

Abraham Traditions in Middle Jewish Literature:
Implications for the Interpretation of Galatians and Romans

Nancy Lynn Calvert

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Department of Biblical Studies

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Nancy L. Calvert
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Summary

In the first three sections of the thesis it is shown how the figure of Abraham functioned in different types of Middle Jewish works. In several different contexts, Abraham functioned as the ideal Jew. The most popular traditions were that Abraham was the first monotheist and anti-idolater, he was obedient to the Mosaic law, and he was hospitable.

In Galatians Paul employed the first two Jewish traditions of Abraham in the context of early Christianity to define those who are now members of the people of God. Paul argued forcefully that obedience to law was inferior to being "in Christ" (Gal 3:10-12, 17, 19, 23-26) because his Jewish Christian opponents were employing the figure of Abraham who was obedient to the Mosaic law to persuade Gentile Christian converts to adhere to the law. The figure of Abraham as the first anti-idolater and monotheist further informed the interpretation of Galatians. Obedience to the law was tantamount to idolatry (Gal 4:1-11). All those who were true children of Abraham should shun the law, just as Abraham was known to have shunned idolatry.

In Romans, Paul played upon the tradition which connected Abraham with the Mosaic law (Rom 4:3). He redefined the faith of Abraham as the faith in the one God who gave life to the dead and who called into being the things that do not exist (Rom 4:17). He explained that the faith of Abraham in the God who gave life to the dead is the same as faith in the God who resurrected Jesus Christ from the dead for the forgiveness of sin (Rom 4:23-25). Paul reshaped the tradition of the monotheistic belief of Abraham into faith in the God of Christ.

Through this analysis the thesis attempts to demonstrate the fruitfulness of setting Paul's discussion of Abraham in the context of Middle Jewish traditions about Abraham which have first been viewed in their own right and not simply subsumed under the categories of Paul's own gospel.

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Preface

It may not be a coincidence that doing research on Abraham appealed to me from the outset. Like myself, Abraham was a traveller. In 1985 while I was a student at Gordon - Conwell Theological Seminary, Dr. T. David Gordon happened to mention that some work on Abraham would be helpful to an interpretation of Galatians. It was the encouragement and hospitality of him and his wife Dianne which started me on my journey.

Abraham was an alien in a country that was not his own. During my years as an American in Britain, several people provided direction. This included the staff of the Department of Biblical Studies at the University of Sheffield, most notably my supervisors Drs. Philip R. Davies and Andrew T. Lincoln who patiently provided their critical expertise. Dr. Loveday Alexander gave me much encouragement and the opportunity for teaching experience for which I am grateful. Thanks also go to members of Tyndale House, Cambridge, who provided financial assistance and additional critical advice and to the British Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals for their gracious financial assistance. Many thanks also go to the staff and students of Sorby Hall and to the tutors of Sorby and Halifax Halls for their friendship and care.

Unlike Abraham, I was given an opportunity to return home. My thanks also go to the kind colleagues with whom I worked in the Bible, Archaeology, Theology, and Religion Department at Wheaton College. I am grateful for their continued input on both the professional and personal levels. My

thanks also go to the staff of Buswell Library who gave me the office space in which I was able to complete this thesis and to Ms. Lisa Hergert who offered helpful critical advice on my thesis during the writing-up stage.

During Abraham's travels God manifested his grace to him in the form of a covenant. During my travels, God's grace was made manifest to me at a time when evidence of that grace was sorely needed. This grace was made evident especially through my friends Ms. Rowena Ching, Ms. Anna Piskorowski, Mr. Russ Adams, the Webb family, Mrs. Margaret Rhine, Dr. Mike and Mrs. Patti Mangis, Ms. Kathleen France, Dr. Cynthia Miller and Dr. Ewan Russell. The continued prayer and financial support from the 1st Presbyterian Church of Downers Grove, Ill. was of inestimable value. My own family members, Mr. Roy and Mrs. Barbara Calvert, Mr. Ken and Mrs. Beth Calvert and Ms. Emily Calvert also provided support in many ways during years of study. It is to these loyal friends and family that this thesis is dedicated.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
<u>AJSL</u>	<u>The American Journal of Semitic Languages</u>
ALGHJ	Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums
<u>ANRW</u>	<u>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</u>
BAGD	W. Bauer. <u>A Greek- English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.</u> ET and eds.,W. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich; 2nd rev. ed. F.W. Danker. Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1979.
<u>BASOR</u>	<u>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</u>
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
<u>BJRL</u>	<u>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</u>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<u>BTB</u>	<u>Biblical Theology Bulletin</u>
<u>CBO</u>	<u>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</u>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
<u>CTM</u>	<u>Concordia Theological Monthly</u>
<i>EncJud</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>
EKK	Evangelisch - Katholischer Kommentar
<u>EvT</u>	<u>Evangelische Theologie</u>
<u>ExpT</u>	<u>Expository Times</u>

FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<u>HTR</u>	<u>Harvard Theological Review</u>
<u>HUCA</u>	<u>Hebrew Union College Annual</u>
ICC	The International Critical Commentary
<u>IDBSup</u>	<u>Supplementary Volume to The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</u>
<u>IEJ</u>	<u>Israel Exploration Journal</u>
<u>Int.</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
<u>JBL</u>	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature</u>
<u>JETS</u>	<u>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</u>
<u>JIS</u>	<u>Journal of Jewish Studies</u>
<u>INES</u>	<u>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</u>
<u>JQR</u>	<u>Jewish Quarterly Review</u>
<u>JSHRZ</u>	<u>Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch - römischer Zeit</u>
<u>JSI</u>	<u>Journal for the Study of Judaism</u>
<u>JSNT</u>	<u>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</u>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<u>JSOT</u>	<u>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</u>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<u>JSP</u>	<u>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</u>
<u>JSS</u>	<u>Journal of Semitic Studies</u>

<u>ITS</u>	<u>Journal of Theological Studies</u>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
<u>MTZ</u>	<u>Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift</u>
NCBC	The New Century Bible Commentary
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<u>NovT</u>	<u>Novum Testamentum</u>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplement Series
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<u>NTS</u>	<u>New Testament Studies</u>
<u>RB</u>	<u>Revue biblique</u>
<u>RevQ</u>	<u>Revue de Qumrân</u>
SBLBMI	Society of Biblical Literature, The Bible and Its Modern Interpreters
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SBLSCS	SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLTT	SBL Texts and Translations
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SD	Studies and Documents
<u>SGTK</u>	<u>Studien zur Geschichte der Theologie und der Kirche</u>
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
<u>SJT</u>	<u>Scottish Journal of Theology</u>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series

SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
<u>TAPA</u>	<u>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</u>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur
<u>VT</u>	<u>Vetus Testamentum</u>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<u>ZNW</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</u>

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 The Centrality of Abraham

Even in the 20th century, the centrality of Abraham in religious thought and tradition cannot be denied.¹ He is known as the forebear of the three monotheistic religions: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. It is ironic that, although they share this common ancestor, such animosity exists between members of these religions.

It is certainly the case that the figure of Abraham was used as a device to exclude certain persons, first by the Jewish people and centuries later by the early Christians. Most recently Jeffrey Siker has shown how early Christians eventually used Abraham as a device for excluding the Jews.² One reason this kind of exclusion could be based upon the figure of Abraham was his

¹For example, see recent publications such as Carol Schersten LaHurd, "One God, One Father: Abraham in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam," *Dialog* 29.1 (1990) 23.

²Jeffrey Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991); "Disinheriting the Jews: The Use of Abraham in Early Christian Controversy with Judaism from Paul through Justin Martyr," (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1989); "From Gentile Inclusion to Jewish Exclusion: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy with Jews," *BTB* 19.1 (1989) 30 - 36.

centrality to the self - understanding first of the Jewish people and later of the Christians.

1.2. Methodology

In the first three sections of this thesis it will be shown the ways in which Abraham exemplified how the ideal Jew was to live. This portrayal in Jewish literature often had to do with how the Jews were to relate to members of nations other than their own. In essence Abraham functioned as the key to how the Jewish people perceived their identity.

Documents found both in Palestine and the Diaspora will be studied, and each piece of literature will be considered as a whole in order that the fullest understanding of the depiction of Abraham might be gained.³ Analyses of the texts will operate in both literary and historical spheres since the attempt will be made to glean information both from the text itself and also from what is known about probable historical and cultural circumstances. The study of Jewish literature is confined to that between 200 B.C.E. and 150 C.E., the period of 'Middle Judaism.'⁴

Within the thesis major depictions of Abraham will be studied. These depictions are found in examples of literature produced by the process known as 'rewritten Bible,' in the works of Philo, and in literature with the characteristics of Jewish apocalyptic. Shorter allusions to Abraham found in

³For a discussion of the importance of treating ancient documents as literary wholes, see George W. E. Nickelsburg with Robert A. Kraft, "Introduction: The Modern Study of Early Judaism," Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters, Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg, eds., SBLBMI 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 239 - 258.

⁴Here I am following the suggestion of Gabriele Boccaccini who holds that Judaism between 300 B.C.E. and 200 C.E. should be called "Middle Judaism." Gabriele Boccaccini, Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E., (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 15 - 25.

other Jewish literature will be noted where appropriate. The purpose of these studies is to identify traditions about Abraham, especially those traditions which recur. By 'traditions' I do not mean a direct quotation or paraphrase of the original text but "an imaginative development stemming from reflection upon the figure of Abraham."⁵

Insofar as Abraham is foundationally to be treated as a motif, one must be aware of two dangers:⁶

it is usually the motifs of *one* of the religions which are compared with elements in the second religion in order to identify their origin. The two religions are not treated in the same way. The history of the comparison of Paul and Judaism shows this clearly. One starts with Pauline motifs and looks for their origins in Judaism, but the various elements of Judaism are not taken up for their own sake. It follows that there is no true comparison of the two religions. In the second place, motif research often overlooks the context and significance of a given motif in one (or sometimes both) of the religions. . . In motif research, one must consider *function* and *context* before coming to an overall conclusion as to similarity or dissimilarity."

This thesis is intentionally *not* about comparing holistic patterns of religion which Sanders recommends; this thesis is about comparing the motifs of Abraham in Middle Judaism and in Paul. However, if one believes that at the foundation of holistic patterns of religion is "*how getting in and*

⁵Daniel J. Harrington, "Abraham Traditions in the Testament of Abraham and in the 'Rewritten Bible' of the Intertestamental Period," Studies on the Testament of Abraham, SBLSCS 6, George W. E. Nickelsburg, ed., (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 165 - 171.

⁶E. P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977; reprint ed., 1983), 13. See also E. P. Sanders, "Patterns of Religion in Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: A Holistic Method of Comparison," HTR 66 (1973) 455 - 478.

*staying in are understood,"*⁷ then Abraham is indeed important, since it is one's relationship to Abraham which defines whether or not one is "in" in the case of both Judaism and Pauline Christianity.

Fundamental to this thesis is the presupposition that during the time Paul was writing, fledgling Christianity still identified with Judaism to a very large extent. Abraham is central to both religions and he functions both as a cipher of Jewish identity in Middle Jewish thought and as a cipher of Christian identity in the thought of Paul. Using Abraham as a cipher in both the literature of Middle Judaism and Paul's letters to the Galatians and Romans, my intent is to comprehend Paul's use of Abraham more fully by first investigating the traditions from Middle Jewish literature.

But Sanders' warnings will be heeded. Middle Jewish thought about Abraham will be addressed for its own sake. The function of Abraham within the literature and the context of the literature will be addressed. What is learned from the traditions of Abraham in Middle Jewish literature will then be used to inform an interpretation of Galatians and Romans.

The corpus of Rabbinic literature has been omitted from this study for two major reasons. The handling of Rabbinic materials themselves is problematic.⁸ Most importantly, the datings of the texts are "highly

⁷E. P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977; reprint ed., 1983), 17.

