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

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, David J. Larsen, and Stephen T. Whitlock
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TWIN SONS OF DIFFERENT MOTHERS?

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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. 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. 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.” 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.

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.

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. 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.

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. 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” (as well as the gentler term “midrash”) to the Book of Abraham and the Book of Moses. 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?” 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,” even when existing manuscripts were written much later and, not infrequently, have come to us in a form that is riddled with the ridiculous. 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.”

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.” Surprisingly, we found that ApAb repeated similar phrases in analogous contexts. 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. 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.

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? 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.

**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;
- 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”\textsuperscript{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 \textit{ApAb}, the genres and settings of the two texts are highly similar.\textsuperscript{32}

- **How much of the entire narrative is spanned by the resemblances?**\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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?**\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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 \textit{ApAb} insists that Abraham will not (and, presumably, cannot) see Him. We also employ Frederick's criterion of “dissimilarity,”\textsuperscript{36} making note of significant instances where Moses 1 and \textit{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. 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.

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.” 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.” 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” in antiquity. And, importantly, in doing so “we must not succumb either to ‘parallelomania’ or to ‘parallelophobia.’"
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. 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.

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

### 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. 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.

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

Building on the earlier work of Hugh Nibley, Jared Ludlow, and Douglas Clark, Bradshaw and Larsen previously identified *ApAb* as a promising candidate for detailed comparison with Moses 1. 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.” 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.  

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.  

The frequency of resemblances of ApAb to Moses 1 in a given section is represented by a number.

![Diagram](image)

**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. 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.’” 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. Though a reproduction of one of the facsimile images was used previously in an article by Hugh Nibley, 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. 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. In Figure 3, Abraham appears with a group of sacrificial animals. 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.
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 Abraham82 “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**

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

*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**

<table>
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<th>Aretology</th>
<th>Book of Moses</th>
<th>Apocalypse of Abraham</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the Lord God Almighty, Endless (1:3)</td>
<td>the primordial and mighty God (9:3)</td>
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<th>Apocalypse of Abraham</th>
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<td></td>
<td>I will show thee the workmanship of my hands (1:4)</td>
<td>I shall … make you know secrets (9:5–6)</td>
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<th>Book of Moses</th>
<th>Apocalypse of Abraham</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thy servant has sought thee earnestly (Abraham 2:12)</td>
<td>since you loved to search for me (9:6)</td>
<td></td>
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<th>The prophet is commissioned</th>
<th>Book of Moses</th>
<th>Apocalypse of Abraham</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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)</td>
<td>I called you my friend (9:6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Resemblances for Moses in the Spirit World (Moses 1:3–6).*95
Figure 5. Abraham's Sacrifice Is Accepted of the Lord.
Aretology. In both the Book of Moses and ApAb, the prophet is given a description of God’s majesty. Formally, such a description is termed an “aretoLOGY.” The titles “Mighty” (Book of Moses) and “mighty” (ApAb) recall the demonstration of God’s power over the waters as the first act of Creation and in the destruction of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. Significantly, Moses will later “be made stronger than many waters … as if thou wert God.”

Both “Endless” (Book of Moses) and “primordial” (ApAb) are related to the characterization of God as being “without beginning of days or end of years.” “Endless” 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.” Such imagery recalls the description in Latter-day Saint scripture of God’s course as “one eternal round.”

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

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.

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” on Moses might be seen as ratifying the prophet’s membership in the divine council. 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.

In Arabic, Abraham is often referred to as al-Khalil, “the Friend,” meaning the friend of God. The teachings and revelations of Joseph Smith sometimes use “friend” as a technical term, denoting one
who is personally acquainted with the Lord and, like the members of the
divine council, has firsthand knowledge of the divine will. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision of the spirit world</th>
<th>Book of Moses</th>
<th>Apocalypse of Abraham</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moses … beheld the world upon which he was created … and all the children of men which are, and which were created (1:8)</td>
<td>And I saw there a great crowd of men, and women, and children … before they were created (21:7, 22:2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circular hypocephalus representing the universe, its two vertical divisions representing light and life (right side) and darkness and death (left side) (Facsimile 2, Book of Abraham)</td>
<td>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)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>among all these were many of the noble and great ones … These I will make my rulers (Abraham 3:22, 23)</td>
<td>Those on the right side … are the people set apart … to be born of you and to be called my people (22:5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

**Vision of the spirit world.** Both Moses 1 and ApAb include a vision of the premortal spirit world. Moses is shown the “world upon which he was created” — which arguably refers to the creation of humankind before Creation in the preexistent spirit realm — and “all the children of men which are, and which were created.” Likewise, in ApAb, Abraham is shown “a great crowd of men, and women, and children” before they “came into being.” 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,” 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.” Rubinkiewicz is careful to clarify that the term used for “picture” likely refers to something more like a “model” or “likeness” of heaven and earth than a photographic reproduction. He observes that “the idea that the model of the created world existed before Creation is widespread in the apocryphal literature.”
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.” In biblical cosmology, circles are used to “indicate the horizon where the earth comes together with the sky.”

