’ān: 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’ān 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’ān itself mentions the “books of Moses ... and of Abraham” (Allama Abdullah Yusuf Ali, ed., *The Holy Qur’ān: 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 Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān 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 Qurʾānic Studies* 13 [2011]: 17). As a final conjecture, al-Thaʿlabi preserves traditions that the “pages” revealed to and written by Abraham contain admonitions and proverbs (Abu Ishaq Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim al-Thaʿlabi, *ʿAraʾis Al-Majalis Fi Qisas Al-Anbiyaʾ* or “*Lives of the Prophets*,” trans. William M. Brinner [Leiden: Brill, 2002], 168–69). This view is probably based on a passage in the Qurʾān (Ali, *The Holy Qurʾān*, 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=lup&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, and Wikipedia, s.v. “Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch,” last updated November 18, 2018, 03:46, 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; 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-naauvoo-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. 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 Rzhetskiy, 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 Überlieferung” [Vienna, AUT: Universität Wien, 2012], 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.uaair.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; 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), 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:xlvi.
- 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/worksofphilojuda01yonguoft#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" (*ʾōhābî*) [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 Hr [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 Uisrwer (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=_jYMAAAAIAAA; 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 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 Wiksells, 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_miniatures/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 Deuteronomic 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; Søren 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” [*Turnant 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 IQSb 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., *Aggadtho 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 *hekhalot* 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, Yaho’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. 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.

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 Philipppian [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 (Philipppians 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-nephis-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.

NEPHITE DAYKEEPERS: RITUAL SPECIALISTS IN MESOAMERICA AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

Mark Alan Wright

Abstract: *Mark Alan Wright describes a common type of ritual specialist among the Maya called a “daykeeper.” He discusses similarities and differences with descriptions of ritual specialists in the Book of Mormon, including those who used the Urim and Thummim, performed rituals of healing, experienced near-death episodes at the inauguration of their calling, kept track of calendars, mastered astronomy, and invoked God to bring rain. He finds several intriguing similarities, but also differences — the most important one being that the Nephites understood that the people to do all these things came from the God of Israel rather than the local pantheon.*

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See Mark Alan Wright, “Nephite Daykeepers: Ritual Specialists in Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon,” in *Ancient Temple Worship: Proceedings of The Expound Symposium 14 May 2011*, ed. Matthew B. Brown, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Stephen D. Ricks, and John S. Thompson (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 243–58. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/ancient-temple-worship/>.]

Contrary to popular belief, the Maya civilization did not mysteriously disappear in the distant past. In actuality, there are millions of Maya

people alive and well today who reside in southern Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize. There are 31 distinct living Mayan languages that continue to be spoken, and the people still maintain many of their ancient traditions. It is true that the Classic period Maya civilization collapsed around the tenth century AD, but rather than annihilation, that simply means that the top-heavy elite culture that commissioned monumental architecture and demanded heavy tribute from the lower classes was overthrown. It was at the time of collapse that the large civic centers were abandoned, and the people returned to farming their land without the burden of heavy tribute; the meek inherited the earth, as it were. Although the political system was overthrown, their fundamental religious ideology remained largely intact. Fortunately, thanks to elaborately carved stone monuments and intricately painted ceramics and murals, there is demonstrable and remarkable continuity in many of their religious beliefs and practices, some of which are evidenced as early as the Formative period — over 1,000 years before Christ — and continue among contemporary Maya cultures today. For 3,000 years they have maintained a core set of beliefs and practices.

An integral part of Maya religious practice was (and is) their reliance on ritual specialists, individuals who claim a special relationship with the divine realm and who are responsible for the physical and spiritual health of the people in their community. Mesoamerican anthropologists and archaeologists broadly refer to these ritual specialists as “shamans.” The Maya have indigenous terms for their ritual specialists, which vary according to which specific roles they play and which particular Maya group is under discussion.

A common type of ritual specialist among contemporary Maya groups is called a “daykeeper”; *aj k'iin* in the Yucatan or *aj q'ij* among the highland Quiche. One of the primary roles of the daykeepers is to keep track of the count of days; they are “calendar priests.” But “daykeepers” have also been described as “mediums,” “shaman-priests,” “priest-shamans,” “shaman-healers” or simply “healers.”¹ Regardless of their specific title, they offer a wide range of beneficial services to the people of their town.

Although there is a variety of ritual specialists found in Maya groups that are separated by language and great geographic distance, they share much in common, which indicates such roles have great time depth. Unfortunately, because of limitations in the archaeological record we only get glimpses into the roles that religious specialists played anciently in the Maya area, but hints remain from their art, writing, and even burial

goods that indicate continuity in many of these practices from the earliest days until the present.

In the Mesoamerican worldview, there are countless different spirit beings that might influence their daily lives. Some of these beings are believed to be allies or helpers, but others prove to be enemies or pranksters; there are givers of life as well as dealers of death.² The shaman's job is to help his fellow villagers stay in the good graces of the benevolent spirits and overcome the malevolent ones.

A wide variety of ritual specialists is also known from the Book of Mormon. Among the righteous there are teachers, priests, high priests, prophets, seers, and revelators, and even the Twelve Disciples, who qualify as their own unique class of religious specialists. However, not all ritual specialists are necessarily the "good guys." Among the Maya there are *brujos*, or witches and sorcerers, who perform black magic and intentionally send illness and bad fortune to their enemies or the enemies of their clients. In the Book of Mormon, we are explicitly told that in times of wickedness there are those who create and worship idols as well as witches and soothsayers (3 Nephi 21:16) and sorcerers and magicians (Mormon 1:19). We are not given many details about these apostate ritual specialists, but their titles alone are telling.

Zaztun and the Urim and Thummim

In modern-day Yucatan, the most common title for shaman or ritual specialists is *aj-meen*, which literally means "practitioner" or "one who knows and does."³ The *aj-men* use crystals, clear rocks, or even fragments of broken glass bottles as a medium through which they receive revelation. They hold them up to a light source and wait for three flashes of light to shine through, which indicates the revelation is about to begin. They interpret these three flashes as representing the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which scholars attribute to the heavy influence of Catholicism among the modern Maya. They call these stones *zaztun*, which literally means "clear stone" or "stone of light."⁴ They are considered extremely sacred objects, and the ritual specialist who owns them does not allow the stones to be casually handled by others. But not all clear stones are necessarily considered *zaztuno'ob* (plural of *zaztun*). Anthropologist Bruce Love recounted meeting a shaman who keeps a jar full of glass marbles on his table and says they are mere toys that are used as "practice" *zaztuno'ob* for his apprentices.⁵

Maya shamans believe that true *zaztuno'ob* are gifts from the gods that have been intentionally placed along their paths for them to find. If

the stone they are meant to find is not along a well-traveled path but is out in the uncultivated forest, they receive some type of spiritual guidance to lead them to where they will find it, sometimes even given vivid dreams or visions of where it is located. One ritual specialist named Don Cosimo was led out to the forest and found his *zaztun* embedded in the fork of a tree.⁶ The finding of these stones is a sign that they have been called and chosen to be a diviner and a healer. *Zaztuno'ob* are not only gifts from the divine realm, but they provide the means of communicating with the Otherworld and enable the ritual specialist to tap into divine powers.

An *aj-meen* named Don Jose once held his *zaztuno'ob* to the sky and when they flashed he said:

“Look! You can see the angels.” *Ti'aaan te ka'an 'elo*, “They are in the sky. This is how they speak to me. They are near. Their words come down. The spirit makes a blessing, makes salvation. The holy ones make a sign and then READY!”⁷

There is evidence that such divination stones were used anciently as well. For example, a burial from Copan dating to the Middle Classic period contained “five peculiar quartz stones, with ferromagnesium inclusions, probably used in divination rituals.”⁸ This burial was likely that of a royal priest or shaman rather than of a ruler, as these stones were found along with other paraphernalia common to ritual specialists.⁹

Now, what does all this have to do with the Book of Mormon? I suggest there are conceptual and functional similarities between the *zaztun*, which literally translates as “light stone” or “clear stone” in Mayan, and the Urim and Thummim, which means “Lights and Perfections” in Hebrew. In Ether 3:1 we read that the stones the brother of Jared made upon the mount Shelem were “white and clear, even as transparent glass.” Interestingly, the brother of Jared went up the mount with sixteen stones, but he came down with eighteen; the two extra stones were the interpreters that were given to him by the Lord. Just as Maya ritual specialists believe their clear stones are gifts directly from their gods, the brother of Jared was given his *zaztuno'ob* by the Lord himself.

We know that Mosiah I interpreted the engravings on a “large stone” that was brought to Zarahemla that told of the demise of the Jaredites, but we are not told exactly how he translated them other than that it was done “by the gift and power of God” (Omni 1:20). It is not until the days of Mosiah II, grandson of Mosiah I, that the Jaredite plates are discovered along with the interpreters that were given to the brother of Jared. We may presume that Mosiah I used an interpreter of some kind to translate

the large stone, as that was the *modus operandi* among the Nephites. If Mosiah I did have an interpreter, it is unclear where he got it; we might speculate that it was a “found object” like unto the *zaztuno’ob* of Maya shamans (or Joseph Smith’s seer-stone, for a more recent analogy).¹⁰

Although the name *Urim and Thummim* never appears in the text of the Book of Mormon, in Doctrine and Covenants 17:1 the Lord explicitly refers to the interpreters given to the brother of Jared (and subsequently to Joseph Smith) as the Urim and Thummim. The interpreters are explicitly associated with light within the text of the Book of Mormon. The stones the brother of Jared made were for the express purpose of providing light in the darkness of their barges (Ether 3:4), and the implication is that the additional stones that the Lord gave him did likewise. The interpreters are also associated with light when Alma passed them to his son Helaman along with the records. In Alma 37:23, he informs Helaman that the Lord proclaimed, “I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, *a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light*,” and in the next verse Alma explains that the interpreters had fulfilled the words of the Lord. He states, “These interpreters were prepared that the word of God might be fulfilled, which he spake, saying: *I will bring forth out of darkness unto light* all their secret works and their abominations” (italics added).

Similarly, Ammon explained to King Limhi the role of a seer; he said, “A seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to *light*, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known” (Mosiah 8:17, italics added). The interpreters, therefore, were for much more than simply translating languages; they were for receiving the light of revelation as well.

Rituals of Healing

There is a modern ethnographic account of a Yucatecan man who was working in his field one day with his brother when suddenly he was overtaken by a strong force that knocked him to the earth. That night they sought out an *aj-meen*, a healer, and he consulted his *zaztun* and other sacred objects to determine the cause of his ailment. After three days of prayers, offerings, and cleansing rituals, the man was restored to health and his “spiritual balance returned.”¹¹

This, of course, calls to mind the account of Alma the Younger, who was stricken upon being rebuked by an angel. Alma the Elder called upon

his ritual specialists to bring healing to his son. In Mosiah 27:22-23 we read, “He caused that the priests should assemble themselves together; and they began to fast, and to pray to the Lord their God that he would open the mouth of Alma, that he might speak, and also that his limbs might receive their strength ... And it came to pass after they had fasted and prayed for the space of two days and two nights, the limbs of Alma received their strength.”

There are several other significant points to be made about Alma’s conversion narrative, which we will return to later in the chapter.

An important aspect of healing practices among Mesoamerican ritual specialists is their use of herbal remedies to treat the infirm. They believe medicinal plants were provided by the gods for the purpose of healing. Fray Diego de Landa, a Catholic Bishop in the sixteenth century informs us, “Certain priests were regarded as doctors who cured with herbs and many superstitious rites.”¹² Modern Maya ritual specialists use their *zaztun* to “see” the causes of afflictions and discern whether or not the person can be cured. Sometimes, *zaztuno’ob* are used as tools to receive specific knowledge through dreams about how to use specific herbs. One *aj-meen*, a healer called Papa Loh, said:

The first night after finding the *zaztun* I dreamt that two old men sat down by my hammock. They came with herbs in their hands; each one brought a certain herb and they began to show me medicine. “Papa Loh, this is medicine for such and such affliction. This medicine cures such and such illness and this is how much is needed.” The other old man spoke up. He said: “This cures such and such ailment, this is how much you use, but take good care of us! Don’t let us die, don’t let us waste away.”

Similarly, in Alma 46:40 we read that in certain seasons the Nephites were afflicted with fevers and other ailments, “but not so much with fevers, because of the excellent qualities of the many plants and roots *which God had prepared* to remove the cause of diseases, to which men were subject by the nature of the climate” (italics added). Note that God did not simply *provide* the plants and roots, he *prepared* them, which I suggest may indicate they received knowledge from Him about how to use them.

Among the Maya, many infirmities are believed to be caused by bad or evil winds (called *k’ak’as iik’* in Yucatec Mayan), which are sometimes sent as a punishment from the gods for failing to make appropriate offerings or for engaging in impious behavior.¹³ This is perhaps reflected

in the Book of Mormon when Abinadi preaches that the “east wind” was sent to punish the wicked (see Mosiah 7:31 and 12:6).¹⁴ *Aj-meen* can cure individuals afflicted by evil winds through prayers or ritual washing.¹⁵ Likewise, those afflicted by the punishing winds spoken of by Abinadi could only be delivered by turning to their ultimate high priest, Jesus Christ (Mosiah 7:31-33; 12:6-8; see Alma 13:9).

A more complicated form of healing is known as *k'ex*, which literally translates as “exchange” or “transference.” When someone is sick or afflicted, either physically or spiritually, the shaman ritually transfers the ailments to an animal, and then the animal is sacrificed to the gods. In the Book of Mormon they continued to obey the Law of Moses, the authors emphasizing their observance of animal sacrifice (ex. 1 Nephi 5:7; Mosiah 2:3). These offerings served to transfer the sins of the penitent onto the animal, reminiscent of the purposes of Maya *k'ex* rituals. The greatest of all *k'ex* offerings of course, is the Atonement (see Jacob 4:5), wherein the Savior took upon him the sins of us all.

Becoming a Ritual Specialist¹⁶

Ethnographic work among traditional societies has shown that holy men of various types — broadly referred to as shamans — commonly receive their calling through near-death experiences. As anthropologist Frank J. Lipp states in reference to modern Mesoamerican shaman-priests called *curanderos* (curers or healers), “Divine election occurs within a context of some physical or emotional crisis” such as “a severe, chronic, or life-threatening sickness.”¹⁷ While in this state they have a vivid dream where “the individual is informed by a spirit being,” such as an angel, that “she or he will receive the divine gift to cure illnesses.”¹⁸ The healing process is often aided by the prayers and ritual actions of another *curandero* on behalf of the critically ill individuals. Once recovered, the newly called shamans possess a power and authority that is recognized by the members of their community due to their shared “cultural language.” According to Lipp, “During the initiatory dream vision the individual may experience temporary insanity or unconsciousness” and it is through this near-death experience that “he or she is reborn as a person with shamanic power and knowledge.”¹⁹

The Book of Mormon similarly describes individuals who fall to the earth as if dead and then recover and become healers. Beyond the examples where physical infirmities are removed, the Book of Mormon also provides numerous examples of individuals who are spiritually healed. It would be a mistake to place physical and spiritual healing in

separate categories; the two concepts are equated in scripture and in the ancient mind. For example, during the Savior's visit to the Nephites in the land Bountiful, beyond the healing he provided to the "lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner" (3 Nephi 17:7), he taught his disciples that they must minister to the unworthy with the hope that "they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them" (3 Nephi 18:32). Centuries earlier, Abinadi quoted Isaiah's comforting message that it is "with his stripes we are healed" (Mosiah 14:5) from our sins and our iniquities.

The first recorded instance in the Book of Mormon where someone falls to the earth as if dead in connection with a prophetic commission is that of Alma the Younger. As he was going about with the sons of Mosiah to destroy the Church, an angel came down to "stop [them] by the way" (Alma 36:6; compare Mosiah 27:10). Significantly, when the angel first spoke to them as with a voice of thunder, they "understood not the words which he spake unto them" (Mosiah 27:12). The angel "cried again," and this time his words were plainly understood (Mosiah 27:13; compare 3 Nephi 11:3-6).

After being threatened with destruction, Alma fell to the earth and became so weak that he could neither speak nor move his hands (Mosiah 27:19). After Alma's helpless body was carried back to his home by his friends (who had also fallen to the earth but were not the focus of the angel's rebuke and therefore quickly recovered), Alma's father rejoiced, acknowledging the Lord's hand in what had transpired. What his father did next is significant: "He caused that the priests should assemble themselves together; and they began to fast, and to pray to the Lord their God that he would open the mouth of Alma, that he might speak, and also that his limbs might receive their strength" (Mosiah 27:22). These priests were acting in their capacity as *curanderos*, or healers. Alma was healed, not just physically but spiritually as well. His exquisite and bitter pain was replaced by exquisite and sweet joy (Alma 36:21). He clearly linked his physical healing with his spiritual healing when he declared, "My limbs did receive their strength again, and I stood upon my feet, and did manifest unto the people that I had been born of God" (Alma 36:23).

Because Alma had been healed, both body and soul, he then possessed a culturally recognized power to heal. This recognition would extend beyond just the believing Nephites who had a clear understanding of the priesthood which Alma held (see Alma 13). For example, Zeezrom was a contentious and apostate Nephite from Ammonihah who knew

nothing concerning true points of doctrine (see Alma 12:8). After contending with Alma and Amulek, Zeezrom became convinced of his own guilt and endured a painful repentance process.

The language used to convey Zeezrom's situation intentionally parallels that used to describe Alma's experience. Alma 14:6 tells us that Zeezrom "knew concerning the blindness of the minds, which he had caused among the people by his lying words; and his soul began to be *harrowed up* under a consciousness of his own guilt; yea, he began to be encircled about by the *pains of hell*" after which he lay "sick, being very low with a burning fever; and his mind also was exceedingly sore because of his iniquities." Just as Alma was snatched out of "an everlasting burning" (Mosiah 27:28), Zeezrom was "scorched with a burning heat" that was caused by "the great tribulations of his mind on account of his wickedness" (Alma 15:3) and his fear that Alma and Amulek "had been slain because of his own iniquity" (Alma 15:3), much as Alma was concerned that he "had murdered many of [God's] children, or rather led them away unto destruction" (Alma 36:14).

Despite the parallels in their accounts, Zeezrom's soul does not appear to have been carried away in vision, and his conversion and healing come at the hands of men rather than from some interaction he had with the Lord while in his near-death state. We instead read that Zeezrom besought healing from both Alma and Amulek. However, the only one to take Zeezrom by the hand was Alma, as he had become the culturally (and spiritually) recognized healer by virtue of his own near-death experience. Alma turned Zeezrom's focus back to the Lord when he asked, "Believest thou in the power of Christ unto salvation?" and then assured him that "If thou believest in the redemption of Christ thou canst be healed." Alma wanted to be clear that healing came through Christ and not through any of his own power, so he cried, "O Lord our God, have mercy on this man, and heal him according to his faith which is in Christ." His plea was heard, and Zeezrom "leaped upon his feet, and began to walk" (Alma 15:6-11).

At the same time Alma was preaching to reclaim apostate Nephites within the greater lands of Zarahemla, Ammon was in the land of Nephi trying to win new converts in Lamanite territory. Through his acts of humility and dedicated service, he gained audience with Lamoni, king over the land of Ishmael (Alma 17:21). Ammon's preaching opened the spiritual eyes of King Lamoni, and for the first time he saw his need for a Redeemer. The king humbled himself and cried unto the Lord for mercy, at which point he fell as if he were dead (Alma 18:42). Lamoni

was seemingly on his deathbed for three days and was even believed to be dead by many of his people (Alma 19:5). Ammon understood that this was not the case, as he had previously witnessed Alma's equivalent experience. The similarity between Lamoni's and Alma's experiences demonstrates the larger cultural language that was shared by Nephites and Lamanites in their ancient Mesoamerican setting.

The New Testament account of Saul's conversion experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3–9) may bear superficial similarities to Alma's experience in the Book of Mormon, but there is a significant difference. We have no record that Saul had a near-death experience in the sense that his soul embarked on a spirit journey while his body lay suffering (as did Alma and Lamoni), which is a defining factor in Mesoamerican shamanic calls.

While Lamoni was lying as if dead, his wife was truly concerned for his well-being. Acting on faith in Ammon's word alone, she stayed by Lamoni's side all that night and anxiously waited for him to emerge from his deep sleep. When he arose, he testified, "I have seen my Redeemer," and he prophesied that "he shall come forth, and be born of a woman, and he shall redeem all mankind who believe on his name." Lamoni then sinks to the earth again, being overcome by the Spirit (Alma 19:13). The queen was likewise filled with the Spirit and also fell to the earth, followed by Ammon; finally even the servants of the king were overwhelmed by the Spirit. At the apex of the narrative, Ammon, the king, the queen, and their servants were all prostrate upon the earth, "and they all lay there as though they were dead" (Alma 19:18). When the queen was raised from the ground by her faithful handmaid Abish, she testified that she had interacted with the Lord by proclaiming "O blessed Jesus, who has saved me from an awful hell!" (Alma 19:29). Even the king's servants who had fallen united their testimony with Ammon's to declare "they had seen angels and conversed with them" (Alma 19:34). King Lamoni, his wife, Ammon, and the king's servants all "administered" unto the gathered crowd (Alma 19:33), which often carries connotations of healing in the Book of Mormon (Jacob 2:19; Mosiah 4:26). While their bodies had lain motionless, their spirits were busy interacting with the Lord and increasing in culturally recognized spiritual potency.