⁸P. S. Alexander, "Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament," ZNW 83 (1983) 238; see also J. Neusner, "The Use of the Later Rabbinic Evidence for the Study of Paul," Approaches to Ancient Judaism, vol. II, BJS 9 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1980). Even W.D. Davies noted that Rabbinic material needed to be used with "extreme caution" and that "many aspects

questionable."⁹ None of this is to say that studying the New Testament in light of Rabbinics and vice versa is unprofitable. In fact, it can be profitable.¹⁰ But in order that the comparison between the traditions of Abraham in Jewish literature and those found in Paul might be within as accurate a time frame as possible, Rabbinic texts have not been included in the analysis.¹¹

Within the writings of Paul, Abraham plays a central role in Galatians and Romans. The final section of the thesis will consider the implications of interpreting the function of Abraham in these letters and in their respective communities of address in light of the traditions of Abraham found in Middle Jewish literature. It is hoped that this study will shed light on Paul's primary purposes as he wrote these letters.

1.3 Previous Literature

The centrality of Abraham in Jewish literature was recognized by B. Beer in the middle of the last century.¹² Beer studied the traditions of Abraham

of first - century Judaism find no place in our Rabbinic sources..." Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 3 - 4. For warnings about assigning parallel meanings to parallel phrases in texts without proper regard for their context, see Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," JBL 81 (1962) 237 - 246.

⁹P. S. Alexander, "Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament," ZNW 83 (1983) 240.

¹⁰For example, while Isaiah M. Gafni warns of the late date of the compilation of the midrashim, he maintains, "midrashim redacted at a later date frequently preserve much earlier material, the antiquity of which may be established through a comparison with early non - rabbinic Jewish or Christian sources." Isaiah M. Gafni, "The Historical Background," The Literature of the Sages, CRINT 2.3 (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1987), 3.

¹¹The traditions of Abraham found in Middle Jewish literature correspond to those found in Rabbinic literature as attested in Arthur Green's recent work, Devotion and Commandment: The Faith of Abraham in the Hasidic Imagination, (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1989).

¹²B. Beer, Leben Abrahams nach Auffassung der jüdischen Sage, (Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1859).

based upon the pericopes found in the Genesis narrative.¹³ His study is important but somewhat diminished by the fact that he uses relatively late sources, primarily Rabbinic literature, and some Islamic material. P. Billerbeck made a similar type of study also based upon relatively late sources.¹⁴ Neither of these studies explored Abraham in the New Testament.

Early in the twentieth century, several works were published which had to do with Abraham either in whole or in part. One of these works was by H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch.¹⁵ Although this can be useful if employed with caution, it is necessary to heed the warning of Sandmel that the use of Strack - Billerbeck can mislead New Testament scholars into "arrogating to themselves a competency they do not possess. . ." ¹⁶ Furthermore, the work leaves the impression that "the unfolding Christian literature, even after Christendom became Gentile in the dispersion in the second century, still owes some immediate debt to the Rabbinic literature, even in passages emerging from

¹³Discussions of issues which surround the account of Abraham in Genesis can be found in John Van Seters, Abraham in History and Tradition, (New Haven and London: Yale U. Press, 1975); R. E. Clements, Abraham and David: Genesis XV and Its Meaning for Israelite Tradition, SBT 5 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1967); A. R. Millard, D. J. Wiseman, eds., Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives, (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983).

¹⁴P. Billerbeck, "Abrahams Leben und Bedeutung für das Reich Gottes nach Auffassung der älterer Haggada," Nathanael 15 (1899) 43 - 57, 118 - 128, 137 - 157, 161 - 179; 16 (1900) 33 - 57, 65 - 80.

¹⁵H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch, (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Oskar Beck, 1926).

¹⁶Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," IBL 81 (1962) 9.

Babylonia in the fifth century."¹⁷ Ginzberg's anthology, The Legends of the Jews,¹⁸ details the life of the patriarch in a narrative format.¹⁹ Because the bulk of information comes from Rabbinic sources, the information is largely unhelpful to one who is attempting to create a picture of traditions of Abraham contemporary with the life of Paul. Geza Vermes studied the traditions of the life of Abraham from two points of view in his book Scripture and Tradition in Judaism.²⁰ Vermes treats the haggadic development of Abraham's life first by looking backward chronologically from the later texts in chapter four and then by studying the development of the traditions of Abraham in a chronologically progressive point of view in chapter five. Commentary on the New Testament was not included in Vermes' book.

The first research to be done on Abraham which took into account the variety of Jewish communities as well as the New Testament was "Abraham im Spätjudentum und im Urchristentum" by Otto Schmitz,²¹ Schmitz investigated the traditions of Abraham found in Rabbinic, Hellenistic, Palestinian, and apocalyptic literature. Schmitz's article "also indicates that

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Louis Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews, 5 vols., (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 5728 - 1968). See also A. Marmorstein, The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinical Literature, (London: New York: KTAV Publishing Hse., 1920).

¹⁹Louis Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews, 5 vols., (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 5728 - 1968), 1:183 - 308.

²⁰Geza Vermes, Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961).

²¹Otto Schmitz, "Abraham im Spätjudentum und im Urchristentum," Aus Schrift und Geschichte, (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1922) 99 - 123.

there would be value in organizing the traditions of Abraham around various communities..."²² In regard to Pauline epistles, the article contains less than three pages. This makes for a somewhat brief, although important, contribution.

In 1935, E. R. Goodenough published By Light, Light²³ which includes a section detailing how Abraham is understood by Philo. Samuel Sandmel, his student, continued and expanded upon his work. In his doctoral dissertation, Sandmel discusses Abraham in "Normative Jewish Tradition" and in "Hellenistic Jewish Tradition" as well as in the New Testament.²⁴ Although in more recent years the idea of a "normative" Judaism has become questionable,²⁵ Sandmel's study is extensive and insightful. His published work, Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature²⁶ is similarly extensive, but includes a compilation of early Jewish conceptions of Abraham interspersed with Rabbinic materials. Although he does not treat the New Testament in his published work, he does discuss it in his dissertation which concludes with the words,

²²Cf. also Bruce Schein, "Our Father Abraham," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss., Yale U., 1972), 6.

²³E. R. Goodenough, By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism, (New Haven: Yale, 1935).

²⁴Samuel Sandmel, "Abraham in Normative and Hellenistic Jewish Traditions," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss, Yale U., 1949).

²⁵For instance, see Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, 2 vols., John Bowden, trans, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) 1: 310 - 314 who contends that Hellenism was pervasive throughout Judaism. See further Samuel Sandmel, "Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism and Christianity: The Question of the Comfortable Theory," HUCA 50 (1979)137 - 148.

²⁶Samuel Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature. (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971).

Assuming that Philo represents a hellenization antecedent to Christianity, the larger task remains of assessing the relationship between hellenized Judaism and Christianity, especially Paul. For the present I have done little more. . . than suggest some lines of approach to the New Testament through the medium of Abraham; that task still remains to be done.²⁷

Two articles which surfaced sixteen years apart capitalized upon one of the major traditions about Abraham found in Middle Jewish literature. The first, by W. L. Knox was entitled, "Abraham and the Quest for God."²⁸ The second and later article was by Sandmel, entitled, "Abraham's Knowledge of the Existence of God."²⁹ Knox notes that in both Hellenistic and "non - Hellenistic" literature, Abraham is known for his finding God.³⁰ Sandmel refines portions of Knox's argument using further examples from Rabbinic Judaism and the works of Philo.

In 1952, Cahiers Sioniens produced an edition entitled "Abraham, Père des Croyants." One article was devoted to Abraham in the Christian tradition,³¹ another to the significance of Abraham in the New Testament.³² Daniélou's article on the Christian tradition shows how traditions of Abraham from the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, Philo,

²⁷Samuel Sandmel, "Abraham in Normative and Hellenistic Jewish Traditions," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss., Yale U., 1949), 392.

²⁸W. L. Knox, "Abraham and the Quest for God," HTR 28 (1935) 55 - 60.

²⁹Samuel Sandmel, "Abraham's Knowledge of the Existence of God," HTR 44 (1951) 137 - 139.

³⁰W. L. Knox, "Abraham and the Quest for God," HTR 28 (1935) 60.

³¹J. Daniélou, "Abraham dans la Tradition Chrétienne," Cahiers Sioniens, 5 (1952) 68 - 87.

³²P. Demánn, "La Signification d'Abraham dans la Perspective du Nouveau Testament," Cahiers Sioniens 5 (1952) 31 - 43.

and the New Testament are found in the works of authors of the early church such as Augustine and Clement of Alexandria. Demánn's article is one of the first to attempt to show how Abraham is significant from the perspective of the New Testament alone. While he admits that Abraham "occupe une place très importante dans la théologie de saint Paul,"³³ he nevertheless devotes only five pages to the subject.

Further interest in Abraham in the New Testament surfaced later. Klaus Berger published "Abraham in den paulinischen Hauptbriefen" in 1966,³⁴ which is a study of Abraham in the Pauline texts with some insight gained from Middle Jewish literature such as *Jubilees* and the *Sibylline Oracles*. Berger later published a short but perceptive work which included more about Abraham in Middle Judaism and its relation to the New Testament.³⁵ C. K. Barrett also studied Abraham in the works of Paul, including reference to Jewish literature such as *Jubilees*, IV Maccabees, and Rabbinic material.³⁶ Because of the compilation of material without careful regard to its date his conclusions, although fruitful, are based in part on traditions of Abraham which are probably post - Pauline. N. Dahl briefly treated the function of

³³Abraham "occupies a very important place in the theology of Saint Paul." P. Demánn, "La Signification d'Abraham dans la Perspective du Nouveau Testament," Cahiers Sioniens 5 (1952) 59. Other articles in the journal include B. Botte, "Abraham dans la Liturgie," Cahiers Sioniens 5 (1952) 88 - 95; J. Guillet, "Figure d'Abraham dans l'Ancien Testament," Cahiers Sioniens 5 (1952) 31 - 43.

³⁴Klaus Berger, "Abraham in den paulinischen Hauptbriefen," MTZ 17 (1966) 47 - 89.

³⁵Klaus Berger, "Abraham II: Im Frühjudentum und Neuen Testament," Theologische Realenzyklopädie, Band I, (Berlin, NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), 372 - 82.

³⁶C. K. Barrett, From First Adam to Last, (N.Y.: C. Scribner's, 1962), 22 - 45. H. J. Schoeps also mixes Rabbinic material with earlier literature in his depiction of Abraham in The Theology of the Apostle in Light of Jewish Religious History. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961). For example, see 228.

Abraham in Galatians and Romans from the standpoint of the communities to which they were addressed.³⁷

Christian Dietzfelbinger published a more in - depth study of the figure of Abraham in Paul, Paulus und das Alte Testament: Die Hermeneutik des Paulus, untersucht an seiner Deutung der Gestalt Abrahams.³⁸ The pamphlet covers only thirty - nine pages and looks at the figure of Abraham in Jewish literature, including Rabbinic works, via categories gleaned from Paul: "ἐπαγγελία," "πίστις," and "σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ."³⁹ In contrast to Dietzfelbinger's work, in this thesis Jewish literature will first be approached in a holistic fashion in order that what is learned can then be used to understand Paul.

R. Martin - Achard returns to a recognition of the variety of Jewish communities within Middle Judaism in his study of the traditions of Abraham in the Pseudepigrapha, Apocrypha, and Qumran, Rabbinic literature, and Hellenistic Jewish literature.⁴⁰ His interaction with the New Testament texts is clear but short; the epistles of Paul have a mere nine pages devoted to them. Halvor Moxnes published Theology in Conflict: Studies in

³⁷Nils A. Dahl, "Abrahamkindschaft," Das Volk Gottes: Eine Untersuchung zum Kirchenbewusstsein des Urchristentums, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), 212 - 217; see also Dahl, "The Story of Abraham in Luke - Acts," Studies in Luke - Acts, ed. by E. Keck and J. L. Martyn, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 139 - 159.