In light of Hugh Nibley’s extensive analysis of circular depictions of the cosmos, 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,’ in which the human race, God’s people and the others, confront each other beneath or within the circle of the starry heavens, on opposite halves of the picture.”

[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.”

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.”

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.” Significantly, these figures correspond to “the canopic figures, figure 6 on [Book of Abraham] Facsimile 2.” 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”) “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).”

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.\textsuperscript{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

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

*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 gesture 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.](image)

Note that Jesus is depicted as having two right hands, consistent with related accounts of God in Jewish Midrash.

**Moses Defeats Satan**

**Satan disrupts the worship of God.** Recalling Satan’s encounter with Christ in the wilderness, 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*.”

According to David Halperin, Satan’s tactics to deceive Abraham is a “last-ditch effort to retain his privileged place in heaven.” If he can persuade Abraham “not to make his ascent, he will perhaps be able to keep his own privileged status.”
Satan disrupted 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. In the Book of Moses, the prophet questions Satan directly. By way of contrast, in ApAb, the angel Yaho’el mediates Abraham’s question. But it is an interesting sort of mediation, as indicated by the following summary of the conversation flow:

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

Nowhere does Satan address Yaho’el.

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

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

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

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.
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.” In ApAb, Satan’s false pretensions and the prophet’s right to glory are both confirmed by the affirmation of Yaho’el that Satan’s heavenly garment is now reserved for Abraham and that his erstwhile glory will be exchanged for Adam’s bodily “corruption.”

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!”

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!” 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!” To ward off further danger, the angel gives Abraham a stern warning: “Answer him not! … lest his [i.e., Satan’s] will affect you.” In the Book of Moses, the goal of Satan’s demand is expressed more directly: “Worship me.”
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)

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 (The Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth, 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.”

Moses Calls Upon God; Hears a Voice

| 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.\textsuperscript{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 “\textit{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.\textsuperscript{194}

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

Importantly, however, the divine whisper or echo (Hebrew \textit{bat kōl} בַּת קֹל — literally, “daughter of the voice”) through which, in Jewish tradition, divine revelation continued aurally even after the open visions of the prophets had ceased,\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{198}
Table 9. Resemblances for Moses Calls Upon God; Hears a Voice (Moses 1:24–26).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seeing God</th>
<th>Book of Moses</th>
<th>Apocalypse of Abraham</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>calling upon the name of God, he beheld his glory (1:25; cf. 1:31)</td>
<td>the Eternal One … you will not see (16:3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing through the veil</td>
<td>he heard a voice (1:25). Cf. 1:27: and while the voice was still speaking</td>
<td>And while he [the angel] was still speaking (17:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many waters</td>
<td>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)</td>
<td>behold a fire was coming toward us … and a sound [voice] … like a sound of many waters (17:1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 kōl205), 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.\textsuperscript{212}

In contrast to \textit{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.”\textsuperscript{214} His experience parallels that of Adam and Eve, when they also “called upon the name of the Lord” in sacred prayer.\textsuperscript{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, \textsuperscript{216} for they were shut out from his presence.”\textsuperscript{217} The “way toward the Garden of Eden” is, of course, the path that terminates in “the way of the Tree of Life.”\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{219} To proceed further, the veil must be opened to the petitioner.

In Moses 1 and \textit{ApAb}, multiple openings of multiple veils are signified explicitly if somewhat cryptically. We observe that in Moses 1:25, a significant \textit{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 \textit{inclusio} closes in similar fashion but states, significantly, that Moses \textit{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, \textit{and talked with him face to face}.” Sandwiched between the opening and closing of the \textit{inclusio} is a phrase that is intriguing
because at first blush it seems both gratuitous and inexplicable: “as the voice was still speaking.”

To our surprise, we discovered that *ApAb* repeats variants of a similar phrase (e.g., “And while he was still speaking”). 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* — 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.