Ammon appears to have fallen to the earth more than any other individual in the Book of Mormon. His initial converting experience occurred when the angel rebuked him and his brothers along with Alma (Mosiah 27:12). As discussed above, he fell to the earth again when king Lamoni and his wife were converted (Alma 19:14) and once more when

he was overcome with joy as he and his brothers chanced upon Alma in the wilderness (Alma 27:17). In his Mesoamerican context, Ammon's experiences — rather than being viewed as a sign of physical weakness or perhaps a case of spiritual hypersensitivity — would actually have imbued him with more spiritual potency as a holy man. Among the modern Tzotzil Maya of Chamula, for example, “the ability to cure illnesses of increasing severity is dependent upon the number of times the shaman has lost consciousness in a trance.”²⁰

Calendar Specialists

Another role of ritual specialists beyond that of healer is that of calendar priest. Modern daykeepers are concerned with keeping track of the solar calendar and knowing when to sow and when to reap, but more importantly, they keep track of the count of days relating to the 260-day sacred calendar and determining whether a particular day is auspicious or not. Knowing the omens of each day enables them to guide people as to when to perform particular rituals, when to bless their child, or knowing whether one's day of birth was a good day or a bad day.²¹

It appears that there were calendar specialists in the Book of Mormon as well. In 3 Nephi 8:1-2 we read, “And now it came to pass that according to our record, and we know our record to be true, for behold, it was a just man who did keep the record—for he truly did many miracles in the name of Jesus; and there was not any man who could do a miracle in the name of Jesus save he were cleansed every whit from his iniquity—And now it came to pass, *if there was no mistake made by this man in the reckoning of our time, the thirty and third year had passed away*” (emphasis added). The implication is that there was one particular individual who was responsible for the “reckoning of [their] time,” and this man was also a healer and a record keeper. This complex of roles mirrors that of Maya “daykeepers.”

The Nephites kept track of hours, days, weeks, months, and years. Omni 1:21 informs us that the people of Zarahemla also maintained a lunar calendar. Nephite record keepers reckoned from at least three distinct starting points: the time Lehi left Jerusalem, the beginning of the reign of the judges, and the time the signs were given of Christ's birth (see 3 Nephi 2:5-8). The ancient Maya daykeepers had a similarly complicated job. They kept track of single day names with associated numbers: periods of 7, 9, 13, 20, and 819 days; 584-day Venus cycles; periods of single “years” of 360 days called *tuns*; 20-year periods called *katuns*; and 400-year periods called *baktuns*, as well as lunar cycles.

The majority of Classic period monuments begin with a “Long Count,” which begins with a count of *baktuns* (400 years) and *katuns* (20 years). Notably, the concluding chapter of the Book of Mormon likewise begins with a count of “four hundred and twenty years” (Moroni 10:1), perhaps an intentional allusion to the Maya Long Count. The twenty-year katun was subdivided into five-year periods called *hotuns*, which were often celebrated by royalty and commemorated in monumental inscriptions. Samuel the Lamanite may have been making a *hotun* prophecy when he stated that in “five years” signs would be given concerning the birth of Christ (Helaman 14:2). Maya monuments often record the “Lunar Series,” which, as mentioned above, appears to be attested in the Book of Omni.

Ritual Specialists and Astronomy

Along with the calendar, ancient Maya ritual specialists were also masters of astronomy. Royal astronomer priests would work in conjunction with rulers and their architects to precisely lay out their city plans to use heavenly bodies for the purposes of royal propaganda. Royal palaces or temple complexes would be aligned with the solar equinoxes and solstices, so on particular days the sun would be seen to rise directly over the abode of the ruler and his gods.²² They tracked the cycles of planets, had their own set of constellations, and were even able to predict eclipses.

Ritual specialists in the Book of Mormon likewise had a firm grasp of astronomy. Alma affirmed that “all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator” (Alma 30:44). In Helaman 14, Samuel the Lamanite prophesied that wonders in heaven would be used as signs to signify the birth of Christ, including the appearance of a new star, and these were all fulfilled in 3 Nephi 1. Nephi, son of Helaman, even proclaimed a heliocentric model rather than a geocentric one (Helaman 12:15).

Rainmaking Ceremonies

One of the primary responsibilities of modern Maya shamans is performing rain-making ceremonies, which are called *chà chaak* ceremonies by the Yucatec Maya. They cover a sanctified table with food and drink offerings, which are fed first to the gods and then to the people. The ritual specialists then make other offerings and utter prayers to petition the gods for rain on behalf of the people.²³

In the Book of Helaman we read that Nephi was given power to seal the heavens, and he did so in hopes that it would compel his people to be humble and stop engaging in endless warfare. In Helaman 11:7-8 the people finally got the message: “And it came to pass that the people saw that they were about to perish by famine, and they began to remember the Lord their God; and they began to remember the words of Nephi. And the people began to plead with their chief judges and their leaders, that they would say unto Nephi: Behold, we know that thou art a man of God, and therefore cry unto the Lord our God that he turn away from us this famine, lest all the words which thou hast spoken concerning our destruction be fulfilled.”

Note that the people did not turn directly to God themselves, nor did they think their political leaders could help. They turned to Nephi, their ritual specialist, the one who had the power to intercede on their behalf with the divine realm on their behalf and bring the rains. We may shrink at the thought that Nephites, the people of the Lord, would behave in such a way, but the context of the chapters makes it clear that they were largely apostate at this point. Just a few chapters earlier in Helaman 6:31 we read, “Insomuch that they had become exceedingly wicked; yea, the more part of them had turned out of the way of righteousness, and did trample under their feet the commandments of God, and did turn unto their own ways, and did build up unto themselves idols of their gold and their silver.” In other words, they had turned away from their own religious traditions and adopted those of the native population.²⁴

Conclusion

Despite the many similarities between Nephite and traditional Maya ritual specialists mentioned above, it must be noted that many profound differences exist as well, as would be expected. The believing Nephites were annihilated before the end of the fourth century AD, and it stands to reason that their specific beliefs and practices perished with them. To be very clear, I am not suggesting that Maya ritual specialists were influenced by the Nephites; rather, Nephite religious practices may very well have been colored by the native cultures that surrounded them. Some may bristle at that suggestion, but as Latter-day Saints many of our common ritual practices are admittedly quite similar to those of other faiths and unquestionably influenced by them. For example, what we believe to be proper ritual attire — a white shirt and tie for men and a modest dress for women — did not originate with a revelation to Joseph Smith, nor did the sitting on pews in a chapel, the singing of opening and closing hymns, the

offering of invocations and benedictions, the giving of sermons, or the administration of the emblems of Christ's body and blood.

Latter-day Saint worship services are likely far more similar to those of other modern churches than they would be to those of the ancient Nephites, and Nephite worship services would undoubtedly have been far more similar to those of their ancient Mesoamerica neighbors than to those of the modern Church. Jacob, among others, noted that it is not the specific ritual practice that matters, but the belief that underlies the practice. The Nephites performed the same rituals as the Jews in their observance of the Law of Moses, but Jacob asserted that the Jews looked beyond the mark and lost their understanding that the law pointed toward Christ (Jacob 4:14). The Nephites would have been at home among their Mesoamerican neighbors by offering sacrifices to take away spiritual afflictions, by fasting and praying over the sick, looking to a ritual specialist to make it rain, by using multiple complex calendars, and by receiving the light of revelation through clear stones. But the Nephites understood that the power to do all these things came from the God of Israel rather than the local pantheon.

Notes

- 1 Cecilia F. Klein, Eulogio Guzmán, Elisa C. Mandell, and Maya Stanfield-Mazzi. "The Role of Shamanism in Mesoamerican Art." *Current Anthropology* 43, no. 3 (2002): 393.
- 2 Bruce Love, *Maya Shamanism Today: Connecting with the Cosmos in Rural Yucatán* (Lancaster, CA: Labyrinthos, 2004), ix.
- 3 Love, *Maya Shamanism*, ix.
- 4 Linda A. Brown, "From Discard to Divination: Demarcating the Sacred Through the Collection and Curation of Discarded Objects." *Latin American Antiquity*, December 2000, 325.
- 5 Love, *Maya Shamanism*, 4.
- 6 Brown, "From Discard to Divination," 326.
- 7 Love, *Maya Shamanism*, 18.
- 8 William Fash, *Scribes, Warriors and Kings: The City of Copan and the Ancient Maya* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 92.
- 9 Marc Zender, *A Study of Classic Maya Priesthood*, Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Calgary, 2004, 65-66.
- 10 Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 48-49.
- 11 Love, *Maya Shamanism*, 1-3.
- 12 Alfred Marston Tozzer, ed. "Landa's Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán:

- a Translation.” Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 1941, 94.
- 13 Robert Redfield and Alfonso Villa Rojas. *Chan Kom: A Maya Village*, 1934, 167.
- 14 In Mesoamerica east winds tend to be beneficial and are typically a sign that the life-giving rains are soon to come (Spence, 139). However, destructive tropical storms and hurricanes typically develop in the eastern Gulf Coast and sweep across the Maya lowlands from the east or northeast, which devastate both field and forest (Bassie, 50-51). In these particular contexts (Mosiah 7:29-31; 12:6), Abinadi is directly quoting the Lord from an unknown source, but it is likely from the brass plates (as he is wont to do), which would as expected reflect the traditional biblical association of the east winds with punishment.
- 15 Redfield and Villa Rojas. *Chan Kom*, 167.
- 16 The bulk of this section was previously published by the author in “According to Their Language, Unto Their Understanding: The Cultural Context of Hierophanies and Theophanies in Latter-day Saint Canon” in *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity*, Vol. 3 (2011) under the subheading “Prophetic Commissions in the Old and New Worlds” (pp. 58-64). It appears here with only minor modification from the previous publication and with permission of the editor.
- 17 Frank Lipp, “A Comparative Analysis of Southern Mexican and Guatemalan Shamans,” *Mesoamerican Healers*, 2001, 95-116.
- 18 Lipp, “Comparative Analysis,” 103.
- 19 Lipp, “Comparative Analysis,” 104.
- 20 Lipp, “Comparative Analysis,” 104.
- 21 The belief in auspicious and inauspicious days may strike some as “primitive,” but it should be noted that scholars estimate that businesses in the United States lose between \$800-900 million every Friday the 13th due to superstitious avoidance of perceived risky behavior such as driving or making large purchases (Travis Ng, Terence Chong, and Xin Du. “The value of superstitions.” *Journal of Economic Psychology* 31, no. 3, 2010, 3).
- 22 Anthony Aveni “Archaeoastronomy in the Ancient Americas,” *Journal of Archaeological Research* 11, no. 2 (2003): 149-191.
- 23 Love, *Maya Shamanism*.
- 24 Mark Alan Wright and Brant Gardner. “The Cultural Context of Nephite Apostasy.” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 1, 25-55. www.mormoninterpreter.com/the-cultural-context-of-nephite-apostasy/ (accessed September 12, 2014).

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VISIONS, MUSHROOMS, FUNGI, CACTI, AND TOADS: JOSEPH SMITH'S REPORTED USE OF ENTHEOGENS

Brian C. Hales

Abstract: *An article recently published in an online journal entitled “The Entheogenic Origins of Mormonism: A Working Hypothesis” posits that Joseph Smith used naturally occurring chemicals, called “entheogens,” to facilitate visionary experiences among his early followers. The entheogenic substances were reportedly derived from two mushrooms, a fungus, three plants (including one cactus), and the secretions from the parotid glands of the Sonoran Desert toad. Although it is an intriguing theory, the authors consistently fail to connect important dots regarding chemical and historical cause-and-effect issues. Documentation of entheogen acquisition and consumption by the early Saints is not provided, but consistently speculated. Equally, the visionary experiences recounted by early Latter-day Saints are highly dissimilar from the predictable psychedelic effects arising from entheogen ingestion. The likelihood that Joseph Smith would have condemned entheogenic influences as intoxication is unaddressed in the article.*

In 2019, retired emergency department physician Robert Beckstead, Naked Mormonism podcaster Bryce Blankenagel, independent researcher Cody Noconi, and retired Arizona State University Professor Michael Winkelman published “The Entheogenic Origins of Mormonism: A Working Hypothesis” in the online *Journal of Psychedelic Studies*.¹ Their lengthy article, richly illustrated with 41 color figures and more than 300 references in the bibliography, attributes many of

1. Robert Beckstead, et al., “The Entheogenic Origins of Mormonism: A Working Hypothesis,” *Journal of Psychedelic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2019): 212–60. Hereafter referred to as “EOMWH.”

Joseph Smith's visionary experiences and those of other early Latter-day Saints to the use of "entheogens," or psychedelic chemical substances available in the environment.² The authors state:

[N]o single explanation has to date successfully accounted for the number and quality of visions in early Mormonism. Nor can these modalities explain the "on-demand" visions that were neither spontaneous nor the result of prolonged austerities. To date, Joseph Smith's and early Mormon converts' visionary experience are neither easily defined nor understood. Against this background, we present compelling evidence suggesting that many early Mormon visionary experiences were facilitated by entheogenic substances. ... We propose that the entheogenic context of early Mormon involved sacraments, ordinances, and endowments feeding these seekers' hunger for primary religious experience. (212–13)

The primary thesis promoted throughout EOMWH assumes that "[h]erbs were a physical means to profound religious experience, experiences that rarely occur without using entheogens" (214).

All human experience and insight emerge in the chemistry of the brain. ... To explore how brain chemistry was involved in Joseph Smith's religious experiences and those of other early Mormon believers and whether entheogens facilitated those experiences is not to question the spiritual validity and power of those experiences but to illuminate how such compelling experiences were accessed then and draw implications for how they may be accessed now (213).

For support, EOMWH presents "six straightforward phenomena reported or observed during the life of Joseph Smith" (214):

1. Entheogens were found in every area the Smith family resided, and produce visions, and spiritual ecstasies.
2. Joseph Smith was mentored by individuals with experience in esoteric fields of knowledge.

2. The term "entheogen" was coined by R. Gordon Wasson and Robert Graves for a 1958 article to describe "substances that would soon come to be known as 'psychedelics.'" (Antonio Ceraso, "Entheogens and the Public Mystery: The Rhetoric of R. Gordon Wasson," *Configurations* 16, no. 2 [Spring 2008]: 217.)

3. Visionary experience in early Mormonism was frequently “on-demand” rather than spontaneous.
4. Joseph Smith devised a method to facilitate dramatic religious experience among his followers.
5. There was an association between early Mormon visionary experience and participation in Mormon ordinances where bread and wine were served, and oil anointings were received.
6. Visionary experiences of the magnitude experienced during Joseph Smith’s life ceased at his death. (214)

With these and many other observations, EOMWH advances a new theory that affirms that historical accounts from Joseph Smith and other followers of visions, dreams, visitations, sensations, voices, or other communications that they attributed exclusively to God were actually facilitated by previously ingesting psychedelic chemicals.

Rather than systematically addressing the specific assertions and conclusions mentioned in EOMWH, this article is divided into three sections. The first establishes the primary claims from the article that connect early visionary experiences to specific entheogenic substances. The second section examines those chemicals in greater detail regarding their usage, preparation, ingestion, potential psychedelic effects, as well as possible dangers associated with consumption. The final section critiques EOMWH’s primary thesis and methodology.

Hypothesizing Entheogen Usage

A consistent strength reflected throughout EOMWH involves the authors’ willingness to identify specific chemical substances as potentially responsible for historical events that religious participants described as visionary and extra-worldly. EOMWH creates a tension by providing a natural explanation for experiences that Joseph Smith and early converts considered to be supernatural in origin.

The responsible entheogens, according to EOMWH, are derived from two mushrooms (*Psilocybe ovoideocystidiata* and *Amanita muscaria*), a fungus (*Claviceps purpurea*), three plants (*Datura stramonium*, *Hyoscyamus niger*, and the cactus *Lophophora williamsii*), and secretions from the parotid glands of the Sonoran Desert toad (*Incilius alvarius*) (224–30).

Name	Source	Active Ingredient	Common Name
<i>Psilocybe ovoideocystidiata</i>	Mushroom (fungus)	Psilocybin, psilocin, and baeocystin	Magic mushrooms, shrooms, mushies, psillys, pixie caps, Welsh friends, or Welsh tea
<i>Amanita muscaria</i>		Ibotenic acid, muscimol	Fly agaric, bug agaric
<i>Claviceps purpurea</i>	Ergot (fungus)	Multiple, including an LSD precursor	Ergot
<i>Datura stramonium</i>	Plants	Atropine, hyoscyamine, scopolomine	Jimson weed, thornapple, loco weed, Jamestown weed, Angel's Trumpet, and Devil's Trumpet
<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i>			Black henbane, stinking nightshade
<i>Lophophora williamsii</i>	Cactus (plant)	Mescaline	Peyote
<i>Incilius alvarius</i>	Sonoran desert toad secretions	5-MeO-DMT	Bufo alvsius, Colorado River Toad

The authors explain, “The availability of entheogenic material to the Smith family and their ability to process and utilize it are foundational to our thesis of an entheogenic early Mormonism” (224). EOMWH affirms that “[b]y following this entheogenic protocol, Joseph Smith facilitated an unprecedented number of ‘on demand’ religious visions and ecstasies” (237). By June 1831, “It is likely that Joseph Smith, had considerable experience with entheogens” (239).

Reports of entheogen-induced experiences by Joseph Smith and others are presented throughout the article.

- Lucy Mack Smith’s dream³ circa “1802–1808” is ascribed to the mushroom *Amanita muscaria* (216).
- Joseph Smith Sr. first dream of eating the contents of a box⁴ is connected to *Datura stramonium* (Jimson weed) ingestion (217).

3. Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool, UK: S. W. Richards, 1853), 54–55.

4. Ibid., 57.

- Joseph Smith Sr.'s second dream that mentions the tree of life⁵ is attributed to *Amanita muscaria* (218) or by smoking parotid gland secretions of the Sonoran Desert toad (*Incilius alvarius*) (229).
- Joseph Smith's mental state at the time of the 1820 First Vision resulted from entheogen intoxication. EOMWH explicates, "Had Joseph been taken to a local physician of the period during the initial phase of intoxication, the diagnosis of poisoning with a member of the *Solanaceae* family, such as Black Henbane (*H. niger*) or *D. stramonium* would have easily been made. Similar clinical features can also present with poisoning by the *A. muscaria* mushroom" (231). "Features of the anticholinergic toxidrome in Joseph's accounts of his first vision include being rendered 'blind as a bat' (mydriasis, blurred vision), 'mad as a hatter' (altered mental status, delusional paranoia, and hallucinations), and 'dry as a bone' (dry mucous membranes), and a duration of intoxication lasting several hours or more. Paralysis associated with *D. stramonium* is also reported" (232).
- An alleged tutor of Joseph Smith named Luman Walters⁶ possessed a stuffed toad (230) apparently used in magical pursuits, and Willard Chase, a neighbor of the Smiths in the 1820s, reported that Joseph Smith encountered a spirit that was "something like a toad" (230) prior to receiving the plates from the Hill Cumorah.⁷ Based on these two

5. Ibid., 58–59.

6. EOMWH posits Joseph Smith was tutored by Luman Walters, but there is no direct evidence Joseph Smith ever met Luman Walters, let alone was taught herbology by him. The only possible support is from Abner Cole, editor of the *Palmyra Reflector*, who wrote in June 1830 that in the early 1820s, "the mantle of [Luman] Walters the Magician had fallen upon Joseph" (Abner Cole, "The Book of Pukei, Chapter 2," *The Palmyra Reflector* (July 7, 1830): 60). This statement could represent a direct connection, but as Mark Ashurst-McGee observed, "Cole may have been implying that Joseph succeeded Walters as the seer who led local treasure ventures" (Mark Ashurst-McGee, "A Pathway to Prophethood: Joseph Smith Junior as Rodsman, Village Seer, and Judeo-Christian Prophet," (Master's Thesis, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, 2000), 205).

7. Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled: or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, for Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, OH: Author, 1834), 242.

observations, EOMWH concludes, “The twice mentioned ‘toad’ during the production of *The Book of Mormon* suggests the remote possibility that Smith employed a toad [*Incilius alvarius*] entheogen in its writing” (230). The authors add, “Had Joseph Smith known the features of entheogenic toad venom, he would have undoubtedly arranged for its procurement and transport to Nauvoo in the 1840s” (230).