³⁸Christian Dietzfelbinger, Paulus und das Alte Testament: Die Hermeneutik des Paulus, untersucht an seiner Deutung der Gestalt Abrahams, (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1961).

³⁹Ibid., 7.

⁴⁰R. Martin - Achard, Actualité d' Abraham, Bibliothèque théologique, (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1969).

Paul's Understanding of God in Romans in 1980.⁴¹ In part two of the book, he provides a study of Abraham in the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, Qumran, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, the works of Philo, and Rabbinic literature all under the heading of "God and his Promise to Abraham" based upon the promise theme found in Romans four.⁴² While the study is profitable, once again a New Testament scholar begins asking questions of Middle Jewish literature based upon the New Testament rather than beginning by allowing the literature to speak for itself.

The most extensive study of Abraham in the New Testament is that by Friedrich Wieser, Die Abrahamvorstellungen im Neuen Testament. This study includes fifty pages on Abraham in Paul. Wieser's work on Abraham in Middle Judaism is relegated to the appendix and combines Jewish literature under a variety of subject headings which relate to the depiction of Abraham but without much regard for their respective dates of composition.⁴³ The most recent publication which addresses Abraham in Paul is by G. Walter Hansen entitled, Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts.⁴⁴ While the work is helpful in terms of the function of Abraham in Galatians and contains some interaction with Jewish literature,⁴⁵

⁴¹Halvor Moxnes, Theology in Conflict: Studies in Paul's Understanding of God in Romans, (Leiden: Brill, 1980).

⁴²See H. Moxnes, "God and his Promise to Abraham," Theology in Conflict: Studies in Paul's Understanding of God in Romans, (Leiden: Brill, 1980) 117 - 206.

⁴³Friedrich E. Wieser, Die Abrahamvorstellungen im Neuen Testament, Europäische Hochschulschriften 23, (Bern: Peter Lang, 1987).

⁴⁴ Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts, JSNTSup 29 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 99 and the section in the appendix entitled, "Abraham in Jewish Literature," 175 - 200.

it is written primarily from the standpoint of the function of Abraham in terms of epistolary and rhetorical criticism and not from the standpoint of traditions of Abraham in Jewish literature in comparison with those found in Paul.

In recent years, a few dissertations have appeared on the subject of Abraham in Middle Jewish literature and the New Testament. One of the earliest dissertations to discuss Abraham from this perspective was by Bruce Schein.⁴⁶ He studied the dominant traditions of Abraham: Sage, Missionary, Priest, Prophet, and the Righteous One.⁴⁷ Schein is careful to note the different depictions of Abraham within different groups of Middle Judaism. However, he may be too careful in his divisions since he does not make enough of the similarities which exist between the various groups' conceptions of Abraham or of their similarities with Paul's conceptions. He also does not discuss the Jewish literature holistically or with reference to literary genre. Schein deals with Abraham in Matthew 3:9 (and its parallel Luke 3:8), John 8:31 - 59, and Hebrews 7: 1 - 10, while his work on Abraham in Paul is primarily concerned with Romans, especially chapter four.⁴⁸ So the Pauline material is not the main focus of the study and in particular Galatians is neglected.

Three recent dissertations covered the history of interpretation of Genesis 15:6. The first, by Terence P. McGonigal, discusses not only Genesis 15:6 but

⁴⁶Bruce Schein, "Our Father Abraham," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss., Yale U., 1972).

⁴⁷Ibid., 24.

⁴⁸Ibid.,17.

the entire Abraham narrative from Genesis in the first quarter of his dissertation. His survey of Abraham in Jewish literature is relatively short (104 pages) and includes Rabbinic material. His primary objective in studying the New Testament is "to understand the significance of Gen. 15:6 in the NT, with other important subjects only being treated as they help to illumine our understanding of Gen. 15:6 in Galatians 3, Romans 4, and James 2."⁴⁹

The second dissertation to address the interpretation of Genesis 15:6 was by Donald D. Sutherland, "Genesis 15:6: A Study in Ancient Jewish and Christian Interpretation."⁵⁰ Sutherland investigates the interpretation of the verse from the Old Testament through the Septuagint and Rabbinic works, Palestinian Judaism, Hellenistic Judaism, Paul (Galatians 3, Romans 4), and the church fathers before and after Constantine. A problem with his investigation is his use of Rabbinic material to interpret both Galatians and Romans without much consideration of dating and influence.⁵¹

The third dissertation of this type is by Larry L. Bethune, "Abraham, Father of Faith: The Interpretation of Genesis 15:6 from Genesis to Paul."⁵² Like the first dissertation of this type, the bulk of early pages (75) are devoted to Abraham in the Old Testament. However, Bethune, unlike the others, examines the Abraham traditions in the Old Testament through Rabbinic

⁴⁹T. P. McGonigal, "'Abraham Believed God': Genesis 15:6 and Its Use in the New Testament," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss., Fuller, 1982), 230.

⁵⁰D. D. Sutherland, "Genesis 15:6: A Study in Ancient Jewish and Christian Interpretation," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982).

⁵¹Ibid., 152 - 153; 176 - 177. For his discussion of Gen. 15:6 in Rabbinic material see 20 - 29, 93 - 106.

⁵²Larry L. Bethune, "Abraham, Father of Faith: The Interpretation of Genesis 15:6 from Genesis to Paul," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1986).

material (28 pages). Like those before him, he mixes Rabbinic material with earlier material in his discussion of Paul.⁵³

While studies of the interpretation of Genesis 15:6 are helpful, this kind of treatment does not exhaust the traditions of Abraham available in Middle Jewish literature. It also means that one does not gain an appreciation of what traditions appear to be most important to the Jewish people and thus most important to those in the thought world of Middle Judaism and ultimately in the thought world of Paul.

An earlier dissertation on the interpretation of Abraham was completed by James R. Lord.⁵⁴ While the study recognizes different types of communities of Judaism, he spends his entire first section discussing the Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomic and Priestly traditions of Abraham in Genesis. Such a discussion of Abraham in Genesis is certainly anachronistic and somewhat irrelevant to a discussion of Abraham in Middle Jewish literature and the New Testament. Additionally, Lord discusses the gospels and Acts but not the Pauline material.

Fred Layman's dissertation differs in purpose to a great extent from the present thesis. He is concerned to investigate the problem of "Paul's understanding of history as it is related to his use of the Abraham figure."⁵⁵ While he is to be commended for studying traditions of Abraham according to literary genre, the traditions he studies are from Rabbinic and apocalyptic

⁵³Ibid., 205 - 211.

⁵⁴James R. Lord, "Abraham: A Study in Ancient Jewish and Christian Interpretation," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss., Duke U., 1968).

⁵⁵Fred D. Layman, "Paul's Use of Abraham: An Approach to Paul's Understanding of History," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss., U. of Iowa, 1972).

literature. It should be noted that he does allude to further pseudepigraphical literature, but only when it parallels Rabbinic thought.⁵⁶

One further dissertation is by Ik Soo Park, "Paul and the Abraham Tradition: A Challenge for the Church Today."⁵⁷ Unfortunately, the author followed the basic outline of Dietzfelbinger, imposing Pauline categories on Middle Jewish texts.⁵⁸ He additionally discussed Abraham in Genesis according to the Yahwist, Elohist, and Priestly schools within his first chapter. Again, such a treatment seems irrelevant to a study of Abraham in Middle Jewish or in Pauline material. In addition, he treats none of the Jewish literature holistically or according to genre, but groups the various documents together according to the dates of their composition.

Several noteworthy articles also discuss Abraham in the New Testament. A few investigate the figure of Abraham primarily from the perspective of the New Testament, such as "Abraham in the New Testament: Tradition and the New Identity" by William Baird⁵⁹ or the article by Richard N. Longenecker entitled, "The 'Faith of Abraham' Theme in Paul, James, and Hebrews: A Study in the Circumstantial Nature of New Testament Teaching."⁶⁰ F. F. Bruce discusses Abraham from the perspective of the

⁵⁶Ibid., 8.

⁵⁷Ik Soo Park, "Paul and the Abraham Tradition: A Challenge for the Church Today," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss, Drew U., 1985).

⁵⁸Ibid., 12.

⁵⁹William Baird, "Abraham in the New Testament: Tradition and the New Identity," *Int.* 42.4 (1988) 367 - 379.

⁶⁰Richard N. Longenecker, "The 'Faith of Abraham' Theme in Paul, James, and Hebrews: A Study in the Circumstantial Nature of New Testament Teaching," *JETS* 20 (1977) 203 - 212.

Hebrew Bible in comparison with the New Testament in "Abraham Our Father."⁶¹ Only a few authors discuss traditions of Abraham in earlier Jewish literature and implications for the interpretation of the New Testament, such as Roy Bowen Ward in "Abraham Traditions in Early Christianity"⁶² and in "The Works of Abraham: James 2: 14 - 26."⁶³ Robert Wilken carries the investigation into the early church Fathers in "The Christianization of Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith."⁶⁴

It would seem that room exists for another study on Abraham in Middle Jewish literature and in Paul based upon the methodology described above. The texts which will be examined in Section I *are those that are now known as 'rewritten Bible.'* These texts contain some of the most extensive descriptions of Abraham. In Section II the depiction of Abraham in the works of Philo will be discussed. Section III contains an investigation of Jewish literature which contains characteristics of the literature known as apocalyptic. Finally, in section IV, Galatians and Romans will be examined. The texts of all of these sections will be examined both in light of their genre and what may be known about their historical situation.

⁶¹F. F. Bruce, "Abraham Our Father," The Time is Fulfilled, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 55 - 74; see also his "'Abraham Had Two Sons:' A Study in Pauline Hermeneutics," New Testament Studies, H. Drumwright, ed., (Waco, TX: Markham, 1975), 71 - 84.

⁶²Roy Bowen Ward, "Abraham Traditions in Early Christianity," Studies on the Testament of Abraham, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, Jr. ed., SBLSCS 6, (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 173 - 184.

⁶³Roy Bowen Ward, "The Works of Abraham: James 2: 14 - 26," HTR 61 (1968) 283 - 290.

⁶⁴Robert L. Wilken, "The Christianization of Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith," CTM 43 (1972) 723 - 726.

1.4 Abraham in the Old Testament: A Brief Survey

In the sections on Jewish literature, the treatments of Abraham will be compared with those found in the Old Testament, particularly in the Genesis accounts. The depiction of the life of Abraham is found in Genesis, from his inclusion in the genealogy of his father, Terah (11:27) to his death and burial (25: 7 - 10). The major events in Abraham's life are his leaving his father and birthplace (12:1), his sojourns in Egypt and Gerar (12: 10 - 20; 20: 1 - 18), his battle with the kings (14: 1 - 16), his meeting with Melchizedek (14: 17 - 20), God's covenant with him (15: 7 - 21; 17: 2,4), his union with Hagar and the birth of Ishmael (16: 1 - 15), God's commandment of circumcision for Abraham and his descendants (17: 9 - 14), the promise of the birth of Isaac (17: 15 - 21), the birth of Isaac (21: 1 - 7), the offering of Isaac (22: 1 - 19) and the death and burial of Sarah (23:1 - 20). Four primary themes are found in the Genesis account in connection with Abraham. Three of the four themes are based upon the promises of God. They are that Abraham would have many descendants (12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:2, 4; 22:17) and land (12:7; 13: 14 - 15; 15:7), and that the nations would be blessed through him (12:3; 22:18). The obedience of Abraham makes up the fourth theme (12: 1 - 4; 17:1; 22: 16 - 18).

Within the Old Testament Abraham functions in three primary ways. First, he is the father of the Jewish people.⁶⁵ Secondly, he is the original source of blessing for the Jewish people.⁶⁶ Thirdly, his name is used to

⁶⁵See Gen. 25:19; 26:15, 24; 28:13; 32:9; 48:15,16; Ex 3:6; Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 30:20; Josh 24:3; 1 Chron 1:27, 28, 34; 16:13; Ps 105:6; Is 41:8; Jer 33:26; Mic 7:20.

