

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF
ABRAHAM
IN THE LIGHT OF EXTRA-CANONICAL
JEWISH WRITINGS**

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INTRODUCTION

There have been many misunderstandings between Judaism and Mormonism regarding the various concepts found in each religion. This project will be devoted to looking at the concepts found in the Book of Abraham and attempting to find parallels in light of extra-Canonical Jewish writings.

The Book of Abraham portrays a broad spectrum of concepts that at first glance might seem foreign to Judaism. Creation is described in the Book of Abraham as denying the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*. This world was created by God fashioning the already existing materials present in the world. The existence of a pre-mortal soul is emphatically portrayed as the pre-mortal existence of the spirit children of God. These spirit children were foreordained before their mortal births to perform their missions on earth. Abraham is viewed as being the rightful heir of the Melchizedek Priesthood. This was transmitted to him by Melchizedek, himself. The Book of Abraham also states that Abraham possessed the Urim and Thummim with which he was able to see many wonderful things. Detailed investigation of these concepts with the light of Jewish writings will be the domain of this dissertation.

Statement of the Problem

The above paragraph notes that there has been much misunderstanding between Mormonism and Judaism regarding the concepts found within the teachings of Mormonism. There is evidence that these misunderstandings can be alleviated if a better knowledge of Judaism and Jewish writings come to the forefront. The purpose of this study is to present an orderly exposition of evidence of parallelism regarding the concepts found in those two arena. The purpose, therefore, is to bring those concepts to the attention of the reader by correlating these concepts as found in Jewish literature with the Book of Abraham. This project was undertaken with the assumption that a comparative study aide of those two areas would allow a conclusion to be drawn as to the meaning, effect or significance of the similarities. It is assumed as a preliminary hypothesis that by showing similarities within the two traditions, a better understanding of the relevance that these literary works bear upon each other will result.

Delimitations

Ninety per cent of the data accumulated comes from the traditional ancient Hebrew texts; the rest of the research was devoted to modern discoveries and how they validate these texts. Throughout the research, one purpose was always present: to show the parallels between the Book of Abraham and Jewish literature.

The Midrash was the main Jewish source for it is a running commentary on the Bible as viewed by the Rabbis. There is no other commentary so rich in concepts as the Midrash. The Mishnah and Talmud were also used as a source when the Midrash proved fruitless.

Many times, medieval commentaries were employed to sum up and verify the traditions put forth by earlier sources.

The Book of Abraham was the main source, in regard to Mormon doctrine, for it was from it that the concepts to be investigated were taken. To verify these concepts, the Doctrinal Commentary of the Pearl of Great Price, The Story of the Pearl of Great Price, and Pearl of Great Price Commentary were used. Mormon Doctrine was also employed to clarify concepts that were hazy.

Other commentaries and general exegetical works consulted during the course of this study are cited in the Bibliography.

Other books of Sacred Scripture are likewise cited, in the text if quoted, or in the Bibliography, if reference to them was made.

Manner of Collation and Presentation of Data

Every occurrence of any concept in the Book of Abraham was located and copied out with a sufficient portion of the context to be meaningful. This was organized as to its relationship to Jewish literature.

Brief analyses and evaluation of the significance of both, Jewish literature and Book of Abraham, are presented chapter by chapter, and some of the implications of these are summarized at the end of each chapter.

Concerning the Language in Which the Data is Presented

The research for this study was necessarily done in the languages of the documents studied: Hebrew and Aramaic. The passages marked for consideration in this study were, as indicated in the previous section, classified and evaluated before being translated into English and copied into this report. This process was adopted for two primary reasons:

(1) Since the study is concerned with concepts and their meanings, the third language, English in this case, served as a common denominator for expressing the meaning of each concept found.

While it would be desirable for those readers who understand Hebrew and Aramaic to see the passages selected in its original forms throughout, for many, however scholarly in related fields, but lacking training in those languages, only the conclusions would be available for evaluation. The compromise presentation of translation and transliteration seemed to be a suitable vehicle for conveying meaning to all readers.

I. JEWISH LITERATURE

This first chapter is devoted to a detailed description of Midrash, Mishnah, Tosefta, and Gemara, in order to acquaint the reader with the sources and origins from which Jewish concepts originated. Therefore, this chapter is divided into three sections, each dealing with one of the three aforementioned topics. These three mayor branches of Jewish literature constitute the world of the Talmud.

The basic method by which the Ora1 Torah was developed in Judaism was the Midrash. The word derives from the Hebrew daruah, which means "to probe" or "to search." Midrash was a process of probing into the written text of the Bible to deal with the various problems suggested by it. These problems varied from the obscurities of linguistics to ideology. They ranged from the quest for the simple elucidation of a text to the quest for underlying principles of theology, ethics, or law that might be applicable to new situations in need of guidance, when explicit direction was missing in the biblical text.

The masters of the Midrash in some cases are clearly innovators, but their probing is an attempt to find some clue, even if indirect, in the biblical text so as to establish continuity between the old and the new. The Midrash that concerns itself with law is called Midrash Halacha; the term Halacha referring to law. The non-legal Midrash is called Midrash Haggadah; Haggadah; the term Haggadah conveying the sense of a general utterance in any realm of thought except law. The dialectic of the Talmud is an exemplification of the midrashic method, and to understand this method is to grasp the process by which the Talmud moves from the confrontation of a problem toward its solution.

Midrash forms a major part of the contents of the Talmud. But as is noted later on, there are other elements in the Talmud besides Midrash. There is, for example, the pronouncement of law or doctrine, without reference to the chain of reasoning by which these are related to the biblical source. The primary source of Midrash is not in the Talmud proper, but in a number of special midrashic works called Midrashim. Quotes from a number of these works are inserted throughout this dissertation.

Among the Midrashim are the Sifre and Tanhuma. Sifre is one of the oldest Midrashim, dating back to the second century C.E. Its title means "books," and it is an abbreviation from Sifre de-be Rav, or "The Books of the School." Its form is that of a running commentary on the biblical books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Tanhuma, so called after a teacher who directs the discussion in this volume, has been traced to the second half of the ninth century. It is a running commentary on each of the Five Books of Moses. The material covered in the two Midrashim is often the same, but there is variation in treatment. The material itself is, of course, much older, and the sources from which the compilers drew their material are of course, older than the date of compilation.

The Sifre is one of the oldest Midrashim and its tendency is to be terse in its comments. The Tanhuma as noted, often covers the same material but presents it more profusely, with incidents and parables and other biblical episodes to reinforce its point.

The observations of the Rabbis cited in the Midrash are not a total answer to certain mysteries, but they are a contribution to the answer. The linking of a text with another biblical passage that expresses more forcefully the interpretation chosen, and the citation of illustration from common experience, are all characteristic of the endeavor of midrashic writing to illuminate a text under discussion. In the process, the discussion seems to wander far afield, but the underlying ideas gain in depth and relevance for helping to meet the ongoing perplexities of life.

The Midrash has as its objective the clarification of the Bible, but sometimes it creates obscurities of its own. Many a midrashic passage is baffling because its idiom is unclear. All the problems that beset a biblical text often beset the midrashic text as well. The Bible tells us, "And the Lord said to Abraham, 'Get thee out of thy country, from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto the land which I will show thee.'"¹

Commenting on this verse, Rabbi Isaac is quoted as saying:

Abraham was like a man traveling from place to place and he continued to see a palace illuminated within. He said to himself, 'Can it be that the palace is without a master?' Then did the master of the palace look and say to him, 'I am the master of the palace.' Similarly did Abraham look out upon the world and say, 'Can it be that the world is without a master to guide it?' Then did the Holy One, praised be He, look out upon Abraham and say to him, 'I am the Master of the world.'²

The point of Rabbi Isaac's comment as here interpreted is that Abraham was sensitive to the teleology, or purposefulness, in the world. There was design, order, and purpose in all things in nature and this ruled out for him the absence of a guiding intelligence. The universe required a master to account for itself, as the palace surely had a master to direct its purposeful operation. It was because Abraham revealed this sensitivity that God saw him as a fitting emissary, and called on him to undertake his ministry to the world, which commenced from his departure from his birthplace.

The key word in this interpretation is the Hebrew doleket. We have translated it as "illuminated." However, another translation for doleket is possible, one that is descriptive of both the palace and the world..."afire." The analogy invoked would then be to a person who beheld a palace afire and wondered whether there was no one who cared that such a stately edifice was being consumed by fire. Similarly Abraham saw that the world was being consumed by injustice and falsehood, and he wondered whether anyone really cared that the world was being destroyed. It was then that God revealed Himself to Abraham, and made it clear to him that He is the Sovereign of the world and that He indeed cares and it was because he saw in Abraham a sensitivity to the evils of his world that He deemed him a fitting emissary to reform the world. God therefore charged

Abraham to leave his birthplace and journey to a new land where he was now to commence a ministry of service to "all the families of the earth."

Which of these two interpretations is correct? It is difficult to resolve the question. Some commentators on the Midrash follow the one interpretation, others the other. The ambiguity of language gives each an element of legitimacy. The biblical text itself is silent on the subject. The Bible begins with Abraham's call. Rabbi Isaac projected imaginatively, as the authors of the Midrash often do, a plausible setting for this call.

Rabbi Isaac's exposition is not necessarily to be taken as a factual statement of what really transpired. The past has come down to us in meager records and we are ever engaged in a labor of imaginative reconstruction to make the past intelligible. In this labor of reconstruction, the past is seen in the light of the present. Contemporary experience is used as a clue to the past, but this is an inescapable procedure. The tools employed are the mind and heart, which acquire their predispositions from the existing world. Rabbi Isaac's statement is clearly an imaginative reading into the past of what was in his own mind and heart. But this does not make it false. Its value is partly in the light it sheds on the biblical world. Its value is also in the insights it conveys independently of the biblical text which evoked it.

This principle is vital to appreciation of the Midrash. Its expositions are frequently not meant as factual characterizations. They are suggested as being a kind of poetry. They are a work of creative imagination, which begins with a perception of the world and its condition, and of the values by which it may be redeemed and perfected. This perception is sometimes projected forward in to the unborn future and sometimes backward into the past. These imaginative flights are precious in themselves, because the perceptions in which they are rooted enrich mightily the treasury of wisdom and faith.

The midrashic collections quoted follow the running text of the Bible. There is also a group of midrashic works in which the order of biblical passages discussed follows the Torah readings on the Festivals and special Sabbaths. There are, in addition, a number of other special collections based on various books of the Bible or on special themes, which expound their lessons regardless of the order of biblical sources where these themes are dealt with. But all these works follow the method of the Midrashim from which quoted. It is recognized that the most comprehensive of all the midrashic collections is the Yalkut Shimeoni, compiled by Simon Karo, of the thirteenth century. His sources are usually the Talmud and the earlier midrashic works, but some of them clearly suggest that he had access to earlier works, a number of which have been lost to subsequent readers. The Yalkut is a summation of the entire treasure of midrashic literature and it covers almost all the books of the Bible. It is the richest single work in this vast literature that sums up more than a thousand years of Jewish thought and experience.

II

The method of Midrash, that was just examined, yielded a rich harvest to the development of Jewish tradition. Its chief asset was that it expressed the central position of the biblical text in the literary expansion which was inspired by it. The biblical text stood out like a jewel in the center. All around it was woven the rich tapestry of comment and elaboration that was characteristic of the Oral Torah.

The Midrash was ideally suited to serve the longings of the Jewish people for a literature of edification and inspiration. It has long been customary for Jews to study the Pentateuch in weekly installments. These were supplemented with selections from other books of the Bible. But instead of studying the bare biblical text, it came to be studied with the enriching embroidery of Midrash.

There was another need, however, that the Midrash could not meet. The Bible was not meant only for edification. One of its principal elements is law, and here a more rigorous approach is necessary. The legislation of the Bible is scattered in many different sections of the Pentateuch. Through the method of Midrash the biblical law was expanded and became a vehicle for disciplining life, but the new legal elaborations created by the masters of the Midrash were also scattered. Moreover, each legal statement-as evolved in the school of Midrash-was formulated in an elaborate and involved exposition. The process by which the new developments were inferred from the old provisions was preserved, with the arguments and proof texts and the give-and-take of academic dialectics.

Those interested in law felt the need for a work of simplification and systematization. They felt the need for a work that would state the legal formula succinctly without reference to the manner of its derivation, one that would organize the different provisions of the law along thematic lines without reference to the order in which the subject was treated in Scripture. Such a work was eventually created, and it has come down as the Mishnah.

The term Mishnah derives from the Hebrew word shanah, which means "to repeat" or "to study." The Mishnah is a source book of Jewish law, as it evolved from its biblical beginnings. It was edited by Rabbi Judah the Prince and his disciples who were active in Palestine in the third century C.E. Rabbi Judah utilized earlier collections of law, but he also engaged in original research. Its objective was to encompass all the legal opinions that had been pronounced by jurists in the preceding centuries.

The entire Mishnah states its provisions anonymously. This indicates that the jurists who had discussed the subject had reached unanimity. None had challenged those rulings. Whoever had taken the initiative in formulating those rulings cannot be determined from the Mishnah. The greatest triumph of a juror was to have the court adopt his views and propound them as his own.

How did the Jurists reach their decision in areas where the Bible is silent? An ingenious dialectic sometimes developed inferences from what is given in the biblical text. But beyond this dialectic there was the intrinsic logic of a situation which recommended certain courses of action

It is the nature of the Mishnah to ignore the considerations underlying a decision. Its rulings are presented categorically, as codified formulae of what should or should not be done.

Rabbinic literature also includes a work that parallels the Mishnah in content and in form; it is known as Tosefta, literally, a "supplement."

A precise definition of this work in relation to the Mishnah is not easy to offer. The editors of the Mishnah had apparently omitted much material in order to make their text as concise and brief as possible. Material excluded from the Mishnah was called baraita, Aramaic for "outside." The omitted material was also of interest to scholars, and in time a collection of some of this material was produced to create the Tosefta as a supplement to the mishnaic text. Subsequent editions of the Mishnah readmitted certain passages from the Tosefta to make for a fuller text. The Tosefta itself is divided, like the Mishnah, into orders and tractates that bear the same names as parallel divisions of the Mishnah.

Sometimes the statement in the Tosefta extends the discussion in the Mishnah by citing additional contingencies. Once understanding of the Mishnah is achieved, it becomes a simple matter to continue the discussion in the Tosefta text.

Note the following two passages: one from the Mishnah, the other from the Tosefta which parallels it, dealing with found property. It illustrates the closeness of the two texts, as well as their divergence.

If one found scrolls he should read in them once in thirty days. If he cannot read, then he should roll them out. However, he must not study from them a subject for the first time, nor may he permit another person to read with him.

If he found a garment, he should shake it out once in thirty days; he should spread it out for its benefit, but not so as to add to his own prestige.

Silver and copper vessels he may use if it is for their benefit, but not to the point where they become worn. Golden and glass vessels he is not to touch but leave them until the coming of Elijah.

If he came upon a sack or a basket or any object which he would not normally carry, he need not take it.³

If one found scrolls, he should read them once in thirty days. But he is not to read the weekly portion from Scripture and review it, nor is he to read it and then translate it. Three are not read from one volume, nor is he to unroll more than three folios at a time.

Simkus said, In the case of new books, he is to read them once in thirty days, but in the case of old books, he is to read from them once in twelve months.⁴

The other statements of the above Mishnah are similarly supplemented in the Tosefta, with additional provisions or illustrations, and, in some cases, with additional opinions by teachers whom the Mishnah had ignored.

The Mishnah and Tosefta are the two classic sources for the succinct formulations of rabbinic law. But the Mishnah was by far the more influential work and it has remained a basic landmark in the literary flowering of the Bible. To be sure, the Bible is not generally cited in the text of the Mishnah; but the Bible is the silent, invisible spring from which it flows on the far-reaching course of its development.

III

The Mishnah was a triumph in the history of Jewish tradition. In brief and succinct formulations it preserved for posterity the great treasures of rabbinic law. Zealously, students poured over its contents. By studying the Mishnah they were able to master the distillation of tradition which had grown from biblical beginning.. But in due time the literary history of tradition turned in a new direction and yielded a new harvest, called the Gemara (from the Aramaic gamor, which means "to learn") or "The Teaching. "

How was the Mishnah studied? The first objective was to master its immediate contents, to learn the formula itself, and to know how to associate the name of the scholars represented in the Mishnah with the views expressed by them. But the rabbinic mind was always impatient with the arbitrary, the dogmatic. It sought underlying principles; it sought a logic and rationale in man's life within the beliefs and practices of the Jewish faith. The rabbis sought a basis for the law in Scripture or in the exigencies of life and they sought a consistency in the various legal opinions of Jurists who created the system by which Jewish life was governed. They also allowed themselves to digress, to tell an anecdote, a parable, or a piece of folklore, or to recall some historic event, or invoke some religious or moral observation, at times only remotely bearing on the subject under discussion.