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, namely as “a kind of ‘visionary screen.’” After the vision closes, Moses stands “in the presence of God” and talks with him “face to face.”

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. 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. 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.”

**Passing through the veil: The voice of the petitioner.** In ancient literature, passage through the veil is frequently accompanied not only with the sorts of divine utterance just described but also with human speech. For example, instances of formal prayer and exchanges of words at the veil are variously described in Egyptian ritual texts, Jewish pseudepigrapha, and the Book of Mormon. 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.”

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. Unlike other pseudepigraphal accounts of heavenly ascent, *ApAb* “treats the [hymn] sung by the visionary as *part of the means of achieving*
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.” Then, “while [he] was still reciting the [hymn],” the veil opens and the throne of glory appears to his view.

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 apocalyptical text.” 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.

“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.” 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
The triumphant procession of a conqueror returning from war.”

“The heavenly light is of dazzling brilliance, the divine voice is like thunder.”

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.”

Elsewhere, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Matthew L. Bowen 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.” 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. 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.”

Moreover, as God explains the significance of Moses’ name, He links it with one of His own titles: “Almighty.” Fittingly, the divine name of “Almighty” in Moses 1:4, 25 recalls the demonstration of God’s power over the waters of chaos as the first act of Creation.

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. Moreover, E. R. Goodenough summarizes Philo’s view on the deification of Moses in ancient Jewish tradition as follows:

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.”

Moses’s Vision at the Veil

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

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.” Now, after ascending to heaven, he “cast his eyes” down to see the earth and all of its inhabitants. Similarly, Abraham is told, “Look now beneath your feet at the expanse [i.e., veil] and contemplate the creation and those who inhabit it.”

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.” 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” 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

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


**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.”

Beneath the throne are fiery seraphim and many-eyed “wheels” praising God. The throne is surrounded by a series of heavenly veils 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.

**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, 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.” The Lord’s voice commanded Abraham to “look,” and a series of heavenly veils were opened beneath his feet. As in Moses chapters 2–3, Abraham is shown the heavenly plan for creation — “the creation that was depicted of old 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).” When Abraham is told again to “Look … at the picture,” he sees Satan inciting the Fall of Adam and Eve (23:1–14), just as Moses saw these events following his own heavenly ascent (Moses 4).

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.

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. 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.”

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. 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.

Could it be that Moses 1 was revealed rather than simply imagined? With a generous openness to Joseph Smith’s claim of the exercise of seeric gifts, Samuel Zinner, a non-Latter-day Saint who is a lifelong scholar of ancient scripture and pseudepigrapha suggests that it might prove fruitful to apply to Joseph Smith’s modern-era Enoch writings Michael Stone’s 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.

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


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


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–xlv.


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.


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).


Moses 1:27.

Kulik, Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha, 17:1, p. 22; 18:1, p. 23; 19:4, p. 25; 30:1, p. 34.

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.

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.

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.


Book of Mormon figures personally known to Joseph Smith include Lehi, Nephi, Moroni, and apparently others. See ibid., 129–31.


Frederick, “Intertextuality in the Book of Mormon.”


> 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.


> 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).

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).

Frederick also discusses a criterion of “sequence” in “Intertextuality in the Book of Mormon.”

Ibid.

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.


41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.


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.)


46 See, e.g., Hebrews 6:18–20; Revelation 11:19.


E.g., Ibid., 45, pp. 296–99.


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.)

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).


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 addressed 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’an (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 Muhammad’s celestial journey).”


Given the conclusion of credible scholars that ApAb provided inspiration for at least some elements of the accounts of Muhammad’s night journey, the conjecture that, in similar fashion, earlier traditions about the heavenly ascents of Abraham and Moses could have been appropriated for use in ApAb is strengthened. The Qur’an itself mentions the “books of Moses … and of Abraham” (Allama Abdullah Yusuf Ali, ed., The Holy Qur’an: Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary [Lahore, Pakistan: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, 2001], 53:36–37, p. 1382; 87:19, p. 1638), which are also called “the Books of the earliest [Revelation] [al-ṣuhuf al-ūlā]” (ibid., 87:18, p. 1638). We should not automatically assume that this sacred text imagined the kinds of stories one reads about these prophets in the Bible. Rather, it seems more plausible to presume,
as some scholars have argued explicitly (e.g., ibid., 1648n6094) that the books referred to were “apparently not the Pentateuch, or the Tawrat [Torah], but some other book or books now lost” (ibid., 1570n5110). Such arguments presume that early readers of the Qur’ān 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).