⁶⁶See Gen 26:3-5, 24; 28:4; Ex 2:24; 6:3 - 8; 32:13; 33:1; Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 29:13; 2 Kings 13:23; 1 Chron 16:15-16; 2 Chron 20:7; Neh 9: 7-8; Ps 105:7-11, 42; Is 51:2; Mic 7:20.

identify the God of the Jewish people as the "God of Abraham."⁶⁷ Abraham functions in three additional ways which are worthy of note. Abraham is said to be faithful to God (Neh 9: 7 - 8) and obedient to his laws (Gen 26: 4 - 5) and this faithful obedience becomes the basis for the blessing of his descendants. God's compassion toward the Jewish people is sometimes invoked on the basis of his covenant with Abraham (Deut 9:27; 2 Kings 13:23; Mic 7:18 - 20). Finally, God brings Abraham out of the midst of idolatry (Josh 24: 2 - 3).⁶⁸

⁶⁷Gen 28:13; 31:42, 53; 32:9; Ex 3:6,15,16; 4:5; 1 Kings 18:36; 1 Chron 29:18; 2 Chron 30:6; Ps 47:9.

⁶⁸Adapted from N. L. Calvert, "Abraham," Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, J. B. Green, S. McKnight, eds., I. H. Marshall, consulting ed., (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992),3-7.

Chapter Two

Abraham in the Book of Jubilees

2.1 Introduction: Jubilees and 'Rewritten Bible'

"In the years that followed Ben Sira (c. 180 B.C.E.) on into the Christian era the patriarchs gained a new prominence and popularity within Judaism. The stories told of them in scripture came to be embellished or amplified or altered in such a way as to enhance their reputation out of all recognition."¹

"The use of Israel's past heroes for apologetic and parenetic purposes was already an established practice in Judaism prior to the coming of Christianity."² During the years 200 B.C.E. to 150 C.E. Abraham was a prominent figure among these patriarchs and apologetic "heroes."

A few authors described Abraham as involved in the bringing of culture or as the author of astrology which was regarded by some as the "highest of all 'sciences'."³ For example, Pseudo - Eupolemus (2nd century B.C.E.) combines the accounts in Genesis with the origin of Babylonian and Hellenistic

¹D. S. Russell, The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Patriarchs and Prophets in Early Judaism. (London: SCM Press, 1987), 1.

²Luis Fidel Mercado, "The Language of Sojourning in the Abraham Midrash in Hebrews 11:8-19: Its Old Testament Basis, Exegetical Traditions, and Function in the Epistle to the Hebrews," (Unpub.Th.D. diss., Harvard U., 1966), 170.

³M. Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 1:238 - 239, 90. See also H. W. Attridge, "Historiography," Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period. CRINT 2.2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 165 - 166.

culture.⁴ His work contains the tradition that Abraham was born in Babylonia and surpassed all men in nobility and wisdom, and that Abraham discovered astrology and the Chaldaic art. Another Jewish writer, Artapanus (c. 300 - 100 B.C.E.), made Enoch, his hellenistic equivalent Atlas, and Abraham the inventors and communicators of astrological secret knowledge.⁵

During this time the *Book of Jubilees*, first known as "The Little Genesis" was also composed. It is an example of 'rewritten Bible,' which, according to Daniel Harrington, refers to those products of "Palestinian Judaism at the turn of the era that take as their literary framework the flow of the biblical text itself and apparently have as their major purpose the clarification and actualization of the biblical story."⁶ Harrington further contends that in order to understand what each writer thought he was doing as he composed each book, "each piece of literature has to be approached on its own terms."⁷ In approaching 'rewritten Bible,' he insists that the starting point must be "the particular historical setting and theological tendencies of individual documents, not generalizations derived from the much later

⁴Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 9.17

⁵M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 1:238 - 239. For Artapanus see Eusebius *Praep. evang.* 9.18. See also B. Z. Wacholder, "Biblical Chronology in the Hellenistic World Chronicles," *HTR* 61 (1968) 458; H. W. Attridge, "Historiography," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT 2.2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 166 - 168.

⁶Daniel Harrington, "Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies," *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, SBLBML 2, eds. Robert A. Kraft, George W. E. Nickelsburg, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 239.

⁷*Ibid.*, 243.

rabbinic materials."⁸ Harrington recommends three areas of concern: the biblical text used in the document, the logic of interpretation, and the character of the document under consideration -- its historical and social setting, literary genre, theological tendencies, and attitude shown to the biblical text.⁹ These recommendations will be kept in mind as *Jubilees* and subsequent texts written according to the process of 'rewritten Bible' are discussed.

2.2 The Book of Jubilees

The biblical text used by the author of *Jubilees* is believed to be of the early Palestinian variety.¹⁰ It is a text "similar to the one reflected in 1 - 2 Chronicles. . . [the] Genesis Apocryphon, and Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae*."¹¹ The affinity of the text with other early Palestinian texts points to "an historical setting before the Hasmonean era, to Palestine instead of the Diaspora as its provenance, and to Hebrew as its original language."¹²

Because Harrington's second recommendation about the logic of interpretation will guide the final portion of the consideration of Abraham in

⁸Ibid., 254 - 255.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰John C. Endres, Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees, CBQMS 18 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 11 - 12. See also James C. VanderKam, Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees, HSM 14 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977), 136 - 137; Frank Moore Cross, "The History of the Biblical Text in the Light of the Discoveries on the Judean Desert," HTR 57 (1964) 281 - 99; "The Contribution of Qumran to the Study of the Biblical Text," IEJ 16 (1966) 81 - 95.

¹¹John C. Endres, Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees, CBQMS 18 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 12.

¹²Ibid. The original Hebrew is believed to have been translated into Greek (c. 200 C.E.) and Syriac (c. 500 C.E.). The Greek was then translated into Ethiopic (c. 500 C.E.) and Latin (c. 450 C.E.). VanderKam considers the Ethiopic text to be an extraordinarily precise reflection of the original Hebrew text. James C. VanderKam, Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees, HSM 14 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 15.

Jubilees, his third recommendation concerning the character of the *Book of Jubilees* will now be discussed. Although the exact dating of the composition of the text differs among scholars, it is usually placed near the middle of the second century, B.C.E.,¹³ either just before the Hasmonean era during the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes IV¹⁴ or not too long after the Hasmonean era began, under the reign of the descendants of Mattathias.¹⁵ What the text reflects is an ideological tension between those Jews who stood for strict maintenance of the law and separation from Gentiles and those who freely associated with Gentiles and assimilated aspects of hellenistic culture. The evolution of these groups must be seen in relation to previous events.

Since 198 B.C.E., the Seleucids had ruled over Palestine. Antiochus Epiphanes IV was the ruler under whom tensions between exponents of differing views of 'Judaism' reached their climax. Through the Jewish high priests Jason and Menelaus, Antiochus IV saw the city of Jerusalem hellenized to a large extent. The conflict between Antiochus IV and the Jews reached its height when Jason attacked Jerusalem (c. 169 B.C.E.) after Menelaus had gained control of the high priesthood. An attack by Antiochus

¹³J. C. VanderKam and J. T. Milik, "The First *Jubilees* Manuscript from Qumran Cave 4: A Preliminary Publication," *IBL* 110.2 (1991) 246. The citation of *Jubilees* in CD 16.2 - 4 has been used to establish a *terminus ad quem* of about 100 B.C.E. based on paleographical evidence. See J. C. VanderKam, *Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees*, HSM 14 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977), 255 - 257.

¹⁴G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT 2.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 101-103.

¹⁵O. S. Wintermute, "Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1985), 2:44; John C. Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees*, CBQMS 18 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 13; James C. VanderKam, "The Book of Jubilees," *Outside the Old Testament*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), vol. 4, *Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World, 200 B.C. to A.D. 200*, ed. M. De Jonge, 116.

IV soon followed, and was repeated two years later. Antiochus IV, who was tired of uprisings, in effect proscribed the Jewish religion.¹⁶ Even under the reign of the Hasmoneans which followed, tensions between nationalistic and assimilationist Jews continued.¹⁷

Given that one major theme of *Jubilees* is separation from Gentile influence, it would make sense that the document was written during these years of severe ideological tension between nationalistic and assimilationist Judaism. If this is the case, *Jubilees* is the text of the response of a Jew¹⁸ who considers himself to be faithful in the midst of many compatriots who by bowing to hellenism are unfaithful in his eyes.

While the *Book of Jubilees* is 'rewritten Bible,' it contains some aspects of apocalyptic literature. First it is pseudonymous and attributed to an authoritative figure from Jewish history; the account is said to have been given privately to Moses in chapter one, by an angel.¹⁹ This is an attempt to

¹⁶E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, eds., (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint ed., 1987),1:155. See also G. W. E. Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 71 - 73; I. Gafni, "The Historical Background," Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period. CRINT 2.2 (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1987), 13 - 17.

¹⁷E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, eds., (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint ed., 1987),1:177.

¹⁸The author may have been either a priest or associated with priests with a "desire to effect a reform of the assimilationist priests." John C. Endres, Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees. CBQMS 18 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 245. See also Wintermute, "Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction," Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. ed. J. H. Charlesworth, (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1985), 2:45; R. H. Charles, The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English. (London: Oxford U. Press, 1913), 2:8.

¹⁹See James C. VanderKam who maintains, based upon the probable original tense of the Hebrew verb (hiphil), that instead of writing the account, the angel of the presence merely dictates what God says to Moses who writes. Thus, only one possible author exists. "The Putative Author of the Book of Jubilees," JSS 26.2 (1981) 209 - 217. Unfortunately, this simultaneously provokes questions concerning Davenport's work, The Eschatology of the Book of

lend authority to the author's instructions to his contemporaries about matters of vital importance for their own time especially in regard to oppression from outside the community and an erosion of values within.

The text. . . was transmitted by an angel to Moses on Mt. Sinai. . . the author wished to extend the authority of ancient figures and events to 'cover' the present, including present - day practices and modes of interpretation. But it is an equally telling detail that the interpretation belongs not to Moses but to an angel (and hence to God); the proper understanding of the text was no less of divine origin than the text publicly promulgated by Moses.²⁰

Conversely, *Jubilees* is not like apocalyptic literature because it does not contain bizarre imagery and is not permeated with eschatology.

How *Jubilees* is to be compared to Rabbinic texts is debatable. Although both *Jubilees* and Midrash have Scripture as their point of departure,²¹ the intent of Midrash and 'rewritten Bible' are not the same. A helpful distinction between the two types of interpretation is made by D. Dimant who describes the use of Scripture in the Rabbinic Midrash, the Qumranic pesher, commentaries on the Torah by Philo and certain types of quotations in the New Testament as "exposition." This is in contrast to the type of

Jubilees. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971) who bases his theory of different redactors in part upon the two authors.

²⁰James L. Kugel, Rowan A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 3 of *Library of Early Christianity*, Wayne A. Meeks, ed., (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 60. See also Daniel Patte, *Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine*, SBLDS 22 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 145 - 153.

²¹O. S. Wintermute, "Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd 1985), 2:39.

interpretation found in the bulk of Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha which Dimant calls "compositional."²²

In compositional use biblical elements are interwoven into the work without external formal markers; in expository use they are presented explicitly as such, with a clear external marker. These two distinctive functions have different aims. In the exposition the divine word is introduced in order to interpret it as such, while the composition is employed when the biblical element is subservient to the independent aim and structure of its new context.

While the author of *Jubilees* certainly uses the biblical text as a point of departure for his work, the work is not technically "midrash." The purpose of midrash is to explain a biblical text while the author of *Jubilees* is more interested in retelling or even replacing the biblical account.