The Mishnah also served as the basis for legal decisions by jurists who held judicial positions within the Jewish community. The Mishnah, as was mentioned previously, was edited in the third century C.E. Jewry then lived within a larger non-Jewish world, in Palestine as part of the Roman Empire, and in Babylonia as part of the Parthian Empire. But both these empires allowed the Jews a large measure of autonomy, which included the right to maintain their courts where the Jewish law was administered. The Mishnah was the source book of law, but no legal formula applies itself automatically. There is always the continuing need of discussion and argument in which judges draw on their own discretion, as well as on the knowledge of the law, to assess the precedents of another age and evaluate their relevance for the new facts of life, in which there is always some element of novelty not anticipated by ancient formulations.

The Mishnah became the center of a vast intellectual endeavor spread over the centuries in the leading academies of Palestine and Babylonia, where the major Jewish communities existed. Various unofficial records were kept of these discussions but it was inevitable that these records should receive a more formal recognition, as a supplement commenting on and clarifying the Mishnah. As the Mishnah and Gemara are presently arranged, each individual Mishnah was followed by its appropriate Gemara. Not every tractate of the Mishnah was supplemented by the Gemara, only those that were of interest to the teachers who created the Gemara. The Palestinian Gemara, frequently called Yerushalmi, or Jerusalem Gemara, supplements thirty-nine of the sixty-three tractates of the Mishnah; the Babylonian (the "Bavli"), only thirty-seven. In scope, however, the latter is three times as large as the former, the Babylonian Gemara being more elaborate in its discussions. The same teachers are often represented in the two Gemaras, for the academies in both countries maintained contact and sought to bring their labors into mutual harmony. The Palestinian academies enjoyed the prestige of functioning in the Holy Land, while the Babylonian academies enjoyed the advantage of a more flourishing Jewish community. For in post-mishnaic times the Jewish community of Babylonia had overtaken Palestine as a center of Jewish culture and life.

The teachers who are represented in the Mishnah are called tannaim, those represented in the Gemara are called amoraim. Both terms are Aramaic. Tanna means "a teacher," amora means "a lecturer."

The Mishnah has often been edited as an independent text, but the Gemara does not appear separately. It is broken down into sections relevant to the individual Mishnayot to which they are added as a supplement. The Mishnah and Gemara as an integrated text constitute what is called the Talmud. The Palestinian Talmud was edited sometime in the fifth century, while the Babylonian Talmud was given its literary form by teachers who lived toward the end of the same century. In the two versions of the Talmud are the vast intellectual resources of one of the most brilliant epochs in the history of Judaism.

Sometimes the language of the Mishnah was not precise and it needed clarification. Sometimes a particular Mishnah appeared inconsistent with another Mishnah or a teacher quoted elsewhere in the Tannaitic tradition. The Gemara deals with these questions, seeking in every instance clarity and consistency. This phase of the Gemara usually clears up the apparent inconsistencies found in the Mishnah.

It is also appropriate to note that the scholars often reflected their own world. Prayer at sunrise has an exhilarating quality, but in an urban society where people rise at a later hour, this would be clearly impossible and it could not have been held up as the norm. The urging of prayer at an early hour would presuppose a rural setting or perhaps working habits of people in the cities where it is customary to awake at early hours.

A frequent preoccupation of the Gemara is to resolve apparent contradictions between several Mishnayot and a Tannaitic statement in another stratum of this literature, or between a Mishnah and the views of an Amora for whom the consensus reached in the Mishnah should have been authoritative law.

Some of the most precious information we have concerning the lives and times of the talmudic epoch have come down in historical notes scattered in the pages of the Gemara as incidental observations or digressions from the main theme.

The teachers of the Gemara, in some cases, invented parables to speak for them. When reflecting on Roman power they felt especially inhibited against speaking directly. Shifting their observations to another epoch, reading the incident into the behavior of other historic personalities, they achieved an apparent dissociation from the world around them, though the knowledgeable person could have had little difficulty in recognizing their meaning.

The Gemara is the fascinating labyrinth in which the details of a legal system are spun out for all to see. But sometimes the masters of the Gemara are reminded of the peril posed by an over-concentration on details, which obscures the larger goals served by the law. They therefore seek to relate those details to the general value concepts expressed by them. The particularities of practice demanded by the detailed provision of the law are thus shown to be a means to a larger end. This end is the larger goal or Justice, or mercy, or love--the love of God and the love of man.

The Gemara became, in turn, a new subject for commentaries and supercommentaries, which have continued to be written by zealous students of this mighty branch of Jewish literature. But with the completion of the Gemara is reached the most important landmark. Together with the Mishnah, around which it is embroidered as a clarifying supplement, it makes up the Talmud, into which all previous literary creations of Judaism flowed and from which all subsequent creations derived their major directions and scope.

II. PRE-MORTAL EXISTENCE

Introduction to the Book of Abraham

The Pearl of Great Price is one of the four books of Scripture of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and is presented as the word of God. The Book of Abraham is one of the books present in the Pearl of Great Price. It is believed that the Book of Abraham exhibits & glowing example of revelation from God to man. It furthers the Mormon concept of continuous revelation.

The Book of Abraham is & translation of an ancient papyrus scroll, codified and translated by Joseph Smith in 1835. It was finally published in 1842. The book asserts that Abraham was the original author and therein contains information regarding the Gospel, the nature of God, pre-mortal existence, priesthood and creation.

The information contained in the Book of Abraham is otherwise unobtainable from any other scripture of book in existence today. It is this information that will be investigated in the light of Jewish literature

Unlike the L.D.S. theology and the Book of Abraham, Judaism does not claim as one of its foundations the concept of pre-mortal existence. However, the concept of pre-mortal existence appears in Jewish history as a common tenet of the religion, i.e., that in one period of Jewish history this concept was very prevalent in Jewish thought.

According to Dr. Hyrum Andrus, the Book of Abraham, "affirms that man existed as a conscious entity before coming to this earth; and in that state of life, many organized spirits acquired great intelligence and power,"⁵ He further adds that "Abraham made clear that the 'intelligences that were organized before the world' existed were spirits."⁶ Therefore, even Abraham had existence in pre-earth life. As the Book of Abraham states:

"Abraham, thou art one of them; thou west chosen before thou west born."⁷

The concept of pre-mortal existence therefore runs through the Book of Abraham like a thread constantly tying up this concept with pre-earth existence, creation, and a life after this world. The Book of Abraham regards these "spirits" or "intelligences" in the affirmation that "They are gnolaum, or eternal."⁸

With this in mind, what is Judaism's, or to be more specific, Jewish literature's point of view with respect to pre-mortal existence?

To begin with, it must be stated that today, in 1968, Judaism does not reckon with the concept, for to Judaism today it does not exist. However, this does not mean that never did this concept have any effect or influence on the Jewish mind. On the contrary, it

surely did. At one time during the long history of Judaism, pre-mortal existence was very much a part of the philosophy of Judaism.

But before any discussion of pre-mortal existence in Jewish literature is attempted, a brief study of the Hebrew word for "soul" or "spirit" is needed. The Hebrew word nefesh (soul) is used in many senses; it has different shades of meaning in different contexts. It denotes the principle of life, the thing that constitutes a living being. "Man became a living being" (nefesh chaya) when God had "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (nishmat chayim).⁹ The Torah applies nefesh chaya to animals as well as men, "since the life of a living body is in its blood,"¹⁰ "for blood is life."¹¹ Though life and blood are not quite identical, the blood is the principal carrier of life.

Since the term nefesh is related to the verbs nashaf and nashav (to blow), as in Exodus 15:10 and Isaiah 40:7, it is defined as that which breathes, the breathing substance or being, the soul, the inner being of man. Hence the expression, "nafcha nafsha,"¹² "she breathed out her soul." Nefesh is used for life itself as well as for an individual person; as in Exodus 21:23 ("life for life") and Numbers 23:10; Judges 16:30. The verb yinafash (Exodus 23:12; II Samuel 16:14) is employed in the sense of taking breath, refreshing oneself.

The terms "ruach" and neshama" are sometimes used synonymously to denote spirit and breath. The dualism of human nature, consisting of body and soul, is frequently mentioned in talmudic-midrashic literature. All beliefs about souls are related to the doctrine of the revivification of the dead. The souls of all generations are said to have been created at the beginning of the world, and kept until the time of their birth in a heavenly repository called "guf" (body). One of the daily morning prayers, borrowed from the Talmud reads as follows:

My God, the soul which Thou hast placed within me is pure. Thou hast created it; Thou hast formed it; Thou hast breathed it into me. Thou preserves" it within me; Thou wilt take it from me and restore it to me in the hereafter. So long as the soul is within me, I offer thanks before Thee... Lord of all souls... who restores" the souls of the dead.¹³

In this devout meditation, the term "neshama" is used repeatedly for "soul." The talmudic sages hold that the body is not the prison of the soul but its medium for development and improvement. Jewish spirituality combines heaven and earth, as it were. It does not separate soul from body or mind from nature, but understands man and history in the unity of man's physical and spiritual life. Accordingly, the soul must not boast that it is more holy than the body, for only in that it has climbed down into the body and works through its limbs can the soul attain perfection. The body, on the other hand, may not brag of supporting the soul, for when the soul leaves, the flesh falls into decay.

According to the kabbalistic teachings, the destiny of every soul is to return to the source whence it came. Those who in their earthly existence failed to develop that purity and perfection necessary for gaining access to their heavenly source above must undergo

incarnation in another body, and even repeat that experience more than once until they are permitted to return to the celestial region in a purified form.

The Bible states that Man was endowed with life by a "spirit" or "breath" (wind) by the Creator.¹⁴ The Bible further states: "The spirit shall return unto God who gave it."¹⁵ It is, therefore, seen that Jewish thought had to reckon from the beginning with a concept of a nefesh given to man by God. The nefesh had to exist before Man in order for it to be given to him. The Wisdom of Solomon states that when the body returns to earth its possessor "is required to render back the soul which was lent him."¹⁶

However, an even more explicit statement of the doctrine of the pre-mortal existence of the soul is found in the Apocrypha: "All souls prepared before the foundation of the world."¹⁷ According to another apocryphal book, the number of the righteous who are to come into the world is foreordained from the beginning.¹⁸ All souls are, therefore, pre-mortal, although the number of those which are to become incorporated is not determined at the very first. We have a statement made by the Midrash, that is ever more explicit than any of the previous sources.

The Midrash Kee Tov, states that before the creation of the present world there were 1,972 generations. During this time all the souls of the righteous were present including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, etc. It ends with the following statement: "They [souls] were with God before the creation of the world."¹⁹

There is also a tradition found in rabbinic literature that each and every soul which shall be from Adam until the end of the world, was formed during the six days of Creation and was in paradise, being present also at the revelation on Sinai ... At the time of conception, God commanded the angel, who is the prefect of the spirits saying:

'Bring me such a spirit which is in paradise and has such a name and such a form; for all spirits which are to enter the body exist from the day of creation of the world until the earth shall pass away " The spirit answered, 'Lord of the world' I am content with the earth, where I have lived since Thou didst create me.' God spoke to the soul saying: 'The world into which you now enter is more beautiful than this.'²⁰

This statement brings to mind the following concept found in the Book of Abraham:

And they who keep the first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads forever and ever.²¹

Throughout Jewish thought it is apparent that man is placed on this earth to be proved. Many times in the Bible the concept of God proving man is found. Adam was proved and so was Abraham. What is the entire book of Job, amongst other things, if not a kind of proving!

The Midrash Tanhuma Pekude, just quoted, reveals a spirit (soul) that was placed on earth. It had a shape and form. Presumably the soul passed the test--or it "kept the second estate," and therefore would be rewarded with an existence "even more beautiful" than the present,-i.e., "shall have glory added upon their heads forever and ever."

Similar to the Book of Abraham, Jewish writings confirm that the spirit (soul) has its origins in the Supreme Intelligence, in which the forms of the living existence may already be distinguished from one another.

At the time the Holy One, Blessed Be He, desired to create the world, it came in His will before Him, and He formed all the souls which were prepared to be given afterward to the children of men; and all were formed before Him.²²

The Book of Enoch relates that before God created the world, He held a consultation with the souls of the righteous. It speaks of an assembly of the holy and righteous ones in heaven under the wings of the Lord of the spirits with the Elect (the Messiah) in their midst.²³ Enoch especially mentions the "first fathers and the righteous who have dwelt in that place (paradise) from the beginning."²⁴ In fact, it is a "congregation of the righteous" in heaven that will appear in the Messianic time.²⁵ It also states that the Elect who had been hidden will be revealed with them.²⁶ Practically the same sentence is employed in IV Esdras when it states that "the hidden Messiah will be revealed together with all those that are with him."²⁷

Jewish literature not only deals with the concept of the pre-mortal existence of souls, but also the concept that these very same pre-mortal souls served an important role in their pre-mortal existence. They were consulted with and did consult God on many vital matters, and especially on the matter of Creation. Amongst these souls are mentioned the Patriarchs who were part of the Merkabah.²⁸ The Merkabah was the Heavenly Throne. Therefore, the Patriarchs, in their pre-mortal life were part of the assembly to whom God consulted on various divine matters. This does not mean that God would change His mind after consultation, but only that these souls were consulted, or advised.

Jewish literature also affords the example of a mortal ascending to heaven and while there, he is shown the pre-mortal soul of a future teacher in Israel studying with his disciples the laws of the Torah. The Talmud states that when Moses ascended to heaven, he found God occupied ornamenting the letters in which the Torah was written, with little crown-like decorations. He inquired as to the significance of the crowns upon the letters, and was answered by God:

Hereafter there shall live a man called Akiba, son of Joseph, who will base in interpretation a gigantic mountain of Halachot, upon every dot of those letters.

Moses said to God: "Show me this man." God said: "Go back eighteen ranks." Moses went back to where he was bidden, and could hear the discussions of the teacher sitting with his disciples in the eighteenth rank but was not able to follow their discussions, which greatly grieved him. But just then he heard the disciples questioning their master in

regard. To a certain subject: "Whence doest thou know this?" And he answered, "This is a Halacha given to Moses on Mount Sinai," and now Moses was content.²⁹

This leads to another concept found in Jewish literature, vis., the concept of the pre-knowledge of the pre-mortal soul. The soul knew everything before entering the world.

A light burns on the head of the embryo by means of which he sees from one end of the world to the other, but that at the moment of its appearance on earth an angel strikes it on the mouth, and everything is forgotten.³⁰

The Book of Abraham, regarding the pre-mortal soul, affirms that:

God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them... and he said unto me... Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.³¹

In the Book of Abraham, the words "spirit" and "intelligence" are used interchangeably. God is the Supreme Intelligence. Intelligence implies a being, but it also implies knowledge. God, therefore, being the possessor of all knowledge, or the Supreme Knower. Now the Book of Abraham states that God saw that these souls were good. What would be the good to a Supreme Knower? What would be good to a being that considers intelligence a good? Another intelligence, another being that possesses knowledge. Then God tells Abraham that he is one of them. Abraham is, therefore, also one who possesses knowledge, or one who possessed knowledge in his pre-mortal existence. Then verse 23 continues with God telling, (or perhaps reminding) Abraham that he was already chosen--that in his pre-mortal life he had acquired this state. Abraham is in need of this information because he had forgotten all that was taught him. He, therefore, is now reminded. Only through this re-acquaintance with the past is Abraham able to begin his mission.

Dr. Andrus states:

Abraham was also shown the organized intelligences or spirits, of man, in his various states of existence, is a creature of the universe whose life is not confined to this mortal state.³²

The Book of Abraham reveals that these intelligences, spirits, or souls were not all alike, but some "more intelligent than others."³³ Abraham is told that Just as there are different phenomena in the mortal world, so did the souls of pre-earth man differ.

These concepts are not foreign to Jewish literature. As already stated on page 20, the body is not the prison of the soul. There are souls of different quality. Solomon says: "Now I was a child of parts, and a good soul fell to my lot; nay rather being good, I came into a body undefiled."³⁴ The term "good soul" presupposes that there are other types of souls,

Dr. Andrus believe a that the spirits were unequal but that each had the potential of being the "good" soul, i.e., to become like God. Since each spirit was independent of the other, it is correct to assume that they need not necessarily have been equal. Independence gives rise to indifference. And Abraham was thus informed.³⁵ Therefore, Dr. Andrus concludes, "Thus the basic point of Abraham's statement is that there was a gradation of intelligences among spirits."³⁶

Similarly, the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch distinguishes between righteous and common souls in the following passage, which describes the Messianic-period and what is characteristic of the concept of pre-mortal existence: :

The storehouses in which the fore-ordained number of souls is kept shall be opened, and the souls shall go forth, and the many souls shall appear all at once, as a host with one mind. And the first shall rejoice, and the last shall not be sad.³⁷

Comparisons, therefore, can be made; parallels do exist between the Book of Abraham and Jewish literature, with regards to pre-mortal existence. Similar to the Book of Abraham there is a pre-earth state of man, these souls are different, but have the potential of becoming equal. These souls are consulted and take part in the affairs of heaven. This analysis affords a fuller understanding of some areas of correspondence between Judaism, its beliefs and concepts, and those of the Book of Abraham.