- During the Book of Mormon translation, “Smith used a seer stone to translate, and we hypothesize an entheogen; the use of the latter is suggested by reports of his frequent ‘intoxication’ or ‘altered’ appearance while translating” (223).⁸ “Several lines of evidence in *The Book of Mormon* suggest Joseph Smith’s awareness of psychedelics and their effects. *The Book of Mormon* functioned as sacred scripture and acted as a psychopomp for early Mormon converts seeking direct and personal experience with God under the influence of entheogenic material” (234).
- According to EOMWH, prior to receiving their visions, the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon (Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris) partook of unspecified chemicals without “fear and embarrassment secondary to the troublesome entheogen-related physical and emotional symptomology preceding their visionary and ecstatic experience” (237).
- “Smith’s promise that converts would see God and experience visions, dreams, and ecstasies would occur in receiving sacraments and endowments” (237). “Joseph Smith promised converts visions, but only in Mormon ‘ordinances’ and in the presence of Church leaders” (237).
- “With increasing confidence in his entheogenic sacraments, Joseph Smith enabled hundreds to receive visions during

8. Levi Lewis reported that “he saw him (Smith) intoxicated at three different times while he was composing the Book of Mormon” (quoted in Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* [Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834], 268). Otherwise, eyewitnesses fail to mention any altered state, intoxication, or drunkenness, while Joseph Smith was dictating the Book of Mormon. See John W. Welch, ed., *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations 1820–1844*, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2017), 126–227.

the dedication ceremonies of the Kirtland temple, but only if willing to participate in the Mormon ordinances” (241). “The spiritual outpouring associated with the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in March and April of 1836 was called the Mormon Pentecost, the equivalent to the early Christian Pentecost that was also accused of alcohol intoxication. Visionary experiences during this period are linked, we argue, to the administration of bread and wine sacraments and oil anointings” (241).

- “The Potawatomi [Native Americans] passed through Nauvoo on their way to and from their hunting grounds in Iowa territory and could have served as an early bridge between the Indians of the Southwest (e.g., Comanche-Osage) and Joseph Smith for the delivery of peyote to Illinois for the Nauvoo temple” (242).
- Administering entheogens to large groups of followers was possible due to the help of herbal physician assistants: “The overwhelming logistical constraints of supplying scores or hundreds of Mormons on multiple occasions with various plant medicines could have been satisfied by an experienced Thomsonian Botanical physician like Frederick G. Williams, with his herbarium” (224). “Frederick G. Williams likely had the education and practical training to cultivate, harvest, and prepare the psychoactive materials associated with ergot for the Kirtland temple” (227).
- According to EOMWH, the lack of historical documentation is due to Joseph Smith’s ability to successfully keep entheogenic usage a secret. “Joseph Smith’s surreptitious use of entheogenic material was a closely guarded secret for obvious reasons. Although the ingestion of such substances was not illegal in the 19th century, their use was discouraged by withering ridicule” (240). “What did Smith want to keep secret? Besides Smith’s unusual marriage practice and his kingdom building ambitions, we argue it was to keep secret administration of an entheogen in the endowment” (223).

The claims made throughout EOMWH describe the early days of the Church as largely resulting from humanly initiated processes employing entheogenic chemicals rather than being initiated by divine influences.

Examining the Seven Entheogens

The following sections examine each substance, specifically *geographic distributions*, *dosing* of chemicals, *onset and duration*, predicted *hallucinogenic effects*, and *side effects and potential dangers* associated with each one. Joseph Smith would have needed this information for each entheogen in order to obtain the results described in EOMWH. Many of these chemical substances are referred to as “psychedelics” in scientific literature, although *entheogen* is gaining wider usage.

1. *Psilocybe Ovoideocystidiata*

Perhaps the most ubiquitous source of environmental psychedelics is the *Psilocybe* genus of wild mushrooms, which produces psychotropic chemicals of psilocybin, psilocin, and baeocystin.⁹



Psilocybe genus of psychedelic mushrooms. (Getty images; used by permission.)

Geographic distribution: *Psilocybe* mushrooms are found throughout the world in a variety of habitats, including that of New England. “There are in the United States around 60 species of *Psilocybe*, of which approximately 25 are hallucinogenic, and of which around 10 are from

9. Ning-Ning Yang et al., “Chemical Study of the Fungus *Psilocybe merdaria*,” *Journal of Asian Natural Products Research* 19, no. 4 (2017): 333.

the eastern United States.”¹⁰ The primary species found in the New England area, *Psilocybe ovoideocystidiata*, was discovered in 2007 by a mycologist who wrote that “this species probably has hallucinogenic properties.”¹¹



Harvested *Psilocybe* mushrooms. (Getty images; used by permission.)

Dosing: The effects resulting from mushroom ingestion depend upon several variables:

- Whether the mushrooms are eaten fresh, dried, or with food.
- The person’s body weight.
- Psychological make-up.
- Expectations.
- The environment in which the mushrooms are taken.¹²

10. Gastón Guzmán, Richard V. Gaines, and Florencia Ramírez-Guillén, “New Species of Hallucinogenic *Psilocybe* (Fr.) P. Kumm. (*Agaricomycetideae*) from the Eastern U.S.A.,” *International Journal of Medicinal Mushrooms* 9 (2007): 75.

11. *Ibid.*, 77.

12. Andy Letcher, *Shroom: A Cultural History of the Magic Mushroom* (Chatham, UK: Faber and Faber, 2006), 18.

“An average dose seems to have been three to five mushrooms. As many as eleven might be consumed for the purposes of obtaining visions.”¹³ “The mushrooms can be roasted or cooked with other vegetables. Different species are often mixed in the same receptacle.”¹⁴

Onset and Duration: “The psychophysical effects of these mushrooms come on anywhere from fifteen minutes to an hour after consumption, depending on how empty the stomach is, and last between four and five hours.”¹⁵

Hallucinogenic Effects: For centuries, *Psilocybe* mushrooms have been used by shamans throughout the world to facilitate their religious practices. Modern users may seek purely psychedelic effects independent of any religious concerns. In the 1950s before governmental policies were placed to regulate access, two researchers, Gaston Guzman and R. Gordon Wasson, visited Mexico to participate in mushroom induced rituals.

Gaston Guzman’s Experience

During a traditional “Indian ceremony in an Indian house in 1958,” Mexican mycologist and anthropologist, Gaston Guzman related his experience in third person:

Following Indian counsel, he ate 12 fresh fruit bodies of *Psilocybe cubensis* gathered by him that morning. The ingestion was an interesting Indian nocturnal ceremony conducted by an old Mazatec woman ... he decided to go to his straw sleeping mat, which was in a corner of the room where the ceremony had taken place. While he was on his straw sleeping mat, he suddenly saw a caricature of a gigantic, colored castle with two human faces. The castle was his gasoline-lamp mushroom dryer at an opposite corner of the room. The castle smiled and said to him: “Come, come to me, don’t be afraid.” The author was greatly surprised and frightened, and he reached for his eyeglasses to see his mushroom dryer. Then the castle laughed loudly. He decided to turn his back on it and sleep, but sleep was impossible, because he began to see many attractive, bright colors wherever he turned, regardless of whether his eyes were open or closed. These colors gradually transformed

13. Ibid., 135.

14. Roger R Heim and R. Gordon Wasson. “The ‘Mushroom Madness’ Of The Kuma,” *Botanical Museum Leaflets* [Harvard University] 21, no. 1 (1965) : 17.

15. Letcher, *Shroom*, 17.

into gigantic black men, who danced around him, singing. In that moment the author felt very comfortable and asked the castle to please keep silent, because he was busy and happy looking at the spectacle. ... These gigantic men were really a little, dark dog chasing a cat. After the above visions, he saw many others, spectacularly colored things and persons, and experimented many other cases, but the castle was there all night, saying to him, “come, come to me.” Finally he fell into a normal sleep after almost 6 hours of neurotropic effects.”¹⁶

R. Gordon Wasson's Experiences

On two occasions while supervised by the local shaman, author and ethnomycologist Robert Gordon Wasson and a co-investigator consumed at bedtime six pairs of the mushrooms from the genus *Psilocybe*.



“Wasson takes them from cup holding his night’s quota as the curandera [female shaman] prays at the household altar. He chewed them slowly, as is the custom, and his six pair took about a half hour to eat.”¹⁷

16. Gaston Guzman, “The Hallucinogenic Mushrooms: Diversity, Traditions, Use and Abuse with Special Reference to the Genus *Psilocybe*,” in *Fungi from Different Environments*, eds. J. K. Misra and S. K. Deshmukh (Enfield, NH: Science Publishers, 2009), 272–73.

17. R. Gordon Wasson, “Seeking the Magic Mushroom,” *Life* 42, no. 19 (May 13, 1957): 103, <https://books.google.com/books?id=Jj8EAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PP1&pg=P A100#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

After about an hour, he noted visions of colorful geometric patterns, palaces, and architectural vistas.

The visions had started. They reached a plateau of intensity deep in the night, and they continued at that level until about 4 o'clock. We felt slightly unsteady on our feet and in the beginning were nauseated. We lay down on the mat that had been spread for us. ... We were never more wide awake, and the visions came whether our eyes were opened or closed. They emerged from the center of the field of vision, opening up as they came, now rushing, now slowly, at the pace that our will chose. They were in vivid color, always harmonious. They began with art motifs, angular such as might decorate carpets or textiles or wallpaper or the drawing board of an architect. Then they evolved into palaces with courts, arcades, gardens — resplendent palaces all laid over with semiprecious stones. Then I saw a mythological beast drawing a regal chariot. Later it was as though the walls of our house had dissolved, and my spirit had flown forth, and I was suspended in mid-air viewing landscapes of mountains, with camel caravans advancing slowly across the slopes, the mountains rising tier above tier to the very heavens.¹⁸

Three days later, Wasson repeated the experiment:

Instead of mountains I saw river estuaries, pellucid water flowing through an endless expanse of reeds down to a measureless sea, all by the pastel light of a horizontal sun. This time a human figure appeared, a woman in primitive costume, standing and staring across the water, enigmatic, beautiful, like a sculpture except that she breathed and was wearing woven colored garments. It seemed as though I was viewing a world of which I was not a part and with which I could not hope to establish contact. There I was, poised in space, a disembodied eye, invisible, incorporeal, seeing but not seen.¹⁹

Regarding the hallucinations, Wasson clarified:

The visions were not blurred or uncertain. They were sharply focused, the lines and colors being so sharp that they seemed

18. *Ibid.*, 102.

19. *Ibid*

more real to me than anything I had ever seen with my own eyes. I felt that I was now seeing plain, whereas ordinary vision gives us an imperfect view; I was seeing the archetypes, the Platonic ideas, that underlie the imperfect images of everyday life.”²⁰

Wasson’s experiences were published in the May 13, 1957, edition of *Life* magazine as the article “Seeking the Magic Mushroom.”



Life May 13, 1957, cover headline: “Great Adventures in the Discovery of Mushrooms that Cause Strange Visions”

Side Effects and Dangers

“Experienced users know that mushroom trips can turn nasty,” reports Andy Letcher, author of *Shroom: A Cultural History of the Magic Mushroom*, “The visions can become hellish, the gnostic insights can be

20. Ibid., 109.

too much to take in, the fear of dying or going mad or of permanently losing one's identity can become overbearing."²¹

Another important danger posed by "magic mushrooms" stems from the potential for amateur seekers to find themselves consuming something different and far more dangerous. Many deadly mushrooms may be mistaken for hallucinogenic species. An 1879 weekly newspaper reported the following conversation: "[An] ignorant young men [speaking] to Professor Tyndall- 'Professor, how is a man to tell a mushroom from a toadstool?'--Professor: 'By eating it. If you live it is a mushroom; if you die it is a toadstool.'"²²

One professional mushroom forager spent the day with his wife collecting mushrooms for their evening meal. As they sautéed their fungal feast, they noticed a death cap mushroom cooking in the mix. "The smell was so tantalizing. We wanted to eat it desperately.' After all, he says, laughing, 'you can eat anything--once.'"²³

"There is no certain test, like the 'silver spoon test,' which will enable one to tell the poisonous mushroom from the edible ones" explains George F. Atkinson, author of *Studies in American Fungi: Mushrooms, Edible, Poisonous, etc.* "For the beginner, however, there are certain general rules, which, if carefully followed, will enable him to avoid the poisonous ones, while at the same time necessarily excluding many edible ones."²⁴

1st. — Reject all fungi which have begun to decay, or which are infested with larva.

2nd. — Reject all fungi in the button stage, since the characters are not yet shown which enable one to distinguish the genera and species. Buttons in pasture lands which are at the surface of the ground and not deep-seated in the soil, would very likely not belong to any of the very poisonous kinds.

3d. — Reject all fungi which have a cup or sac-like envelope at the base of the stem, or which have a scaly or closely fitting

21. Letcher, *Shroom*, 121.

22. [Editor], "The Recess," *The Educational Weekly* [Chicago] 131 (October 2, 1879): 137

23. Jane Black, "Mushroom Madness; Wild Things," *Boston Magazine* 43, no. 9 (Sep 2005): 211.

24. George F. Atkinson, *Studies in American Fungi: Mushrooms, Edible, Poisonous, etc.* (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), 229.

layer at the base of the stem, and rather loose warts on the pileus, especially if the gills are white ...

4th. — Reject all fungi with a milky juice unless the juice is reddish. Several species with copious white milk, sweet or mild to the taste, are edible ...

5th. — Reject very brittle fungi with gills nearly all of equal length, where the flesh of the cap is thin, especially those with bright caps.

6th. — Reject all Boleti in which the flesh changes color where bruised or cut, or those in which the tubes have reddish mouths, also those the taste of which is bitter ...

7th. — Reject fungi which have a cobwebby veil or ring when young, and those with slimy caps and clay-colored spores.”²⁵

Besides distinguishing between edible and deadly mushrooms, foragers would need to also discern from among the edibles, which, if any, could produce psychedelic changes in consciousness.

2. *Amanita Muscaria*

Amanita muscaria is another mushroom commonly called, “fly agaric,” apparently due to an incorrect belief that it is poisonous to flies and other insects. It exists as a large white-gilled, white-spotted, usually red-topped mushroom, and is commonly recognized in popular culture.

Geographic distribution: “The fly agaric is one of the well-known poisonous species and is very widely distributed in this country as well as in other parts of the world.”²⁶

Preparation and Dosing: “In most cases as little as one cap, a cup of sautéed mushrooms, is a sufficient for psychotropic effects.”²⁷

Onset and Duration: Effects appear within 30 minutes to 2 hours after ingestion and last for several hours.

25. Ibid., 229–30.

26. Ibid., 54–55.

27. Didier Michelot and Leda Maria Melendez-Howell, “*Amanita muscaria*: Chemistry, Biology, Toxicology, and Ethnomycology,” *Mycological Research* 107, no. 2 (2003): 132; references removed from text.



Amanita muscaria. (Getty images; used by permission.)

Hallucinogenic Effects: Consumption of *Amanita muscaria* induces an “unsteady set of symptoms: nausea, dizziness, a flushed countenance, twitchiness, increased stamina, euphoria, deep coma-like sleep, hallucinatory dreams and, occasionally, nothing but a headache the next day.”²⁸ Other effects include, “A state of confusion, dizziness, and tiredness, visual and auditory aesthesia (hypersensitivity), space distortion, and unawareness of time.”²⁹ Clark Heinrich, author of *Magic Mushrooms in Religion and Alchemy*,³⁰ experienced the hallucinogenic effects of *Amanita muscaria*:

Heinrich found himself ascending through ever-increasing levels of bliss, each more magnificent than the last, until he achieved union with the clear white light, the source, the Godhead. Understandably excited, he attempted to repeat this experience a few days later, but this time the experience was hellish. Losing all sense of time, space, and identity, he struggled to remember who he was. Coming to, and remembering his name (at last!), he saw grotesque rope-like

28. Letcher, *Shroom*, 12.

29. Michelot and Melendez-Howell, “*Amanita muscaria*: Chemistry, Biology, Toxicology, and Ethnomycology,” 132.

30. Clark Heinrich, *Magic Mushrooms in Religion and Alchemy* (Paris, ME: Park Street Press, 2002).

columns stretching upwards to the sky — which turned out to be threads on the handkerchief upon which he was slumped — and promptly vomited. The whole cycle, loss of identity, coming to, and being sick, was repeated again and again for what seemed like an eternity, until the effects eventually wore off.”³¹

Side Effects and Dangers: The entheogenic potential of *Amanita muscaria* is less consistent and predictable than for *Psilocybe* mushrooms. According to Andy Letcher, “For every fly-agaric enthusiast, then, there are twenty, or perhaps fifty or more, who read these accounts and politely decline, preferring the more trustworthy psilocybin experience.”³² While it may be used for recreational and even shamanistic purposes, “[t]he fly agaric is not a true object of religious and ritual veneration.”³³

In their 2003 review article on *Amantia muscaria*, Didier Michelot and Leda Maria Melendez-Howell conclude:

Amanita muscaria occupies a unique position amongst all mushrooms. Its emblematic aspect merges with the psychotropic effects and the chemical load. As far as toxic effects are concerned, consumption of *A. muscaria* ... does not induce any critical organ damage. Thus, in the case of such a poisoning, the victims are not considered endangered, but intensive care is recommended ... *A. muscaria* is not yet the object of any drug-traffic, an aspect reflected in the lack of awareness amongst possible consumers or applicants for recreational purposes. Considering the effects so far reported, *A. muscaria* has a low psychotropic action, but still a toxic one.³⁴

3. *Claviceps Purpurea*

All mushrooms are fungi, but not all fungi are mushrooms. Other fungi include rusts, smuts, yeasts, molds, mildews, and the ergot *Claviceps*

31. Clark Heinrich quoted in Letcher, *Shroom*, 173.

32. Letcher, *Shroom*, 173.

33. Michelot and Melendez-Howell, “*Amanita muscaria*: Chemistry, Biology, Toxicology, and Ethnomycology,” 139–41.

34. Michelot and Melendez-Howell, “*Amanita muscaria*: Chemistry, Biology, Toxicology, and Ethnomycology,” 142.

purpurea. Ergot has been used medicinally for centuries, primarily to enhance labor and possibly as an abortion agent.³⁵

Geographic distribution: *Claviceps purpurea* may infect rye, but also wheat or barley. Cooler moist spring weather conditions may enhance growth wherever these grains are raised.



Claviceps purpurea attached to an ear of rye. (Getty images; used by permission.)

35. Ergot is likely the medication John C. Bennett referred to as he assured the women he seduced that if they should become pregnant, he could induce an abortion. On August 28, 1842, Mrs. Zeruiah Goddard affirmed, “Mrs. [Sarah] Pratt stated to me that Dr. Bennett told her, that he could cause abortion with perfect safety to the mother, at any stage of pregnancy.” (“Testimony of Mrs. Zeruiah Goddard,” the seventh affidavit published in *Affidavits and Certificates, Disproving the Statements and Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett’s Letters* [Nauvoo, IL, August 31, 1842.])

Preparation and Dosing: *Claviceps purpurea* (ergot) is very different from all mushroom psychedelics. “Ergot is a chemical factory containing everything from the simplest of compounds such as amines and aminoacids to the most complex polycyclic alkaloids. At the last count, there were more than 200 clearly identified chemical compounds in a simple extract of the fungus. ... [It is] a glorious chemical mess.”³⁶ Among the compounds that can be isolated from the ergot fungus are chemicals that range in their effects from causing convulsions or intense vasoconstriction to basic compounds used to synthesize LSD. Prior to the 1900s, the ability of researchers to segregate specific chemicals from the mix was greatly limited. “The chemical techniques of the nineteenth century were, to put it bluntly, simply not good enough to isolate the active substances reproducibly.”³⁷ What this means is that *Claviceps purpurea* was always ingested whole, which infused the recipient with a veritable cocktail of chemicals, some with psychotropic properties mixed with others that could kill.

Hallucinogenic Effects: Since the chemicals in *Claviceps purpurea*, when taken together, have little or no psychedelic potential, ergot has not been sought after as a hallucinogen. Hallucinations are mentioned among its effects, but they are generally not recalled after the event, only suspected by observers as they watch the behaviors of those affected.

Incidents of ergot poisoning were common in the Middle Ages, likely resulting from ergot-contaminated foods like rye bread. “St. Anthony’s fire,” a condition of intensely painful burning sensations in the extremities, arose from the vasoconstrictive properties of ergot chemicals when repeatedly consumed. Some historians believe the peculiar behaviors of women accused in the Salem witch hunt of 1692 were caused by ergot that had infested rye-containing foods.³⁸

One of the chemicals in ergot is a molecular building-block that can be synthesized into lysergic acid diethylamide or LSD. But when left within the mixture of chemicals inside the ergot, it does not induce psychedelic effects. In other words, consuming ergot will never simulate the ingestion of LSD.