One of the features of *Jubilees* is the large role played by angels and demons.²³ Most noticeable is the "angel of the presence" who participates in the composition of the text (1:27; 2:1). The creation of angels is a major theme in the creation account found in chapter 2; they are later reported to have been circumcised from the day of their creation (15: 25 - 27). Demons also play a large role. In fact, it is Prince Mastema (the embodiment of evil) who suggests to God that he test Abraham through the sacrifice of Isaac (16:16). In chapter 10, Mastema pleads with God not to destroy all of his angels as Noah had recently requested (*Jub.* 9). God complies with this request as he destroys only nine - tenths of Mastema's spirits. "In this way the writer explains the

²²D. Dimant, "Use and Interpretation of Mikra in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," *Mikra*, CRINT 2.1, ed. M. J. Mulder, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 382.

²³This emphasis on angels may provide more information about the theological stance of the author. It was the Sadducees who "rejected all innovations such as angelology. . ." while the Pharisees approved of them, cf. Helmer Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 343.

ongoing influence of evil on the earth while simultaneously maintaining that God is ultimately in control."²⁴

Additionally the themes of covenant and law are important to the author. Covenantal stipulations which actually were established after the era of Noah, Abraham, and Jacob are ascribed to them. For the author of *Jubilees*, these stipulations seem to have existed since Creation independently of the Jews. That those who lived before the law was given actually practiced stipulations of what became known as the Mosaic law adds to the credibility of that law. Many of the laws were not only given to Moses but were instituted at Creation; the Mosaic law in essence is part of the created order.²⁵ Given the historical circumstances of the author, this is further evidence for his case that the Jewish people should remain true to their God and their law.

According to *Jubilees*, the covenant established with Noah (*Jub.* 6) was renewed yearly during the feast of Shebuot²⁶ by Noah and his children. The covenant established with Abraham is the next occasion to celebrate Shebuot (14:20), which is a renewal of the feast celebrated by Noah. Abraham again

²⁴James C. VanderKam, "The Book of Jubilees," Outside the Old Testament, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1985), vol. 4, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World, 100 B.C. to A.D. 200, ed. M. De Jonge, 127.

²⁵For example, the laws for keeping the sabbath are declared after the seventh day is made (*Jub.* 2:25); the laws of purification are instituted because Adam was created in the first week while Eve was not shown to Adam until the second week (*Jub.* 3:8); celebration of the feast of Shebuot "was celebrated in heaven from the day of creation until the days of Noah. . ." (*Jub.* 6:18).

²⁶Roland de Vaux identifies the Feast of *shabu'oth* (of 'weeks') as being "held seven weeks after the cutting of the first ears of corn" (see Deut 16:9 - 12). Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions, (New York: McGraw - Hill, 1961), 472. S. Zeitlin, The Book of Jubilees: Its Character and Significance, (Philadelphia, 1939), 6, maintains that Shebuot meant "oaths," noting that the covenant between God and Noah provided the context for establishing the feast and that the covenant with Abraham in chapter 15 also occurred on this festival. Wintermute maintains that the significance of this double meaning was probably not lost on the author of *Jubilees*. "Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction," Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd 1985), 2:67.

celebrates Shebuot in *Jubilees* 22, just before he blesses Jacob. The feast of Shebuot is central to *Jubilees*; its celebration allowed the community to observe the anniversary of the first covenant concluded between God and Noah after the deluge. The celebration of Shebuot at the final encounter between Abraham and Jacob emphasized the continuity of the covenant through Jacob.²⁷ It is significant that Abraham, not Isaac, blesses Jacob. In fact, the author attributes to Abraham the same words used by Isaac in Genesis 27:29 (see *Jub.* 22: 11b).

After the feast, in his last words, Abraham blesses Jacob (*Jub.* 22: 10 - 30). Within this blessing Abraham desires that Jacob and his descendants be righteous in their "ways. . . in order to be a holy people" (*Jub.* 22:12). This portion of the blessing is not found in Genesis; it is one example of the author shifting attention from the promissory aspect of the disclosure to Abraham to the demand for covenant fidelity. This emphasis is more characteristic of the Mosaic covenant tradition which the author of *Jubilees* combines with the Abraham traditions.²⁸

Thus the covenants established with those before Moses shift from being promissory in nature to being those which demand covenant fidelity in the eyes of the author of *Jubilees*. The forbears are no longer so much examples of divine favor as they are examples for imitation by the Jewish

²⁷John C. Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees*. CBQMS 18 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 40. See also Annie Jaubert, *La Notion d'Alliance dans le Judaïsme: Aux Abords de L'Ère Chrétienne*, *Patristica Sorbonensia* 6 (Paris: Seuil, 1963), 100 - 102; Michel Testuz, *Les Idées Religieuses du Livre des Jubilés*, (Geneva: Droz; Paris: Minaard, 1960), 148 - 149.

²⁸John C. Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees*. CBQMS 18 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 49.

community.²⁹ In order to provide perfect examples, the author of *Jubilees* even goes so far as to correct questionable deeds on the part of the forebears.

One example of this type of correction occurs in *Jubilees* 13, when Abram and Sarai travel to Egypt. In the Genesis account (Gen. 12: 10 - 20), Abram is depicted as calling Sarai his sister so as to protect himself from Pharaoh's certain attraction to the beautiful Sarai.³⁰ Abraham's courage and ultimately his trust in God could be seen as lacking in this event. The most important factor in this discussion is that the author of *Jubilees* saw the story as one which needed correction.

In the *Jubilees* account, Sarai is taken from Abraham with no attempt at his own self - protection on the part of Abraham. Pharaoh's house is duly plagued "on account of Sarah" (13:13) and Abram is "honored with many possessions" (13:14) including the return of his wife and is sent out from the land of Egypt.³¹ Because of his correction, the author can write,

And the Lord was aware that Abraham was faithful in all of his afflictions because he tested him with . . . his wife, when she was taken (from him). . . And in everything in which he tested him, he was found faithful. And his soul was not impatient. And he

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰See E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, AB 1 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), 91 - 94 who argues that the story reflects a Hurrian custom whereby the wife being also a sister would elevate her social status. In *Jub.* 12:9, the author replicates Gen. 20:12 in which Sarah is defined as a half - sister of Abraham. The Genesis account clearly states that she is the daughter of Abram's father but not his mother, while the *Jubilees* account mentions only that she is a daughter of Terah.

³¹The account of Abraham and Abimelech in Genesis 20:1 - 18 where Abraham uses the identical "sister" interpretation is missing; the author of *Jubilees* combines the two accounts in Genesis into one in his work (*Jub.* 13: 10 - 15). In Gen 22 and in *Jub.* 13, Abraham receives gifts after the plague: in Gen 12, the two events are reversed.

was not slow to act because he was faithful and a lover of the Lord (*Jub.* 17: 17 - 18).³²

Another prominent theme in *Jubilees* is the separation of the people of Israel from the Gentiles. In chapter 2, God speaks of the significance of the Sabbath upon finishing Creation, "Behold, I shall separate for myself a people from among all the nations. And they will also keep the sabbath. And I will sanctify them for myself, and I will bless them" (2:19).³³ Later in *Jubilees* the author depicts God telling Abraham that he would be the father of many nations (*Jub.* 15: 5 - 9; *Gen.* 17:1 - 7) in an account which is very similar to that found in Genesis. It is significant that the author adds his own interpretation; the separation of Israel from the Gentiles is presented in a deterministic light.

And he sanctified them and gathered them from all of the sons of man because (there are) many nations and many people, and they all belong to him, but over all of them he caused spirits to rule so that they might lead them astray from following him. But over Israel he did not cause any angel or spirit to rule because he alone is their ruler and he will protect them and he will seek for them at the hand of all of his authorities so that he might guard them and bless them and they might be his and he might be theirs henceforth and forever. (*Jub.* 15: 31 - 32).³⁴

Another important theme in *Jubilees* is God's eternal covenant with his chosen nation, Israel, and its obedience or disobedience to the stipulations of

³²All *Jubilees* translation is from O. S. Wintermute, "Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction" *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd 1985), 2:52 - 142.

³³See also *Jub.* 35:12 in which Rebekah states concerning Jacob, ". . . since he came from Haran. . . he has been blessing us and has not separated from us. . . but has been dwelling with us continually at home. . ." This addition to the text from Genesis seems to emphasize geographical separation -- one is not even to live among the Gentiles.

³⁴See also *Deut* 32:8f and *Sir* 17:17 which also contain deterministic themes.

that covenant especially in the way that this behavior separates them from the Gentiles. God is faithful to his covenant with his nation, Israel (*Jub.* 1:17 - 18). Those who belong to Israel are to follow the stipulations of the covenant. Among these stipulations are abstaining from idol worship (1:9; 11:4; 11:16; 12:2; 20:7; 22:22; 36:5), keeping the Sabbath (2:18), covering nakedness (3:31), refraining from eating meat with blood in it (6:10; 21:18), observing the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles (6:17;16:29), tithing (13:24), circumcising their sons (15:25 - 34), abstaining from sexual immorality (16:4 - 6; 20:3 - 6; 25:7; 50:5), not intermarrying with members of other nations (30:7) and not committing incest (33:10).³⁵ "The members of the covenant are not to behave like the Gentiles, particularly by avoiding idolatry, but also by avoiding the 'uncleanness' of the Gentiles, which refers not only to idolatry, but also to other transgressions, especially sexual ones."³⁶ In order to be obedient to the covenant one needs to be separate from the Gentiles.

Circumcision is depicted as a covenant stipulation for those who are the elect in chapter 15. In fact, anyone who does not have the sign of circumcision does not belong to the Lord (15:26a; see also Gen. 17:14) and is destined for annihilation (*Jub.* 15:26b).³⁷ This discussion of the severity of the punishment for those who do not have the "sign" of circumcision would certainly speak loudly to those Jews who had succumbed to the hellenistic

³⁵See also E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977; reprint ed., 1983), 364. In *Jubilees*, incest is one of the sins for which there is no forgiveness, see 33:17.

³⁶E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977; reprint ed., 1983), 365.

³⁷To the author of *Jubilees* circumcision was also instituted from the day of creation, "Because the nature of all of the angels of the presence and all of the angels of sanctification was thus from the day of creation" (*Jub.* 15:27).

assimilationist pressures of the day and had their marks of circumcision removed artificially.³⁸

One of the major preoccupations of the author is his use of a solar calendar. Scholars have argued over the significance of the calendar.³⁹ But most important is that in *Jubilees* the calendar "was expanded to the whole of history, which was divided into jubilees."⁴⁰ It is this calendar which frames the secrets of world history given to Moses until the Lord will descend and dwell with his people (*Jub* . 1:26).

2.3 The Interpretation of Abraham in the Book of Jubilees

The *Book of Jubilees* is a reinterpretation of Genesis 1 through Exodus 12. In Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees, John Endres has provided an extensive study of the character of *Jubilees* as a work of biblical interpretation. Because he believes Jacob is the central character in *Jubilees*, he concentrates upon such interpretation in chapters 19 - 45, missing most of the depiction of Abraham. In order to understand the character and function of Abraham in *Jubilees*, it is important to stress that through his adaptations of the Genesis

³⁸The operation is known as epispasm. "The purpose of disguising circumcision. . . was to avoid mockery in public baths and wrestling - schools." E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People, Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, eds., (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint ed., 1987),1:149.

³⁹For example, see A. Jaubert, "Le calendrier des Jubilés et de la secte de Qumrân: ses origines bibliques" VT 3 (1953) 250 - 264; P. R. Davies, "Calendrical Change and Qumran Origins: An Assessment of VanderKam's Theory" CBO 45 (1983) 80 - 89; James VanderKam, "The Origin, Character, and Early History of the 364 - day Calendar: A Reassessment of Jaubert's Hypothesis," CBO 41 (1979) 390 - 411. Morgenstern notes inconsistencies within the *Jubilees* calendar, and mentions that the calendar was probably used primarily for establishing religious festivals. Julian Morgenstern, "The Calendar of the Book of Jubilees, Its Origin and its Character," VT 5 (1955) 36-76. For other views on the calendar in *Jubilees*, see J. B. Segal, "Intercalation and the Hebrew Calendar," VT 7 (1957) 250-307 and J. M. Baumgarten, "The Beginning of the Day in the Calendar of Jubilees," IBL 77 (1958) 355-360.