Man is placed here to be proved, and if man is successful while on earth, then the Lord will accept the souls back to their eternal abode where they will have glory added upon their heads forever and ever."³⁸

III. CREATION

There are many problems that arise when one begins to discuss creation, for the study of it in the Hebrew text is a work for the specialist. Those who read the Bible in English bypass many of the problems posed by the original, which had to be coped with by the translator. He has to commit himself on the definition of each Hebrew word. He had to resolve the many obscurities of language which beset the original text, the ambiguities of phraseology, the unfamiliar allusions and idiomatic expressions. In many cases he has to consider the date to be ascribed to particular biblical books or portions of books, to give the allusions relevance. All literature presents such problems to one probing its meaning in depth, especially a literature written in an ancient language. Thousands of years separate the reader from the earliest record of the Hebrew Bible and it becomes a formidable task of scholarship to master its meaning. All the aids of linguistic science, including comparative philology and archeology, have to be invoked in this process. The translator has at his disposal a formidable body of commentaries which have wrestled with the study of the original Hebrew text. But once the translator has done his work and given the fruit of his labor, reading is performed without stumbling, unaware of the rough road by which he reached his destination. Consider, for example, the opening sentence of the Bible: "Bereshit bara Elohim." The very opening word, Bereshit, is beset with problems. It usually means "in the beginning." This may be taken to introduce the order of Creation, that in the beginning God created heaven and earth. But it may also be taken as a declaration of great antiquity, that "in the beginning, in the dim past, in the long, long ago, the events about to be narrated had their occurrence. On the other hand, the prefix "be" in Hebrew also means "with" and bereshit may be taken to mean "with the beginning." The rabbis showed that the Torah is sometimes described as "reshit," "the beginning." A design, a plan, indeed precedes all creation. The Torah is the blueprint of existence, and the opening sentence may, therefore, be taken to declare With the Torah (the beginning) God created heaven and earth."

The conventional translation of this verse, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth," has a Juxtaposition of words in the Hebrew which allows for an altogether different interpretation. The word for God, Elohim, may be the object as well as the subject of the sentence. In the pagan world where the Bible originally took form, the notion was current that the deity was born or created from a pre-mortal eternal substance. One of the common themes in pagan mythologies is the genealogy of the gods who procreate. Is there perhaps an echo of this notion in the opening sentence of the Bible? As far as the grammatical structure of this sentence goes, it may be conceivably rendered thus: "In the beginning he created God together with the heaven and the earth." This would certainly involve a doctrinal revolution in the understanding of biblical religion. The text needed interpretation to yield the traditional meaning which is generally given to it.

The problem with the word "Elohim" also exists. The form is plural. The belief of a plurality of gods is foreign to Jewry Why does the text then use a plural form "Elohim?"

Does this perhaps carry directly or indirectly an illusion to the conception of the deity prevalent at the time? It is interesting that Christian commentators have occasionally cited this usage as a support for Trinitarian conceptions. Here, for example, is a statement by Rev. Robert Jamieson in his commentary on Genesis:

By its use here in the plural form, it is obscurely taught at the opening of the Bible, a doctrine clearly revealed in other parts of it, that though God is one, there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead-Father, Son and Spirit, who were engaged in the creative Work.³⁹

Not quoting from Genesis, Joseph Smith, however, stated:

I will preach on the plurality of Gods... I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute personages and three Gods...⁴⁰

The several interpretations discussed above assume that the opening verse is a complete sentence. There is, however, a school of commentators who take this verse as an opening clause introducing the principle declaration which is in verse two, an interpretation which is perfectly compatible with the original Hebrew. Indeed the new translation of the Bible being published by the Jewish Publication Society of America adopted this interpretation, rendering the verse thus: "When God began to create the heaven and the earth -the earth was unformed and void"

It is clear that proper research is fraught with great doctrinal difficulties and significance. Such interpretations can be arrived at only through deliberate and careful study of the biblical texts.

The Book of Abraham reiterates that Abraham was privileged to witness the council of the Gods as they were preparing to create the heavens and the earth. Dr. Andrus and Dr. Hunter state that this should be considered the "blueprint of creation." Throughout the verses found in the creation section of the Book of Abraham, the concept of "plan" arises continuously:

And the Gods said: Let us prepare the waters to bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that have life;... And the Gods said: We will bless them, and cause them to be fruitful and multiply.⁴¹

Also:

And the Gods said: We will do everything that we have said and organize them; and behold they shall be very obedient.⁴²

And:

And thus were their decisions at the time that they counseled among themselves to form the heavens and the earth.⁴³

The Book of Abraham, therefore, propounds the idea of the Gods making a "plan" or a "blueprint" of creation before an actual creation. As was mentioned before, this, too, can be paralleled in some Jewish literature and Jewish thought.

The act of creation to the religious mind presupposes the bringing of the world into existence by the act of God. Many Jewish philosophers find in the word, "beriah," the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*. However, a closer study of the Hebrew word refutes this notion. The etymological meaning of the verb, "beriah" (creation) denotes, "to cut and put into shape," and therefore presupposes the idea that some material has to be employed. This was easily recognized by Nachmonides and Maimonides in their respective commentaries on the Bible.⁴⁴ It is further taught that "God looked into the Torah, and through it He created."⁴⁵ Also, the book, *Wisdom of Solomon*, posits a formless archmatter which the Creator simply brought into order.⁴⁶ It is evident that Man had to be taught the manner of creation. It can, therefore, be inferred that Adam needed instruction in the manner of creation, not only with regards to Eve, but also with regards to all creation.

Notwithstanding the impressive parallels of "blueprint," there is a greater parallel to be found within the framework of those two stories.

The creation story as related by the two separate accounts serves to convey certain statements of faith. It tells something about the nature of God who is the creator and Supreme Sovereign of the world and whose will is absolute. It asserts that God is outside the realm of nature, which is wholly subservient to Him. He has no myth; that is, there are no stories about any events in His life. Magic plays no part in the worship to Him. The story also tells something of the nature of Man, a God-like creature, uniquely endowed with dignity, honor and infinite worth, into whose hands God has entrusted mastery over His creation. Finally, this narrative tells something about the biblical concept of reality. It proclaims the essential goodness of life and assumes a universal moral order governing human society.

To be sure, the affirmations are not stated in modern philosophical terms. But, as we have pointed out, the audience of the Bible had its own literary idiom. Therefore, to understand them properly, it is important not to confuse the idiom with the idea, the metaphor with the reality behind it. Mormonism and Judaism proclaim, loudly and unambiguously, the absolute subordination of all creation to the Supreme Creator who thus can make use of the forces of nature to fulfill His mighty deeds in history. They assert unequivocally that the basic truth of all history is that the world is under the undivided and inescapable sovereignty of God. In brief, the Genesis Creation narrative is primarily the record of the event which inaugurated this historical process and which insures that there is a divine purpose behind creation that works itself out on the human scene.

As was just stated, God has no myth. There is no notion of the birth of God and no biography of God. Never does a statement appear with regard to the existence of God. God's existence is self-evident as life itself. Therefore, the creation stories begin immediately with an account of the creation activity of the pre-mortal God.

There is no room for magic in the two philosophies. The God of Creation is eternally existent, removed from all corporeality, and independent of time and space. Creation comes about through the simple divine fiat: Let there be! And this creation is created from matter.

Each of the acts of the creation drama covers a period of one day. This raises the problem of whether or not the world was truly created in seven days. Or did it take longer than seven days, as is reckoned? To be sure, the Book of Abraham answers this question much more clearly than does the Genesis account.

And the Lord said unto me, by the Urim and Thummim, that Kolob was after the manner of the Lord, according to its times and seasons in the revolutions thereof; that one revolution was a day unto the Lord, after his manner of reckoning, it being one thousand years according to the time appointed unto that whereon thou standest This is the reckoning of the Lord's time, according to the reckoning of Kolob.⁴⁷

Genesis does not answer the question of time. However, Jewish tradition does answer the question. Nachmonides states that the six days of creation are equal to all the days of the world, for the earth will be established for six thousand years; for "one day according to the Lord is equal to one thousand years."⁴⁸

Genesis Rabbah uses practically the same language to express the same sentiment. It quotes God as saying: "One of My days is equal to one thousand years (according to man's reckoning)."⁴⁹

Another answer to this problem is mentioned by the Book of Abraham:

Now I, Abraham, saw that it was after the Lord's time which was after the time of Kolob; for as yet the Gods had not appointed unto Adam his reckoning.⁵⁰

It was not that the earth had not been appointed its reckoning.

In conclusion, both the Book of Abraham and Jewish literature are in agreement that the creation did not occur in seven days as is reckoned, but rather in seven thousand years.

Be that as it may, both literatures describe creation by means of divine fiat-"Let there be," "Let us make." It has been maintained that this notion of the creative power of the word is known from elsewhere in the ancient Near East.⁵¹ But the similarity is wholly superficial, for wherever it is found it has a magical content. The pronouncement of the right word, like the performance of the right magical actions, is able, or rather, inevitably

must, actualize the potentialities which are inherent in the inert matter. In other words, it implies a mystic bond uniting matter to its manipulator.

Worlds apart is the concept of creation by divine fiat. Notice how both narratives, Genesis and the Book of Abraham pass over in absolute silence the nature of the matter upon which the divine word acted creatively. Its presence or absence is of no importance, for there is no tie between it and God. "Let there be!" or, as the Psalmist echoed it, "He spoke and it was so,"⁵² refers not to the utterance of the magic word, but to the expression of the omnipotent, sovereign, unchallengeable will of the absolute, transcendent God to whom all nature is subservient. This liberates religion from the baneful influence of magic.

The task of seeking parallels reaches its greatest test when discussing the God of Creation. To both, Genesis and the Book of Abraham, the moral nature of God stands out. That God is moral is not accidental. To God there is only one standard of ethics and morals. The God of Creation is not all morally indifferent. On the contrary, morality and ethics constitute the very essence of His nature. The Bible presumes that God operates by an order which man can comprehend, and that a universal moral law had been decreed for society. Thus, the idea of an ethical God embedded in Genesis as well as in the Book of Abraham has profound ethical implications. It means that the same universal sovereign will that brought the world into existence continues to exert itself thereafter making absolute, not relative, demands upon man, expressed in categorical imperatives-"thou shalt," "thou shalt not."

One of its seemingly naive features is God's pleasure at His own artistry, the repeated declaration, after each completed act of creation, that God saw how good His work was.⁵³

The concept of God behind the cosmic machine, with its ethico-moral implications, emancipates man from thralldom to the vicious cycle of time. In place of fortuitous concatenation of events, history becomes purposeful and society achieves direction.

This basic belief in the essential goodness of the Universe is, of course, destined to exert a powerful influence upon the direction of the religion and to affect the outlook of life of its people. In Judaism, it found its expression in the concept of the covenant relationship between God and His people and ultimately achieved its most glorious manifestation in the notion of Messianism. The Deity described in the two books is one whose will is absolute and incontestable and whose word is eternal, and who is able to give assurances that human strivings are decidedly not in vain.

There seems to be one point of difference between Drs. Hunter and Andrus in their views relative to the creation of the seventh day. Dr. Hunter sees in the seventh day a planned rest-"that the Gods planned to rest from all their labors on the 'seventh time'" (day).⁵⁴ Dr. Andrus, on the other hand, views the seventh day quite differently. He propounds a theory with great acumen, "that on the seventh day the Gods sanctified the earth which they had formed..."⁵⁵ But to Dr. Andrus, the act of sanctification was an act of creation

and through this act of creation, He "also formed man out of the dust of the earth,"⁵⁶ on the seventh day. At the beginning of the seventh day, "there was not yet flesh upon the earth, neither in the water, neither in the air."⁵⁷ "Then man was formed, a garden was planted, and man was placed in the garden as the first flesh upon the earth."⁵⁸ This evidently means that there was an act of creation in progress on the seventh day. This, Judaism does not accept. This, Dr. Hunter does not accept. According to Judaism, the seventh day is and was a day of rest.

This unshakable conviction in the essentially benign nature of divine activity, is reflected, too, in the description of the cessation from creativity. It is written that God "ceased on the seventh day from all the work which He had done. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation which He had done."⁵⁹

It is noted that the statement about God here cited contains no mention of the sabbath as a fixed weekly institution. It refers only to the seventh day of Creation, to the divine cessation from work, and to the blessing and sanctification of that day. But the name "sabbath" is not to be found, only the cognate verbal form "shabat," meaning, "to desist from labor." Yet the connection between the weekly sabbath day and creation is explicitly made both in the first version of the Ten Commandments:

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it...⁶⁰

There is also another passage emphasizing the sabbath as an external sign of the covenant between God and Israel.⁶¹ In other words, while Genesis ignores the weekly sabbath day, these texts understood this self-same passage as being the source of the institution.

As a matter of fact, there are no biblical sources recounting the founding of the weekly sabbath-day. The antiquity of its existence is presupposed in all the legislation and even in the narratives. Just one month after the departure from Egypt, and before the Sinaitic revelation, the sabbath is assumed to be already established.⁶² Moreover, the very formulations of both versions of the Decalogue-"Remember/ observe the Sabbath day"-take for granted an existing institution.⁶³ There cannot be any doubt that the sabbath belongs to the most ancient of Israel's sacred days.⁶⁴

Judaism and Mormonism, as reflected in their respective literatures, conceive of a plan, a design that preceded all creation. Both posit a formless archmatter, which the Creator simply brought into order. Both proclaim the absolute subordination of all creation to God who thus can make use of the forces of nature to fulfill His mighty deeds in history. Together Judaism and Mormonism propound that God is outside the realm of "sure," which is wholly subservient to Him and that man is a God-like creature, uniquely endowed with dignity, honor and infinite worth, into whose hands God has entrusted mastery over His creation. The essential goodness of life is evident in both philosophies and it assumes a universal moral order governing human society. The Book of Abraham and Jewish literature are in agreement that the Creation did not occur in seven days as is

reckoned, but rather in "seven thousand years." Both agree that God rested on the seventh day from all the work which He, in creating, had made. but most important, both state that it was God, Himself, who created the universe.

It may, therefore, be concluded that the sacred literature of Judaism and Mormonism stand on parallel ground when evaluating the concepts of Creation.

IV. MAN, THE PINNACLE OF CREATION

I. Introduction

Judaism is not the religion of the Bible. It is founded on the Bible but is not identical with it. Biblical religion differs from classic Judaism as the seed differs from the flower that finally has blossomed from it. Judaism has been a living faith that never became static and unchanging. Each generation has deposited something of its own experience to enrich the total treasury of Jewish wisdom that comprises the Jewish tradition. The classic character of Judaism was given form by the Sages who created the Midrash and the Talmud. A more generic term for the Sages is "Rabbis," and we call the Judaism as formulated by them, "rabbinic Judaism."

It will be helpful to review the transformation that biblical religion underwent in the process of becoming classic, or rabbinic Judaism, so that a better insight is acquired into the nature of man, as the Rabbis saw it.

The Hebrew Bible seeks to teach man how to live in the existential world, the world of nature, the world of history, the world of social relations. The different books of the Bible reflect diverse interests and tastes; they reveal both the divergent minds of the men who gave them literary form and the particular setting of locale and of historical circumstances in which they arose. But those who determined the selection of the books to be included in the biblical canon sought unity amidst diversity. And there is added such a unity that underlies the varied experiences recorded in biblical literature. The unity consists in the conviction that the existential world is man's home, that finite existence fulfills a divine vocation, and that man, by ordering his life within a certain discipline vindicates his own life as well as that of the world which God saw fit to bring into being.

II. Biblical View of Man

The Bible begins with the story of Creation. The Book of Abraham has within its framework the story of Creation as well. One of the main functions of the Creation story is to declare the world of material being, the world of man and nature, as a divine creation, as an embodiment of "good." It is to declare the dignity of man, his primacy in the order of existence. It is to declare that his life is subject to divine imperatives, that he is under obligation "to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it."

Other biblical stories help round out the vision of man, of his place in the world, of the eminence to which he is called as well as of the depths to which he may fall, of his need to struggle in order to meet the claim of his Creator which continues to press on him.

God is pictured as charging one man and his family, in whom He sees an embodiment of His dream to go forth to the world as His emissary, to lead the families of the earth to the knowledge of God and His law of righteousness. The one man and his family become the

founder of a people, who are given the mandate to continue the work till it shall finally be accomplished.⁶⁵

III. Rabbinical View of Man

The Oral Torah, as it developed in Judaism, remained with the basic conception of the Bible. It only sought to clarify and to implement these conceptions. The goal that underlies the Oral Torah is the same that pervades the written Bible. It is to define man's way as a child of God and as citizen of the world. It is to define more clearly his responsibilities to God and to the rest of creation, and to chart his duties toward the emergent goals of history, the establishment of the messianic age of justice, freedom and peace, of the universal knowledge of God and the universal obedience to His will. "There is a living bond between rabbinic thought and the character of Biblical thought are not essentially different."⁶⁶

The Rabbis broadened the biblical recognition of the universal worth of all men, regardless of religious affiliation. The dimension of universality is always present in the Bible, whether expressed or not. Abraham's call has as its motivation that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed,"⁶⁷ through him. So it is seen that the Bible, Jewish writings and the Book of Abraham are emphatic in their inclusion of all peoples in God's concern and in the recognition that all men have the capacity to respond to God's word in deeds of penitence and in growth toward moral and spiritual perfection.