36. Michael R. Lee, “The History of Ergot of Rye (*Claviceps purpurea*) I: From antiquity to 1900,” *The Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh* 39, no. 2 (June 2009): 183; sentence order reversed.

37. *Ibid.*, 184.

38. Linnda R Caporael, “Ergotism: The Satan Loose in Salem” *Science* 192, no. 4234 (April 1976): 21–26.

Side Effects and Dangers: Historically, with little or no psychedelic activity, ergot alone has little or no abuse potential, and its primary usages have been medicinal.³⁹ “The best-documented effects include high fever, angina, gangrene, convulsions, stupor, vivid hallucinations, and delirium. ... Ergotism often causes permanent disabilities, including blindness, amputation of fingers, hands, feet, legs or arms; it may also result in death.”⁴⁰

4. *Datura Stramonium*

Datura stramonium, more commonly called “Jimson weed,” is well known in folklore as a medicinal herb. It contains neuroactive compounds atropine, hyoscyamine, and scopolamine.



Datura stramonium plant and flower. (Photo by Joozwa. CC-BY-SA-3.0; used by permission.)

39. See Adam Neale, *Researches Respecting the Natural History, Chemical Analysis, and Medicinal Virtues of the Spur, or Ergot of Rye* (London: Horatio Phillips, 1828), 80; T. H. Wardleworth, *An Essay on the Chemical, Botanical, Physical, and Parturient Properties of Secale Cornutum [Ergot]*, (London: Simkin, Marshall, & Co., 1840), 26–27.

40. Alessandro Tarsia, “The Devil in the Sheaves: Ergotism in Southern Italy,” *Semiotica*, 195 (2013): 358.



***Datura stramonium* fruit with seeds. (Photo by Joozwa. CC-BY-SA-3.0; used by permission.)**

Geographic distribution: *Datura stramonium* is a cosmopolitan weed found throughout the warmer regions of the world. It may invade a wide variety of locales including roadsides, railways, crops, managed pastures, drainage ditches, woodland edges, gullies, and even dry riverbeds.

Preparation and Dosing: “The dried plant material should be finely ground to ensure an even distribution of the alkaloids. If an initially small dose is ineffective, a slightly higher dose can be taken a couple of weeks later, and so on until the desired effects are reached. Because of the high variability between and often within plants, this process should be repeated for each new batch even if it’s from the same plant.”⁴¹

41. “The Ultimate Guide to Datura,” The Third Wave (website), <https://thethirdwave.co/psychedelics/datura/>.

“Even small amounts of leaves or seeds can be fatal” if inappropriately prepared.⁴² All parts of the plant contain neurogenic substances, which can be eaten, smoked, or applied to the skin as an ointment. Onset of effects occurs within 30 minutes, with peak effects lasting 12–24 hours, but may persist for several days.

Hallucinogenic Effects: Unlike the psychedelics, *Datura* is better defined as a delirogen because of the close relationship between delirium and any hallucinations that occur. The effects of *Datura* have been described as “a living dream: the patient loses and regains consciousness and converses with imaginary or absent people. The effects can last for days. Very few other substances produce the same effects as tropane alkaloids, i.e. very vivid hallucinations and an inability to distinguish between real and unreal stimuli.”⁴³ A United States Department of Justice publication warns, “The high experienced by users often includes delirium, delusions, hallucinations, disorientation, and incoherent speech. Often users do not recall the experience.”⁴⁴

Side Effects and Dangers: Side effects from ingesting *Datura stramonium* include dry mouth, blurred vision, photophobia, and may be followed by hyperthermia, confusion, agitation, hallucination, and aggressive behavior. In severe toxicity, it can cause “seizures, coma, and even death.”⁴⁵ An online warning explains, “The *Datura* plant is not to be taken lightly. It is absolutely essential to have a sober sitter present when experimenting with *Datura* — not only to keep you safe from accidental injuries but also to monitor your body’s response to the plant.”⁴⁶

While serving as a medical intern in a Spokane, Washington, emergency department in 1986, I was assigned a patient with Jimson weed toxicity. My questions to him brought nonsensical answers. It was obvious he was experiencing repeated hallucinations, talking to imaginary people, smoking imaginary cigarettes, trying to leave a room through an imaginary door. I reported my findings to the attending physician who seemed unsurprised and unconcerned; he had treated such pathologies before. The patient was admitted to the floor with supervision. I visited him the next day and he was lucid and responding

42. Marlene Julian, “*Datura Stramonium* L. — Narcotic, Anodyne or Poison?” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 4, no.2 (January 2014): 181.

43. *Ibid.*, 182.

44. National Drug Intelligence Center, *Jimsonweed* (*Datura stramonium*) (Washington: U.S. Department of Justice, September 1998), 1.

45. *Ibid.*, iii.

46. “The Ultimate Guide to *Datura*.”

appropriately. I asked if he could recall any of his activities as I recounted them to him; he remembered nothing.

As a recreational drug, *Datura* is less popular. “Heightened awareness of the ‘bad high’ and potentially deadly consequences of jimsonweed use is key to curbing the appeal of this plant.”⁴⁷ “Most people who post information on various other Internet sites about personal experiences with the plant do not recommend its use, because it is such a ‘bad trip.’”⁴⁸

5. *Hyoscyamus Niger*

Hyoscyamus niger is more commonly called black henbane, or “hen killer,” possibly due to that fact that when hens eat it, they become paralyzed and die.⁴⁹ It possesses the same neuroactive compounds as *Datura stramonium*: atropine, hyoscyamine, and scopolamine.



Hyoscyamus niger drawing. (Public domain.)

47. National Drug Intelligence Center, iii.

48. Ibid., 2.

49. Anahita Alizadeh, et al., “Black Henbane and Its Toxicity - a Descriptive Review,” *Avicenna journal of phytomedicine* 4, no. 5 (2014): 298.



Hyoscyamus niger. (Getty images; used by permission.)

Geographic distribution: Originally native to Europe, *Hyoscyamus niger* is found throughout New England and the Northeast, the Midwest, and much of the West.

Preparation and Dosing: Possessing little abuse potential, “the chopped, dried herbage can be used as an ingredient in incense and smoking blends, for brewing beer, to spice wine, and as a tea.”⁵⁰ Dosages must be assessed carefully no matter what type of preparation is being considered.

Hallucinogenic Effects: *Hyoscyamus niger* is well known for its psychoactive properties, but it is not classed with the psychedelics. Visual hallucinations, including sensations of floating or flying, are reported, but results from ingestion are usually quite disagreeable. A 34-year-old woman drank *Hyoscyamus niger* tincture:

She suffered a burning sensation in her limbs that followed by losing their power through ten minutes after ingestion.

50. Christian Rätsch, *The Encyclopedia of Psychoactive Plants: Ethnopharmacology and its Applications* (Rochester, Vermont: Park Street Press, 2005), 692.

She also presented giddiness and intense thirst. The swollen purple rash especially on her face and neck also presented. She was numbed and unable to speak with a swollen tongue and dry mouth. Her pupils were dilated and at 7th hour after ingestion, her vision was limited and limb paresis was observed. After six days, she had been able to move her limbs although she lost her short-term memory and she could not remember what had happened.⁵¹

Henbane is best classed as a delirogen rather than hallucinogen, nor does it consistently produce positive memorable experiences in those who ingest it.

Side Effects and Dangers: Clinical manifestations of acute *Hyoscyamus niger* poisoning include a long list of untoward effects: “Mydriasis, tachycardia, arrhythmia, agitation, convulsion and coma, dry mouth, thirst, slurred speech, difficulty speaking, dysphagia, warm flushed skin, pyrexia, nausea, vomiting, headache, blurred vision and photophobia, urinary retention, distension of the bladder, drowsiness, hyper reflexia, auditory, visual or tactile hallucinations, confusion, disorientation, delirium, aggressiveness, and combative behavior.”⁵² One researcher noted that, historically, “Henbane’s toxic properties became a mainstay for professional poisoners.”⁵³

6. *Lophophora Williamsii*

Lophophora williamsii, better known as peyote, contains the psychedelic drug mescaline, used for centuries in Native American religious ceremonies. According to Comanche Chief Quanah Parker, because of those effects, “[t]he white man goes into his church house and talks about Jesus but the Indian goes into his tipi and talks to Jesus.”⁵⁴

51. Alizadeh, et al., “Black Henbane and Its Toxicity - a Descriptive Review,” 303.

52. Ibid., 297.

53. Larry W. Mitich, “Black Henbane,” *Weed Technology* 6, no. 2 (April-June 1992): 490.

54. William T. Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 57.



Lophophora williamsii (peyote) cacti. (Getty images; used by permission.)

Geographic distribution: *L. williamsii* is primarily found in Mexico with just 20 percent of its distribution in southern Texas. It does not naturally grow in any other state in the United States (see map below).⁵⁵

Preparation and Dosing: Peyote grows as a small cactus, typically one to two inches in diameter, about the size of a large button. It is ingested according to the number of buttons, which is defined as the head of the cactus cut off above the root. “The buttons can be either eaten fresh or dried and then chopped or powdered for later use. The fresh or dried buttons can be boiled or decocted in water. ... Dosages vary

55. James S. Slotkin, “Peyotism, 1527–1891,” *American Anthropologist* 57, no. 2 (1955): 207; Martin Terry, et al., “Limitations to Natural Production of *Lophophora Williamsii* (Cactaceae) I. Regrowth And Survivorship Two Years Post Harvest in a South Texas Population,” *Journal of the Botanical Research Institute of Texas* 5, no. 2 (December 7, 2011): 665.

considerably, both between individuals and in rituals. Dosages ranging from four to thirty buttons may be ingested.”⁵⁶ The psychedelic effects usually begin within one to two hours after ingestion, lasting from six to nine hours.



Harvested *Lophophora williamsii* cacti called “peyote buttons.”
(Photo by Gary Parker; used by permission.)

Hallucinogenic Effects: Peyote and mescaline predictably create visual hallucinations (that may be experienced with eyes open or closed), altered and dream-like states of consciousness, euphoria and laughter,

56. Rätsch, *The Encyclopedia of Psychoactive Plants*, 825.

a perceived slowing of time, and a mixing of the senses where sound is seen and colors are heard. The following three accounts illustrate some of these qualities. After consuming seven peyote cactus buttons, one subject related:

He closed his eyes and was enveloped by visions which he described to the doctors as they unfolded: “a host of little tubes of shining light” down which red and green balls were rolling, then shaping themselves into letters, then revolving rapidly, the spaces between them filling with shifting seas of green. The patterns evolved “through rich arabesques, Syrian carpet patterns, and plain geometric figures, and with each form came a new flash of color.”

From this point, however, his experience took a disagreeable turn. He had an intermittent, highly discomfiting feeling of “double personality — to be outside of himself looking at himself.” He became acutely aware of his “mental inferiority” towards the doctors surrounding him, and evinced “a feeling of great distrust and resentment.” His supervisors recorded that he “firmly believed that we were secretly laughing at his condition. He believed that we intended to kill him, and for this reason he refused to take the eighth button.” In the intervals between these “paroxysms” his hostile feelings disappeared entirely and he apologized for his outbursts. In a later interview he maintained that the drug had made him “perfectly ‘insane,’” and he “would have attempted violence had it not seemed to him too much trouble in his lazy and depressed condition.”⁵⁷

A second report:

The first time one puts the peyote into one’s mouth, one feels it going down into the stomach. It feels very cold, like ice. And the inside of one’s mouth becomes dry, very dry. And then it becomes wet, very wet. One has much saliva then. And then, a while later one feels as if one were fainting. The body begins to feel weak. It begins to feel faint. And one begins to yawn, to feel very tired. And after a while one feels very light. The whole body begins to feel light, without sleep, without anything.

57. Mike Jay, *Mescaline: A Global History of the First Psychedelic* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 80–81.

And then, when one takes enough of this, one looks upward and what does one see? One sees darkness. Only darkness. It is very dark, very black. And one feels drunk with the peyote. And when one looks up again it is total darkness except for a little bit of light, a tiny bit of light, brilliant yellow. It comes there, a brilliant yellow. And one looks into the fire. One sits there, looking into the fire which is Tatewarl [the god of fire in Huichol folklore]. One sees the fire in colors, very many colors, five colors, different colors. The flames divide — it is all brilliant, very brilliant and very beautiful. The beauty is very great, very great. It is a beauty such as one never sees without the peyote. The flames come up, they shoot up, and each flame divides into those colors and each color is multicolored — blue, green, yellow, all those colors. The yellow appears on the tip of the flames as the flame shoots upward. And on the tips you can see little sparks in many colors coming out. And the smoke which rises from the fire, it also looks more and more yellow, more and more brilliant.

Then one sees the fire, very bright, one sees the offerings there, many arrows with feathers and they are full of color, shimmering, shimmering. That is what one sees.⁵⁸

Another related:

As darkness fell, honeycombs of green and violet threaded across my vision. The cactus still sat queasily in my stomach. ... I walked over to the wall of the roof terrace, chest-high and surmounted with pots of cactus cuttings. ... The panorama was mesmerising, and as I watched it took on the granular, hypnotic quality of a mescaline vision. The crowd [below] seemed composed entirely of young couples, gazing off the bridge or strolling arm in arm; the bridges and railings became an Escher puzzle in which all were simultaneously ascending and descending. The streetlights against the tropical night made the scene into a rich chiaroscuro, balanced on the cusp between figurative and abstract. ...

Until this vision absorbed me, I had been entirely immersed in the strange alterations in my sensorium. Now I was nowhere

58. Barbara Myerhoff, *Peyote Hunt: The Sacred Journey of the Huichol Indians* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1974), 219.

in the scene, no more conscious of myself than when caught up in a movie. The scene in front of me might have been endless, or it might have been a short repeating loop; I had, in another familiar refrain of mescaline's subjects, stepped outside of time.⁵⁹

While mescaline visions are classified as psychedelic, they are quite different from those caused by psilocybin.

Side Effects and Dangers: Peyote side effects include nausea, vomiting, anxiety, tachycardia (increased heart rate), dizziness, weakness, sweating, tremors, and amnesia. More severe symptoms like seizures, psychosis, panic, and paranoia are also reported.



Map showing the habitat and distribution of the Sonoran Desert toad and peyote cacti.⁶⁰

7. *Incilius Alvarius* (*Bufo Alvarius*)

Perhaps the most interesting of these seven entheogens is derived from *Incilius alvarius*, or the *Bufo alvarius* species of toad, also referred to

59. Jay, *Mescaline*, 28–29.

60. Modified from James S. Slotkin, "Peyotism, 1527–1891," *American Anthropologist* 57, no. 2 (1955): 207; Terry et al., "Limitations to Natural Production of *Lophophora Williamsii* (Cactaceae) I. Regrowth And Survivorship Two Years Post Harvest in a South Texas Population," 665.

as the Sonoran Desert toad and Colorado River toad. The entheogen, sometimes called “toad venom,” is chemically 5-MeO-DMT, and is found in the parotid and coxal glands, as well within its skin.⁶¹ There are rumors of people getting high simply from “toad licking,” but actual cases are difficult to verify and oral consumption (verses smoking dried secretions) of the psychedelic chemical is far less effective.⁶²



Incilius alvarius (Bufo alvarius) or Sonoran Desert toad. The parotid glands are bulging just posterior to the eye and ear orifice. (Getty images; used by permission.)

Geographic distribution: “5-MeO-DMT is present in only one of the more than 200 types of *Bufo* toads,” the *Bufo alvarius*.⁶³ “It is a semi-aquatic amphibian found only in the Sonoran Desert, an area of approximately 120,000 square miles that reaches from southeastern California across the southern half of Arizona and south approximately 400 miles into

61. V. Erspamer, “5-Methoxy- and 5-hydroxyindoles in the Skin of *Bufo Alvarius*,” *Biochemical Pharmacology* 16 (1967): 1149–64.

62. See discussion in T. Lyttle et al., “*Bufo* toads and bufotenine: Fact and fiction surrounding an alleged psychedelic” *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 28, no. 3 (September 1996): 267–79.

63. *Ibid.*, 274.

Mexico. It is indigenous to southern Arizona and Northwestern Mexico and is not found in New England or the Midwest of the United States.”⁶⁴

Preparation and Dosing: The parotid glands are located on the back of the toad, medial to the eyes. They are *milked* by squeezing them and preserving the secretions, usually on a glass plate, where they are allowed to dry. One “milking session” can yield sufficient 5-MeO-DMT to allow several psychoactive doses. The process does not harm the toad, which can then be released. Alternatively, the skin can be dried and prepared for smoking, but that requires sacrificing the toad. “A single inhalation of vaporized dried toad secretion produces a psychedelic experience within 15 seconds and may last up to 20–40 minutes.”⁶⁵

Hallucinogenic Effects: “A single dose of vapor from dried toad secretion containing 5-MeO-DMT can bring about changes in affect and cognition that last for a prolonged period of time.”⁶⁶ One user related her experience: “Your ego structure is dissolving, which allows your small consciousness to reunite with the big consciousness. ... It doesn’t have to do with form and content. ... 5-MeO-DMT is more about going into this tunnel of iridescent light and it is incredibly gorgeous and I would consider it much more of a sematic, meaning a body-based and heart experience, than it is a cognitive experience. ... What happened to me is I really very quickly was able to surrender to the dissolving of my ego and then was just enveloped by this sense of infinite love and compassion.”⁶⁷

Side Effects and Dangers: 5-MeO-DMT is an amino acid derivative that occurs naturally in the body, so it does not carry the toxicities found with other entheogens. However, mistakenly consuming the secretions of another species of *Bufo* toad could be dangerous. “There are two main areas of the [human] body that *Bufo* toad [not *Bufo alvaria*] venom attacks as it poisons: the heart and blood vessels, and the peripheral vascular and nervous systems.”⁶⁸ One user milked the venom of the *Bufo marinus* toad in order “to experience hallucinogenic effects from the

64. Andrew T. Weil and Wade Davis, “*Bufo alvarius*: a Potent Hallucinogen of Animal Origin,” *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 41 (1994): 4.

65. M. V. Uthaug et al, “A single inhalation of vapor from dried toad secretion containing 5-methoxy-N,N-dimethyltryptamine (5-MeO-DMT) in a naturalistic setting is related to sustained enhancement of satisfaction with life, mindfulness-related capacities, and a decrement of psychopathological symptoms,” *Psychopharmacology* 236 (April 2019): 2654.

66. *Ibid.*, 2662.

67. Ashley Booth, “How to Build a Psychedelic Community,” The Third Wave Podcast, 17:40, <https://thethirdwave.co/podcast/episode-17-ashley-booth/>

68. Lyttle et al., “*Bufo* toads and bufotenine,” 277.

venom,” and it “resulted in seizures. He had taken the venom orally by touching the glands and then licking his fingers. It is likely that ingesting a straight maceration of the parotid glands would have caused death by cardiac failure or respiratory arrest.”⁶⁹

Weaknesses of the Entheogen Hypothesis

This brief review of the seven entheogens discussed in EOMWH demonstrates some of the challenges Joseph Smith would have faced using them to generate psychedelic experiences among his followers. Despite the assertions and suggestions outlined by the authors, several weaknesses are identified:

- Inaccurate chemical cause-and-effect claims.
- Inaccurate historical cause-and-effect claims.
- Joseph Smith’s “peyote stone”?
- Joseph Smith’s teachings about herbs and intoxication.
- Did visionary experiences largely cease at Joseph Smith’s death?

Latter-day Saints will also wonder if the God that is described in their doctrines and scriptures would ever work through chemicals like exogenous entheogens.

Inaccurate Chemical Cause-and-Effect Claims

A primary problem throughout EOMWH involves assumptions about chemical causes-and-effects. EOMWH explains the visionary experiences in the lives of early Church leaders with wide waves of the hand towards entheogens without attempting to show that, in other settings, those entheogens have generated similar experiences for users.

Early Latter-day Saint Visionary Experiences

In a recent book chapter, Alexander L. Baugh sought to “compile and analyze all of the known visions, visitations, or visual revelations experienced by the Prophet Joseph Smith.”⁷⁰ In all, Baugh identifies seventy-six visionary occurrences of various sorts:

Visions can take various forms. Personal visitations or appearances of deity, angels, or even Satan and his emissaries

69. Weil and Davis, “*Bufo alvarius*,” 3.

70. Alexander L. Baugh, “Seventy-six Accounts of Joseph Smith’s Visionary Experiences,” in *Opening the Heavens*, 282.

certainly come under the heading of visions. Visions can also include seeing vivid images where the veil is lifted from an individual's mind in order to see and comprehend the things of God. Certain dreams could be considered visions, particularly when heavenly or spiritual messages are conveyed. Finally, certain revelations received through the Urim and Thummim mediums such as the Nephite interpreters and the seer stone may also be classified, in the ancient sense, as visions.⁷¹

Other early Church members left similar visionary reports. Milton Backman summarized some of the accounts from the dedication of the Kirtland Temple:

During a fifteen-week period, extending from January 21 to May 1, 1836, probably more Latter-day Saints beheld visions and witnessed other unusual spiritual manifestations than during any other era in the history of the Church. There were reports of Saints' beholding heavenly beings at ten different meetings held during that time. At eight of these meetings, many reported seeing angels, and at five of the services, individuals testified that Jesus, the Savior, appeared. While the Saints were thus communing with heavenly hosts, many prophesied, some spoke in tongues, and others received the gift of interpretation of tongues.⁷²

Further analysis of early Latter-day Saint supernatural manifestations is beyond the scope of this article, but those experiences were described as faith-sustaining, usually communicating specific understanding. None were limited to a series of unfocused sensations or hallucinations that failed to convey religious themes.