⁴⁰Daniel Patte, Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine, SBLDS 22 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 148 - 149.

narrative, the author is attempting "to derive binding norms of behavior from narrative -- to set out, for example, rules for the observance of Israel's sacred holidays (and to root them even in the lives of Israel's earliest ancestors)."⁴¹ Our investigation will proceed along the lines of finding out how Abraham functions within the text, how his character is described, and what the character and function mean in reference to the implied norms of behavior for the reader.

2.3.1 Abraham's Separation from his Homeland and from Idolatry

The story of Abraham in *Jubilees* is reported from his birth in 11:15 through his death in 23:10. In order to understand what our author considered the character and function of Abraham to be, each pericope in *Jubilees* will be studied in reference to its similarity or dissimilarity with the biblical account. Because the author is so fond of streamlining the biblical accounts, it follows that anything he adds or expands upon is of importance. As recommended by Harrington, we are after the author's "logic of interpretation"⁴² where Abraham is concerned.

The scene is set for the arrival of Abraham early in chapter 11. The author adds many interesting details to the account of the ancestors of Terah, the father of Abraham. Terah's ancestors, the "sons of Noah" are making "molten images" and "worshipping the icon" (11:4).⁴³ Mastema, the

⁴¹James L. Kugel, Rowan A. Greer, Early Biblical Interpretation, Wayne A. Meeks, ed., (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 60.

⁴²See above, 2; from Daniel Harrington, "Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies," Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters, SBLBMT 2, eds. Robert A. Kraft, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 254 - 255.

⁴³This idea is not new with *Jubilees*. The Old Testament also contains evidence that Terah may have worshipped idols, ". . . 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors -- Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor -- lived beyond the Euphrates and served

personification of evil, is responsible for their idol - worship (11:5). Terah was the son of Nahor who had been practicing divination and astrology since his early years.⁴⁴ When Terah is born, Prince Mastema sends crows and birds "so that they might eat the seed which was being sown in the earth in order to spoil the earth so that they might rob mankind of their labors" (11: 11 - 12).

When Abram is born of Edna and Terah (11:15) the author immediately extols the character of Abram:

the lad began understanding the straying of the land, that everyone went astray after graven images and after pollution. And his father taught him writing. And he was two weeks of years old. And he separated from his father so that he might not worship the idols with him. And he began to pray to the Creator of all so that he might save him from the straying of the sons of men, and so that his portion might not fall into straying after the pollution and scorn (11: 16 - 17).

Within the account of Abraham, the author of *Jubilees* picks up on the theme of separation noted earlier. The separation of Abraham from his idolatrous father is symbolic of the separation of the people of God from the Gentiles who worship idols. According to *Jubilees*, Abraham is now the only one of the descendants of Noah -- the entire population of the earth -- who worships the true God. Most of the proscriptions of idolatry found in *Jubilees* are found in the story of Abraham. It is noteworthy that Abraham turns to the Creator in order that he might not make the same mistake as those around him of straying after idols and the consequent "pollution and scorn" (11:17). Vermes mentions that pushing Abraham's conversion back to as

other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. . . " (Josh. 24: 2 - 3).

⁴⁴Astrology was the method of divination for which Mesopotamia was famed. They also had intricate systems of divination. See A. Leo Oppenheim, Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization, (Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1964), 206 - 227. See also *Jub* 11:8 and chapter 5, below.

early an age as possible in some circles led to the denial that he ever followed his ancestors' pagan worship.⁴⁵

Our second pericope is that of Abraham's successful efforts against the crows (11:18 - 24) which the author has juxtaposed with the destruction by the crows at the birth of Terah (11:9 - 13). Abraham's successful efforts occur after the author has mentioned Abraham's intention to separate from his father in order that he might not worship idols (11:16).⁴⁶ Because he is successful, Abraham has also overcome evil in the form of Prince Mastema who sent the crows (see *Jub.* 11:10 - 11). Thus it would seem that Abraham's fledgling belief in the one God has already assisted him in overcoming evil in a way in which his ancestors could not.

It may be that an allegory is intended here between the seed on the ground which Abraham protects from the snares of Satan and his own seed or descendants.⁴⁷ The blessing of Abraham over Jacob may clarify this intention. In it Abraham states, "may the spirit of Mastema not rule over you or over your seed in order to remove you from following the Lord who is your God. . . ." (*Jub.* 19: 28 - 29). As has already been mentioned, it was Mastema and his cruel spirits who deluded the sons of Noah and "led them astray to commit sin. . . ." (*Jub.* 11:5).

⁴⁵G. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961), 78. See also S.P. Brock, "Abraham and the Ravens: A Syriac Counterpart to Jubilees 11 - 12 and its Implications," *JSJ* 9 (1979) 135 - 152. One Syriac manuscript locates Abraham's separation from his father later in the tale while also holding that he was 12 (148).

⁴⁶See also VanderKam's critical notes about 11:16 where the Syriac text states ". . . everyone was going astray after statues and molten images." VanderKam prefers the more difficult reading, "statues and impurity." James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, CSCO 510-511; *Scriptores Aethiopicci* 87-88 (Louvain: Peeters, 1989) 2: 67.

⁴⁷This is based on the idea that in Hebrew the same word is used to mean both "seed" and "descendants."

The pericope also includes Abraham's teaching the carpenters how to make a plow which would "hide" seed within the earth (11:23). The problem of the ravens stealing the seed before it can be turned into the soil is then solved. Charles notes, "An improved method of sowing by means of a seed - scatterer attached to the plough is here described. This marked an advance on the primitive method of scattering the seed by hand, and its invention is ascribed to Abraham."⁴⁸ Abraham is depicted here not only as a teacher but as a developer of culture. Brock notes that the seed - plough which Abraham invented was "a type of plough known from ancient Mesopotamia and perhaps introduced from there into Syria and Palestine. . . already in antiquity."⁴⁹ Abraham, the founder of the Jewish nation, is also a contributor to world culture.⁵⁰

If S. P. Brock is right in his assertion that the Syriac documents reflect an earlier version of the tradition of Abraham, the ravens, and the plough,⁵¹ perhaps conclusions can be drawn from the way the author of *Jubilees* changed these traditions. The important differences in the "raven" story between the Syriac documents and *Jubilees* are as follows: 1. In *Jubilees*, the ravens are sent by Mastema, whereas in the Syriac documents, the ravens are sent by God as a punishment for idolatry. 2. In the Syriac account, Abraham

⁴⁸R. H. Charles, *The Book of Jubilees*, (London, 1902; SPCK ed., 1917), 87.

⁴⁹S. P. Brock, "Abraham and the Ravens: A Syriac Counterpart to Jubilees 11 - 12 and Its Implications," *JSJ* 9 (1979) 140.

⁵⁰Through his development of the plough he has certainly become a blessing to all the nations (Gen. 12:3; 22:18).

⁵¹See S. P. Brock, "Abraham and the Ravens: A Syriac Counterpart to Jubilees 11 - 12 and Its Implications," *JSJ* 9 (1979) 135 - 152. He maintains that the Abraham traditions found in the *Catena Severi* (c. 861 C.E.) and a letter written by Jacob of Edessa (d. 708) are earlier, independent traditions about Abraham.

is specifically sent by his father to frighten away the ravens, while in *Jubilees* he goes out of his own volition. 3. Abraham has little difficulty in driving off the ravens in *Jubilees*. The Syriac text shows him exhausted and "having failed to achieve anything, calls on the creator God to help, to which God replies, identifying himself as the Creator who has already heard Abraham's petition."⁵² 4. In *Jubilees*, Abraham is described as the inventor of the seed - plough, whereas in the Syriac version the episode of the ravens is described as "Abraham's first calling".⁵³

The author of *Jubilees* may have used such traditions in his supplementation of the biblical text. We may draw the following conclusions concerning his adaptation of the tradition: 1. Our author shows a theological tendency to find a scapegoat for evil other than God. One is reminded of the author's similar handling of the story of the sacrifice of Isaac in *Jub.* 17: 15 - 18 where Mastema is also the instigator (compare Gen. 22 where God tests Abraham.)⁵⁴ 2. By depicting Abraham as going of his own volition to frighten ravens instead of at the direction of his father, perhaps our author is accentuating Abraham's separation from his father. 3. In *Jubilees* 11: 18 - 24 Abraham has no trouble turning back ravens; he had already begun to pray to the Creator in 11:17 in response to separating from his family and from idolatry. In the Syriac account, Abraham admits defeat and calls upon God to help him drive off the ravens; God hears him, answers him, and helps him.

⁵²Brock, "Abraham and the Ravens: A Syriac Counterpart to Jubilees 11 - 12 and Its Implications," *JSJ* 9 (1979) 140.

⁵³Adapted from Brock, "Abraham and the Ravens: A Syriac Counterpart to Jubilees 11 - 12 and Its Implications," *JSJ* 9 (1979) 140 - 142.

⁵⁴Another document which reflects the idea of evil being responsible for ill befalling humankind is Job (see 1: 6 - 12). Evil in the form of Satan is also blamed for the sins of Israel in 1 Chron. 21:1 and CD 4.

Abraham's motivation in seeking God seems more noble in *Jubilees* since it is in response to separating himself from idolatry rather than in response to his inability to turn away ravens. 4. The Syriac account does make it clear that Abraham "endeavored to teach and warn Terah his father and Nahor his brother to remove themselves from false (worship) and recognize the true God"⁵⁵ in response to the raven incident. In *Jubilees*, Abraham's warning to his family concerning idolatry does not take place until fourteen years after the raven/plough incident when it is a result of Abraham's own motivation in following his Creator rather than as a result of God's intervention found in the Syriac accounts. 5. In *Jubilees*, Abraham is portrayed as an important contributor to culture. 6. The "first calling" of Abraham in the Syriac account is God's response to Abraham's call for God to drive off the ravens. In *Jubilees*, the call of God to Abraham occurs after Abraham reasons that the heavens are not God and he prays to the true God who is the Creator of everything (*Jub.* 12: 16 - 24). It would seem that the author of *Jubilees* is capitalizing upon qualities of Abraham which might be attractive to Jews who are threatened by hellenism. Abraham finds God by searching for him via the evidence of the Creation, which was a hellenistic philosophical method for finding God. In addition, Abraham has contributed to culture in general. Because the author of *Jubilees* is concerned that the Jewish people separate from the Gentiles and their ways, the reason for his attributing these attributes to Abraham may be apologetic. The Jews were sometimes accused not only of stupidity but also for contributing nothing at all to culture. To those Jews who suffered from such accusations, the author of *Jubilees* gives them a defense. Not only was Abraham the first monotheist, but he became a

⁵⁵Ibid., 138, quoting Jacob of Edessa.

monotheist through reason. And, against the accusation that the Jews have offered nothing of value to society, they are given the depiction of their forefather who provides the world with a type of seed plow.

The next pericope recorded for us is Abraham's first speech in which he pleads with his father to stop worshipping idols. Abraham states,

What help or advantage do we have from these idols
before which you worship and bow down?

Because there is not any spirit in them,
for they are mute,
and they are the misleading of the heart.
Do not worship them.

Worship the God of heaven,
who sends down rain and dew upon the earth,
and who makes everything by his word,
and all life is in his presence.
Why do you worship those who have no spirit in them?

Because they are works of the hands,
and you are carrying them upon your shoulders,
and there is no help from them for you,
except great shame for those who made them
and the misleading of the heart for those who
worship them.
Do not worship them (12:2b - 5).