The Rabbis placed the dimension of Jewish universalism into doctrinal terms. Probing into all the implications of the verse, "Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and Mine ordinances, which if a man do he shall live by; them,"⁶⁸ one teacher asked, "Whence may it be demonstrated that a non-Jew, when he conforms to the moral law of the Torah, becomes the equal of a High Priest in Israel?" From the words, "which if a man do he shall live by them" (the term being universal and referring equally to Jew and non-Jew). Similarly it is said "This is the law of mankind, Lord God."⁶⁹ It is not stated: "This is the law of the Priests, Levites and Israelites, but (the more inclusive term) the law of mankind." In similar manner, too, Scripture does not say, "Open the gates that Priests, Levites and Israelites may enter."⁷⁰ And again it does not say, "This is the gate of the Lord, Priests, Levites and Israelites shall enter into it," but, "the righteous shall enter it."⁷¹ Likewise, it does not say, "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye Priests, Levites and Israelites, but, "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous."⁷² And finally, it does not say, "Do good, O Lord, to the Priests, Levites, and Israelites, but, "unto the good."⁷³ It is thus abundantly demonstrated that even a non-Jew provided he adheres to the moral discipline of the Bible, is the equal of the highest ranking priest in Israel."⁷⁴

Thus both Jewish literature and the Book of Abraham view man with utmost dignity. Dr. Hunter says about man: "Of all of God's creations, Man is His masterpiece."⁷⁵ Both literatures proclaim that man is created in God's image. Both aim at the same goal and that is: through the emulation of the Godhead (to the best of one's ability), one can and must become like God.

A problem of comparable importance in Genesis 1:26 which describes the creation of man, rendered literally, thus reads: And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." In what sense was man created in God's "images and after His likeness"" Does this imply that God is endowed with a particular shape or form? And with whom did God consult when He resolved to fashion man Many different interpretations of this verse are available. The image of God in which man was created has generally been applied, in Judaism, to his moral and spiritual sense which differentiate him from other creatures in the scale of life and make man truly human. The plural "Let us make man," has been interpreted by some commentators, Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra among them, as a plural construction, but is really singular in substantive meaning. E.A. Speiser, who translated the Book of Genesis for the Anchor Bible, renders this verse in the singular: "Thus God said I will make man in my image after my likeness." The new Jewish Publication Society translation of the Pentateuch, The Torah, also renders this verse in the singular: "And God said, I will make man in My image, after My likeness." The latter is followed by a clarifying footnote that the translators took the Hebrew plural forms as plurals of majesty.

It is stated simply that God created man "in His own image,"⁷⁶ nothing being stated of the matter used in the act of creation. But in another portion of the story it is related how God "formed man from dust of the earth."⁷⁷ Note that the word here translated "dust" is used quite often in biblical Hebrew as a synonym for "clay."⁷⁸ It is readily recognized that this is a theme frequently encountered in Scripture.⁷⁹

The very fact that the creation of man in the two books' description is an exception to the rule of creation by divine fiat, and that solely in the case of man the material from which he is made explicitly mentioned, implies emphasis upon a unique position for man among the created things and a special relationship to God. This, indeed, is reinforced in many and varied subtle ways. It is as though for the climactic performance, the usual act of will was reinforced by an act of divine effort. Man, alone, has the breath of life blown into his nostrils by God Himself. Only by virtue of this direct animation did man become a living being, drawing directly from God his life source. The creation of nothing else in the cosmogonic process is preceded by a divine declaration of intention and purpose, "Let us make man."⁸⁰ Man, in fact, is the pinnacle of creation " and the entire story has a human-centered orientation.

So much is noticed regarding a special status accorded man in the cosmos, that the relationship between God and man is sui generis. Furthermore, the story reiterates the theme of man being actually created, in the "image of God."⁸¹ The phrase "in the image of God" is difficult to explain, but must be associated with the immediately following divine blessing: He fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, and birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth."⁸² Also:

And the Gods said: We will bless them. And the Gods said: We will cause them to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it, and to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.⁸³

This exclusive distinction outdoes man with power over the animal and vegetable worlds and confers upon him the right, nay the duty, to exploit the resources of nature for his own benefits. In this setting, the idea of man "in the image of God" must inevitably include within the scope of its meaning all those faculties and gifts of character that distinguish man from the beast and that are needed for the fulfillment of his task on earth, namely, intellect, free-will, self-awareness, consciousness of the existence of others, conscience, responsibility and self-control. Moreover, being created "in the image of God" implies that human life is infinitely precious. Such indeed, is the meaning given to the phrase: "Whosoever sheds the blood of man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God was man created."⁸⁴ Man is possessed with honor, purpose, freedom and a tremendous power.

Yet the pre-eminence of man over beast is not the same as total independence. This is where the vivid picture of the clay origin of man comes into play once again. The figure is suggestive of the activity of a potter molding the malleable raw material into the desired shape. The very verb used in the second account of the creation of man - "yatzar"⁸⁵ is the same form from which the Hebrew word for "potter" is drawn. Most significantly the terms for "creator" and "potter" may be expressed in Hebrew by one and the same word, "yotzer." This figure is a well-known biblical symbol evocative of the notion of God's absolute mastery over man.⁸⁶ Human sovereignty can never quite be absolute. It must also be subject to the demands of a higher law, the divinely ordained moral order of the universe. Man has glory and freedom, but at the same time, inescapable dependence upon God.

Therefore, Jewish and L.D.S. Traditions look upon man as the crown end glory of creation. He is at the center of the drama of life. In him is the purpose of all existence on the way to fulfillment. This doctrine, becomes apparent over and over again in the biblical story and in the Book of Abraham, which portrays all stages in the appearance of life as but preliminary to the great moment when man enters upon the scene. It is expressed in the declaration that God made man in his own image. It never loses sight of the finite character of man, his smallness, his unworthiness when compared to the perfection that is in God. But at the same time, it sees in man the closest approximation to the divine which a creature may attain.

The Psalmist expressed it thus:

O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is Thy name in all the earth! ...When I behold Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast established, what is man and the stars which Thou has established, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou has regard for him? Yet Thou hast made him but a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of Thy hands, Thou hast put all things under his feet...O Lord our Lord, how glorious is Thy name in all the earth!⁸⁷

The psalmist was aware that from the perspective of God's majesty man was too trivial to merit His mindfulness, but as he saw it, God had nevertheless crowned man with glory and honor and had made him pre-eminent in the hierarchy of existence.

IV. Modern Attacks on the Nature of Man and Religion's Answer

This estimate of man has often been challenged in the modern world. The challenge has derived from various sources. Some have pointed to man's lowly origin, as revealed in the scientific studies of the evolution of life on earth. Instead of being the direct creation of God, a noble being separate and distinct from the rest of existence, man appears in the findings of Darwinists as an integral part of evolution. He has sprung by traceable stages from the most primitive beginnings of life, and his immediate ancestor was in the ape family, to whom he bears many striking resemblances.

Others have mocked the claim of man's alleged greatness by citing the new astronomy which began with Copernicus. Vast is the universe that modern astronomy reveals, and man is like a speck of dust, and even less, before the stupendous beings, the stars and planets without number that move in their orbits in cosmic space. The earth itself, which is man's home, has been dethroned from her ancient eminence. She is no longer conceived of as the center of the solar system, with sun and moon and stars to render her homage by illuminating her darkness. She is but a tiny planet in a universe of planets and revolves as they all do in endless gyrations on a path around the sun. Astronomers, moreover, are increasingly drawn to the opinion that other planets too have life on them, and who knows whether a race of creatures more intelligent and nobler than man may not inhabit another planet-home somewhere in Space.

And man has also been mocked because of his mortality. He is here today, and for a while struts proudly across the scene of his labors. But in the midst of all his plans and ambitions, his breath departs, and he must drop everything to which his hands cling so lovingly. What significance can be attached to life when it must be lived against this knowledge of ultimate doom for which there is no reprieve?

The most serious challenge to man's alleged greatness is his moral failure. There are episodes of wisdom and goodness in the human scene, but how infrequent and fleeting they are! Man has continued to betray beastly qualities. All kinds of dark forces are operative in his nature. He has disappointed the hopes and placed in him by continued displays of folly and meanness.

It is one of the grossest errors made by some protagonists of religion as well as by some of its detractors to take the biblical story of creation as a complete account of the origins of life. The biblical account offers only the sketchiest generality, and it is clear that it is intended to deal with questions other than those normally dealt with in science. The biblical story seeks to communicate certain religious values. It seeks to convey a value judgment concerning life, concerning the world at large, and specifically concerning man. It expresses through this account the deepest conviction of Judaism and Mormonism, that existence had its origin through the action of a beneficent Creator, that the world is the

embodiment of His design, that it is purposive and friendly to man, and that man himself is the apex of the creative process.

It is not the study of how man developed, of the stages through which he passed before reaching his present status, that issues vital to Judaism, in the story of man's origin, is the value judgments involved.

Is man immodest in claiming greatness for himself because astronomically speaking he is so insignificant?

If there be intelligent beings on other planets, then it is not contrary to biblical thought to assume that they certainly share in man's dignity. For within the realm of the physical, there is continuity in the universe. It can be assumed, within the realm of the ever-probing related fields of science, that the basic properties of matter, the basic laws of motion remain the same in all the worlds of all the galaxies as they are on earth. Otherwise a science of astronomy would have been Impossible. Hence, is it equally Justifiable to assume a Similar continuity in the spiritual? If intelligent life exists on any planet in the universe other than earth, it may be far ahead of terrestrial man or behind him, but it is undoubtedly of the same stuff. For consciousness is the most precious element in the treasury of creation, its culminating point in the surge of life. And wherever there be creatures with these properties they must be seen as bearing the divine image in themselves. In such a eventuality, God's wonders would indeed be even greater than man ever surmised.

V. The Battle Within Man

Whatever the Lord has made is intrinsically good: whatever He planted in our nature is directed toward a good purpose. No area of life illustrates this more profoundly than sex. Considering the onerous commitments which a mate assumes to his partner, a powerful drive is needed to overcome a person's clinging to privacy, to singleness. This drive is present in the call to sexual gratification felt by all creatures at certain stages in their development. Sexual union is the Convergence of divine energy on its continuing objective to create and perfect life. The very first commandment of the Bible is: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it."⁸⁸ The basic imperatives of life are written in the human heart no less than in the texts of the Scripture.

The painful dilemma of man is to discover the golden mean, the proper direction he is to give each claim in his nature. This is a prize he must earn at great cost, and he must enlist toward its achievement all the resources open to his life, the fruits of reason and revelation and the knowledge gained through experience, his own and that of the race.

The raw or unrefined play of the instinct is what is sometimes described in Jewish tradition as the 'yetzer ha-ra,' the so-called "evil inclination." It is balanced by what has been called the "yetzer ha-tov," "the good inclination." The Rabbis denied that there is anything intrinsically evil in man, for God would not have fashioned what is wholly evil. It is evil only in the sense that it is often misdirected. The Rabbis present this thought in

commenting on Genesis 1:31: "And God saw everything that He made and behold, it was very good."⁸⁹ "Very good," the Rabbis explained, referred to the two impulses, the "yetzer ha-tov" and "yetzer ha-ra," the good impulse and the evil impulse. But it was asked: "How can the evil impulse be called good?" The answer given was: Were it not for that impulse, a man would not build a house, marry a wife, beget children, or conduct business affairs."⁹⁰

The battle for man's moral refinement is a battle between these two impulses. The so-called evil impulse presses us to follow its way Without regard to the limiting and refining considerations that are to describe in proper expression. The good impulse cautions man in the name of these refinements, asking him to set bounds and conditions for the fulfillment of his gratifications. It reminds him of other values that might be at stake, and if he does not listen, it continues to speak to him, to rebuke him for his failure, and to fill him with remorse. The tug of war goes on in all men. The evil impulse holds man in bondage to the self that he habitually is, while the good impulse bids him to transcend it. At other times when man becomes subject to strong passions which seek to break the dikes of his behavior patterns and destroy the refinements built around his instincts, then the good impulse plays a conservative part, bidding him to hold these dikes and not permit them to yield to the sweep of raw and undisciplined energy.

This is a struggle which truly tests a man. Ben Zoma said: "Who is might? He who controls his passions; and so it is written in Proverbs 16:32, 'He who is master over his own spirit is mightier than he who conquers a city.'"⁹¹

Both impulses are subtle in their operations. The evil impulse has in its armory all kinds of powerful weapons to deceive man and keep him in bondage to his baser self. It whispers enticing words casting all kinds of allure over the zone that is forbidden. It can rationalize its propositions and robe them in seemingly virtuous trappings. And once a person yields it weaves a fabric of habit, strong and unbending, to keep in bondage to itself, so that he can extricate himself only at the cost of the greatest exertions.

But let no one underestimate the weapons in possession of the good impulse. It affects those it seeks to heal with all kinds of therapeutic afflictions. Those who lead empty, uncreative lives it smites with boredom and with a sense of emptiness in life. Those who transgress, it smites with a sense of guilt. It fills some lives with a discontent with themselves and their world and sends them dreaming, yearning for something better than what exists.

Man is born with original sin, in the sense that the "evil impulse" begins its operations as soon as life begins. But this is only half the story. Man is also endowed with original virtue, and from the moment he is born the "good impulse" begins to propel him toward the heights.

Modern psychology has dwelt at length on this subject, testifying to this dual aspect of man's nature. John Dewey and James H. Tufts put it thus:

Confining ourselves for the moment to the native psychologic equipment, we may say that man is endowed with instinctive promptings which naturally (that is, without the intervention of deliberation or calculation) tend to preserve the self, and to develop his powers; and which equally tend to bind the self closer to others and to advance the interests of others. Any given individual is naturally an erratic mixture of fierce insistence upon his own welfare and of profound susceptibility to the happiness of others--different individuals varying much in the respective intensities and proportions of the two tendencies.⁹²

Even Sigmund Freud, who has often spoken of the dark forces operative in human nature, concedes a wide range of nobility in man. "It is no part of our intention," he declared, "to deny the nobility in human nature... We dwell upon the evil in human beings with a greater emphasis only because others deny it, thereby making the mental life of mankind not indeed better but incomprehensible."⁹³ One psychologist has read these tendencies in the very beginnings of organic life:

When the first living cell divided to form two cells, when it gave up its life for two others, we have the beginnings of true altruism... Altruism is the very nature of living matter... an integral part of life.⁹⁴

Man as he is yields many clues to his greatness. But he is only a fraction of himself. He is still a creature in transition. Many qualities of moral excellence lie dormant in his nature, waiting to reveal themselves as man attains a greater maturing. Only as man succeeds more fully in refining his "raw" nature will it be possible to judge what it means to be truly human.

As the noted scientist, Alexis Carrel, has expressed it:

Man is simultaneously a material object, a living being, a focus of mental activities. His presence in the prodigious void of intersidereal spaces is totally negligible. But he is no stranger in the realms of inanimate matter. With the aid of mathematical abstractions his mind apprehends the electrons as well as the stars... He appertains to the surface of the earth, exactly as trees, plants and animals do... But he also belongs to another world. A world which, although enclosed within himself, stretches beyond space and time. And of this world, if his will is indomitable, he may travel over the infinite cycles. The cycle of Beauty, contemplated by scientists, artists and poets. The cycle of Love, that inspires heroism and renunciation. The cycle of Grace, ultimate reward of those who passionately seek the principle of all things. Such is our universe.⁹⁵

Jewish tradition and the Book of Abraham therefore view man from the same perspective. Both claim that man is created in God's image. Both help round out the vision of man, of his place in the world, of the eminence to which He is called as well as to the depths to which He may fall. Both reject the modern view held by some that man has a lowly origin and therefore should not be considered as the pinnacle of Creation. And in answer to man's moral failure, the two traditions are emphatic in their inclusion of all people in God's concern and in the recognition that all men have the capacity to

respond to God's word in deeds of penitence and in growth toward moral and spiritual perfection.

V. PRIESTHOOD, AND THE CULT IN EARLY ISRAEL

Dr. Hunter begins his chapter of "The Holy Priesthood" with the following statement: "Priesthood is the power of God."⁹⁶ This is quite true! Judaism could not and would not ever deny this fact. One is chosen by the Eternal to be consecrated to the service of the sanctuary, and more particularly of the altar. This might hold true more in the use of the latter rather than the earlier stages of the Hebrew priesthood. For the Bible does state that one was not required to be specially consecrated in order to perform the sacrificial functions in early days; anyone might approach the altar and offer sacrifices. Thus Gideon, of the tribe of Manasseh, sacrificed in person at the express command of God.⁹⁷

However, going back to the beginning of the Bible, it is noted that Adam had received the priesthood. It matters not whether Jewish literature or the Book of Abraham is approached, the fact remains, that according to these traditions, Adam had the priesthood.