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).


60 Ludlow, “Abraham’s Vision of the Heavens.”

61 Clark, “A Prologue to Genesis,” 129–42.


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”).

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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:


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


69 Photographs of the originals of the illustrations are from \textit{Otkrovenie Avraama} (\textit{Apocalypse of Abraham} or \textit{ApAb}), which comprises pages 328–375 of the \textit{Codex Sylvester}. The \textit{Codex Sylvester}, “the oldest and the only independent manuscript containing the full text of \textit{ApAb}” (Kulik, \textit{Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha}, 3), is known to scholars as manuscript “\textit{S}.” It is the only illustrated manuscript of \textit{ApAb}. Photographs of the illustrations from the original manuscript are published in this article for the first time with the kind permission of the \textit{Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov} (RGADA — Russian State Archive of Early Acts, formerly TsGADA SSSR = Central State Archive of Early Acts) in Moscow. We express our sincere gratitude to Evgeniy Rychalovskiy, Head of the Publication Department, and Vladislav Rzheutsky, of the German Historical Institute in Moscow, for their assistance on 4 and 6 December 2019. Within the RGADA collection, the \textit{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. \textit{Otkrovenie Avraama} (\textit{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/

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).

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.


Kulik, Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha, 83. See also Orlov, “The pteromorphic angelology of the Apocalypse of Abraham,” 205–207. For an erudite description of the proliferation and usages of this mythical animal from its origins in Egypt from the late fourth millennium onward, see Nicholas Wyatt, “Grasping the griffin: Identifying and characterizing the griffin in Egyptian and West Semitic tradition,” Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections 1, no. 1 (2009): 29-39, https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index.php/jaei/article/view/8/11. Wyatt suggests “a symbolic equivalence” (ibid., p. 30) of the griffin and the sphinx in its Egyptian form. He argues that the figure of an eagle in Judeo-Christian iconography derived from Ezekiel’s chariot vision is actually a falcon, derived from Egyptian royal symbolism. Wyatt relates the griffin to the iconography of the cherubim and seraphim, and to solar and royal symbolism down to modern times.

Though, as Wyatt notes, in Egyptian art the wings are not explicitly portrayed (Wyatt, “Grasping the griffin,” 29).


Ibid., 207.

Nibley, Abraham in Egypt, 57.


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

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).


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).


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.)


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.

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 Neferirmub: A Translation and Commentary [Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2010], 18), though he could represent a deity (Richard H.

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 $\text{yahwh}'l$ (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)

Translation of caption: “And the angel said to me, all these many [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).
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).


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


> 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 Vetereis Testamenti Pseudepigrapha* 9, ed. A. M. Denis and M. De Jonge (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 379–418.

Moses 1:4.


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

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).


112 Moses 1:6.


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 \( \text{agapetos kai monos} = \text{loved-and-only} \) 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 (\textit{De migratione Abrahamo}),” in \textit{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 \textit{The Works of Philo Judaeus}, ed. and trans. Charles Duke Yonge, Vol. 1 [London: George Bell and Sons, 1890], 207–41, https://archive.org/stream/worksofphilojuda0lyonguoft#page/206/mode/2up, 10 (43), p. 99)


Likewise, in the later Jewish Septuagint revisions:

Genesis 22:2 of Aquila “take your son Isaac, your only-begotten (\( \text{monogenēs} \)) 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 (\( \text{monogenēs} \)) son, from me.”

In contrast in Proverbs 4:3 Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion all have \( \text{monogenēs} \) 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 (\( \text{plerēs charitos kai alētheias} \)) is a rendering of the Hebrew in Exodus 34:6

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.


124 Rubinkiewicz, L’Apocalypse d’Abraham, 175n1.

125 Ibid.


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).


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]).

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.

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

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

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

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

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 18:1–21; 25; Deuteronomy 1:13).

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’an 7:172; 30:30; 33:7; 53:56; Muhammad ibn Abd Allah al-Kisa’i, Tales of the Prophets (Qisas al-anbiya), trans. Wheeler M. Thackston, Jr. [Chicago: KAZI Publications, 1997], 63–64; G. Weil, ed., The Bible, the Koran, and the Talmud or, Biblical Legends of the Mussulmans, Compiled from Arabic Sources, and Compared with Jewish Traditions, Translated from the German (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1863), 39–40; https://books.google.com/books?id=_jYMAAAAIAAJ; 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.


Paulsen-Reed, Origins of the Apocalypse of Abraham, 93.