Reported Entheogenic Psychedelic Experiences

Each of the seven sections above includes a subheading called "hallucinogenic effects" with anecdotal accounts from users that describe a wide variety of psychedelic experiences. Participants were unable to *dial up* a specific encounter; they were always at the mercy of multiple variables, like the type of entheogenic chemicals consumed, the form of the preparations, the ingestion techniques, the dosages, the individual's physiology, and the surroundings. In 1966, Pahnke and Richards

71. Ibid., 271.

72. Milton V. Backman, Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 285.

compiled “examples of the psychological phenomena being reported” by people taking psychedelic chemical substances, specifically psilocybin (mushrooms), mescaline (peyote) and LSD. In a lengthy summary, they identified nine typical sensations experienced by users:

1. *Unity*. Experience of an undifferentiated unity, we suggest, is the hallmark of mystical consciousness.
2. *Objectivity and reality*. Insightful knowledge or illumination about being or existence in general that is felt at an intuitive, nonrational level and gained by direct experience, and the authoritativeness or the certainty for the experiencer that such knowledge is truly or ultimately real.
3. *Transcendence of space and time*. He suddenly feels as though he is outside of time, in eternity or infinity, beyond both past and future.
4. *Sense of sacredness*. Sacredness is here defined as a nonrational, intuitive, hushed, palpitant response in the presence of inspiring realities
5. *Deeply felt positive mood*. This category focuses upon the feelings of joy, love, blessedness, and peace inherent in mystical consciousness.
6. *Paradoxicality*. This category reflects the manner in which significant aspects of mystical consciousness are felt by the experiencer to be true in spite of the fact that they violate the laws of Aristotelian logic.
7. *Alleged ineffability*. When a subject attempts to communicate mystical consciousness verbally to another person, he usually claims that the available linguistic symbols — if not the structure of language itself — are inadequate to contain or even accurately reflect such experience.
8. *Transiency*. This category refers to the temporary duration of mystical consciousness in contrast to the relative permanence of the level of usual experience.
9. *Positive changes in attitude and/or behavior*. Changes in attitudes (1) toward themselves, (2) toward others, (3) toward life, and (4) toward mystical consciousness itself.⁷³

73. Walter N. Pahnke and William A. Richards, “Implications of LSD and Experimental Mysticism,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 5, no. 3 (July 1966): 176–83.

When these characteristics and other details reported in the psychedelic “trips” are compared to early Latter-day Saint visionaries’ descriptions, stark contrasts are apparent. Overall, the hallucinations from entheogens seem qualitatively different in significant ways. It appears that more dissimilarities than parallels are identified, which EOMWH fails to address.

Inaccurate Historical Cause-and-Effect Claims

EOMWH mentions many chronological occurrences in the life of Joseph Smith including his family’s involvement with magic (216, 221), Joseph Smith’s childhood operation (230), the Indian mission (224), the Egyptian papyri (243), freemasonry (221), and even polygamy (241). Despite so many references, another important weakness in EOMWH is the lack of correlation between the reported visionary experiences and the identification of historical details showing an association with the ingestion of entheogens.

Spiked Sacrament Wine and Infested Bread?

The most popular connection, mentioned dozens of times in EOMWH, is “sacrament” bread or wine contaminated with a hallucinogenic substance. “Symptomology associated with Mormon visionary experience likely results in charges of medicating or doctoring the wine” (238). “Sacramental wine was not the only possible carrier for an entheogen enhancing early Mormon sacramental experience. We have noted the entheogenic potential of ergo infected rye, possibly mixed with the sacramental bread” (239).

With such claims, EOMWH might have sought to identify historical references to the administration of the sacrament and chronologically link them to supernatural experiences reported by early Church members. Showing a sequential connection within the historical record would have strengthened the overall thesis, but no such data is provided, possibly because it does not exist.

The six volumes of *History of the Church* covering Joseph Smith’s lifetime refer to the administration of the sacrament thirty-three times.⁷⁴ Only three of those include a subsequent reference to spiritual phenomena.

74. See Joseph Smith et al. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. 7 vols. edited by B. H. Roberts, ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1960), 1: 108, 109, 115; 2: 54, 65, 69, 204, 223, 299, 304, 312, 330, 345, 363, 376, 395, 430; 3: 112, 116, 123, 129, 131; 4: 5, 6, 104, 4: 135, 139, 238, 440; 5: 419, 435; and 6: 153, 401.

[March 30, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple.] “We partook of the bread and wine. The Holy Spirit rested down upon us, and we continued in the Lord’s House all night, prophesying and giving glory to God.”⁷⁵

[July 22, 1838, Rush Creek, Ohio.] “Attended to offering our sacraments to the Most High, breaking bread for the first time on our journey. ... At our meeting in the afternoon the Lord blessed us by the outpouring of His Spirit, our hearts were comforted and most of the camp felt thankful for the blessings conferred upon us by our heavenly Father.”⁷⁶

[August 26, 1838, near Dayton, Ohio] “As usual a public meeting was held in the forenoon and a sacrament meeting in the afternoon. The Spirit of the Lord was poured out on the assembly and some were convinced of the truth of what was declared unto them.”⁷⁷

Likewise, Joseph Smith journals contain thirteen references to the sacrament, and with the exception of the Kirtland Temple dedication in March-April of 1836, no remarkable visionary experiences are reported in conjunction with partaking of the Lord’s Supper.⁷⁸ The

75. *Ibid.*, 2: 430.

76. *Ibid.*, 3: 112.

77. *Ibid.*, 3: 131.

78. See Joseph Smith’s journals for 1835: Nov. 1, 8, 15; Dec. 13, 27. 1836: Jan. 10; Feb. 14; Mar. 29, 30. 1839: Jul 28; Aug 4, 11. 1843: Dec. 31. “Journal, 1832–1834,” The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1832-1834/1>; “Journal, 1835–1836,” The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/1>; “Journal, March–September 1838,” p. 15, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-march-september-1838/1>; “Journal, September–October 1838,” p. [3], The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-september-october-1838/1>; “Journal, 1839,” The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1839/1>; “Journal, December 1841–December 1842,” The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1841-december-1842/1>; “Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 1, 21 December 1842–10 March 1843,” The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-1-21-december-1842-10-march-1843/1>; “Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 2, 10 March 1843–14 July 1843,” The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-2-10-march-1843-14-july-1843/1>; “Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 3, 15 July 1843–29 February 1844,”

timelines at the temple where sacrament was sometimes provided do not show a clear correlation to subsequent visionary experiences.⁷⁹ No clear cause-and-effect ordering of bread/wine consumption to ensuing visionary or psychedelic phenomena is detectable in the available documents.

One of Joseph Smith's most publicized visions occurred with Sidney Rigdon where both men reported a similar manifestation. Now section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, it was received on Thursday, February 16, 1832. EOMWH theorizes, "As was the customary order of the priesthood at that time, Smith and Rigdon likely partook of the sacrament at the beginning of this meeting. After this vision, Sidney appeared pale and exhausted" (235). The problem is that none of the available accounts describe a sacrament meeting or the administration of the sacrament. This added detail is entirely speculative. Joseph and Sidney were translating the Bible and other men were present in the room as the vision was recounted, but it was not a formal meeting.⁸⁰ Even if the sacrament had been given, EOMWH fails to explain how two drugged men might receive the same highly detailed hallucination.

Undeniable Skepticism

The historical record shows that the early Latter-day Saints were just as skeptical as we are today. If Joseph Smith were to openly or stealthily use entheogens, it is highly probable that those affected would have figured out what was going on. Mushrooms and peyote cacti are usually ingested over several minutes, and 5-MeO-DMT must be smoked to be effective.

Before ingesting hallucinogenic substances proper physical and mental preparation is usually needed to experience a positive psychedelic event. Harvard psychiatrist Walter N. Pahnke and therapist William A. Richards stress, "When subjects were given a psychedelic drug without knowing what to expect or how to respond, often being left alone in a dark room or threatened by unfamiliar researchers demanding cooperation in psychological testing, it is easy to understand why many

The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-3-15-july-1843-29-february-1844/1>; "Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 4, 1 March–22 June 1844," The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-4-1-march-22-june-1844/1>.

79. See Steven C. Harper, "The Restoration of Temple Keys and Powers," in *Opening the Heavens*, 351–93.

80. Philo Dibble in "Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith," *Juvenile Instructor* 27, no. 10 (May 15, 1892): 303–304.

experiences quickly became psychotic. If nonpsychotic experiences are desired, subjects must be prepared, must feel secure in a friendly environment, and above all must be willing and able to trust reality greater than themselves.”⁸¹

EOMWH discusses a few events and presents a sufficient number of historical facts to imply a connection to hallucinogens (238–42), but the idiom “the devil is in the details” applies. The simplistic descriptions of the religious behaviors outlined in EOMWH do not explain what would have been a very complex process if those activities were caused by entheogens. While a few accusations of intoxication can be found from critics (223, 238, 241), no historical report from friend or foe includes details that trace the intoxication to any chemical or drug previously consumed, except perhaps ethanol. More importantly, the sensations felt at onset and the durations of potentially many hours, not to mention the variable psychotropic influences the visionaries would have experienced (including bad trips), hardly correlate to the faith-promoting manifestations reported in multiple accounts from believers.

Nonspecific Information Recruited to Support Focused Claims

The methodology employed throughout EOMWH presents nonspecific information to support focused claims. For example, the article references the second edition of D. Michael Quinn’s *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* twenty-two times. Having read and reviewed Quinn’s book multiple times, I did not recall any discussions that might directly or indirectly corroborate the use of entheogens by early Church members. Ultimately, I emailed the article to Dr. Quinn and asked whether he “had theorized any such connection.” In response, he wrote, “I have NEVER written nor spoken (even privately) in favor of their speculation. You may quote me.”⁸² Quinn, one of the foremost experts on Joseph Smith, folk magic, and early Latter-day Saint history, finds no specific support for EOMWH theories.

Joseph Smith’s “Peyote Stone?”

EOMWH alleges that Joseph Smith also used peyote: “We suggest that Joseph Smith may have negotiated with Native Americans for the delivery of peyote to Nauvoo for the Nauvoo temple endowment”

81. Pahnke and Richards, “Implications of LSD and Experimental Mysticism,” 188.

82. D. Michael Quinn to the author, April 6, 2020; emphasis in original. Used by permission.

(228). “Joseph Smith may have attempted to plant a Mormon–Indian colony in the heart of peyote country, where his colony could harvest thousands of peyote buttons, just what the thousands of Nauvoo saints would need if peyote was the entheogen used in the completed Nauvoo temple” (243–44). To complete this scheme, Joseph apparently needed an accomplice: “When Joseph Smith sent Lyman Wight to Texas to establish Mormon colonies, he would have been in contact with both the source of peyote and Native Americans expert in its use” (228), and “Wight could easily carry 20,000 peyote buttons weighing 60 pounds to Joseph Smith in Nauvoo” (247).

Regarding Lyman Wight’s possible involvement with peyote, I emailed Melvin C. Johnson, the author of *Polygamy on the Pedernales: Lyman Wight’s Mormon Villages in Antebellum Texas, 1845 to 1858*, a book that is referenced several times in the article (243, 247). To my question of whether his research had uncovered any evidence or anecdotal support for Wight’s involvement with peyote, Johnson replied, “As far as Lyman Wight and his confederates, not a breath of implication exists for any such connection of that group of far travelers and any connection to psychedelics.”⁸³ In summary, detailed research into Lyman Wight’s Texas travels fails to support EOMWH’s speculations regarding peyote use.

Perhaps more intriguing is the unveiling of an artifact allegedly owned by Joseph, which the authors describe as “Joseph Smith’s peyote stone.” EOMWH draws this conclusion by accepting four assumptions:

1. The stone “was handtooled by a Native American familiar with peyote” (246).
2. Joseph Smith acquired it from travelers who transported it to Nauvoo from peyote country in Texas.
3. At Joseph’s demise, the stone passed to Emma Smith, then to Lewis C. Bidamon (1806–1891), whom she married in 1847. Lewis then passed it to his son Charles Bidamon (1864–1944), who delivered it to a half-sister, Mary E. Abercrombie (1859–1942), who passed it to a member of her family (Sarah Luce?), who then sold it to Latter-day Saint collector Wilford Wood in 1943.⁸⁴ Throughout these transfers the provenance back to Joseph Smith was not contrived, but accurately retained within the family tradition.

83. Melvin Johnson, email to the author April 11, 2020; used by permission.

84. D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 246–47.

4. The stone's tooled design resembles a peyote plant: "The stone is smooth in texture with a hole through the center surrounded by eight smaller indentations of alternating sizes where the central flower and tufts of the peyote button have been cored out. It is comparable to [an] eight-lobed peyote button. ... The coin-like ridged circular edge of Smith's stone not seen on the peyote button signifies the visionary nature of peyote."(244–45).



Stone identified in EOMWH as "Joseph Smith's peyote stone."

Accepting all four of these assumptions with the veracity found in EOMWH seems unjustified.⁸⁵ The article refers to "peyote" 141 times and "Joseph Smith's peyote stone" five times without providing a single historical reference that verifies an actual connection to any Church member, including Joseph. Perhaps the greatest leap of logic is seeing a peyote cactus in the stone's design. Such cacti may have from 5 to 13

85. Quinn uses conditional language when tying the stone described in EOMWH as "Joseph Smith's peyote stone" to Joseph saying that one of the two stones found in Nauvoo "was *probably* used to manufacture" it and that the stone is only "attributed to Smith" rather than solidly documented to be his. (Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 246–47; italics added.)

ribs (not strictly eight), and the edges of the plant do not resemble the purposefully sculpted edges of the stone.

Joseph Smith's Teachings About Herbs and Intoxication

Joseph Smith's belief in the usefulness of herbs to treat illnesses is well documented.⁸⁶ EOMWH advocates he also promoted their use as entheogens and that he and other observers would have identified their effects as being spiritual, rather than intoxicating.

The Word of Wisdom

Three of Joseph Smith's revelations mention the use of herbs:

And whosoever among you are sick, and have not faith to be healed, but believe, shall be nourished with all tenderness, with herbs and mild food, and that not by the hand of an enemy. (D&C 42:43)

Yea, and the herb, and the good things which come of the earth, whether for food or for raiment, or for houses, or for barns, or for orchards, or for gardens, or for vineyards; Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart. (D&C 59:17–18)

And again, verily I say unto you, all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man — Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving. (D&C 89:10–11)

The last scripture (D&C 89:10–11) is an excerpt from a longer revelation discussing health issues, called the “Word of Wisdom.” It is

86. See Andrew F. Ehat, and Lyndon W. Cook, eds. *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 76; Joseph Smith's journal entries for October 7, 1835 (“Journal, 1835–1836,” p. 5, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/6>); December 14, 1835 (“Journal, 1835–1836,” p. 67, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/68>) and December 15, 1843 (“Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 3, 15 July 1843–29 February 1844,” p. [198], The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-3-15-july-1843-29-february-1844/204>).

referenced throughout EOMWH (214, 215, 231, 249, 251), each time as evidence that Joseph Smith taught that entheogens were acceptable.

Ironically, nowhere in EOMWH is an earlier verse (D&C 89:7) mentioned: “And, again, strong drinks are not for the belly.” What is a “strong drink”? The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “strong drink” as “intoxicating liquor, alcoholic liquors generally.” It further defines *strong* medicine, food or drink as being “powerful in operative effect.”⁸⁷ Since chronic alcohol consumption can produce hallucinations including auditory illusions, it is similar to entheogens in this regard.⁸⁸

Consistent Condemnation of Intoxication and Drunkenness

Throughout his life, Joseph Smith consistently condemned intoxication and drunkenness. On March 11, 1836, he prayed, “O my God how long will this monster intemperance find its victims on the earth?”⁸⁹ In a letter dated December 16, 1838, he cautioned, “Brethren from henceforth let truth and righteousness prevail and abound in you, and in all things be temperate, abstain from drunkenness.”⁹⁰ Three years later Joseph wrote an editorial published in the Church’s newspaper, *Times and Seasons*, saying, “Thank God, that the intoxicating beverage, that bane of humanity in these last days, that [blank space] what shall we call it? devil? is becoming a stranger in Nauvoo.”⁹¹

In the early nineteenth century, *intemperance* meant “immoderate indulgence in intoxicating drink; addiction to the use of intoxicants.”⁹² Likewise, *drunkenness* was defined as “intoxication of the mind or spirit” and *intoxication* as “the action of rendering stupid, insensible, or disordered in intellect, with a drug or alcoholic liquor.”⁹³ Whether individuals exposed to psychedelics would outwardly appear intoxicated (and worthy of criticism), or simply under the influence of God’s Spirit

87. *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “Strong Drink” (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1971), 2:3102–103.

88. Robert S. Porter, ed. *The Merck Manual*, 19th ed. (Whitehouse Station, NJ: Merck Sharp & Dohme, 2011), 1684.

89. Joseph Smith, “Journal, 1835–1836,” The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/170>.

90. Joseph Smith, “Communications” [Liberty Jail, Missouri, Dec. 16, 1838], *Times and Seasons* 1, no. 6 (April 1840): 86

91. Joseph Smith, ed. “Celebration of the Anniversary of the Church . . .” *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 12 (April 15, 1841): 377.

92. *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “Intemperance,” 1:456.

93. *Ibid.*, s.v. “Drunkenness,” 1:810, 1472.

(and divinely blessed) is an old question. The day of Pentecost when the Spirit induced proselytes to “speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God” brought accusations that “these men are full of new wine” (Acts 2:11, 13). EOMWH documents similar claims against the Latter-day Saints (214, 238).

As discussed above, if early adherents ingested mushrooms or other entheogens as described in EOMWH, their outward behaviors would probably have generated questions of whether the Spirit or intoxication were responsible. “The bemushroomed are famously prone to hysterical fits of the giggles,” explains Andy Letcher. “For ordinary and mundane aspects of life are seen in a new, childlike and very often comic light. One habitué told me how she was once overcome with gales of laughter when the moles and freckles on her arm got up and danced away ... intoxicated people behaved strangely and ridiculously (although it was claimed that this was all at the behest of the mushroom spirits whose orders could not be gainsaid). The bemushroomed might leap about, blather uncontrollably, or even stand stock still pretending to be, well, a mushroom.”⁹⁴

A repeated weakness of EOMWH describes entheogens as causing unique sensations that participants consistently attributed to God. Early members are portrayed as incapable of detecting a chronological association between mind-altering phenomena and the previous partaking of plants or secretions, if even packaged as sacramental wine or bread. The possibility that Joseph Smith and other devotees would have considered entheogen-induced consequences as intoxication or drunkenness is not addressed in EOMWH.

Visionary Experiences Ceased at Joseph Smith’s Death?

One of the supportive evidences presented in EOMWH is that “[v]isionary experiences of the magnitude experienced during Joseph Smith’s life ceased at his death” (214). If Joseph actively implemented entheogens that subsequent leaders, like Brigham Young, did not employ, then the visionary experiences flowing from those chemicals would almost instantly diminish at Joseph’s death.

The historical record supports that the level of Joseph Smith’s personal visions, revelations, translations, and other supernatural phenomena exceeded that of his successors. Joseph’s unique responsibility in these latter-days had been prophesied: “A choice seer will I raise up out of the

94. Letcher, *Shroom*, 18, 134.

fruit of thy loins; and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins. And unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren, which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers” (2 Nephi 3:7). As this “choice seer,” Joseph Smith Jr. was tasked with responsibilities no other Church president ever expected. He received the keys necessary to “restore all things” (D&C 132:45; see also 40). Once the “keys of the kingdom of God” had been successfully “committed unto man on the earth” (D&C 65:2), subsequent prophets were called to fill a different role, but spiritual gifts continued. Brigham Young, for example, manifested many spiritual blessings. D. Michael Quinn explained:

One of the recurring themes in non-Mormon biographies of President Brigham Young is the idea that he was not a very “spiritual” man. Such interpretations, however, not only misrepresent his character, they also totally disregard the evidence, both published and unpublished, that refutes such a stereotype. For example, throughout his life Brigham Young had personal experience with many of the divine gifts of the Spirit.⁹⁵

Claims that visionary experiences among the Latter-day Saints have diminished since 1844 might reflect the naiveté of the authors. Such sacred experiences continue to occur, but members are under a “strict command” to not publicize them, because “that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care” (Alma 12:9; D&C 63:64).