But the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in my own hands...

It [the Priesthood] was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yes, even from the beginning or before the foundations of the earth to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, on the first man, who is Adam, our first father, through the fathers unto me.⁹⁸

Jewish literature confirms this hypothesis when it states in the Yalkut Shimeoni: "Thus said the Holy One Blessed Be [to Abraham]: 'Follow me and I will make you a High Priest after the manner of Adam.'"⁹⁹

It is, therefore, concluded that Jewish and Mormon tradition have within their traditions the very same concept with regards to the origin of the priesthood.

It is believed, according to LDS literature, that the following held the priesthood: Adam, Noah, Enoch, Shem, Melchizedek and Abraham. It can be shown that Judaism will accept fully the same concept, with perhaps one variation. It is agreed that Adam, Enoch, Noah and Abraham possessed the priesthood. It is also agreed that Shem and Melchizedek possessed it. However, there seems to be a controversy whether Shem and Melchizedek were two distinct personalities, or one in the same. Nachmonides states that Melchizedek was Shem, son of Noah, who left his land to serve the Lord in Jerusalem. There he served in the capacity of High Priest.¹⁰⁰

Whether or not Shem and Melchizedek were one or two different personalities is irrelevant with regards to this dissertation. It is agreed by all that Shem and Melchizedek possessed the priesthood and this is most relevant.

The concept of hereditary priesthood developed in Israel whereby no longer was this sacred task conferred on any man, but rather he was born into it. At this point, it is relevant to look at the development of the hereditary priesthood, commencing with its origin in Exodus.

It is noted that the Aaronites and Levites were elected by God to be the hereditary priesthood of Israel.¹⁰¹ From that time onward, indeed the priesthood played a decisive role in the formation of the Israelite religion. This is substantiated in Deuteronomy where the priesthood (i.e. the Levite tribe) is praised as being the tribe of God's devoted and loyal men.¹⁰² The religion of the Israelites received from the priesthood such great contributions as the ark of the covenant and the Tent of the Wandering Congregation, the temple cult in the land, the symbols of holiness and impurity, and finally, the centralization of worship.

It is the popular view that the cult was manifested in order to secure the blessing and favor of God.¹⁰³ It magnified the popular view that the temple was the place where God revealed Himself and manifested His election of Israel. This is made apparent by God's commandment to Israel to make a sanctuary so that He might dwell in their midst.¹⁰⁴ This shows that God's presence was not geared as a convenience whereby he might hear their prayer and attend to their wants, but rather that His mere presence was the primary factor. The very name: the Tent of Meeting, is clearly descriptive as being the place appointed by God for "meeting" Israel. One duty of the cult was to hallow the sanctuary, to guard it from impurity and to surround it with awe. With such a setting, the sanctuary was deemed a fit place for God's revelation. It is further noted that the Bible views the Tent of Meeting as an oracle. The Ark of the Covenant is the heart of its archetypal temple, upon whose cherubs God appears in a cloud and between which He speaks. Each Israelite temple is a replica of the ancient tent and each holy of holies is conceived of as a place of God's revelation, as if the ark were there. It is interesting to note that Ezekiel does not mention an ark in his future temple, but it does have a "devir,"¹⁰⁵ which is the ideal site of the ark. The Second Temple similarly did not contain an ark, yet the entire cult was performed as though it lay in the holy of holies.¹⁰⁶ The terror that surrounded the ancient ark prevailed in the Second Temple as well. The heart of every synagogue now bears the symbol; the "holy ark," in which the Torah scrolls are housed. Indeed the "holy ark" is most sacred to Judaism.

The cult is described in great detail in the Torah and we assume that a combination of the practices of various temples are contained therein. The deity is not glorified by magical or mythological rites and there is no rite designed to call on man God's material blessing of rain or fertility. Festivals are heightened by an additional sacrifice (whole and sin offerings, with their meal and wine adjuncts) in order to attain atonement and because they supply an obviously "pleasing odor."¹⁰⁷ The first sheaf is waved before God with the hope that Israel will be acceptable before Him.¹⁰⁸ Indeed this rite, with the accompanying offerings, allows for the enjoyment of crops (vs. 14), and yet this rite is not to be confused with a fertility rite. To commemorate the festival of first fruits, the priest waves two loaves and two lambs (vs. 17ff.). It must be noted that the stress is placed on thanksgiving for past blessings rather than an appeal for the future. The rite of

the Day of Atonement is the priestly rite par excellence. The Day of Atonement, for later Judaism, is marked as the day of judgment on which the fate of each man is determined for the coming year. In the Bible, however, the priestly ritual for the Day of Atonement places no activity aimed at seeking a good decision for the individual or the people, for priests or laity. The stress is placed on purification and atonement.

Both the priesthood and the people sought divine blessing and it was understandable that the mere presence of God in Israel presumably implied a guarantee of His tangible favors. When the priest blesses the people after a sacrifice¹⁰⁹ and sets God's name upon Israel for a blessing,¹¹⁰ these activities are solely on the periphery of priestly ritual. These priestly rites, it is noted, are mere adjuncts to the main rites. For within the temple itself, at the altar and within the holy of holies, all priestly rites are directed towards the sanctification of God's dwelling place and the purification of whatever comes near it. Indeed the awe of holiness prevails rather than the atmosphere of supplication and entreaty.

The various acts of the priest are performed in silence and hence the priestly temple could be best described as the kingdom of silence. The Bible does not make mention in regard to a spoken dialogue-either between man and God or man and man-while these temple rites are performed. The priest kindles the altar fire, removes the ashes, tends the lamp, burns incense, arrays the shewbread. He daubs some sacrificial blood on the corners of the altar, pours out the rest at its foundation, burns the fatty parts, the limbs, and the meal offering, makes libations, eats the flesh of sin and guilt offerings, burns bulls and goats outside the camp, sprinkles blood to atone and purify, waves consecrated objects in the temple, and so forth. All of these activities are done in silence without inference of spells or psalms, and in this priestly cult, prayer is not even evoked. Deuteronomy 26:1ff offers a typical example of a festival whereby the priest is merely the silent performer of the ritual. In this particular festival of bringing first fruits, the farmer is the participant in regard to reciting the thanksgiving formula at the temple, and it is the priest who merely takes the basket of fruit and places it before the altar. Priestly speech is found only outside the temple. It is contained in the temple service only when it is apart from the essential cultic act. The priest does make confession on the Day of Atonement, over the head of the scapegoat for "all the sins of the Israelites."¹¹¹ The priest then blesses the people¹¹² at the conclusion of making the offering. Deuteronomy 27:12ff states that it is the Levite priests who recite the blessing and curse the mountains of Gerizim and Ebal. The priest exhorts the army going out to war.¹¹³ Whatever priestly speech is found throughout the course of the temple rite itself, is indeed altogether wanting. For it is further evident that even song is not employed in any form of the priestly cult. It bears mention that even biblical psalms are not a part of the priestly cult and henceforth are not attributed to priests. Within this domain of silence, the Israelite cult lacked intrinsic meaning in regard to ritual. The outcome of the rite simply became a vehicle expressive of human submission to the command of God. Amidst the significant lack of speech, it is a positive belief that the silence of the temple cult was inductive to an atmosphere filled with awe of holiness. A similarity in the Islam cult is seen, where song was excluded on the pagan Arab notion that song was inspired by spirits.

Musical or orgiastic elements in the priestly cult of Israel are not employed,¹¹⁴ nor is there any sexual element. Priestesses were non-existent as well. The Dionysiac element of the Israelite religion is apparent outside the priesthood. According to the Israelite view, prophetic frenzy and ecstasy are efforts of the divine spirit and bear no connection with human activity as such emotional display is believed to be solely a gift of God. "Prophesying" as a fixed critic phenomenon, as a goal of sacerdotal rites, was therefore omitted by Israel's priesthood and also every element of enthusiasm and ecstasy was intuitively negated by the priest as well.

For the priest to be defiled by the impurity of a corpse was a strong conviction which necessitated his strict removal from any situation of mourning or death. The priestly laws of the Bible forbade any association between the priest and the realm of death. Priests did not attend to the dead unless they were his kin and in such an instance, the high priest was entirely exempt from participation. The priest is further excluded from displaying signs of mourning.¹¹⁵ In the temple there was no motif connected with death and any vestige of self castigation or mutilation remained non-existent.

The Torah was in the priests' charge and it should be noted that the Torah was not an esoteric lore of cosmic magic. The Torah consisted of law and statutes, cult and morality of which it was the priests' responsibility to preserve the word of God and guard His covenant. Primarily he teaches God's judgments to Jacob and His Torah to Israel.¹¹⁶ He does not, receive God's law at His mouth; this is the prerogative of the prophet. The priest merely "handles" God's law and transmits it.¹¹⁷ There are occasions, however, when in the Torah it is not unusual that the prophetic and priestly elements join hands.

It is a natural occurrence that in spite of the priestly cult in the temple of silence, tumult and passion found their place outside the sanctuary. The joyous popular cult of passion and enthusiasm, though rejected by the priesthood, was most apparent with the folk and what might otherwise have savored of magic became innocuous. Since the folk did not enter the temple, but rather remained outside and around it, their activity was not linked with any specific symbol of sanctity.

The essence of great national festivals lay outside the temple where the popular celebrations were held. Within the temple walls, the priestly rites were held on such occasions. The Day of Atonement, of all the holy days, is essentially sacerdotal; the people fast and cease from working, but it is the priests who perform the activity of the day.¹¹⁸ The distinctive characters of the various festivals differ in composition' with the basic offering of another sacrifice by the priest remaining the same.¹¹⁹ Hence the popular cult gave each festival its particular character.

The priestly cult was of no great consequence in regard to the historical rationales of the three great festivals. Moreover, it was the popular contributions that were most significant. The paschal sacrifice which took place in the home, commemorated the deliverance of the Israelite first born on the eve of the Exodus. This dramatic element of the festival was entirely apart from the Temple rite. Although an additional sacrifice was performed within the temple, it nevertheless bore no suggestion of this commemorative

aspect. The popular cult also claimed propriety over the eating of matzos for the Temple rite did not include this symbolic rite. The later bringing of the first sheaf to the Temple was associated with the Passover festival.

Like the bringing of the first fruit, the sheaves were probably brought in a festive procession by the people and this rite was a main part of the festival. The Festival of Weeks was celebrated at the conclusion of reaping the harvest and the first fruits were brought to the temple. The priestly act of waving and offering the fruits did not receive the credit for the Joyousness which prevailed. Indeed the gaiety of the festival was produced by the folk who, in Joyous procession, brought their produce and added the distinctive tone to the occasion. The chief popular festival was The Feast of Tabernacles. The holiday highlighted the ingathering of the crops and its distinctive characters were found outside the temple. The ingathering was commemorated by the erection of booths which were fashioned out of prescribed materials.¹²⁰ Once again, it is apparent that there was an historical connection with the Exodus and this did not reflect in the temple cult.

The Sabbath, the festival of the New Moon and the festival of the New Year-all three cosmic festivals-were made meaningful by the popular cult. They possessed "color" and vividness which were not a part of the priestly rites. The temple worship did not reflect the "myth" of the sabbath,¹²¹ as was displayed in the people's rest. It was the socio-moral rationale of the Sabbath, set forth in Exodus 23:12 and Deuteronomy 5:14 5., that is linked with national history. The sign of Israel's covenant is a part of the Sabbath observance.¹²² and it is also regarded as a memorial to the release from Egyptian bondage.¹²³ The cosmic significance of the day is embodied by the people on the Sabbath, and the resting is significant of the social-historical rationale. On the Sabbath, the repose of slave and boast signifies the perpetual observance of the day by which Israel testifies to the covenant between it and the Eternal God.

Similarly, the festival of the Now Moon bore popular features which added to its distinguishing flavor. The folk refrained from working on this festival and observed this day by participation in a solemn family feast¹²⁴ or a visit to the man of God.¹²⁵ The distinctive cultic feature of this occasion was the blowing of trumpets over the sacrifice.¹²⁶

Two new year days seem to appear in Ancient Israel; one in the spring and one in the autumn. Exodus 12:2 accounts for the new year occurring in the spring month in which the Exodus took place and was. believed to be the first of the year's months. It is noted that wherever months are counted in the Bible, Aviv-Nisan is the first. Exodus 23:16 and 34:22, claim the feast of the ingathering occurs at the "end" or "turn" of the year, consequently at the beginning of the new year. Contrary to some beliefs, it bears no relevance to suppose that the spring new year is a late importation from Babylonia. We do, however, support the fact that all the sources count the "matzot" festival as the first of the three agricultural festivals,¹²⁷ and thus the antiquity of the spring counting of the months is validated.

The spring new year was a priestly festival and the autumn new year in the harvest time, was claimed by the popular religion. It is interesting to note that a connection was apparent in the development of this festival with that of the Day of Atonement, as the priest and folk did manage to influence one another in some instances.

The cultic year began on the first day of the first month; the month of the Exodus.¹²⁸ On this day, the tabernacle was erected. The Bible relates that Israel entered Canaan in the first month¹²⁹ and Passover was the first festival celebrated in the land.¹³⁰ The Second Temple was inaugurated by the beginning of the cultic year¹³¹ as well. Later, it was considered that the first of Nisan marked the beginning of the cultic year.¹³² The month of ingathering was the beginning of the agricultural year. In Exodus 23:14ff. and 34:18ff, a combination of both reckonings is found. The first festival is marked by the "matzot," while the ingathering festival is marked by the harvest which occurs at the turn of the year. Leviticus 25:8ff bears a similar combination which shows that the seventh month of the cultic year (Tishri) is the beginning of the Sabbatical and Jubilee year, since these are connected with agriculture. In I Kings 6:1, the counting of years from Exodus was shown and connected to the priestly year. Both Solomon and Jeroboam conceded to the popular custom when they inaugurated their temples at the autumn festival. This was an expedient measure since the spring festival did not attract many people to Jerusalem as the folk remained at home to participate in the family type observance of the spring festival.

The tenth days of Nisan and Tishri had sacred meaning as well. The paschal lamb was consecrated on the tenth of the month,¹³³ the day commemorated in the Bible as the day of Israel's entry into Canaan.¹³⁴ The tenth of the seventh month was a great fast day¹³⁵ and in Leviticus 25:9, the Jubilee year is proclaimed on that day.

The popular religion had exclusive claim on prayer. The individual prays for himself, ordinarily. There are occasions when an intercessor appears, but he is not a priest, rather he is a righteous man or prophet.¹³⁶ The tithe-confession is the only prayer formulated in the Torah and it is non-priestly.¹³⁷

Although prayer was employed by the popular folk, it was preferred that the sanctuary be the site of prayer.¹³⁸ However, there was never a controversy over the legitimate places of prayer as there was in regard to sacrifice. The specific location where a person chose to pray is of little concern in the Bible. Prayer may be offered to God outside the land¹³⁹ which differs with the practice of sacrifice and cultic song. For example, Jonah prayed from the belly of the fish; Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, from Babylonia and Persia. As with location, there were no limitations on time of prayer. Prayer could not have a fixed form or season since it was, in many cases, a spontaneous "cry" and "shout" to God for mercy. Prayer was manifested as an independent, non-priestly religious realm. The Bible shows that prayer is almost entirely separate from sacrifice (the two appear together only in I Samuel 7:9; Job 42:8).

To the Jew; a priest was born and not made. Only those were admitted to the priesthood who could prove their descent from Aaron. When the Jews returned from the Babylonian

captivity, all those who claimed priestly rank but were unable to produce documentary evidence of their descent from Aaron were disqualified.¹⁴⁰

Also, the principle duties of the priests were those connected with the sacrificial service of the temple in Jerusalem, as well as teaching the people the laws of the Torah. In the course of time, the number of priests increased to such an extent that it was necessary to divide them into twenty-four divisions, serving in the temple in rotation each for one week. Each division was sub-divided into several families who served one each day.

This gave every priest an opportunity of discharging his duty. Since the priests were allowed no share in the land, the Torah assigned certain benefits to them in compensation, which originally formed their sole source of income. At the three great annual festivals, known as the pilgrimage festivals, all the twenty-four divisions are said to have officiated simultaneously.

The high priest, who was the spiritual head of the people, was regarded at times as the secular head of the community as well. During the Hellenistic period, his contact with the foreign rulers, for whom he collected the taxes of the people, introduced a process of assimilation among the priests.

In the storm and stress of the times, the real control of priestly pedigrees has been placed by family tradition. The duties and privileges of priests are now limited to pronouncing the priestly benediction on festival days, the avoidance of contact with a corpse, the redemption of the first born males on the thirty-first day after birth, and the precedence of a priest at functions such as the public Torah reading.

The Book of Abraham is silent on this subject. For this institution did not commence until long after Abraham had passed from the scene of history. However, the Book of Abraham is quite vocal on a different sort of priesthood, as will be shown, Jewish tradition will agree wholeheartedly with the notion of a priesthood in existence before the advent of the Mosaic priesthood; i.e., the hereditary priesthood.

Who Was Melchizedek?