Ibid., 98. For more details, see the thorough discussion of the issue in ibid., 88–100.

Translation of caption: “I heard a voice saying, Here Olu, 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).

In the Ezekiel mural at Dura Europos, the “hand from heaven” is specifically associated with the “revivification 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).


In classic iconography, the gesture being given by God represented the spoken word. This is consistent with the mention of the heavenly voice in

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.


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 See D&C 129:8.

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).


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=-rJWWAAAACAAJ).


167 Margaret Barker, The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1991),


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/latterdaysaints01unse/latterdaysaints01unse.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.


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.


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).

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).


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-Philo: 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.*

Moses 1:21.


Moses 1:24.

Moses 1:1.

Kevin L. Barney, e-mail to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, June 21, 2006.

Cf. 2 Corinthians 12:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Moses 7:27.

Moses 6:64.

2 Corinthians 12:2.


“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).
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 \textit{bat qōl} [echo, distant voice, whisper] is given (Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, \textit{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 \textit{Approaching Zion}, ed. Don E. Norton, \textit{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 \textit{Akedah} in the Beth Alpha synagogue (Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, \textit{Illustrations} [New York: Pantheon Books, 1953], figure 638), where the message of the \textit{bat qōl} is represented in Hebrew words written below the hand that explicitly tell Abraham “do not raise [your hand against the boy]” (\textit{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, \textit{Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue} [New York: Pantheon Books, 1964], 9:71; cf. Kraeling et al., \textit{The Synagogue}, 57). However, extending the meaning of the hand in Beth Alpha, the hand at Dura may have been intended to signify \textit{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, \textit{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 \textit{Codex Sylvester}.

“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

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.

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.”)


> 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.


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 idíou huiou. This phrase is sometimes rendered “only son” since idíou 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.


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 1*, 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?’"


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.


208 See Ether 2:22–25.


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

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


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*).


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.

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).

Our search through the relevant literature revealed no commentary discussing this odd, repeated phrase.


Moses 1:31.


Ibid., 30:1, p. 34; Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 30:1, p. 704.


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:


232 See Bradshaw, “Faith, Hope, and Charity,” 103–104.

233 See ibid., p. 103.


236 Himmelfarb, Ascent to Heaven, 64, emphasis added.


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


242 Of course, it could be argued that Moses has implicitly ascended from the telestial 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.


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


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].)


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. Bradahaw, 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.


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,
 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.


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).


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.


266 Ether 3:20; cf. Moses 1:27.


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, Teaching of the Pearl of Great Price, 117.

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

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).

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)

Moses 1:30.

Ibid., 26:1, p. 30.

See Moses 2.

See Moses 1:39.


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).

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).

Moses 1:31.

See Kulik, “Slavonic Apocrypha and Slavic Linguistics,” 263.


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)


287 From the text of manuscript K. See Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 697 n. c.

288 Ibid., 17:5, p. 697.

289 Adela Yarbro Collins explains her view of the relationship between God the Father, Christ, and the angels in the writings of Paul as follows:

In the prose poem or hymn of Philippian [2:6], Paul portrays the pre-existent Christ as being “in the form of God.” This phrase does not refer to being God or being divine in the fullest sense. Otherwise, the “hyper-exaltation” after his death on the cross would lose its rhetorical force (Philippians 2:9). Thus “being in the form of God” is best understood as being a heavenly being, probably some sort of angel. The hyper-exalted state of Christ, historically interpreted, is best thought of as being the principal angel. The principal angel in some ancient Jewish texts is the angel who bears the name of God, such as
Yaho’el in the Apocalypse of Abraham, and is closest to and most like God. That the pre-existent Christ, who became the earthly Jesus, was transformed and became the highest angel is analogous to the transformation of the human Enoch into the exalted angel Metatron, whom God gives the name “The lesser YHWH” (Alexander, “3 [Hebrew Apocalypse of] Enoch,” 12:5, p. 265). Thus, when the bodies of Paul and the members of his communities are “conformed to his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21) they will become like those of the angels. (Adela Yarbro Collins, “Paul, Jewish mysticism, and spirit possession,” in Apocalypticism and Mysticism in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity, ed. John J. Collins, Pieter G. R. de Villiers, and Adela Yarbro Collins [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018], 94.)

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

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.

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

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)

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).

D&C 130:9.


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.”


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

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.”


> 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.

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).


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.


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).
On the temple ordinances that enable one to receive revelation, see Smith, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 53–54n19.


David K. Hart, e-mail message to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, January 29, 2009.