This speech contains three sections. The first concerns the worthlessness of idols (12:2b - 3): they have no spirit because they are mute, and are misleading "of the heart." This section ends with "do not worship them." In the second section (12:4), Abraham adjures his father to "Worship the God of heaven." This God is the Creator who, contrary to the mute idol, makes everything "by his word." Thirdly (12:5) Abraham points out that in contrast to the God who creates, idols are created by human beings and serve to hinder them rather than to help them. The entire speech ends with the statement, "Do not worship them."

Wintermute points out that the imperatives and second person pronouns are all plural in verses three through five. "The author of the text has apparently made use of a liturgical unit written for a communal setting."⁵⁶ Perhaps plural imperatives simultaneously serve a further important purpose. VanderKam notes that in the Ethiopic reading, the verb "to worship" is plural in all three verses.⁵⁷ The purpose of this speech of Abraham may be to instruct the readers.

Endres maintains that "speeches often provide an interpretive clue to the events which they accompany."⁵⁸ As is well known, Thucydides often used his speeches in a similar way. The speeches which Thucydides reported did not

necessarily reproduce the exact words that various speakers employed. . . Instead, it is his purpose to make the speakers say what, in his opinion, was called for by each situation. Thus the speechmakers are mouthpieces of the historian, their speeches being designed to penetrate to underlying causes and motives, *reveal general truths*, and bring out the viewpoints and characters of the major participants in events.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Wintermute, "Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction," The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, J. H. Charlesworth, ed. (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd: 1985), 2: 80, n. 12a. R. H. Charles points out that this section has "remarkable parallels, both in thought and expression, with chapters 1 - 8 of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. " The Book of Jubilees, (London, 1902; SPCK ed., 1917) ,88.

⁵⁷ J. VanderKam, The Book of Jubilees, CSCO 510-511; *Scriptores Aethiopici* 87-88 (Louvan: Peters, 1989), 2:69.

⁵⁸John C. Endres, Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees, CBQMS 18 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 198.

⁵⁹Michael Grant, ed. Greek and Latin Authors. (New York: The H.W. Wilson Co., 1980), 441, italics mine. Thucydides states, "It was in all cases difficult to carry the speeches word - for - word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speaker say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said" (Thucydides 1.22.1).

In reference to apocalyptic literature, a genre to which *Jubilees* can be considered to belong in addition to 'rewritten Bible,' Harrelson maintains that because the structures of the Jewish community were so gravely imperiled, the Jews were searching for traditions, teachings, visions, and authorities from Israel's past. Consequently, authors brought ancient visions "up to date through revelations to themselves that gave God's guidance to their contemporaries."⁶⁰ Our author, like Thucydides, is using speeches to bring out what is important in each situation in which the speech is found and, like fellow Jewish authors of the period, he is using the speeches to make the Torah relevant to his contemporaries through the guidelines found in the speeches. Through his mouthpiece Abraham, the author of *Jubilees* is telling his reader the reasons for the worthlessness of idolatry and encouraging the reader to worship the one, true Creator God of Abraham.

Abraham's father does not listen to his words but succumbs to the pressure of those around him who will kill him and his family should he refrain from worshipping idols. Abraham himself is in danger of death (12:7). Even Abraham's brothers are angry with him (12:8).

The next extra - biblical tradition included by our author concerns Abraham secretly burning the house of idols. A word - play on the Hebrew word for fire (אֵשׁ) and the name of the city, "Ur" may be intentional here. Abraham's brother, Haran, rushes in to save the idols and dies in the fire. Through this addition our author successfully explains how it is that Haran died before leaving Ur (*Jub* 12:14; Gen. 11:28).

⁶⁰Walter Harrelson, "The Significance of 'Last Words' for Intertestamental Ethics," *Essays in Old Testament Ethics*, eds. James L. Crenshaw and John T. Willis, (New York: KTAV Pub. Hse. Inc., 1974), 209.

Abraham successfully destroys this center of idolatry when he is sixty. The Syriac accounts make it quite clear that the consequent departure from Ur was in fact due to Abraham's deed.⁶¹ A cause and effect relationship between the two events is not explicit in *Jubilees*. In any case, Ur was the place of idol worship in these accounts. In leaving Ur, Terah and his family are leaving idol - worship behind them.

While living in Haran, Abram sits up "to observe the stars." Vermes maintains,⁶²

A critical attitude towards astrology first appears in the Book of Jubilees. Its author..who...held the...opinion concerning the ungodly origin of the science of the stars, hesitates even to consider Abraham as an astrologer proper, but as what is nowadays known as a meteorologist. But even so, astrology and meteorology were so inseparable in antiquity that Jubilees is able to rebuke Abraham for his attempt to forecast the weather.

Another element of astrology was that it was a type of divination for which Mesopotamia was especially famed.⁶³ Abraham has physically left his

⁶¹Brock maintains that *Jubilees* does not connect the burning of the temple with the departure from Ur since if one subtracts the "fourth year of the fourth week" (12:12) when the temple was burned from the time when Abraham actually leaves Terah during the "seventh year of the sixth week" (12:28) one is left with seventeen years. Fourteen of these years were spent in Haran (12:15), leaving three years between the burning of the temple and Terah's journeying to Haran. S. P. Brock, "Abraham and the Ravens: A Syriac Counterpart to Jubilees 11 - 12 and its Implications," *ISL* 9 (1979) 136.

⁶²Scripture and Tradition in Judaism, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961), 81. See also James H. Charlesworth, "Jewish Interest in Astrology," *ANRW* II.20.2, Wolfgang Haase and Hildegard Temporini, eds. (Berlin, N.Y.: de Gruyter, 1987), 926-955. L. Finkelstein points out the Rabbinic tradition that "one may know the character of a coming year by observing weather conditions on New Year's Day" (Berakot 18B). See "The Book of Jubilees and the Rabbinic Halaka," *HTR* 16 (1923) 39 - 61.

⁶³A. Leo Oppenheim, Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization, (Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1964), 224. See also the chapter entitled "Abraham in the Works of Josephus," below, where Abraham is depicted similarly.

home in Mesopotamia behind; now he is leaving behind the method of divination known as astrology.

After rejecting astrology, Abraham prays,

My God, my God, God most High,
You alone are my God.
You have created everything;
Everything that was and has been is the product of your hands.
You and your lordship I have chosen.
Save me from the power of the evil spirits who rule the thoughts
of people's minds.
May they not mislead me from following you, my God.
Do establish me and my posterity forever.
May we not go astray from now until eternity. (12: 19 - 20).⁶⁴

Besides recognizing God as the Creator, Abraham discerns in this prayer that it is evil spirits who rule people's minds and cause them to practice idolatry. He asks for God's guidance in maintaining devotion to him alone not only for himself, but also for his descendants forever. ⁶⁵

Sanders points out "That God of his own will chose Israel is the predominant theme in *Jubilees*, but the author can also say that Abraham chose God and his dominion. As always in Judaism, the divine choice does not eliminate freedom of action."⁶⁶ Thus far, Abraham has not only separated himself *from* idolatry but has separated himself *to* God.⁶⁷

⁶⁴Translation from J. VanderKam, The Book of Jubilees, CSCO 510-511; *Scriptores Aethiopici* 87-88 (Louvain: Peeters, 1989), 72.

⁶⁵That the Jewish people were known by the Greeks for their belief in the one God, their practice of astrology and perhaps even the sacrifice of Isaac is reflected in a fragment from Theophrastus (372-288 B.C.E.). See Menahem Stern, Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism, (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974), 8-9.

⁶⁶E. P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977; reprint ed., 1983), 363.

⁶⁷It seems significant that Abraham is depicted as contemplating a return to Ur and asking for God's guidance in *Jubilees* 12:21.

2.3.2 Abraham's Obedience to Aspects of Jewish Law

Abraham is called to the land of promise with words very similar to Genesis 12:1 - 3. He is promised descendants, land, blessings, reputation, and that he will be a blessing to other nations, and the Most High God promises to be his God forever (*Jub.* 12: 22 - 24).

God then reveals the sacred language, Hebrew, to Abraham. As was mentioned earlier, *Jubilees* was probably originally written in Hebrew. The use of Hebrew signified Jewish allegiance to their nation. For example, in 2 Macc. 7:8 one of the seven martyrs replies in his mother tongue, Hebrew, as he is being tortured.⁶⁸ In the same story, the mother of the seven martyrs is said to have encouraged her sons in their ancestral language (2 Macc. 7:21; see also 4 Macc 12:7).⁶⁹ The story of Abraham learning Hebrew is not found in the Genesis account. To our author, Hebrew is the language which was used in creation and ceased at the Fall (*Jub.* 12:25). The portrayal of Abraham being the first to whom God reveals Hebrew since the Fall signifies that he is the first to use the language of God and his people and that he also receives a kind of heavenly knowledge. This indicates not only the election of Abraham by God but the election of his descendants who are known for their use of the sacred language.

As mentioned above, the author of *Jubilees* makes the story of Abraham in Egypt more palatable for his Jewish reader. Abraham does not call Sarah

⁶⁸S. Zeitlin notes that some early manuscripts omit "in the language of the fathers" which means Hebrew in The Second Book of Maccabees, ET Sidney Tedesche, (New York: Harper & Bros. for Dropsie College, 1954), 161.

⁶⁹See Zeitlin who notes that according to 2 Macc 7:21 that she probably spoke Aramaic, while in 4 Macc. the text says that she spoke in the Hebrew language. The Second Book of Maccabees, ET Sidney Tedesche, (New York: Harper & Bros. for Dropsie College, 1954) 164 - 165, nn. on verses 21, 24.

his sister in the *Jubilees* account (*Jub.* 13: 10 - 15). The account of Abraham and Abimelech in Genesis twenty where Abraham uses the identical explanation of Sarah being his sister is also missing (see Gen. 12: 10 - 20; 20: 1 - 18). Abraham is made the perfect patriarch by our author. He also is said to be very wealthy, in itself an indication of favor by God (*Jub.* 13:14). The author adds to the account, "Egyptian Tanais was built at that time -- seven years after Hebron."(13:13).⁷⁰ That Hebron is more ancient than Tanis in Egypt is stressed.⁷¹ In the thought world of the time, the more ancient something was the more worthy it was.⁷²

Between *Jubilees* 13:15 and 15:25, the author of *Jubilees* not only uses portions of Genesis but also uses traditions like those found in the *Genesis Apocryphon*. Both the *Genesis Apocryphon* and *Jubilees* explain how it is that Abraham moved south in Genesis 12:9 by including his stop in Hebron.⁷³ Additionally, unlike Genesis, the *Genesis Apocryphon* and *Jubilees* contain the very words which Abraham spoke when he built the altar.⁷⁴ The concern found in *Jubilees* to portray Abraham as obedient to the law is illustrated when, after the proclamation, Abraham offers up a burnt offering on the altar, a deed not found at this point in the *Genesis Apocryphon*

⁷⁰Translation from J. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, CSCO 510-511; *Scriptores Aethiopici* 87-88 (Louvain: Peeters, 1989), 2:77.

⁷¹See B. Z. Wacholder, "How Long did Abram Stay in Egypt?" *HUCA* 35 (1964) 43 - 56 for a discussion of the accounts of Abraham's stay in Egypt as reported in the *Genesis Apocryphon* and in *Jubilees*.

⁷²See John C. Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees*, CBQMS 18 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 6.

⁷³See *Jub.* 13:8 - 10; 1 *QapGen* 19:7 - 9 and further comments in chapter three, "Abraham in the *Genesis Apocryphon*."

⁷⁴*Jubilees* contains virtually the same proclamation.

(cf. *Jub.* 13:9; *1QapGen* 19.7 - 9).⁷⁵ Much like the account in Genesis, Abraham participates in a covenant ceremony (*Jub.* 14:7 - 20) and later he has a child by Hagar (*Jub.* 14:21 - 24).