In the Book of Genesis, Melchizedek came to greet Abraham after his victory over the five kings and ascribed the victory entirely to God. Melchizedek brought out wine and bread, blessed Abraham and received tithes from him.¹⁴¹ In Psalms, reference is made to him where the victorious ruler is declared to be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.¹⁴² This is neither an invention nor the product of an error but rests upon an ancient Jewish tradition.¹⁴³ A feature ascribed to him in the Midrash is his supernatural origin in that he is described as being "without father and without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the son of God abiding forever."¹⁴⁴ Rabbinical literature identified Melchizedek with Shem, the ancestor of Abraham.¹⁴⁵

If Melchizedek indeed possessed the characteristics as described in Ruth Rabbah, then a valid answer to commentators who reject the idea that Melchizedek was Shem, is achieved. For Shem lived two generations prior to Abraham.¹⁴⁶

The incident with Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of "God Most High," is most puzzling. It interrupts the continuity of the narrative.¹⁴⁷ If Salem be identical with Jerusalem, as is suggested by its use elsewhere parallel with Zion,¹⁴⁸ then Melchizedek was a Canaanite king. Yet he blesses Abraham in the name of God using the very epithets that the patriarch himself employs in his dialogue with the king of Sodom. Moreover, Abraham acknowledges Melchizedek's blessing by paying him a tithe.

There is some evidence to suggest that the incident here recorded was once part of a fuller tradition about Melchizedek since lost. This shadowy figure appears once again in biblical literature referring to a king of Israel as being divinely endowed with sacral attributes, "after the order of Melchizedek."¹⁴⁹ This would make sense if the symbolism were easily understood, but it is not. Does LDS theology fill in the gap that is missing in the Bible?

In view of this, Abraham's oath to the king of Sodom¹⁵⁰ is particularly important. Unlike the case of Melchizedek, the text has here prefixed the tetragrammation YHWH, as though to leave no doubt as to the correct reference. But this is not the whole story, for by giving a tithe to the priest, Abraham actually acknowledges that the deity of Melchizedek is indeed his own. The insertion of YHWH, therefore, can only be meant to emphasize the identity, not the difference, between the God of Melchizedek and the God of Abraham, known to the people of Israel as YHWH. This accords well with the biblical idea of individual non-Hebrews who acknowledge YHWH. Thus Melchizedek belongs to this category.¹⁵¹

Why did the narrative introduce the Melchizedek incident here at all? This question cannot be answered with any degree of certainty, though some plausible suggestions may be put forth. True, it is not known. The Bible does not as much as hint as to the reason for his inclusion. However, if the accounts of the Talmud and Jewish literature be correct, then the plausible answer is that the Bible saw fit to include Melchizedek because he was a high priest who had already received authority from God. Melchizedek thereby becomes the agent of God in transmitting the high priesthood to Abraham. This is sound Mormon and Jewish thinking. What happened to the original text and why is it not given in the Bible? Perhaps, it is assumed by some scholars, that it eroded away as many other ancient documents.

VI. CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM

Primary inspiration is the gift bestowed upon the chosen few. The active pursuit of moral and spiritual values is part of what Maimonides called the moral prerequisite for prophecy. The divine influence does not settle on a person capriciously. The intellect and the imagination are tools. The intellect functions in the revelational experience, to some extent, as it does in the act of reason. It translates the experience into intelligible conceptual terms. The imagination fashions the images and symbols by which the concepts are profusely illustrated, giving the inspired word its singular potency. But neither the intellect nor the imagination will be activated unless the self reaches out by an act of will to seek divine illumination.

This seems to be borne out right at the outset of the Book of Abraham. "In the land of the Chaldeans, at the residence of my father, I, Abraham saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence."¹⁵² The chapter goes on to say that Abraham was not satisfied with his residence, or with his own state of mind. Therefore he sought to obtain the "blessings of the fathers" for he was a man of righteousness. And only after relating the moral decadence present in this world does God appear to Abraham.

The Rabbis appear to have shared this very same conviction. They suggest that God did not suddenly break in on Abraham to send him forth on his vocation to be a religious pioneer in civilization, but rather that Abraham had taken the first step. He had brooded on the nature of existence. By his own quest to understand the universe, he came to feel the insufficiency of existence without a divine Sovereign to account for the world's rationality and purposefulness or to assume the ultimate triumph of moral virtues against the pressures of the dark forces rampant in the world.¹⁵³ The divine influence needs a receptive vessel through whom to perform its work. It finds it in one who yearns for God, who cares deeply about the issues which involve righteousness and truth. Thus begins the career of Abraham as a prophet.

The newly discovered A Genesis Apocryphon, seems to favor the view that there is more to the story of Abraham than the Bible would lead one to believe. The editors state:

On the left-hand side of column XXII we can still see the seam of the next sheet which was torn out of the scroll before it was rolled up at the time it was hidden away. We conclude from this that the mission sheet contained the continuation of the story of Abram as given in Genesis XII through XVII...¹⁵⁴

The editors also seem to imply that these missing links in the scroll are attached to apocryphal stories about Abraham.¹⁵⁵ Note one additional piece of information. Like the Book of Abraham, the Apocryphon is written in the first person. Therefore, a tradition in favor of a larger tradition with regards to the narratives of Abraham is clearly illustrated. Who knows, perhaps, the Book of Abraham is that lost piece of literature.

In recent years, much doubt has been raised with regards to the authenticity of the patriarchal narratives. Was Abraham truly a historical figure, or merely symbolic and therefore not to be regarded as factual? This question must be decided before entering upon any discussion regarding Abraham, the man.

Not so long ago it was accepted as one of the finalities of scholarship that the documents that make up the Book of Genesis, chapters 12-50, were thoroughly untrustworthy for any attempted reconstruction of the times about which they purport to relate. The events described were regarded as a late collection of folkloristic tales originating in the soil of Canaan, and it was thought to be naive in the extreme to expect them to yield any reliable information about the beginnings of the history of Israel.

This Judgment, however, was inaccurate, even in the light of nineteenth century critical methods. It overlooked the remarkable fact that the origins of Israel related in the Bible are not hidden in the mists of mythology. The Hebrew patriarchs are not mythical figures, not gods, or semigods, but intensely human beings who appeared fairly late on the scene of history and whose biographies are well rooted in a cultural, social, religious and legal background that ought to be verifiable. It is not to be wondered at that in recent years a thorough-going revolution has taken place in the scholarly attitude to the patriarchal narratives; in fact, no period in biblical history has been so radically effected. Irrespective of the dating by many modern critics, one thing emerges clear. The traditions of the Book of Genesis are now acknowledged to be an authentic reflection of the age with which they claim to deal. Those narratives have come to be accepted as the starting point for the reconstruction of the patriarchal period.

... there is scarcely a single biblical historian who has not been impressed by the rapid accumulation of data supporting the substantial historicity of patriarchal tradition.¹⁵⁶

The biblical sources are emphatic and consistent about the Mesopotamian origins of the patriarchs, and the narratives describe the continued contacts with the native land even after the migration to Canaan. It was to his kinsmen in the Haran area that Abraham sent to find a wife for his son Isaac.¹⁵⁷ It was to this very same place that Jacob repaired when he fled from the wrath of Esau.¹⁵⁸ Here he spent a good part of his adult life and here, too, he found his wives and begat, with one exception, all his sons, the fathers of the future tribes.

However, this intimate association with Mesopotamia ceases with Jacob's return to Canaan, and is not again encountered in the Bible. There could not be any conceivable reason either for inventing these traditions or for abruptly discontinuing them at the end of the patriarchal period. They must, therefore, represent an authentic historical situation.

This argument may be strengthened by yet another peculiarity of the narratives. Their foreign origin and associations make Abraham, Isaac and Jacob always strangers and aliens in Canaan. They are wanderers and tent-dwellers ever on the move, with no roots in the soil and much dependent upon the goodwill of the inhabitants. It must be admitted that this is a very unusual and inconvenient tradition for a people that laid eternal claim to

the land of Canaan as a national home. It is, fact, highly significant that Israel never made conquest or settlement the basis of its rights to its national territory. Its title to the land derived solely from the everlasting validity of the divine promise to the patriarchs. It is this very inexpedience that authenticates the traditions of the Book of Genesis relative to the Mesopotamian origins of Israel.

Much the same conclusion as to the antiquity of the patriarchal narratives may be derived from the simple fact that they have preserved materials offensive to the latter religious consciousness of Israel.

Abraham is said to have married his paternal half-sister,¹⁵⁹ although such a union is prohibited by later Torah legislation.¹⁶⁰ Jacob was married simultaneously to two sisters, a situation repugnant to the morality of another age.¹⁶¹ The stories of Judah's relationship with his daughter-in-law Tamar,¹⁶² and Reuben's affair with his father's concubine and the mother of his half-brothers,¹⁶³ are recorded despite their objectionable character. All these events can hardly be retrojections of later "ideals."

Pursuing the same line of inquiry with regard to the picture of tribal relationships as presented in the Book of Genesis, a similar conclusion emerges. The contrasting historical situation, as compared with later times, is striking.

If Reuben is represented as Jacob's first-born son, it must reflect a time when the tribe bearing that name was the most powerful.¹⁶⁴ Yet the biblical sources show clearly that the tribe of Reuben enjoyed no such supremacy in the post-patriarchal history of Israel.¹⁶⁵ The identical situation applies to the fortunes of the tribe of Menasseh. Since it was very early eclipsed by Ephraim,¹⁶⁶ there is absolutely no reason why Menasseh should have been depicted as the first-born of Joseph unless the story represents an authentic tradition about the one-time supremacy of that tribe. In the patriarchal narratives, Levi displays none of the priestly interests which later characterized the tribe. He is depicted as a warlike and ruthless adversary who collaborates with Simeon in predatory expeditions.¹⁶⁷ But Levi took no part in the wars of conquest in which Simeon was the partner of Judah who subsequently absorbed that tribe.¹⁶⁸ Here, again, the information of the Book of Genesis must reflect the two situation in pre-conquest times.

In the period of the conquest of Joshua, and for a long time after, relationships with the inhabitants and neighbors of Canaan were generally marked by outright hostility. This contrasts very strongly with the atmosphere of peaceful and harmonious contacts that characterize the patriarchal period. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob wander freely through the country, make pacts with local peoples,¹⁶⁹ and purchase land from them.¹⁷⁰ Melchizedek blesses Abraham who thereupon gives him a tithe.¹⁷¹ There is no tension recorded between the religion of the patriarchs and that of their neighbors. Neither Ishmael nor Esau is portrayed as an idolater.

The attitude to the Arameans is particularly illuminating. From the time of David, and through most of the period of the monarchy, Aram was the warring rival of Israel. But the Book of Genesis does not hesitate to make Nahor, brother of Abraham, the grandfather of

Aram,¹⁷² to identify the house of Laban the Aramean with Abraham¹⁷³ and to assign to Isaac and Jacob Aramean wives.

Israel waged a war of extermination against the Canaanites, yet Judah lived peacefully among them and intermarried with them.¹⁷⁴ Simeon, too, took himself a Canaanite wife.¹⁷⁵ In biblical literature, Edom is the implacable enemy of Judah. But Edom¹⁷⁶ is the brother of Jacob.

Still more striking is the role of Egypt in the lives of the patriarchs as contrasted with later history. Abraham descends to Egypt;¹⁷⁷ Isaac would do so if not forbidden by God;¹⁷⁸ Joseph spends all his adult life there and marries the daughter of an Egyptian priest;¹⁷⁹ Jacob and his entire family settle there and are very well received by the Egyptians.¹⁸⁰ Yet in all the stories of the conquest of Canaan, and until the time of Solomon, Egypt is neither a political nor a military factor and of all the external cultural and religious influences upon biblical Israel, that of Egypt was the least.

Finally, the picture of the Philistines in the patriarchal age differs radically from that of the later historical books. They are not organized in five coastal city-states led by Seranim,¹⁸¹ but dwell in the vicinity of Beersheba and are ruled by the King of Gerar.¹⁸² They are far from being the principal enemy of Israel, as they are from the days of the Judges until their subjection by David.

All this shows that the patriarchal traditions about the mixed ethnic origins of Israel and the associations with the local inhabitants and neighbors of Canaan are not retrojections of later history, but authentic reflexes of a true historic situation. The biblical material was not reworked in the spirit of later ideas, experiences and legislation.

The most startling confirmation of the conclusion about the archaic nature of the patriarchal materials result from archeological excavations of a few sites in Mesopotamia and elsewhere. The material has completely revolutionized our understanding of the formative period in Israel's history and has illuminated many a biblical text in a most unexpected manner.

The outstanding site from the point of view of the sheer wealth of relevant materials is the town of Nuzi, twelve miles or so southeast of the modern Kirkuk in northeast Iraq. Excavated between 1925 and 1931, it yielded many thousands of clay tablets comprising mainly of public and private archives. The legal, social and business activities of the leading citizens of the town over a few generations are meticulously recorded in these documents which date from the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C.E.

This people infiltrated middle Mesopotamia about the beginning of the 3rd millennium B.C.E. By the middle of the second millennium, or just about the time of these records from Nuzi, the Hurrians were at the height of their power and constituted the dominant ethnic element in the kingdom known as Mitanni in northern Mesopotamia. They had also spread out widely over Syria and Palestine.¹⁸³

What makes the archives of Nuzi so significant for the study of the patriarchal period of the Bible is the fact that one of the most important political and religious centers of the Hurrians was the town of Haran in northwest Mesopotamia. Nuzi and Haran were both part of an integrated ethnic and cultural area, so that the picture of life and custom as it emerges from the Nuzi texts would apply equally to Haran.

Now Haran is the most prominent place-name connected with the origins of the patriarchs. Here Torah lived with his family and from here Abraham set out for the promised land.¹⁸⁴ His kinsmen stayed on in Haran for generations as it was, as has been already mentioned, to this same area that Abraham sent for a wife for Isaac.¹⁸⁵ It was in the Haran area, too, that Jacob spent so many years of his life, married and raised a family.¹⁸⁶ The reconstruction of life in this place was bound to illuminate the patriarchal narrative, and this it has indeed done to an extent that is truly remarkable and to a degree of detail that is truly astonishing.¹⁸⁷

Westward from Nuzi is the modern Tel Hariri on the right bank of the middle Euphrates, as well as the site of the ancient town of Mari, about seven miles northeast of Abou Kemal near the Iraqi-Syrian border. Excavations at Mari were begun by French archaeologists in 1933 and continued for several years, in the course of which it became apparent that here once stood the capital of a highly important state. Situated strategically on the highway from southern Mesopotamia to Syria and Palestine, Mari was under the control of the western Semites. It was one of the largest and richest commercial and political centers in Mesopotamia in the second millennium B.C.E. The great palace of the king was one of the show places of the ancient world. It covered no less than seven acres and contained about three hundred rooms, halls and courts. This magnificent edifice was found in a fine state of preservation and the royal archives of the eighteenth century King Zimri-Lim have yielded approximately twenty thousand clay tablets. About one-quarter of these comprise the royal diplomatic correspondence from many kingdoms of Western Asia. The rest are economic and administrative records.¹⁸⁸

These documents constitute a rich source of material for Mesopotamian history; they also are of the greatest importance for understanding the early history of Israel. Most of the persons mentioned are, like the patriarchs, western Semites, and the close ties that existed between Mari and the Haran area naturally arouse the interest of the student of the Bible. The dominant ethnic group at Mari was the Amorites, the people most frequently mentioned in Scripture with the exception of the Canaanites. In the second millennium, Amorite tribes had spread out over Palestine, Syria and northern Mesopotamia. How numerous they were in Canaan in the time of Abraham may be seen from the fact that the chief reason against the immediate fulfillment of God's promise of the conquest of the country was that "the sin, of the Amorites was not yet complete."¹⁸⁹ Abraham was linked to the Amorites in an alliance of mutual assistance,¹⁹⁰ and the language of this people was very closely linked to that of the Canaanites and the patriarchs. The excavations at Mari, like those at Nuzi, have thus provided fruitful source materials for biblical studies.

Between the Tower of Babel episode and the life of Abraham is interposed a long genealogical chain delineating the descendants of Shem, son of Noah.¹⁹¹ The purpose is clearly to provide the bridge between two epoch-making events in history as seen from the biblical perspective. These lists, however, are of special interest to the historian for several reasons. Of thirty-eight names connected with the patriarchal family, no less than twenty-seven are never found again in the Bible. This fact, alone, makes it highly unlikely that the narratives are products of later inventiveness, and increases the probability that they reflect historic traditions actually derived from patriarchal times. Furthermore, quite an appreciable proportion of these names conforms to the onomastic, or name giving, patterns common to the Western Semites during the first part of the second millennium B.C.E. But most important of all, is a surprising discovery involving these personal and place names.