Could Entheogens Facilitate Access to the True God?

Many users of psychedelics relate that, at times, the chemicals induce a feeling of intense love and compassion. One user stated, “Life reduced itself over and over again to the least common denominator. I cannot remember the logic of the experience, but I became poignantly aware that the core of life is love.”⁹⁶ Others report a connection with the divine:

95. D. Michael Quinn, “Brigham Young,” *Ensign* (August 1977), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1977/08/brigham-young-man-of-the-spirit>.

96. Richard Yensen and Donna Dryer, “Thirty Years of Psychedelic Research: The Spring Grove Experiment and its Sequels” (Conference paper, Conference: European College of Consciousness (ECBS) International Conference: Worlds of Consciousness, Göttingen, Germany, September 19920, 5, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309477954_Thirty_Years_of_Psychedelic_Research_The_Spring_Grove_Experiment_and_Its_Sequels).

“I was experiencing directly the ... unbroken and infinite light of God, the light then breaks into forms and lessens in intensity as it passes through descending degrees of reality.”⁹⁷ “Archetypal imagery may appear, and one thus finds oneself encountering mythological characters such as angels, demons, dragons, and Grecian gods. On the boundary of mystical consciousness, it is not uncommon for Christians to encounter an image intuitively identified as the Christ.”⁹⁸

Connecting with the Ultimate Reality

A 2019 study evaluated “[n]aturally occurring and psychedelic drug–occasioned experiences interpreted as personal encounters with God.”⁹⁹ It surveyed reports of such “God encounters” through non-drug related experiences presumably by religionists, as well as those obtained among three groups of psychedelic users (psilocybin, LSD, and DMT).¹⁰⁰ An interesting finding is that through their psychedelic-induced experiences, many participants felt a connection, not with a monotheistic God, but with a more transcendent force the researchers called the “ultimate reality,” causing a significant portion to move away from atheism but not necessarily into a belief in God as understood by Jews, Christians, or Muslims.

Items ¹⁰¹	Non-drug	Psilocybin	LSD	DMT
<i>Best descriptor of that which was encountered</i>				
God (the God of your understanding)	41%	16%	19%	16%
Ultimate Reality	26%	57%	59%	48%
An aspect or emissary of God (e.g., an angel)	18%	9%	6%	12%
<i>Identification as atheist (percentage of group)</i>				
Before the experience	3%	21%	22%	25%
After the experience	1%	9%	9%	7%

97. Pahnke and Richards, “Implications of LSD and Experimental Mysticism,” 179.

98. Ibid., 185.

99. Roland R. Griffiths et al, “Survey of subjective “God Encounter Experiences”: Comparisons Among Naturally Occurring Experiences and Those Occasioned by the Classic Psychedelics Psilocybin, LSD, Ayahuasca, or DMT” *PLoS ONE* 14, no. 4 (April 23, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0214377>.

100. Ibid., 2, 4.

101. Modified from *ibid.*, 13, 18.

Items ¹⁰¹	Non-drug	Psilocybin	LSD	DMT
<i>Identification with major monotheistic tradition</i>				
Before the experience	47%	12%	15%	7%
After the experience	41%	8%	9%	5%
<i>Identification as Other (not atheist or major monotheistic tradition)</i>				
Before the experience	50%	68%	62%	68%
After the experience	59%	84%	82%	88%

Joseph Smith on Knowing God

Within the context of Joseph Smith’s teachings, psychedelic chemicals do not produce visions of the true God or Christ. Interactions with the divine are sacred and occur according to personal worthiness and to God’s timetable; they “shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will” (D&C 88:68; see also 67:10 and 93:1). They are not under the control of mortals choosing to ingest entheogens.

The sensations and psychotropic experiences that flow from chemical substances, including alcohol (ethanol) or the psychedelics, would likely be labelled intoxication and denounced. Whether the hallucinations arise purely from the physiological effects of the chemicals or give the adversary (and false spirits) enhanced power over the spirit of the user is less clear. Our mortal bodies are naturally “subject to the will of the devil” (D&C 29:40), and Joseph warned that “there are many spirits which are false spirits, which have gone forth in the earth, deceiving the world. And also Satan hath sought to deceive you, that he might overthrow you” (D&C 50:2–3). Outsourcing the control of our minds to any substance might increase Satan’s influence over us.

Conclusion

EOMWH presents an interesting theory that the visionary experiences of Joseph Smith and the early Saints resulted from entheogenic ingestion. Sustaining this view, the authors present general observations and a few selected reports along with many conjectures.

The idea that Joseph Smith was a highly advanced herbalist and mycologist who could correctly distinguish psychedelic mushrooms and from death caps and then appropriately prepare the entheogens to obtain the expected hallucinations is historically unsupported. The learning curve to obtain such expertise for most of the seven entheogens

would be steep and time-consuming. Overall, there is no evidence that mushrooms, cacti, other plants, or toad secretions were sought, harvested, prepared, or consumed by the first generation of believers or any thereafter.

An additional concern is that the psychedelic influences of drugs like psilocybin, mescaline, and 5-MeO-DMT are very different from the extra-worldly experiences mentioned by early Latter-day Saints that were described as faith-promoting and uplifting. It is likely that Joseph Smith would have condemned many of the behaviors arising from entheogen ingestion as intoxication.

A growing trend among secularists is to provide naturalistic explanations for religious phenomena. Claims that exogenous chemicals can duplicate the spiritual experiences described by religionists remain unverifiable, because spiritual sensations are so personal to the individual. However, as a believer and researcher who has read multiple accounts describing entheogen effects, I detect remarkable differences.

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IS DECRYPTING THE GENETIC LEGACY OF AMERICA'S INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS KEY TO THE HISTORICITY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON?

Ugo A. Perego and Jayne E. Ekins

Abstract: *Some critics of the Book of Mormon suppose that the DNA characteristics of modern Native Americans should be compatible with “Israelite” rather than with Asian genetics. The authors point out that while DNA is a valid tool to study ancient and modern populations, we must be careful about drawing absolute conclusions. They show that many of the conclusions of critics are based on unwarranted assumptions. There are specific limitations that cannot be ignored when using the available genetic data to infer conclusions regarding the DNA of Book of Mormon peoples. Such conclusions are not founded on solid science but are the interpretation of a few, as genetic data fails to produce conclusive proof weighing credibly in favor of or against the historicity of the Book of Mormon.*

[Editor's Note: Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.

See Ugo A. Perego and Jayne E. Ekins, “Is Decrypting the Genetic Legacy of America's Indigenous Populations Key to the Historicity of the Book of Mormon?,” in *Ancient Temple Worship: Proceedings of The Expound Symposium 14 May 2011*, ed. Matthew B. Brown, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Stephen D. Ricks, and John S. Thompson (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 259–94. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/ancient-temple-worship/>.]

Background

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (i.e., Mormons or LDS) consider the Book of Mormon a volume of divine origin comparable in scriptural sacredness to the Bible (Article of Faith #8). They believe it to be an historical record originally engraved on golden plates, covering a period of approximately one thousand years (600 BC to 400 AD) and dealing with ancient people who lived in the American continent hundreds of years before the arrival of the Europeans. A small part of the Book of Mormon describes a different group of people of unknown Old World origin, called the Jaredites, disappearing (at least as a civilization) by the time the second group of migrants made their journey to the Western Hemisphere.

The main narrative of the Book of Mormon begins in Jerusalem with a family who escapes, by divine warning, the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians approximately six centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ. With a few others, they are eventually guided on a journey to a non-specified region of America's double continent.¹ The descendants of this small original group later divided into two opposing factions, called the Lamanites and the Nephites, and the rest of the volume focuses mainly on the spiritual and social dynamics between these two groups, including their warfare. The recurring theme of the Book of Mormon is the coming of the Savior Jesus Christ first to the Old World, as witnessed in the Bible, followed by a brief ministry after his resurrection to a group of disciples who received him in the Americas. The book itself does not claim to be a complete history of these people but rather an abridgment made by Mormon, one of the last prophets in charge of the records, after whom the whole volume was eventually named. Further, the explicit purpose of many of the contributors to the records compiled in the Book of Mormon was to focus on spiritual rather than historical matters regarding the doings of their people.

Honest seekers of truth are invited to receive a spiritual confirmation of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon within the scriptural text itself (Moroni 10:3-5). Still, at times some have wondered about the compatibility of the record put forth in the Book of Mormon with academic studies (archaeological, linguistic, anthropological, etc.) of the indigenous people and area of the Americas. There are some who promote strong criticism in this arena in an attempt to discredit the divine origin of the volume.

Recent attention has been paid to DNA data reported in scholarly papers written by scientists external to the Book of Mormon debate but

interpreted by some as the ultimate proof against the book's historicity. Others are even making claims about specific genetic lineages found in the Americas as a confirmation that the record is true. Overall, the complexities and limitations of the discipline of population genetics cannot be dismissed when attempting to use these tools to reconstruct the history of past civilizations. The questions treated herein examine the historical origins of the people described in the records of the Book of Mormon from a genetic point of view, making use of key principles of population genetics that cannot be neglected when undertaking such a study.

Introduction

The arguments of some critics of the Book of Mormon suppose that the DNA characteristics of modern Native Americans should be compatible with "Israelite" rather than with Asian genetics, as reported in scientific data demonstrating a strong affinity with the latter. In response to such criticisms, others have jumped at reports of pre-Columbian genetic lineages found in the Americas that could be ascribed to a Near Eastern origin as physical evidence of the existence of Book of Mormon people.² A key point is that arguments in favor or against the Book of Mormon narrative rely on genetic data gathered by researchers uninvolved with the Book of Mormon historicity issue. These studies were designed to offer new perspectives on the prehistoric origin and migrations of Native Americans. Contrary to the claims of critics, they fail to address historical events pertaining to the Nephites' record.

The stated time frame of The Book of Mormon covers ca. 600 BC to 400 AD, and the text explicitly states itself to be a record of the religious dealings of the people rather than a purely historical document. Scholarly studies on the genetic origin of the ancestors of Native Americans have been concerned most with the first waves of migrations that took place several thousands of years ago, toward the end of the Last Ice Age, across the exposed land-bridge called Beringia that once connected Siberia to Alaska. Thus the genetic data used by critics of the Book of Mormon address a time period many thousands of years before the time of the actual record. One may compare this case of "interpretive anachronism" to searching for news about the landing of man on the moon in ancient Egyptian papyri. However, it should be noted that if there were a large genetic contribution by a group of Middle Easterners, it would stand out in these sorts of analyses because they are analyzed in comparison to modern populations sampled from diverse geographical regions.

Nevertheless, these analyses have not ruled out a comparatively small contribution of ancestry from Middle Eastern groups.

Another factor worth considering in this context is that many Native American samples have some amount of post-Columbian European mixture. This mixture could confound putative evidence in support of the Book of Mormon narrative for some analyses (researchers often ignore any non-Asian DNA as definitively post-Columbian). In addition, recent publication of preliminary data from the remains of an individual dated 24,000 years ago, found in south-central Siberia and showing a possible ancient connection between Native Americans and Central/West Eurasia, is further complicating the admixture issue.³ Nonetheless, the possibility of an arrival of a small group of migrants approximately 2,600 years ago to an already populated continent is not excluded by the reported genetic data.

Critics incorrectly insist that the LDS Church has taught for years that the American continent was uninhabited until the arrival of Book of Mormon people and that only recently, following the DNA debate, this position has changed. However, the LDS Church has not expressed an official opinion with regard to either Book of Mormon geography or population dynamics.⁴ This, of course, does not preclude LDS leaders and scholars from sharing their personal opinions one way or the other, including several instances in which the concept of an already inhabited continent was shared prior to bringing forth the so-called DNA evidence.⁵

The main argument seems to stem from the introduction added in 1981 at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, which read that “after thousands of years, all [people] were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are the *principal* ancestors of the American Indians” (emphasis added). Although the term “principal” already presupposes the existence of other ancestors without specifying whether the idea of ancient or modern ancestral contribution was intended in this statement, this was recently changed. The current edition of the Book of Mormon now reads “... all [people] were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are *among* the ancestors of the American Indians” (emphasis added).

Although this change does not drastically affect the concept of heritage and ancestry of modern Native Americans in relation to ancient Lamanites, of greater importance is to understand the meaning of the term *Lamanite* as used in the latter part of the Nephite history. In the book 4 Nephi, the writer explains that following the visitation of the Savior to the Americas, the formerly warring people became united, without genetic or ethnic distinction among them: “There were no robbers, nor

murderers, *neither were there Lamanites*, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God” (4 Nephi 1:17, emphasis added).

The record continues by stating that eventually there “were a small part of the people who had revolted from the church and *taken upon them the name of Lamanites*; therefore there began to be Lamanites again in the land” (4 Nephi 1:20, emphasis added). It is very likely that this choice of designation was social or religious rather than genealogical in nature, based on the character of the Lamanites prior to Christ’s visit. In fact, 4 Nephi 1:36-39 reports that in a similar fashion, others decided to use the term *Nephites* again to distinguish them as “true believers of Christ” and restating that those that “rejected the gospel were called Lamanites” and were “taught to hate the children of God, *even as the Lamanites were taught to hate the children of Nephi from the beginning*” (emphasis added).⁶ Here the use of the word “even” underscores the practice of choosing a name that had a specific social meaning in the past.

History is repeating itself, but the genetic distinction most likely no longer applies to the masses. Of note in this context are instances in the text of the Book of Mormon where Mormon himself twice declares his ancestry [as a genealogical descendant of Nephi (Mormon 1:5) and a “pure descendant” of Lehi (3 Nephi 5:20)], possibly supporting by inference the existence of outside populations contributing to the social dynamics of the people of the Book of Mormon.⁷ As the term *Lamanite* loses its genetic meaning in the latter part of the Book of Mormon narrative, attempts to define an original *Lamanite* genetic signature are highly suspect, as the modern remnant of this ancient population would have to include both true descendants of Lehi’s original party as well as others already inhabiting the land.

Critics who conclude the Book of Mormon to be fictitious in nature due to genetic data which fails to show “Israelite DNA” in the Americas must also consider logical and scientific reasons why such DNA could have existed in Native Americans at some point in history but may not be present or as easily detected in today’s population. To rigorously examine the history of a people using genetics, all the tools of the discipline of population genetics must be embraced.

What some may refer to as the absence of genetic evidence does not preclude at all the real possibility that Lehi and his family were real people who actually left Jerusalem and established themselves on the American continent. In fact, as will be examined, it is very likely that either their DNA has disappeared over time, or it is present at such a low frequency

(due to mixing with other peoples) that the genetic methods to date have not detected it. In the event such DNA is found, it will most likely only be possible to ascribe it to these migrant groups only speculatively. Regardless, a DNA approach does not decisively and definitively fill in our void of knowledge of the happenings on the American continent during the time frame of the Book of Mormon. Both critics and apologists utilize speculations and assumptions to support their views. However, both sides of this controversy fail either to support or reject the authenticity of the Book of Mormon on the basis of DNA.

Evidence or Proof?

Stating that DNA evidence stands as the conclusive proof that the Book of Mormon is a fabricated historical account is not a convincing argument. Scholarly studies indicate that the majority of DNA observed in Native Americans has a common origin or ancestry with Asian populations, thus suggesting an ancient split between Paleo-Indians and their Eurasian source population sometime before the Last Ice Age. These population studies do not consider, however, the possibility of other migrations that could have taken place between the first entries of the early ancestors of Native Americans and the more recent documented European colonization after 1492.

The concept of additional, small-scale contacts and migrations to the Americas throughout the millennia is not dismissed by scientists. In fact, in recent years, genetic data was successfully sequenced from hair belonging to a well-preserved, 4,000-year-old, Paleo-Eskimo individual belonging to the Saqqaq culture discovered in Greenland.⁸ This research has contributed greatly to the current understanding of events that led to the peopling of the Americas. The authors concluded that the genetic makeup of the ancient Saqqaq individual was very different from that of Inuit or other Native American populations. Instead, he was closely related to Old World Arctic populations of the Siberian Far East, separated from them by approximately two hundred generations (roughly 5,500 years).

These data suggest a distinctive and more recent migration across Beringia by a group of people who were not related to the first ancestors of modern-day Amerindians. In an interview, one author emphasized that the lack of genetic continuity between the ancient Saqqaq individual and the modern population of the New World Arctic stands as a witness that other migrations could have taken place that left no contemporary genetic signals.⁹ In commenting about the findings of this project, population geneticist Marcus Feldman from Stanford University said

that “the models that suggest a single one-time migration are generally regarded as idealized systems, like an idealized gas in physics. *But there may have been small amounts of migrations going on for millennia*” (emphasis added).

He went on to explain that “just because researchers put a date on when ancient humans crossed the Bering Bridge, that doesn’t mean it happened only once and then stopped.”¹⁰ This concept has also been included in the volume *The Origin of Native Americans* by Michael H. Crawford, molecular anthropologist at the University of Kansas. In his lengthy review of data supporting the ancient Asian origins of the Amerindians, he stated that “this *evidence* does not preclude the possibility of some small-scale cultural contacts between specific Amerindian societies and Asian or Oceanic seafarers” (emphasis added).¹¹

Lastly, in discussing the difference between “evidence” versus “proof” Professor Daniel C. Peterson wrote that,

The claims of Mormonism are, I think, ... [n]ot so obviously true as to coerce acceptance, and not so obviously false as to make acceptance illegitimate.

I can’t agree with my fellow believers who imagine that the evidence for Mormonism is so strong that only deliberate, willful blindness can explain failure to be persuaded. But I also reject the claim of detractors of Mormonism, that its falsehood is so transparently obvious that only naked dishonesty or ignorance can account for failure to recognize it.¹²

Dr. Peterson’s paradigm is easily adapted to the current discussion of “genetic evidence” vs. “genetic proof.” The lack of genetic evidence or absence of strong affinity for “Israelite” genetic markers in Native American populations in no way approaches the level of *ultimate proof* of falsehood of the Book of Mormon. The lack of genetic evidence as examined in modern populations does not demonstrate proof of an absolute historical absence. This issue will be discussed in detail later in this essay.

Some critics propose a straw man construct superimposing an empty continent theory (i.e., the Americas were completely unpopulated prior to the arrival of the Book of Mormon people in 600 BC) as the basis of belief from which Mormonism stems regarding Book of Mormon populations and their origins. By such reasoning the lack of a pervasive Israelite genetic profile in pre-Columbian Native American populations must be viewed necessarily as the ultimate proof that the Book of Mormon is a product of

nineteenth-century fiction. With this strategy, critics purposely engineer the background they want others to accept at the outset in order to have a strong case based on genetic evidence. Many fallacies arise from this approach that will be treated in detail herein. Suffice it to say, as with archaeological, linguistic, and anthropological evidence, DNA cannot be used to support or to discredit the true historical nature of Joseph Smith and his purported acquisition and translation of ancient gold plates.

Honest seekers of truth will be wary of dogmatic statements that proclaim absolute authority on a topic and call it closed. Often these statements are based on personal interpretation that can be shown to have logical lapses and are given without careful regard for the complexities of the topic at hand. At times it is helpful to understand something about the nature and motives characterizing those bringing forth such claims.

What Does Science Say About the DNA of Native Americans?

The early 1990s marked the beginning of the genomic era with regard to the study of human diversity and the elucidation of the relationships and origins of different world populations. With the best technologies available in those early days, scientists for the first time were able to analyze segments of the female-inherited mitochondrial genome and to identify small but important genetic markers uniquely linked to specific populations.

Subsequent to this novel use of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), new technologies ushered in the study of genetic markers found on the male-inherited Y chromosome and the autosomes, giving sometimes distinct insights into populations origins and migrations. With regard to mtDNA, the first samples analyzed came from Native American populations. The data showed that nearly all the mtDNAs could be clustered into one of four groups, which were initially labeled A, B, C, and D, and later groupings identified in other populations proceeded through the subsequent alphabetical nomenclature.¹³

These earlier studies utilized a small section of the mitochondrial genome, often limited to just a few hundred DNA bases. Among others, three significant findings were published during the 1990s based on mtDNA diversity with some implications to our understanding of Native American origins:

1. The highest level of mtDNA variation was observed in sub-Saharan African groups, thus indicating that all humans shared a common female ancestor from Africa and that human colonization of the planet started from there;

2. Lineages A, B, C, and D were observed in the Americas as well as in modern Asian populations, thus supporting the theory that the ancient maternal ancestors of Native Americans were Paleo-Indians of Asian origins who survived the Last Ice Age on the continent-sized land-bridge called Beringia that once connected northeast Siberia to Alaska;¹⁴
3. A fifth lineage was observed in Native American populations from the Great Lakes area and in a few other North American groups. This new mtDNA was termed X, and differently from the previously known Native American mtDNA lineages, it was also observed in many modern European, African, and Middle Eastern populations¹⁵ as well as in a small region of Central Asia.¹⁶

These three points have strong implications with respect to the Book of Mormon debate, but the most emphasized in early disputes was point 2 — the common presence of lineages A, B, C, and D in both the Asian and American continents. Each of these three findings deserves its own treatment in detail.