The city of Haran from which Abraham migrated to Canaan has already been referred to. This place, together with its neighbor, Nahor,¹⁹² is very frequently mentioned in the Mari texts. Interestingly, the name Nahor was borne also by Abraham's grandfather,¹⁹³ and brother. The name Haran was commemorative of Abraham's brother who died in Ur.¹⁹⁴ This identity of place and personal names is not uncommon in ancient Near Eastern literature and occurs, too, with other members of Abraham's family. Terah designates a town near Haran, and the same is true of the name Serug, Terah's grandfather,¹⁹⁵ and Peleg, grandfather of Serug.¹⁹⁶ Every one of these names is peculiar in the Bible to the ancestors of the patriarch, and at the same time each denotes a place-name in the area in which the family resided. This manner of naming localities, brought to light by the Mari texts, constitutes striking additional or independent confirmation of the authenticity of the Genesis traditions about the associations of the patriarchs with northern Mesopotamia.

The name Abram, or Abraham, has not so far turned up in precisely the Hebrew form, but a closely connected name occurs in Akkadian texts. In sixteenth century Babylonian texts, Laban, the name of Jacob's uncle, was an epithet of the moon-god, the chief deity in Haran. The noun is found as a component of several old Assyrian and Amorite personal names. Jacob, itself, occurs numerous times as the basic element of Semitic personal and place names throughout the Fertile Crescent in the first half of the second millennium B.C.E.¹⁹⁷

Among the most intriguing of all the names in the Mari texts is that of the Semitic tribe repeatedly cited as the Bin-Yamina. The epithet means, "sons of the right-hand," i.e., southerners. The tribe had pasture lands south of Haran, and its rebellious and predatory nature was a constant source of worry and trouble to the kings of Mari in the eighteenth century.¹⁹⁸ The history of this tribe as it emerges from these texts readily calls to mind the description of the tribe of Benjamin in Jacob's last blessing.¹⁹⁹

That Abraham should have left Canaan for Egypt in time of famine accords well with what is known of conditions in the second millennium B.C.E. An excellent illustration is the report of an Egyptian frontier official sent to his superior, the "Scribe of the

Treasury," concerning Edomite shepherds to whom permission was given to cross into Egypt for seasonal pasturing of their flocks in the Delta. He writes:

We have finished letting the Bedouin tribes of Edom pass

the fortress, to keep them alive and to keep their cattle alive.²⁰⁰

Isaac, too, it will be remembered, had intended to descend to Egypt in time of famine in Canaan,²⁰¹ and the ultimate migration of the tribes of Israel was the result of the same cause.²⁰² Egypt, of course, unlike Canaan, was not dependent upon seasonal rainfall. Its fertility derived from the less capricious rise and fall of the life-giving Nile.

One of the strangest of patriarchal narratives is that recording the attempt by Abraham to ward off personal danger by passing off his wife as his sister.²⁰³ The wife-sister motif occurs only in the Book of Genesis where it is repeated no less than three times, Abraham is again forced to resort to the device in his dealing with Abimelech, King of Gerar.²⁰⁴ The explanation that Sarah was indeed Abraham's half-sister²⁰⁵ is not adequate to explain Isaac's experience.²⁰⁶

Recent research in Nuzi archives sheds totally new light on this problem. There was an institution, peculiar it would seem to Hurrian society, which may be described as "wife-sistership." "Sistership" in Nuzi did not necessarily have anything to do with blood-ties, for it could indicate a purely legal status. In other words, the woman enjoyed the dual status of wife-sistership which endowed her with superior privileges and protection, over and above those of an ordinary wife.²⁰⁷

In the light of this situation, it must be assumed that Sarah and Rebekah were both holders of this wife-sister privilege, peculiar to the society from which they came and in which the legal aspects of their marriage were negotiated. Therefore, the patriarchal narratives have faithfully recorded the unique institution of wife-sistership. Abraham and Sarah, as well as the other patriarchs, were real human beings and not the figment of someone's imagination. An analysis in depth with regards to the parallels found between the Book of Abraham and later Jewish writings is now inserted.

With regards to the man, Abraham, Mormon tradition and later Jewish writings agree. He was a great man, possessed of great knowledge, and indeed, lived.

Upon reading the Book of Abraham, one notices immediately that the entire book is written in the first person. This fact presupposes that Abraham possessed the knowledge of writing in order to write the book. Is there found among other sources indications that Abraham possessed the knowledge of writing? Indeed! For in the Talmud it states that besides the discovery of astronomy, was the invention of the alphabet. Also the Midrash states: Abraham was the author of a treatise on the subject of Creation. ²⁰⁸ This would coincide very nicely with chapters 3, 4, and 5 of the Book of Abraham.

The Doctrine and Covenants Sec. 84:14 relates that Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, and that this priesthood originated from Adam.

But the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands...

It [the Priesthood] was conferred upon me from the fathers: it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning or before the foundations of the earth to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, on the first man who is Adam, our first father, through the fathers unto me. 209

What does Jewish literature state concerning this?

The Midrash states very clearly that God informed Abraham, He was going to make him a High Priest after the same order as Adam.

Thus saith the Lord to Abraham Follow me and I will make you a High Priest in the same order as Adam. 210

The Zohar goes further in trying to show a connection between Adam and Abraham by stating:

Adam's book, which contained celestial mysteries and holy wisdom, came down as an heirloom into the hands of Abraham; he by means of it was able to see the glory of his Lord.211

The Yalkut Shimoni also states that Melchizedek brought bread and wine to exhibit symbolically the transference of the High Priesthood. The Rabbis thus infer that the bread symbolized the holy Shewbread, and the wine libations.212 And the Yalkut Shimoni explains Genesis 23:1, "...and the Lord blessed Abraham as a priest and distributed to him a tithe from all things," for the Yalkut says that the true meaning of this verse is that God, Himself, treated Abraham as a priest and distributed to him a tithe from all things.213 Therefore, it is seen that Jewish literature not only ascribes to Abraham the Priesthood, but that God, himself, is pictured as treating him accordingly.

The L.D.S. theology states that Melchizedek received the priesthood from "the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah."214 This implies that Melchizedek received it from Shem. Judaism will concur with this statement. However, there is another tradition that states that Melchizedek could not have received the priesthood from Shem, because he was Shem.215 This, however, will not refute the statement that Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek. It only questions the identity of Melchizedek. Also:

Rabbi Jochanan teen Nuri says: The Holy One Blessed Be He, took Shem and separated him to be a priest to Himself, that he might serve before Him. He also caused His Shechinah to rest with him, and called his name, Melchizedek, priest of the Most High and king of Salem, where...Abraham came and... learned the Law at the school of Shem,

where God, Himself, instructed Abraham so that all else he had learned from the lips of man was forgotten. Then came Abraham and prayed to God that His Shechinah might ever rest in the house of Shem which also was promised to him; as it is said, 'Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.'²¹⁶

The Book of Abraham would have it believed that Abraham was a man possessed of great knowledge--that he knew the celestial Mysteries of the world (astronomy). It would be believed that he knew all about the nature, of man and the nature of the universe. This is a bold statement seeing that nowhere else in the Old Testament could the veracity of this statement be proven.

However, the Midrash and Jewish literature offers insight to the fact that the Book of Abraham is recording a tradition that can also be seen in Jewish literature.

Alexandrian Jews, under the names of Hecataeus and Berosus, who lived during the third and second centuries B.C.E., wrote works on Jewish history. Josephus gives the following information regarding their works on Abraham:

Abraham, endowed with great sagacity, with a higher knowledge of God and greater virtues than all the rest, was determined to change the erroneous opinions of men. He was the first to have the courage to proclaim God as the sole Creator of the Universe, to whose will all the heavenly bodies are subject, for they by their motions show their dependence on Him.²¹⁷

Is this not one of the missions for which God chose Abraham?

And the Lord said unto me: Abraham I show these things unto thee before ye go into Egypt, that ye may declare all these words.²¹⁸

Josephus continues:

Afterward, when he came to Egypt, he entered into disputes with all the priests and the wise men, and won their admiration and, in many cases, their assent to his higher views. He imparted to them the knowledge of arithmetic and astronomy, which science came to Egypt from Chaldea only in the days of Abraham.²¹⁹

In facsimile no. 3 of the Book of Abraham, is shown : "Abraham sitting upon Pharaoh's throne, by the politeness of the king, with a crown upon his head, representing the Priesthood.²²⁰ This facsimile is stating in picture form that which Josephus reports by the written word.

An explanation accompanying the facsimile says that: "Abraham is reasoning upon the principles of Astronomy in the King's court."

The Book of Jubilees relates an episode about Abraham watching the stars in order to forecast the year's fertility. God then informs him that all astrological predictions are

valueless. He receives the word to leave the Chaldeans and set out on his mission to bless the nations by teaching them the higher truths.²²¹

It is also written: God lifted him above the vault of heaven to cause him to see all the mysteries of life,"²²²

The whole world once believed that the souls of men were perishable, and that man had no pre-eminence above the beast till Abraham came and preached the doctrine of immortality.²²³

All this supports the claim that Abraham was a wise man possessed of great knowledge, nay, the wisest of his day. He is revered by all and is a prince among the nations. One concluding Midrash from the Talmud will prove beyond a shadow of a doubt, the nature of the man, Abraham.

When Abraham died, all the chiefs of the nations of the world stood in line and exclaimed, 'Alas for the world that has lost its leader' Alas for the ship that has lost its helmsman "²²⁴

Indeed Abraham was considered by all as the leader of the world -the "father of all the nations."

That Jewish thought and Mormon tradition stand hand in hand with regards to the man, Abraham, has been illustrated. Both claim that he, indeed did live--that he was High Priest--that he attained the priesthood, the very same priesthood of Adam and Noah, from Melchizedek. Both agree that he was one of the wisest of all in his time; that he learned the secrets of the universe and the higher truth from God and that he sought to teach the world these truths. He was recognized by all as the prince of the nations. Once again, Judaism and Mormon tradition do not stand apart from each other in many of their concepts, but rather their parallel concepts are a uniting influence.

VII. URIM AND THUMMIM

The Book of Abraham makes the following claim: "and I, Abraham, had the Urim and Thummim, which the Lord my God had given unto me, in Ur of the Chaldees.²²⁵

Unlike many of the other concepts found in the Book of Abraham, it is very difficult to find elsewhere any reference to Urim and Thummim with regards to Abraham. The first mention of the Urim and Thummim in the Bible is found in Exodus and this immediately excludes Abraham from its possession. However, under further investigation, it is noted that Abraham did possess some stones the nature of which will be discussed later in this chapter. The first discussion will be based on what the Urim and Thummim was according to Jewish literature.

The high-priestly ephod and the breastplate are described in Exodus 28:13-30 with reference to the Urim and Thummim. The breastplate is referred to as a "breastplate of judgment" and it is noted that it is characterized as being "four square and double" and the twelve stones are located outside the breastplate. Further reference to the breastplate is found in the following passage:

He [Moses] put upon him [Aaron] the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him, and he girded him with the cunningly woven band of the ephod, and bound it unto him therewith. And he put the breastplate upon him: and in the breastplate he put the Urim and Thummim.²²⁶

This ritual was performed by Moses in compliance with the command in Exodus 29:1-37.

Please note that the Urim and Thummim was not part of the breastplate, but had to be placed therein.

Deuteronomy mentions Urim and Thummim in the following instance:

And of Levi he said: Thy Thummim and thy Urim are with the godly one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah.²²⁷

The Urim and Thummim, since it is mentioned only approximately eight times in the Hebrew Bible, is difficult to define. However, it is worth noting that in spite of the fact that the exact nature of Urim and Thummim is uncertain, various speculations have been offered. It has been suggested, for instance, that Urim and Thummim is a lot of some kind which was drawn or cast by the high priest to ascertain God's decision in doubtful matters of national importance.²²⁸

"Therefore Saul said unto the Lord, the God of Israel: 'Declare the right.' And Jonathan and Saul were taken by lot [Thummim]; but the people escaped."²²⁹

Another concept for Urim and Thummim is offered in the following passage: "And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by the prophets."²³⁰

Indeed it can be ascertained from the above that the Urim was further employed as a means of divine communication.

Another mention made in the Old Testament in which Urim is used as a means of divine communication appears in the following:

And before Eleazar the priest he shall stand, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord; at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. And Moses did as the Lord commanded him; ...²³¹

It is noted from this instance that Eleazar was then the high priest, and Moses was permitted by the Lord to address Him directly. It is further noted that Joshua and his successors could communicate with the Lord through the mediation of the high priest and by means of the Urim and Thummim.

The various explanations of these mysterious objects identify them with: stones in the high priest's breastplate, sacred dice, and little images of Truth and Justice. According to rabbinical literature, Urim and Thummim was regarded as the "great and holy name of God" written on the breastplate of the high priest.²³²

Consequently the use of the Urim and Thummim ceased with the destruction of the First Temple, and there is no mention of the Urim and Thummim having any part in the rites of the Second Temple.

Indeed, it can be added that "... this oracle had been silent"²³³ for 200 years before the time of Josephus.

The use of the Urim and Thummim was employed, as previously mentioned, as a means of consultation or communication between man and God. The high priest was the intermediary and performed his official task by first donning his eight garments. The person for whom the priest sought an answer stood facing him, while the priest turned toward God. The question was a brief one, and while it was pronounced by the priest in extreme brevity, it was not pronounced aloud. Only one question was pronounced at a time, and the answer was a repetition of the query and it was repeated either in the affirmative or the negative. The answer to the single query was given by the letters of the names of the tribes which were engraved on twelve precious stones on the Breastplate of Judgment. It was important that each question was precisely worded; otherwise, the reply risked being properly understood.²³⁴

And the children of Israel arose, and went up to Bethel, and asked counsel of God; and they said: 'Who shall go up for us first to battle against the children of Benjamin?' And the Lord said: 'Judah first.'²³⁵

It can be assumed, that the stone of Judah reached a greater brilliance than the other stones, thus signifying the answer.²³⁶

A decision by the oracle was sought only by the king, or by a prominent man of the community, such as the chief of the highest court. The decision was sought only for the common weal. The breastplate was also used to proclaim victory in battle. It is understandable that the high priest who questioned the oracle was a man upon whom the Shechinah rested.²³⁷

The Breastplate of Judgment, it can be summarized, had a most effective role in regard to the Urim and Thummim. The exact nature of these two mysterious objects is debatable and yet it can be surmised with reasonable confidence that it was a lot of some kind which was drawn or cast by the high priest to ascertain God's decision in doubtful matters of national importance.

The gleaming of the gems in the breastplate was a miraculous means of confirming the answer which occurred to the high priest while he was offering prayer for divine guidance. There are those who believe that the answer was inward illumination; and other interpreters are of the opinion that the answer was revealed by an external sign. Nevertheless, the high priest, in his great faith, believed that the response which dawned in his mind was divinely inspired and therefore correct.

As was previously stated, and according to the Jewish tradition just mentioned, Abraham could not have possessed the Urim and Thummim as the Bible and Jewish literature describes it. However, there are three references that must be mentioned that will show a tradition that Abraham and Noah did possess "stones" that can be compared to the Urim and Thummim.

'A window shalt thou make in the ark' (Gen. 6:16): Rabbi Ammi says, 'it was a real window!' Rabbi Levi, on the other hand, mentioned that it was a precious stone, and that during the twelve months Noah was in the ark he had no need of light of the sun by day nor of the moon by night because of that stone, which he had kept suspended, and he knew it was day when it was dim, and night when it sparkled.²³⁸

The illuminative characteristics of the stone brings to mind the illumination of the stone of Judah in the Book of Judges 20:18.

It is also noted that:

Abraham built an iron city, the walls of which were so lofty that the sun never penetrated them: he had a bowl of precious stones, the brilliance of which supplied them with the light in the absence of the sun.²³⁹

Again the brilliance or the illumination is the characteristic of these stones.

And: "Abraham, our father, had a precious stone suspended from his neck, and every sick person that gazed upon it was immediately healed of his disease.²⁴⁰

David Whitmer is quoted by Roberts with regards to the stones as follows: "In the darkness the spirit light would shine.²⁴¹

Whitmer also says that there were, "two transparent stones set in a rim of a bow fastened to a breastplate."²⁴²

This is the only comparison that can be made. But it is a good comparison. The Urim and Thummim as reflected by L.D.S. theology and the tradition of the stones as mentioned in these last three reports coincide. The breastplate not being mentioned in these last reports need not be of concern, for the breastplate is not the essential feature of the Urim and Thummim but rather the stones. If this be true, then once again a parallel between the Book of Abraham and Jewish literature is apparent.

Thus Abraham, indeed possessed certain stones that could be called Urim and Thummim. If not, then they still possessed the same characteristics.

VIII. THE DIVINE PROMISE

The tenets of Judaism that will be discussed in this chapter and the teachings of the Book of Abraham are so pre-eminent that they are found in the basic sources of Judaism, the Hebrew Bible itself. So common is the concept of a covenant of God with Israel which makes of Israel God's servant, His messenger, His witness, it is not subject to the defining, describing, defending and delimiting to which the many more controversial and less established subjects are submitted in the Mishnah and Gemara, the Midrashim, etc.. It will be instructive and pertinent to note the basic facets of the concept of the covenant, the Divine promise, and the "mission" of Israel in Genesis and the Book of Abraham, for example.