The existence of a common maternal ancestor from Africa for all mtDNA lineages has many significant implications; of relevance for the current question is the fact that this woman was not the only female alive at that time, but merely lucky in perpetuating her genetic lineage through millennia to the present time. (This was due to several factors, including her own success and the happenstance successes of her descendants.) The phenomenon of chance transmissions will be addressed in detail when we introduce the population genetic principle of *genetic drift*. For the current discussion, it is sufficient to realize that the genetic variation present in modern populations does not give a complete picture of the variation that existed in the past.

The second relevant principle is the presence of mitochondrial DNA lineages labeled A, B, C, and D on both sides of the Bering Strait. As explained earlier, based on data from different disciplines, including genetics, archaeology, and linguistics, it has been postulated that anatomically modern humans were trapped in the landmass that once connected Siberia to Alaska during the Last Ice Age.¹⁷ These Paleo-Indians most likely came from other source populations in Asia during the spread of hunter-gatherers thousands of years ago. By following and hunting large mammals, they reached the continent-sized land-bridge

Beringia but were eventually trapped there due to the worsening of climate conditions and the build-up of glaciers on either side.

During the following millennia, they probably survived in natural enclaves, living in a manner similar to modern-day Arctic natives. Population growth was probably halted because of scarcity of resources. They were physically separated from their source population, thus gradually developing their own unique linguistic, cultural, and genetic characteristics.¹⁸ Eventually, the climate began to improve again, and the large glaciers started to withdraw.

As sea-levels began to rise again, gradually submerging Beringia and most of the world's coastlines, at least one, perhaps two entryways became available to the ancestors of American natives moving eastward into a pristine and empty continent.¹⁹ Lack of competition for resources allowed a quick spread southward, reaching the tip of South America's southern cone (a distance greater than that from Portugal to Japan!) probably in as few as 1,000 years. Populations began to grow, and by the time the Europeans arrived after 1492, at least 20 million people lived in the Americas.²⁰ This summary reflects the knowledge based on genetics, archaeology, and other disciplines to the proposed understanding of the first and most significant expansions into the Western Hemisphere.

Although genetic diversity in Asia is much higher than that observed among the indigenous people of America — and also includes significantly different lineage frequencies — it is notable that those who survived the Beringia “imprisonment” were but a few compared to the larger Asian population of that time.

Once the two populations were separated, never to be reunited — first because of the deteriorating climate conditions and then by the Bering Strait — gene flow between the populations was interrupted, and their genetic histories diverged. Once populations become physically separated in this manner, powerful forces play a role in how the genetic dynamics of different populations develop over time. Even holding geographical and climate conditions constant, events that influence the genetic shaping of a group play out in a distinct story for every population.

Genetic drift and perhaps to some degree natural selection with regard to DNA transmission, gender (based on the inheritance of Y chromosome or mitochondrial DNA), and variation in number of offspring, etc., give shape to the resulting genetic profiles of populations as they develop over time. Often, if the group of founding migrants is small, the effects of drift that persist into future generations are accentuated, as the loss of even a single individual from the small founding group, or a

female bearing no children or children of just one gender, will cause the loss of genetic variability at an early stage of the colonization process. For example, when considering mtDNA passed on only by females to their children, if an original founding group is composed of four women, each carrying a different mtDNA lineage, and one of them bears only male children, 25% of the mtDNA variation in the founding population will be immediately lost from all subsequent generations.

Although the founding group of ancient Paleo-Indians trapped in Beringia for thousands of years would have included more than four women, this process can occur in subgroups of a population and could result in lost lineages that are still found among Asians but that are not currently found among Native Americans. Additionally, the separation of Paleo-Indians from their source population for such a long period resulted in the rise of novel mutations that were exclusively found in the ancestors of Amerindians.

From a strictly mitochondrial DNA point of view, a Native American mtDNA lineage is so distinct that it is easily distinguishable from those of any other world population. In fact, the level of discrimination allows clear discernment of Asian and Native American types that are relatively closely related but that have both amassed enough unique features since their divergence to give a strong degree of differentiation between the two. For example, if an mtDNA profile carrying the key mutations classified as Native American is found in Europe, one obvious argument is that early European colonists brought back indigenous women from the Americas to the Old World, whose descendants persist to the current day. These lineages are clearly not European, but neither are they Asian. They are Native American.

The opposite is also true. If mtDNA lineages are observed in the Americas, even in tribal groups considered deeply indigenous who belong to mtDNA groups known to be African, European, or even Asian, the argument most readily given is that they have been introduced more recently, after the rediscovery of the New World by Europeans.

Therefore, going back to the question posed above, a Native American lineage is an mtDNA profile that has accumulated a unique set of mutations that, although showing evidence of common ancestry with Asian populations, is different enough to be ascribed exclusively to the Americas and not to Asia. In other words, Native American mtDNA lineages are, for the most part, nested within the large family of Asian mtDNAs, and are distantly related to them (or showing an affinity) but not identical.

An increased understanding of the dynamics that characterized the mtDNA origin of Native American populations was achieved during the past decade through the analysis of complete mtDNA genomes — the highest level of mtDNA molecular resolution attainable. The original A, B, C, and D mtDNA lineages observed in the Americas were eventually renamed A2, B2, C1, and D1 to distinguish them from their Asian “cousins.” Lineage X became X2a, and to this day it has been found only in North America, although there is still some uncertainty regarding its origin. These five lineages constitute the majority (approximately 95%) of all Native American lineages observed in the Americas, although in recent years, additional rare lineages also have been identified as Native American.²¹

At the present time, thanks to the complete sequencing of large numbers of mtDNA genomes, scientists performing research of worldwide populations are dissecting individual mtDNA lineages to discover important details missed in the past. This microgeographic approach is revealing a number of peculiar situations that, for the most part, are still not fully explained. For example, mtDNA lineage C1 has six known sublineages, called C1a-f. They all share a common maternal origin, but their geographic distribution is very specific: C1a is found exclusively in Asia, C1b, C1c, and C1d are found only in the American continent,²² and C1e and C1f are two new lineages found recently in a limited number of living individuals from Iceland²³ and in ancient remains retrieved in Western Russia,²⁴ respectively.

The natural question is, how did the four geographically distinct clusters end up in the locations where they were observed? A possibility is that they were all in Beringia at some point, and following the Last Ice Age, carriers of the C1a and C1f mtDNA returned to Asia,²⁵ whereas C1b-C1d and possibly C1e moved eastwards in the Americas. Eventually, either through an Atlantic crossing along the north ice cap or, more recently, through Viking voyages,²⁶ a Native American female (or females) carrying the C1e lineage ended up in Iceland, where successful progeny have persisted into today's Icelandic population. However, any C1e left in the Americas either failed to perpetuate its lineage by chance due to lack of female posterity or became extinct following the massive population reduction caused by the arrival of Europeans.

Another possibility for its sole distribution in Iceland hinges on its extreme rarity as a mtDNA type, and therefore scientists have not encountered it yet on American soil.

In summary, the recent discovery of C1e in Iceland, its pre-Columbian mtDNA age, and its apparent absence among modern Amerindian groups poses some interesting questions that can be applied to the Book of Mormon debate. Would it ever have been known that an additional C1 lineage existed in America's past if it were not found in Iceland? This situation demonstrates a possible scenario in which a Beringian lineage of Asian origin could have become extinct in the Americas, and detection of the genetic type could have been accomplished only due to its having had more time to spread to outlying geographies, causing it to be external to competition with the abundant contemporary mtDNA Native American lineages.

Similarly, a more recently introduced mtDNA lineage from the Old World, as in the Book of Mormon scenario, would have been even more likely to disappear or escape detection when introduced to a large gene-pool. We will discuss this further in the section about genetic drift.

A far more puzzling story surrounds the origin of the fifth Native American lineage, called X2a. This group of mtDNAs is found exclusively in North America, with its highest modern-day concentration in the Great Lakes region.²⁷ While Native American mtDNAs A2, B2, C1, and D1 are clearly nested within Asian clades, lineage X2a has a hypothesized ancient Old World origin, probably in the Middle East.²⁸

Although a small number of X2 samples have also been observed in Central Asia,²⁹ they most likely represent a recent migratory event to that region. In an mtDNA tree, the Asian X (called X2e) contains more recent mutations than the Native American X2a, and therefore it is not ancestral to the latter. Although it cannot be completely excluded that ancestors of X2a once lived in Northeast Asia and then became extinct, at the present time the closest relatives of the Native American X2a lineage have been identified in a single sample from Iran³⁰ and in Bedouin groups from Egypt.³¹

The potential connection between New World and Middle Eastern mtDNA X types could be seen by some as a candidate for Book of Mormon DNA in the Americas. However, some data confounds this hypothesis, as the mtDNA molecular clock³² — the estimated average number of years before a mutation is expected to appear — dates X2a at about the same time as the arrival of all the other Asian-like lineages to the Americas (toward the end of the Last Ice Age). Data from ancient DNA studies on pre-Columbian specimens presumably belonging to lineage X are, for the most part, also inconclusive.³³

As an additional cautionary note, mtDNA dating is concerned most with the age of divergence between two lineages sharing a common ancestor and not necessarily the location of the shared ancestral sequence. In other words, the coalescence time of X2a,³⁴ or of any other mtDNA lineage for that matter, reveals only how far back in time the split from the ancestral node took place, not where the split occurred and does not account for the geographic locations of these lineages today.

As seen with the C1e example, there could have been closer relatives of X2a in other parts of the world, but either they became extinct or have not yet been found. The Egyptian and Iranian X2* samples share one of the three coding region mutations that define X2a in the Americas. Their existence indicates that potential “relatives” of the X2a lineage could be found elsewhere, assuming they still exist in contemporary individuals.

However, in this particular example, it is important to note that the Old World X2* haplotypes share additional mutations that would increase the genetic distance between the Amerindian and Middle Eastern branches of X2, even with the shared common conservative mutation. The story of X2a is a likely example of an mtDNA lineage found in the Americas that to this date cannot be completely ascribed to an Asian origin and is a subject worth further investigation.

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by scientists is to be able to assign clearly and unequivocally any European or African lineage found in the Americas to the pre-Columbian era. The generalized view among population geneticists is that after the initial arrival of Paleo-Indians toward the end of the Last Ice Age, no other migrations took place until the discovery of the double-continent by Europeans in 1492.

Together with a drastic indigenous population reduction (addressed in detail in the section dealing with the effect of *population bottleneck*), first the European and later the African gene-pool were introduced to the Americas, thus altering forever the original genetic landscape of the Western Hemisphere. Therefore, the common consensus, whenever any DNA is found that does not fit with the classic Native America genetic types, is an automatic assignment of such DNA to the post-Columbian migration wave of European or African migrants.

Although this assignment may be accurate in most instances, few tools are available to test the assumptions underlying this assignment; this means that even in the unlikely scenario that a few genetic lineages survived to modern times from additional migrations that occurred in the pre-Columbian era, they would not be strongly differentiated from contemporary DNA profiles found in modern Europe and Africa.

This is a critical and often overlooked limitation in using DNA to try to isolate a migration by a small group to the Americas in the recent past. If we take mtDNA, for example, it is correct to say that more than 95% of lineages identified are of Asian origin for the simple reason that they are similar to — but at the same time sufficiently different from — Asian lineages due to the fact that they have been separated for enough time to develop their own set of unique mutational motifs. If a modern Asian lineage were to be found in the Americas, it would most likely be assigned to a post-Columbian arrival, just like any other non-indigenous mtDNA profile. The root of this issue lies with the so-called “molecular clock” used to determine the age of lineages.

Scientists have been able to calibrate the estimated time of entry of the first Paleo-Indians based on the number of mutations that separate the Native American lineages from those found in Asia today (using molecular clocks).

Dating of the genetic data supporting this first arrival coincided with the geological evidence from the improvement of climate conditions toward the end of the Last Ice Age, at about 15-18,000 years ago. This molecular clock is based on the number of mutations accumulated in each mtDNA lineage, and it is calibrated on the assumed common ancestor between modern humans and chimpanzee, a split from their common unknown ancestor (the “missing link”) that would have occurred approximately 6.5 million years ago.

The mutation rate of mtDNA is roughly 3,000-9,000 years per mutation, depending on the section of mtDNA analyzed and the molecular clock applied.³⁵ Therefore, with few exceptions, it is only possible to infer migrations and other events that occurred thousands of years ago and not more recent ones.

Moreover, scientists in general are extremely cautious to make statements based on the available data that unequivocally point to a single conclusion and leave no room for an alternative hypothesis. Nearly all scientific papers published on population migration subjects offer new clues or revisit old ones, with the objective of furthering scholarly work by contribution of new perspectives and data that other researchers will utilize in their own work.

However, this is often not the case when the same information is then represented by the media or by others with a specific agenda, as they tend to sensationalize such discoveries in order to attract greater attention from the public. Unfortunately, as with any sub-specialized topic, a relatively small percentage of the population has the necessary

background to fully grasp the original scientific work, and therefore they often have to rely on how this information is interpreted and propagated, and this includes all the involved biases.

In summary, it is an oversimplification to assert that all DNA in the Americas is provably Asian. The large majority shows Asian affinity simply because it is similar enough to demonstrate a more recent shared ancestry with Asian populations than other worldwide populations but has enough accumulated differences to be distinctively identifiable as Native American DNA. Based on scientific investigation, this main genetic component was introduced in the Americas at the end of the Last Ice Age thousands of years ago.

A particular lineage called mtDNA X does not appear to be of Asian origin: it is more closely related to ancient Near Eastern lineages, but there is not enough evidence to link it definitively to Book of Mormon people. Unless retrieved from ancient specimens, any other unusual DNA types found in the Americas are generally ascribed by scientists to later colonization events. However, as the following points will clearly show, the hypothesis that makes the fewest assumptions (*lex parsimoniae*) based on the principles of populations genetics is that any unusual DNA types that arrived in a recent small migration to the Americas would most likely not be detectable in our present time.

What Did Lehi's DNA Look Like?

A major limitation that prevents the identification of genetic signatures that could be tied to Book of Mormon people is the obvious fact that this genetic signature is not known in the first place, although based on modern and ancient DNA studies, it is possible to determine a genetic lineage that could approximate a “typical” Near Eastern type.

While this may be the case, it must still be acknowledged that virtually any individual DNA profile could be found in any population, although at different frequencies. For example, the male Y chromosome type known as lineage J and the female mitochondrial DNA family U/K are found at high frequencies in the Middle East. However, these lineages are also found in smaller numbers in other countries, and conversely non-typical Middle Eastern lineages are also found in the Holy Land and surrounding countries, albeit in low frequency.

From a genetic viewpoint, there are a larger number of distinct mtDNA lineages observed in a single population than there are unique lineages in a particular population when comparing two or more groups.

This means that anyone from any region of the Old World could have carried virtually any mtDNA lineage to the Americas.

As an example, one of the authors of this paper, Ugo Perego, is nearly 100% European based in his overall DNA makeup (autosomal),³⁶ but his paternal line belongs to the Y chromosome family C, which is typical of Asia, North America, and Oceania.

The frequency of this particular genetic lineage in the Mediterranean Basin approaches zero. It appears that the introduction of this DNA marked as Asian in Ugo's family is quite ancient and perhaps attributable to the invasion of barbaric groups to Europe between 400 and 600 AD.³⁷

There is no genealogical record to confirm this information, only speculation based on history and the available DNA in his particular family. If he were to relocate to Asia today, and someone were to find his skeleton and extract his DNA two thousand years from now, based on the Y chromosome data alone, they would believe that he was indigenous to Asia and not a migrant from Europe.

Additionally, this is also a helpful example that demonstrates the presence of an ancestor of Asian origins (through the Y chromosome) whose autosomal DNA failed to survive in Ugo's current genetic makeup. If a single individual or a relatively small number of people mixed with a large pool of Southern Europeans, their DNA would likely disappear over time, even though their genealogical ancestry would remain.³⁸

The problem with not knowing the DNA of Lehi and his group is a situation that in forensics would be categorized as the absence of specific information. First, it would be impossible to recognize their DNA even if it survived genetic drift and population bottleneck. It could be something similar to other Asian lineages, or it could be European or Middle Eastern. It could be nearly anything.

It is possible that the DNA of Lehi's group is one of the most prominent lineages in the American continent but that we do not recognize it as such due to lacking knowledge of their mtDNA profile. Second, any attempt to link DNA in the Americas that might look like a potential candidate for Book of Mormon people (e.g. mtDNA lineage X found in northern North America) would likewise result in further speculation for the same reason. The small group that left Jerusalem to embark on a journey to a new land was not selected based on their genetic uniqueness, or because they represented the typical genetic signature found in their homeland.

These people were unaware of their genetic profile, and so are we. This fact alone would seriously compromise any effort to bring forth

DNA as evidence that they never existed or that the Book of Mormon is not the religious and historical record it claims to be. One could ask, “What would Lehi’s DNA have looked like?” but no testable hypothesis answers this question.

Population genetic studies are based on statistical evidence, but they are weak when evaluating rare occurrences in the sampled population. If we were trying either to detect or measure the amount of genetic contribution from Book of Mormon people, the hypothesis to be tested would be not how much Middle Eastern DNA is observed in the pre-Columbian native population, but rather how much DNA from Lehi’s or other groups survived to our day. In other words, what is the frequency of rare lineages that could be confidently assigned to them? We can attempt to determine a Middle Eastern DNA contribution to the Americas (a population-based approach), but we don’t have the tools to determine the contribution of Lehi’s family DNA in the same area (a family/pedigree-based approach). Therefore, we have to be careful to avoid confusing the absence of confidently recognizable Old World DNA in the Americas with the assertion that Lehi’s party never existed.

No matter how large or small they eventually became as a people in the American continent, we are still talking about a very small initial group with extremely limited genetic variation that would not constitute a large enough sample of their native population to ensure that the genetics of the Middle East would be properly represented in the New World.

What is Genetic Drift?

While several genetic principles, limitations, and possibilities have been explored at length herein, possibly the single most influential factor that would prevent detection of Lehi’s DNA in both modern and ancient samples is the concept of genetic drift.

For the sake of modeling, assume that Lehi and the members of his family carried the most representative modern Middle Eastern genetic profiles, a paternal Y chromosome belonging to lineage J for the males, a mtDNA K female lineage, and nuclear DNA packed with genes and markers typical of the Old World.

The only way these Middle Eastern markers would have survived past the first few generations in the American continent would be in the unlikely event that they were successful in being an isolated population with limited mixing with the hosting population.

The abridged history contained in the Book of Mormon gives only a few sporadic details about the whereabouts of its people with regard to

potential interactions with any other groups.³⁹ If the hypothesis we are trying to test is whether the party from Jerusalem really existed, we must take into the account their group size and the estimated population count in the Americas at their arrival.

Exact information on both issues is unknown, but a fair guess about proportions can be attempted. Lehi, his family and the others who came along were probably no more than 30-40 individuals, representing two, perhaps three family nuclei:

1. Lehi, his wife Sariah, and their children Laman, Lemuel, Nephi, Sam, Jacob, Joseph, and some sisters;
2. Ishmael's widow and her children;
3. Zoram, the servant of Laban.

It is even more speculative to infer much about the genetics of surviving Jaredites (if any) and Mulek's group, since the Book of Mormon is silent about their population of origin.

Mulek is presented as one of the genealogical heirs to the Jerusalem throne, but nothing is recorded about the number and origins of those who eventually sailed with him to the Americas. Since many assumptions are already made about the group size and the genetics of the main characters of the Book of Mormon, the following considerations will be based exclusively on the hypothesis that these were real people and made it to the American continent.

What would have happened to their DNA after their arrival? A well-considered argument comes from Henry C. Harpending, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the University of Utah. When asked, "If a group of, say, fifty Phoenicians (men and women) arrived in the Americas some 2,600 years ago and intermarried with indigenous people, and assuming their descendants fared as well as the larger population through the vicissitudes of disease, famine, and war, would you expect to find genetic evidence of their Phoenician ancestors in the current Native American population? In addition, would their descendants be presumed to have an equal or unequal number of Middle Eastern as Native American haplotypes?"