The Book of Abraham and the Hebrew Bible, both relate that Abraham was to be the father of a great nation, and that his name would be great among all the nations.²⁴³ It is also stated that Abraham and his posterity would be given a land which would be for an everlasting inheritance.²⁴⁴ Further information reveals that Abraham's posterity would be as numerous as the stars of the heavens and the sand of the sea;²⁴⁵ and that in Abraham all the families of the earth would be blessed. God promised Abraham to bless them that bless him and curse them that curse him.²⁴⁶ The circumcision was the sign of the covenant²⁴⁷ and the covenant was to be an everlasting one.²⁴⁸ These promises would all be fulfilled only if Abraham and his seed would obey God's divine commandments, according to both sources.

In Genesis 12:1-3, the Bible signals the beginning of the integral history of Abraham and his family. There is nothing in the Bible in preparation for this call. Abraham is asked to pull up his stakes and leave for a destination as yet undisclosed. The command means a complete break with his environment. This command was accompanied by the assurance that the patriarch was to become the progenitor of a "great nation."²⁴⁹ Since this was not the kind of promise that could possibly be fulfilled in the lifetime of the recipient, it was something that had to be accepted on faith. Certain is it that Scripture intended to emphasize just this aspect of Abraham's personality and the magnitude of his act of faith.

According to the Hebrew Bible, Sarah was barren;²⁵⁰ therefore, God's pledge of nationhood taxed the patriarch's credulity to the full. Nor was the vagueness of the ultimate destination-"the land that I will show thee"²⁵¹-calculated to arouse an enthusiastic response; moreover, the migration from Haran involved for Abraham the agonizing decision to wrench himself away from his family in the sure knowledge that he was not likely to see his father ever again.

It might appear somewhat strange that the divine promise of nationhood should have necessitated a sacrifice of his nature. Could not the ancestral soil of Mesopotamia have witnessed the birth of Israel?

The answer to this question may perhaps be sought in the very nature of Mesopotamian civilization as contrasted with the destiny of the nation yet to emerge.

The land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers was already heir to tradition of hoary antiquity by the time the patriarch arrived on the scene. It could justifiably boast of monumental achievements and rightly take pride in the success of its administrative accomplishments. Intensive agriculture and extensive foreign trade sustained a stratified society controlled through a highly centralized royal authority with its professional bureaucracy and an elaborately organized temple government. But it was not a situation that would be likely to encourage a challenge to its basic conservatism. The burden of tradition lay very heavily upon the ancient Near East, above all, in the sphere of religion. The overcrowded, changeable pantheon, resting upon a mountain of complex mythological symbolism, served to accentuate the inherent deficiencies of paganism in providing satisfactory answers to the problems of existence. The ever-present pall of anxiety that hung over Mesopotamian life is the measure of the failure of its civilization, religious speaking. Consequently, it is not to be wondered at that the fulfillment of God's purposes in history through the mediation of a new people required a radical break with the past and the finding of a new and more fruitful soil.²⁵²

It should be noted that the divine blessing, bestowed while Abraham was still in Haran, made no mention of the gift of land.²⁵³ This would have detracted from the act of faith involved in heeding the simple command, "Go forth!" It would also have been a meaningless promise, being contingent upon the patriarch's obedient response to the divine call. No sooner, however, had the destination been reached than the divine word came once again to declare that that very land through which Abraham journeyed would become the possession of his offspring.²⁵⁴ The promise of nationhood was supplemented by the grant of national territory, two themes that henceforth dominate biblical history and theology.

The pivotal nature of the divine promise may be gauged from the numerous times it is repeated to the patriarchs and cited in later literature, usually in times of crisis. No sooner had Abraham received the picture of a glorious future than the contrasting reality of the present asserted itself. There was a famine in the land and the patriarch was forced to depart for Egypt.²⁵⁵ When he had arrived, he found himself confronted with personal danger of a different kind.²⁵⁶ These two incidents are of special interest to the historian and have already been discussed in Chapter VI and need not be reviewed here.²⁵⁷

Affirmation of the Promise

The famine in the land of promise and the physical danger that threatened to engulf Sarah and Abraham exemplify one of the characteristic features of the patriarchal story. The hopes generated by the divine promise of nationhood and national territory seem to be in perpetual danger of miscarrying. Reality always seemed to fall short of the promise. Yet the purpose of God cannot be frustrated, and the hand of Providence is ever present, delivering the chosen ones. Hence the recurring theme of peril and recurring theme of peril and reaffirmation of the promises throughout the Book of Genesis.

As soon as Abraham was back once more on the soil of Canaan, fresh trouble developed over rival claims to the limited pasture land available.²⁵⁸ The quarrel with Lot was amicably settled and at once evoked God's renewed and strengthened reassurance:

Raise your eyes and look out from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west, for I give all the land that you see to you and your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, then your offspring too can be counted. Up, walk about the land, through its length and its breadth, for I give it to you.²⁵⁹

The entire land was now actually given to Abraham himself, as well as to his offspring, for all eternity, and the promise of nationhood is made more explicit through the use of picturesque language. It is quite probable that God's order to "walk about the land" etc. (v. 17), preserves some ancient contract formula describing the performance of a symbolic physical act that legally validated title to land received by gift.²⁶⁰

Another reaffirmation occurs in Genesis 15, in a dialogue with God. Abraham complained that material reward would be of little use to him since, having no offspring, his servant was to be his heir.²⁶¹ To this, God replied with an emphatic promise of a natural born heir.²⁶²

Three stages are discernible in the unfolding of the divine promise of national territory to Abraham. Soon after the arrival in Canaan from Haran, he was told, "I will give this land to your offspring" (Gen. 12:7 & Book of Abraham 2:6). After the separation of Lot came the word, "I will give all the land that you see to you and your offspring forever" (Gen. 13:5 & Book of Abraham 2:6, 19). Here Abraham is included among the beneficiaries, the gift is made irrevocable, and is protected by what is most likely a legal formality performed by the recipient.²⁶³ With the vision in chapter 15, a new stage has arrived. Ownership of the land by Abraham is sealed by a covenant ritual in which God, Himself, plays a dominant role.

The subtle changes in the tense forms of the verb used each time are illuminating. "I will give" became "I gave" and then "I hereby give" (Gen. 15:18). The covenant actually marked the transference of real ownership. The future conquest under Joshua, in the biblical view, was but the conversion of ownership into possession.

Israel never made conquest or settlement the basis of its rights to its national homeland, but that it always regarded its sole title-deed to be the eternally valid divine promises. Even more striking is the moral rationalization of God's actions.

It is perfectly obvious that the biblical genealogical conception of the origins and growth of the people of Israel left no room for immediate occupation of the land. The idea of nationhood through a process of natural proliferation, rather than through amalgamation or confederacy of existing tribes, meant that scripture had no option but to envisage the realization of the divine promises only after the passage of many years.²⁶⁴ But this "natural" explanation is only hinted in the text (Gen. 15:13). We are told that the other

cause of the delay was that "the iniquity of the Amorites will not be fulfilled until then" (v. 16).+

This amazing explanation means that the displacement of the native population of Canaan by Israel was not to be accounted for on grounds of divine favoritism or superior military prowess on the part of the invading Israelites. The local peoples had violated God's charge. The universally binding moral law had been violated, just as in the days of Noah, and with the same inevitable consequences. The pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan had been doomed by their own corruption. Yet God's justice is absolute. In the days of the patriarch the measure of the pagan sin was not yet complete and Israel would have to wait--and suffer--until God's time was ripe. Divine justice was not to be strained even for the inheritors.

The turning point in the life of Abraham is marked by a further affirmation of the divine covenant.²⁶⁵ This time, however, the patriarch was no longer to be a passive onlooker, but is ordered to play an active role. The spiritual progression indicated by a change of name is to be supplemented by circumcision--physical alteration, a painful, self-inflicted act in submission to the divine command.

Circumcision is conceived of as being divinely ordained and as deriving its sanction solely from that fact. It is an everlasting pact (Gen. 17:14). It is a "sign of the covenant" and a covenant itself (Gen. 17:9, 11, 14). It is a token of the immutability of God's unilateral promises to Israel, and at the same time its operation constitutes a positive act of identification and dedication as a member of the covenanted community.

The divine promise and how the reaffirmation of these promises emerged are basic to both Jewish tradition and Mormonism as seen through the Book of Abraham. Identical concepts are found when viewing them, and the evidence suggests that they are similar.

SUMMARY

The study of the Book of Abraham in light of Jewish literature affords a great deal of insight into the parallels present between Mormon and Jewish traditions.

Pre-Mortal existence is found in both traditions. The souls of the pre-mortal life are different but have the potential of becoming equal. These souls are consulted and take part in the affairs of heaven. Man is placed on this earth to be tested, and if he passes the test, then the Lord will accept his soul back to its eternal abode.

Creation poses no problems when viewed from the literature of Judaism and Mormon tradition. Both the Book of Abraham and Jewish literature propound the idea of a "plan" or a blueprint of creation before an actual creation. The etymological meaning of the verb, barah (create), denotes "to cut and put into shape," and therefore presupposes the idea that some material has to be employed. Jewish literature and Mormon literature both point to the idea of a formless archmatter, which the Creator simply brought into order.

Man, as viewed by the two traditions, is proclaimed with the utmost dignity. Both literatures state that man is created in God's image. Both aim at the same goal and that is: through the emulation of the Godhead, one can and must become like God. This exclusive distinction endows man with power over the animal and vegetable worlds and confers upon him the right, nay the duty to exploit the resources of nature for his own benefits. Moreover, being created "in the image of God" implies that human life is infinitely precious. Man, therefore, is the crown and glory of creation. He is at the center of the drama of life. In him is the purpose of all existence on the way to fulfillment.

The Priesthood is believed to be held by the following: Adam, Noah, Enoch, Shem and Melchizedek. Both Judaism and Mormonism will accept this theory. Both agree that a priesthood existed before the Mosaic priesthood was established; i.e., the Melchizedek priesthood.

Melchizedek was a high priest to God and was accepted as such by Abraham. There are those who claim that Melchizedek and Shem are identical personages. This can be illustrated with reference to Ruth Rabbah where it is stated that Melchizedek was "without father and without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the son of God abiding forever." The tradition of Melchizedek is authentic and Mormon theology from the Book of Abraham represents a tradition long forgotten or lost in the Hebrew Bible. Jewish literature and Mormonism are identical in their evaluation of Melchizedek.

Abraham as described and portrayed in the Book of Genesis is not the complete story. This view is widely accepted today among the scholars. The recently discovered, A Genesis Apocryphon, seems to favor the view that there is more to the story of Abraham than the Bible would infer. Both Judaism and Mormonism agree that Abraham was one

of the great men of his day, and indeed lived. He invented an alphabet and was the author of a treatise on the subject of creation; he was also in possession of a book which contained celestial mysteries and holy wisdom. He also received the priesthood from Melchizedek. All the leaders of the world accepted Abraham as the "father of all the nations."

Urim and Thummim as described in the Book of Abraham with regards to Abraham's possession has no parallel in Jewish literature. However, Abraham did possess certain stones that could be described as forerunners to the organized Urim and Thummim as described in the Book of Exodus. They were most possibly the exact stones that were in Noah's possession and they had some revelatory aspect to them.

The Divine Promise as portrayed in Judaism and Mormon tradition relates that Abraham would be the father of a great nation and that his name would be great among all the nations. He and his posterity would be given a land which would be for them an everlasting inheritance. His descendants would be as numerous as the stars of the heaven and the sand of the sea. The promises and their re-affirmation occur throughout the Bible and are not only paralleled in Jewish and L.D.S. theology, but are indeed identical.

Based on the evidence submitted, Mormon and Jewish tradition stand on common ground with respect to the significant parallels between the Book of Abraham and Jewish literature.

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ABSTRACT

The study of the Book of Abraham in light of Jewish literature affords a great deal of insight into the parallels present between Mormon tradition and Jewish tradition. It is the objective of this writer to expose a variety of topics which appear both in Mormon and Jewish theology and which can only add to verify the notions that these two great theologies do indeed concur on many issues.

The souls of the pre-mortal life are mentioned in both traditions. Although the souls differ, they have the potential of becoming equal. Mormon and Jewish literature concur when viewing Creation inasmuch as it is agreed that life was manifested of a formless archmatter which the Creator simply brought into order. Man is created in God's image according to both traditions; this implies that human life is infinitely precious and therefore is the crown and glory of creation. Both traditions propound the view that Adam, Noah, Enoch, Shem and Melchizedek possessed the priesthood. Abraham, viewed as one of the greatest men of his time, is so portrayed in both traditions. He invented an alphabet and was the author of a treatise on the subject of creation. He received the priesthood from Melchizedek. Abraham possessed certain stones that could be described as the forerunners to the organized Urim and Thummim as described in the Book of Exodus. Noah possessed the same stones. Both Jewish and Mormon literature portray the Divine Promise with reference to Abraham being the father of a great nation. He and his posterity would be given a land which would be for them an everlasting inheritance.

ENDNOTES

1 Gen. 12:1

2 Genesis Rabbah 39:1

3 Mishnah Baba Metzia 2:8

4 Tosefta Baba Metzia 2:21.

5 Hyrum L. Andrus, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1967), p. 99.

6 Andrus, quoting Book of Abraham 3:22-23.

7 Book of Abraham 3:23.

8 Book of Abraham 3:18.

9 Gen. 2:7.

10 Lev. 17:11.

11 Deut. 12:23.

12 Jer. 15:9

13 Talmud Berachot 60b.

14 Gen. 2:7

15 Eccles. 12:7.

16 Wisdom of Solomon 15:8

17 Slavonic Book of Enoch 23:5.

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- 33 Book of Abraham 3:18
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- 44 31.Perush Haramban Al Hatorah, Genesis 1:1; Moreh Nevuchim, 2:30.

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61 Exodus 31:12-17.

62 Exodus 16:5, 22-30.

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66 Max Kadushin, *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1952), P. 300.

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72 8 Psalms 33:1.

73 Psalms 125:4, which clearly refers to good men among all nations.

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76 Genesis 1:27, Book of Abraham 4:26, 27.

77 Genesis 2:7, Book of Abraham 5:7.

78 Genesis 11:3, Job 10:9, 27:16, 30:19.

79 Job 4:19, 19:9, 33:6; Isa. 29:16, 45:9, 64: 7

80 Gen. 1:25, Book of Abraham 4:26~27.

81 Gen. 1:26-27, 5:1, 9:6; Book of Abraham 4:26-27

82 Gen. 1:28.

83 Book of Abraham 4:28.

84 Gen. 9:6

85 Gen. 2:7, 8.

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108 Leviticus 23:11.

109 Leviticus 9:22 f.

110 Numbers 6:23ff.

111 Leviticus 16:21.

112 Leviticus 16:21, 9:22 f.; Numbers 6:23ff.

113 Deuteronomy 20:2 ff.

114 The horn and the trumpet are the two instruments of the priesthood--both alarms, and employed as such, not as musical instruments (Numbers 10:1-10; Joshua 6:5ff.)

115 Leviticus 21:1-12.

116 Deuteronomy 33:9 f

117 Jeremiah 2:8.

118 Lev. 16, 23:26ff; Num. 29:7 ff

119 Numbers 28.

120 Leviticus 23:40

121 Numbers 28:9 f

122 Exodus 31:13ff

123 Deuteronomy 5:15

124 I Samuel 20:5, 24, 27

125 II Kings 4:23.

126 Numbers 10:10; Psalms 81:4; There is evidently a connection between the Sabbath and the New Moon, The moon is created anew each month, therefore, like the Sabbath, the new moon recalls the Creation.

127 Ex. 23:14; 34:18; Deut. 16:1ff.

128 Ex. 40:17.

129 Josh. 4:19.

130 Josh. 5:10 f.

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133 Exodus 12:3.

134 Joshua 4:19.

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245 Gen. 13:16; Abraham 3:14.

246 Gen. 13:16; Abraham 3:14.

247 Gen. 17:10-14.

248 Gen. 17:7.

249 Genesis 12:2; Abraham 2:9.

250 Gen. 11:30.

251 Gen. 12:1; Abraham 2:3.

252 See E.A. Speiser, "Israel Exploration Journal," VII (1957), p. 21.

253 The Book of Abraham reflects something of this Mesopotamian establishment, and of the response to Abraham's early religious reform attempts in Abraham 1:1-20

254 Gen. 12:1, 7; Abraham 2:6, 19.

255 Gen. 12:20; Abraham 2:21.

256 Gen. 12:11-20; Abraham 2:22-25.

257 See pages 60-70

258 Gen. 13:5-12

259 Gen. 13:14-17, although there is no direct parallel in the Book of Abraham, we must assume that Abraham encountered the identical experience according to Mormon theology, and therefore it might be said that it is alluded to in Abraham 2:19.

260 This view held by Rabbi Eliezer in Babba Bathra 100 a; see also Joshua 18:4; 24:3; Ezekiel 33:24.

261 Gen. 15:2.

262 Gen. 15:3ff.

263 Gen. 13:17.

264Gen. 15:13, 16.

265Gen. 17:19. ?? 9