Professor Harpending's reply was, "I doubt that we would pick up [evidence of the Phoenicians] today at all, but it does depend on how they intermixed once they were here. If they intermixed freely and widely, and if there were several millions of people here in the New World, then the only trace would be an occasional strange stray haplotype. Even if we found such a haplotype we would probably assume it was the result of post-Columbian admixture."⁴⁰

The natural process of DNA markers disappearing in populations over time is called *genetic drift*. The concept of genetic drift is partly based on the inheritance properties of DNA. With regard to markers received from one parent only (Y chromosome and mitochondrial DNA), inheritance is contingent on whether or not you have offspring of the “right” gender. If a couple has only girls, none of them (and therefore no posterity) will receive the father’s Y chromosome. If a couple has only boys, they will all receive the mother’s mitochondrial DNA, but none of the grandchildren will inherit it.

The situation is different for autosomal DNA, the twenty-two pairs of chromosomes, excluding the X and Y chromosomes. This part of the nuclear genome is subject to reshuffling at each generation, with the loss of substantial components of the parents’ genetic make-up. In fact, when a man and a woman have a child, she will receive fifty percent of each of her parents’ autosomal DNA. Consequently, the remaining part of her parents’ DNA will be lost unless the couple has more children.

Over just a few generations, potentially all of a couple’s genetic material will be diluted and lost, as they will represent an ever-smaller percentage of the ancestors contributing to the DNA of a single descendant. Simply stated, as with the previously-mentioned example of Ugo’s autosomal DNA, there is a considerable difference between being genealogically related and having a genetic inheritance. In fact, it is estimated that at the tenth generation level, and given an equal chance to propagate their autosomal DNA, a person would carry only 12% of his or her 1,024 ancestors’ DNA.⁴¹

This phenomenon can be observed in as few as a couple of generations at a family level, but the effects of genetic drift at the population level are even more drastic. Depending on the population size and the variety of DNA present in that population, over a time measured in generations, some of that variation will inevitably be lost due to chance.

Even when a hypothetical population made up of only two ancestral lines, lineage A and lineage B, are found with the same frequency in a given hypothetical population (therefore having the same initial probability of perpetuating through future generations), over time one or the other may disappear completely. It is comparable to the probability of tossing a coin and knowing you have a fifty percent chance of obtaining heads or tails. The probability is based on the number of potential outcomes (either head or tail), but with one hundred actual tosses it would be unlikely that the final result would be exactly fifty heads and fifty tails.

With DNA, you start with a specific set of genetic markers at one generation, and through mating and random segregation of variants, generation 2 will have a somewhat different representation of the DNA markers than generation 1. Generation 2 will provide the only gene-pool available, which will be responsible for the variation of generation 3 and so on. If we could compare DNA variation of a starting gene-pool to one hundred marbles of two colors, fifty red representing lineage A and fifty blue representing lineage B, where marbles are drawn randomly, recorded, and placed back in their box with the purpose of determining the colors of a new box of marbles, chances are that the new box would have a different color composition than the one used to create it.

For example, during the first one hundred draws, sixty blue and forty red marbles may be obtained. To create a third box, we would repeat the exercise using the marbles of the second box. Drawing one hundred times from box 2 could very easily produce an even larger number of blues for box 3 than reds. As we continue this exercise, box after box, or generation after generation, it would not be an unusual outcome to end up with a box with all blue and no red marbles.⁴²

While the example of the marbles is a purely statistical approach to what could happen to a population made of only two different lineages having equal starting frequencies, when modeling the dynamics of questions of DNA and the Book of Mormon, we face even more confounding variables. In fact, it is estimated that at the time of its rediscovery, the American double-continent may have had a larger population than Europe. It is difficult to guess the population size of the Western Hemisphere at the time of Lehi's arrival, but it probably would have been in the order of a few millions, considering that humans have been here at least since after the Last Ice Age.

From a numerical point of view, the arrival of Lehi and his group would be comparable to a drop of ink in a swimming pool. However, in the swimming pool, although nearly impossible to detect, the actual drop of ink is present. The difficulty in recognizing the drop of ink is determined by the availability of instruments sufficiently sensitive to detect its minuscule presence within the much larger body of water. This analogy does not extend perfectly to DNA and inheritance at the population level. Although the group of Old World migrants was small (a drop of ink), the DNA may have survived (or not) to the present time — due to the forces of genetic drift. If it disappeared, it would be as if someone removed the drop of ink from the swimming pool such that it seemed never to have been there in the first place. Of course, this would

be heavily dependent on the level of isolation the Book of Mormon party experienced — something not clearly stated in the narrative.

In the case of almost immediate admixture with locals, returning to the model of the colored marbles, the earlier exercise would be repeated, drawing from a box with one million blue marbles and five red ones. As marbles are randomly selected to create the second generation, what is the likelihood that red marbles are selected by chance to perpetuate their color to future generations?

From a cultural or linguistic point of view, even a small group of migrants may play a significant and lasting impact on the host population, but genetic signatures are different. Even if we know the family lines several generations in the past, the DNA of a specific ancestor, depending on the markers studied, can readily disappear. This can happen even in a single generation.

For example, in just three generations, both the Y chromosome of the paternal grandfather and the mitochondrial DNA of the maternal grandmother could not be transmitted to their descendants. On average, twenty-five percent of the grandparents' autosomal DNA will be inherited by their grandchildren, with a range that would go from zero to fifty percent. Some traces of the autosomal DNA may persist over generations, but this will become more diluted over time and, depending on the roll of the dice with each new generation, may be nearly extinguished at some point.

In other words, genetic lineages were and are continually lost randomly in the world among all living species, even when there is no selective factor operating or the environment would not favor any specific lineage to be the likely surviving candidate in future generations. However, when dealing with a disproportionately larger hosting population, the odds are against the chances of genetic survival in the colonizing population. Depending on the size of the migrant group and the timing of admixture, the probability approaches zero. This of course also depends heavily on the level of intermixing between hosting and colonizing groups, which will be addressed when discussing the process of *natural selection*.

It is important to remember that genetic drift is a natural phenomenon that is central to study of the population genetics of all organisms. It is not exclusive to the Book of Mormon discussion. It affects all genetic markers: mtDNA, the Y chromosome, and autosomal DNA. A powerful example of the effect of genetic drift on a population was described in a classic study of the Icelandic people, where genealogical and historical

records have been available for the past three centuries, providing opportunities for comparison to the genetic data observed in the modern population.⁴³ This study demonstrated that the majority of individuals living in the eighteenth century did not have any living posterity, whereas a small percentage of the population during the same time period is responsible for nearly all living Icelanders today. The findings gleaned in the Icelandic study can be extrapolated to any population around the world, including Native Americans, keeping in mind that genealogical and historical records are often not available elsewhere. The impact of the European conquest in the shaping of the genetic dynamics and demographics of the New World would have exponentially accentuated and aggravated the effects of genetic drift in the Americas.

The Effect of Population Bottleneck

By the time Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas in 1492, perhaps as many as one hundred million inhabitants could have populated the entire double-continent.⁴⁴ The clash with European settlers, followed by disease, slavery, and warfare, resulted in a population decline of tremendous proportions.

Molecular anthropologist Michael Crawford states in his volume *The Origin of Native Americans: Evidence from Anthropological Genetics* that “the conquest and its sequelae squeezed the entire Amerindian population through a genetic bottleneck. The reduction of Amerindian gene pools from 1/3 to 1/25 of their previous size implies a considerable loss of genetic variability.”

He also added that “it is highly unlikely that survivorship was genetically random.”⁴⁵ Eventually, starting in the eighteenth century, native groups began to increase in size again, even reaching some of the original numbers in certain areas. However, the variation previously seen in pre-Columbian genetic lineages would never be replicated again.

Simply stated, a population bottleneck is the decrease in number of individuals (or genetic lineages) in a population following migration, natural disasters, disease, or warfare. The small number of survivors will carry only a fraction of the genetic diversity from the original population. Their posterity, no matter how large it could become in subsequent generations, will carry the DNA of only those living through the catastrophic event, thus not representing all the genetic variation once found in the whole population.

The arrival of Europeans to the Americas in the fifteenth century was orders of magnitude worse than the combined effect of the Black

Plague and the Spanish Influenza on Europeans. The consequences of rapidly reduced population and displacement has forever altered the demographic landscape of pre-Columbian America such that scientists from many disciplines are considerably limited in their ability to draw conclusions about the history, including the genetic history, of the New World. To model such an event, suppose that after an epidemic of smallpox, a hypothetical village of a thousand individuals experienced a ninety percent reduction; the one hundred surviving subjects may or may not include at least one representative of all the original group genetic lineages. Although survival of many diseases also involves a genetic component,⁴⁶ Y chromosome and mitochondrial DNA variance have little known or no influence at all on the immunity of an individual affected by one of the several diseases Europeans brought to the New World.

With selection playing little or no recognizable role on specific ancestral lines, the drastic population reduction in the hypothetical village inevitably would have affected the number of surviving genetic lineages. Of course, the initial impact with Europeans was so severe that entire tribal groups, particularly on the Atlantic side of the Americas, were completely decimated, leaving no genetic trace of their existence. Native Y chromosomes were quickly replaced by those from the Old World, and mitochondrial DNA variation was greatly reduced.⁴⁷

In the unlikely scenario that the descendants of the few migrants described in the Book of Mormon were able to “survive” genetic drift and therefore transmit a modest genetic signal to future generations, the devastating conquest by Europeans in the 16th and 17th centuries has created a situation in which even the most experienced researchers admit the limited knowledge available to properly infer the complete history of the pre-Columbian era.

However, this would not be the only event affecting population bottleneck among the Nephites. In fact, the Book of Mormon itself describes at great length two additional major events that, presuming historical accuracy, would have had a tremendous impact on the survival of any genetic lineages carried to the Americas by any of its original groups.

The first event took place after the biblical account of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. Only one of the Gospels of the New Testament briefly mentions the geological events experienced in the Holy Land following the death of Christ.⁴⁸ Concomitantly, in the Western Hemisphere, far greater destructive natural forces were witnessed as

recorded in 3 Nephi chapter 8, with entire cities being destroyed and the geographical landscape becoming greatly changed. The extent of destruction over the whole American continent is not known, as the writer in the Book of Mormon was likely mostly limited to his immediate radius. However, since this debate concerns the genetics of Book of Mormon people, it is not unreasonable to think that such devastation and loss of life would also have had a great effect on the survival and transmission of any Old World genetic lineages to future generations.

Finally, in conjunction with the natural destruction described in the Book of Mormon at the time of the death of Jesus Christ in the Holy Land is the targeted elimination of people referred to as Nephites through massive warfare starting in the 4th century AD.

It is a difficult task to estimate the level of admixture experienced by the descendants of those that came from Jerusalem around 600 BC, but from the population growth described occasionally in the Book of Mormon, it could be that the Lamanites were more consistently absorbed with locals than the Nephites.⁴⁹

The Bible itself perhaps supports this assertion, as it is rich with examples of those who placed little importance on covenants with God and how they were more easily infiltrated and adopted practices, often mixing with the people surrounding them. This may allow suggestion that because of the religious character of the Nephite people as a whole, they may have had some success in maintaining a fraction of their ancestors' genetic integrity. The great war that resulted in their nearly complete annihilation would also have had a negative effect on the survival of their Old World DNA, if any at all persisted to the time of the end of the Book of Mormon narrative. Of course, at that time, as already discussed, the terms *Nephite* and *Lamanite* were mostly used as cultural rather than genetic terms.

Natural Selection

Although genetic drift and population bottlenecks are likely the two primary causes of why DNA from a purported Old World migration 2,600 years ago is not found in modern-day American natives, another perspective should be considered, albeit probably not as influential as the previous two. Consider that early humans have migrated from place to place for thousands of years in a process that resulted in the colonization of the whole planet. The initial driving force to move was simply the need for survival. If a population nucleus outgrew the resources of a particular

area, they would probably starve or become a few people left searching for new means of survival.

A gradual expansion into new unoccupied regions allowed the newcomers to adapt to different environments and master new survival skills. Naturally, some individuals would have characteristics better suited to adaptation than would others. In genetics, this is known as degree of fitness, or in other words, possessing the right genes for the right surroundings so that climate, food tolerance, etc. would allow some to live longer and become stronger, thus increasing their chances for reproduction and passing their “more-fit” genes to future generations.

However, as climate conditions changed, or a move was necessary, those more fit in the previous environment may have later become genetically disadvantaged. Through this process of gene selection, the best genetic make-up for a specific environmental background would end up as the predominant gene pool for a specific population. Less fit genes would tend to disappear over time.

Natural selection is a well-established population genetic principle which has been observed among many species and organisms, including humans. This natural process has recently been recognized as influential in the Black Death that was responsible for the death of one out of four Europeans in the 14th century. Recent genetic studies on remains from that period revealed that the bacteria that caused the bubonic plague are still in existence today.⁵⁰ However, together with other factors, the subsequent generations of humans since that time are not dying in such large numbers as in the past because those who survived the first devastating pandemics had a stronger genetic resistance to it, and they passed those successful genes to their progeny.

Likewise, after the publication of the complete sequence of the Neandertal genome, scientists reported that a small percentage of hominid DNA was found also in modern humans but not the other way around. The Neandertal genome is also relevant, as some have pointed out that since we are able to sequence ancient DNA samples dating tens of thousands of years ago and to observe admixture between two related species, in turn we should also be able through the same technology to detect Middle East DNA in the genome of indigenous individuals from the Americas (and consequently, failure to find any should be a further proof that Book of Mormon migrants never existed).⁵¹ However, as explained by a researcher who helped produce the Neandertal genome, this is not always the case,

We detect gene flow from Neandertals into modern humans but no reciprocal gene flow from modern humans into Neandertals. Although gene flow between different populations need not be bidirectional, *it has been shown that when a colonizing population* (such as anatomically modern humans) *encounters a resident population* (such as Neandertals), *even a small number of breeding events along the wave front of expansion into new territory can result in substantial introduction of genes into the colonizing population* as introduced alleles can “surf” to high frequency as the population expands. *As a consequence, detectable gene flow is predicted to almost always be from the resident population into the colonizing population, even if gene flow also occurred in the other direction.*⁵²

The example of Neandertal and anatomically modern human gene flow can safely be applied to the Book of Mormon and New World scenario. The indigenous inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere had lived here for thousands of years prior to the arrival of the small group of migrants from the Old World. Environmental conditions were likely dramatically different from those of their homeland as they adjusted to their new conditions. Surely food supplies and other technologies available to them allowed for their initial survival while they adapted to the features of the new land. However, although many markers used in population studies do not contribute directly to cellular processes, it is plausible that the change in climate and food resources, among other factors, may have caused a selection against their genes over time, especially in the case of potential admixture with locals. Mitochondrial DNA in the population could have experienced the same effect, since the mitochondria are organelles responsible for the cell respiratory cycle and energy production, crucial to the health and proper function of the cells making up the human body.

It is possible that Lehi and his group may have fathered a genealogically large posterity that was eventually absorbed and became part of the current, or at least the pre-Columbian, native population. Additionally, based on a simple mathematical calculation, there are scenarios in which Lehi is potentially the genealogical ancestor of all living Amerindians,⁵³ contributing culturally to their contemporary indigenous neighbors, yet leaving no genetic trace of their presence in the present day.

A similar possible scenario can explain the absence of Viking DNA among modern Native Americans, although historical and archaeological evidence suggests Vikings had a significant presence which lasted a few

centuries in northern North America and had regular exchanges and contacts with native groups.⁵⁴

Founder Effect

Another demonstrated principle that plays an important role in shaping the genetics of populations is the *founder effect*.⁵⁵ This phenomenon, which is a specific type of population bottleneck, is observed when a few members from a population source relocate to a different area, thus carrying with them a small sample of the genetic variation of the population of origin. Subsequent inbreeding and the effects of genetic drift may result in a large population displaying only the genetic lineages inherited from the founding ancestors, which may or may not resemble the frequency of the original population. An example comes from the blood types of Native Americans, which are almost exclusively group O, the least common in other world populations (where A, B, and AB are the prevalent types), including Siberia. The low blood group diversity observed in the Americas is probably attributable to a founder effect.⁵⁶

An overly simplistic view of the Book of Mormon is that the American continent was empty at the time of the arrival of Lehi and his family and, assuming that they carried the most typical genetic lineages from the Middle East, all Native Americans today should have maintained a similar genetic make-up as their Israelite forefathers. However, this is an extremely skewed take on the Book of Mormon issue because it would imply, among other things, the following:

1. The American continent was completely empty at the arrival of Lehi's party.
2. None of the Jaredites described in the Book of Mormon would have survived;
3. Lehi and his family would carry typical and known ancient Near Eastern genetic markers (particularly those found among Jews);
4. Mulek and his group, founders of the city Zarahemla, would meet the same genetic composition criteria;
5. Middle Eastern (and more specifically Jewish) genetic makers of today's populations would be the same ones and in the same proportions as those found in the same geographic region (Jerusalem) 2,600 years ago.

Unfortunately, none of these conditions offers true testable hypotheses. For example, as already explained, neither the Book of Mormon nor the LDS Church openly teaches that the American continent

was empty in 600 BC. The summary made by Mormon on the plates does not talk explicitly about others but does not say that no one else was in the Americas. Moreover, there are different opinions on whether or not the Jaredites — whose geographic origin and genetics are unknown — became completely extinct by the time the last recorded survivor is mentioned in Omni 1:21.⁵⁷ Any Jaredite dissenters who escaped the final battle could have contributed to the complexity of identifying founding lineages from Eurasia on the American soil.

Regarding Mulek and his party, very little is written about their whereabouts and how/who arrived in the Western Hemisphere. There are too many unpredictable variables to use DNA effectively as a tool to test conclusively for the existence of Book of Mormon people.

Conclusions

In commenting on a recent article published in the scientific journal *Nature* and dealing with the number of original migrations by Paleo-Indians,⁵⁸ Professor David Meltzer of Southern Methodist University said, “Archaeologists who study Native American history are glad to have the genetic data but also have reservations, given that several of the geneticists’ conclusions have changed over time. This is a really important step forward but not the last word.” On the same occasion, molecular anthropologist Michael H. Crawford added, “The paucity of samples from North America and from coastal regions made it hard to claim a complete picture of early migrations has been attained.”⁵⁹ These and other comments from experts in the field of ancient American history provide further evidence that DNA is a valid tool to study ancient and modern populations, but they also remind us to be careful about drawing absolute conclusions based on the genetic data. Can genetic testing and science honestly answer any of the following questions?

- What did the DNA of the Book of Mormon people look like?
- Was it the typical DNA found in the population of Jerusalem in 600 BC?
- Can their DNA be differentiated from that of Europeans arriving after 1492?
- Is the current molecular clock adequate to discern pre- from post-Columbian genetic contributions to the New World within the last three thousand years?
- What degree of mixture did the Nephites and/or Lamanites experienced with local natives?

- How long were the Nephites and/or the Lamanites an isolated population after their arrival to the American continent?

Obtaining answers to these questions would enable the design of research that could contribute to our understanding of the Book of Mormon as a historical record from a scientific approach. Without such information, we risk forming conclusions based on personal interpretation and biased assumptions. As outlined in this paper, the problems and limitations with attempting such an investigative approach are significant and cannot be overlooked by those honestly seeking for answers about the Book of Mormon through DNA. Trying to reconstruct and identify the DNA of these Old World migrants in the Americas is not a task comparable to that of finding a needle in a haystack. With time and diligence, the needle eventually will be found. With the Nephite record, the needle was once there, and then through population demographic pressures, such as drift and perhaps some degree of natural selection, the needle may have been removed from the haystack — with some people convinced that it is still there and therefore should be found. Consequently, these critics, rather than accepting the fact that the needle was once there and now is lost, prefer to take the position that it was never there in the first place. These are two very distinctive conclusions based on the same observations. Stating that the DNA of Book of Mormon people has disappeared or not been detected through time, following very basic and widely accepted population genetics principles such as genetic drift and selection, is much different from claiming that Book of Mormon people never existed because we failed to recover their DNA in the American indigenous gene pool.

The advances with DNA technologies have provided never-before attainable knowledge in many fields, such as medicine, criminal justice, etc., including the history of humanity. However, much more still needs to be investigated, and some information might never be fully revealed with a molecular approach.

We need to be wary about any statement against or in favor of Book of Mormon historicity based on genetic evidence and take the time to understand the difference between scientific data and claims people make about it. As with other religious texts and topics, science is often an inadequate tool to corroborate spiritual truths, morals, and ethics.

DNA is a powerful tool in reconstructing recent and ancient historical events. The large body of published work on the topic of Native American origins using genetic markers stands as witness that researchers are still tackling some fundamental questions surrounding the history of

the Western Hemisphere and of humanity in general. New publications provide helpful insights into the past but often pose new questions in need of further investigation.

As extensively explained herein, there are specific limitations that cannot be ignored when using the available genetic data to infer conclusions regarding the DNA of Book of Mormon people. Such conclusions are not founded on solid science but are the interpretation of a few, as genetic data fails to produce conclusive proof weighing credibly in favor of or against the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

Notes

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