Abraham celebrates the feast of the firstfruits when he offers sacrifices of animals, offerings of cereal⁷⁶ and libations (*Jub.* 15:1-2). Our author waxes eloquent concerning the laws of circumcision in *Jubilees* 15: 25 - 32. He states that a son who is not circumcised is

not from the sons of the covenant which the Lord made for Abraham since (he is) from the children of destruction. And there is therefore no sign upon him so that he might belong to the Lord because (he is destined) to be destroyed and annihilated from the earth and to be uprooted from the earth because he has broken the covenant of the Lord our God. Because the nature of all of the angels of the presence and all of the angels of sanctification was thus from the day of their creation (*Jub.* 15: 25 - 27a).

The author of *Jubilees* puts the covenant of circumcision within the context of the "eternal ordinance" (*Jub.* 15:25) of circumcision on the eighth day. As such, the account functions in the story of Abraham to encourage his readers to continue to circumcise their children: not to be circumcised is akin to being "from the children of destruction" (15:26), the Gentiles. The prophetic passage ("They will not circumcise their sons. . ." 15:33 - 34) functions to warn those adults who were never circumcised as children or those who have not had their children circumcised or have practiced epispasm that by not having the sign of circumcision they have made

⁷⁵I am assuming at this point that the author has in mind descriptions of the burnt offering in the law like those found in Leviticus 1. Although he does offer a sacrifice on the altar later in *1QapGen*, the author of *Jubilees* makes it a more frequent occurrence. See the chapter on Abraham in *1QapGen*.

⁷⁶See VanderKam's translation, *The Book of Jubilees*, CSCO 510-511; *Scriptores Aethiopici* 87-88 (Louvain: Peeters, 1989), 2:87.

themselves like the Gentiles. They are condemned by this "eternal error" (15:34).

The author of *Jubilees* continues the Abraham story by condensing the stories of the announcement of the birth of Isaac by the sacred visitors, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the sin of Lot's daughters (*Jub.* 16: 1 - 9). For our purposes, the last two accounts are the most important. Concerning the destruction of Sodom, it is clear that it was retribution for their sins of "pollution" and "fornication" (16:5) and wherever such sin is continued the Lord will execute judgment. Moreover, the descendants of those who act incestuously like Lot and his daughters are also to be judged and uprooted from the earth. Davenport makes an important observation concerning these last two accounts in his consideration of non - eschatological passages that contain significant eschatological elements:⁷⁷

He [the author] has used both the destruction of *Sodom and* the sin of Lot as a warning against non - Israelite ways. . . the fate of the . . . descendants of Lot -- is proof that God does indeed bring judgment on those who imitate the Gentiles. This passage is primarily to exhort readers to remain faithful by obeying Torah.

Eventually, Isaac is born and circumcised (*Jub.* 16 10 - 19). According to *Jubilees* it is not Isaac who is the "holy seed," but he who is from the sons of Isaac that will "become a people (belonging) to the Lord, a (special) possession from all people, and so that he might become a kingdom of priests and a holy people" (*Jub.* 16: 18 - 19). Even at the birth of Isaac the priority of Jacob as the transmitter of the covenant people is stressed.

⁷⁷Gene L. Davenport, *The Eschatology of the Book of Jubilees*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 53.

Our author takes Genesis 21:8, which mentions the feast Abraham celebrated upon the birth of Isaac, and uses it as an occasion to depict Abraham as observing the feast of Tabernacles (*Jub.* 16: 20 - 31). This is an example of the use of an ancient biblical character to strengthen the author's contemporary tradition.⁷⁸ If in the diverse religious milieu of the second century the Jewish people were looking for foundations and authority for their traditions, this kind of depiction provided it. Abraham not only observed the feast, but did so "according to the testimony of the heavenly tablets" (16:28). The "heavenly tablets" are important to the author as regulators of religious festivals. Because Abraham celebrated the feast "seven days in the seventh month" (16:29), Israel should observe it on the same days. The days were ordained in the heavenly tablets. Abraham is the example of one who acted in accordance with the previously established sacred days.

2.3.3 Abraham's Faithfulness: the Offering of Isaac and the Death of Sarah

One of the most interesting items that our author adds to the Genesis story is Mastema's participation in the sacrifice of Isaac.

And Prince Mastema came and he said before God, "Behold, Abraham loves Isaac his son. And he is more pleased with him than everything. Tell him to offer him (as) a burnt offering upon the altar. And you will see whether he will do this thing. And you will know whether he is faithful in everything in which you test him"(17:16).⁷⁹

⁷⁸See Solomon Zeitlin who notes the differences between the Feast of Tabernacles described in *Jubilees* 16: 20 - 31 and Leviticus, The Book of Jubilees: Its Character and Its Significance. (Philadelphia: Dropsie College, 1939), 4 - 5. See also Moses Hadas, "Jub 16:30," AJSL 49 (1933) 338.

⁷⁹Before Mastema's appearance it also states, "there were voices in heaven regarding Abraham, that he was faithful. . . ." (*Jub.* 17:15). VanderKam's translation, The Book of Jubilees, CSCO 510-511; *Scriptores Aethiopici* 87-88 (Louvain: Peeters, 1989), 2:105). See also the tradition found in the *Biblical Antiquities* in which jealous angels are responsible for the testing of Abraham in chapter 4, "Abraham in the *Biblical Antiquities* ."

In the Genesis account it is God himself who directly proves Abraham (22:1). In contrast, a kind of dualistic reasoning whereby God cannot participate in evil deeds is at work in *Jubilees* -- another evil being is needed to explain Abraham's testing. God agrees to the test because he knows the faithfulness of Abraham (*Jub.* 17:17).⁸⁰

Within this pericope, we are given a glimpse of the supernatural warfare between God and Mastema behind the scenes. In *Jubilees* we are also told that "Prince Mastema was shamed" (18:12) by the actions of Abraham who, in obedience to God, was willing to slaughter his firstborn⁸¹ son Isaac (18:8). The Lord blesses Abraham, promises him numerous descendants, inheritance, and the eventual blessing of all the nations of the earth because Abraham obeyed him (18: 14 - 16).

Sarah dies; Abraham weeps for and buries her. Even in this pericope, Abraham is depicted as being tested. In this case, the sons of Heth, who note

⁸⁰R. H. Charles notes in *The Book of Jubilees*. (London, 1902; SPCK ed., 1917), 109, that seven of the traditional ten trials of Abraham are mentioned in *Jubilees*; they are said to be the trials of land, famine, wealth of kings, his wife, circumcision, banishing Ishmael and Sarah, and Sarah's death (see 17:17; 19:1 - 9; cf. *m. 'Abot*, 5:3). Traditionally, the ten trials of Abraham included departure from his country, famine, the wealth of kings, seizure of his wife, circumcision, expulsion of both Hagar and of Ishmael, the unfruitfulness of Sarah, the sacrifice of Isaac, and the burial of Sarah. Maimonides listed a different ten trials, see W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Sayings of the Jewish Fathers*, (London: SPCK, 1919), 61 - 62, n. 9.

⁸¹Wintermute points out that in two of the manuscripts the reading is "only begotten" which may indicate that Christian scribes may have associated the sacrifice with New Testament soteriology at some point. See "Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, J. H. Charlesworth, ed., (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1985), 2: 91 n. 18d. *Jubilees* 18 has been used by some scholars to support the view that the Aqedah tradition is found in pre-Christian sources and that it was a contributing factor to New Testament soteriology. R. J. Daly argues such a case in "The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac," *CBO* 39 (1977) 47 - 75. Chilton and Davies disagree with Daly in "The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History" *CBO* 40.4 (1978) 514 - 546. See also Chapter 4, "Abraham in the *Biblical Antiquities*." For an in-depth discussion of the Aqedah tradition in Rabbinic literature, see Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial: On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice*, (New York: Pantheon Books, Random House, 1967).

Abraham's self - controlled spirit, offer to give Abraham the cave of Machpelah free. Abraham, however, insists upon paying for the cave in silver. It is noted:

This is the tenth trial with which Abraham was tried. And he was found faithful, controlled of spirit. . . and he did not say a word concerning the rumor which was in the land that the Lord said he would give it to him and to his seed after him, but he begged a place there so that he might bury his dead because he was found faithful and he was recorded as a friend of the Lord in the heavenly tablets. (19:9)

The designation of Abraham as a friend of the Lord is found elsewhere in Jewish material of the time. In *Jubilees*, the designation seems to be based upon Abraham's faithfulness to God in trial. In the *Damascus Document* Abraham was "accounted a friend of God because he kept the commandments of God and did not choose his own will. And he handed them down to Isaac and Jacob, who kept them, and were recorded as friends of God and party to the Covenant for ever."⁸² However, if we consider that being faithful to God and being obedient to his law means putting the will of God above one's own, essentially the title of "friend of God" attributed to Abraham in both texts is based on the same thing.

In keeping with his focus on Jacob, the author of *Jubilees* merely mentions the biblical story in which Abraham orders a wife to be found for Isaac. The account of Jacob earning Leah and Rachel, in contrast, is given

⁸²CD III in G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, (London: Penguin Books, 3rd ed., 1987), 84. See also 2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8; Jas 2:23. Abraham's designation as "friend" may be a play on the name of the burial place Hebron because the word for friend contains the same Hebrew root consonants חכר. The motifs expressed in CD III are very similar to those found in *Jubilees*: keeping the commandments of God, not walking in the stubbornness of heart, not following one's own desires, the anger of God being aroused, and the succession of rebellion through children. Cf. CD III and *Jub.* 6: 17-19. P. R. Davies, *The Damascus Covenant: An Interpretation of the "Damascus Document,"* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1983), 76-83.

much consideration (*Jub.* 28). Abraham is subsequently depicted as marrying Keturah, "from the daughters of his household servants" (19:11). This information concerning Keturah's origin is not in the Genesis account. The author may be attempting to depict Abraham in a favorable light once again as one who married only within the Israelite community. After all, in his first blessing of Jacob, Abraham is depicted as warning Jacob against intermarriage with Gentiles (*Jub.* 22: 20).

2.3.4 Abraham's Proclamation of Separation from Gentiles, Idolatry, and Sin

The remaining extra-biblical material in *Jubilees* (20: 1 - 23: 10) in which Abraham appears is made up of speeches except for his celebration of the feast of Shebuot in 22: 1 - 9 which is in preparation for his blessing Jacob. In the first speech Abraham speaks to his descendants: Ishmael and his twelve children, Isaac and his two children, and Keturah's six children and their sons. His second speech is his testament to Isaac, and the third and most important speech is given to his grandson and primary covenant transmitter, Jacob.

In these speeches Abraham is passing on the law of the Lord to his descendants, particularly Isaac and Jacob. Earlier we noted the similarity of the use of "friend of God" in *Jubilees* and the *Damascus Document*. In this case, another similarity arises. In CD III, Abraham is known not only for obedience to the commandments of God over his own will, but also for passing the commandments on to his descendants.⁸³ In his speeches in *Jubilees* he is doing the same thing; he is passing on the commandments by which his descendants can be obedient to God. And, through this depiction of Abraham and his descendants, the author of *Jubilees* is portraying for his

⁸³P. R. Davies, *The Damascus Covenant: An Interpretation of the "Damascus Document."* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1983), 81.

readers the very same thing--these are the commandments by which they can put the desires of God above their own.

Abraham's first speech is concerned with following the way of the Lord in contrast to going after idols and their defilement (20:2, 6). In the prelude (20: 1 - 5) he commands them to practice righteousness and love towards all people,⁸⁴ to circumcise their sons, not to cross over "either to the right or left from all of the ways which the Lord commanded us" (20:3), to keep themselves from all fornication and pollution and to set aside such activity among them. Abraham drives his point home by telling his listeners about the judgments of Sodom based on sexual impurity and the giants who were judged and destroyed because of their evil.

An extensive section of poetry follows (20: 6 - 10). It is broken up into five sections. It is plausible that the second section (20:7) contains the summary of the speech both because it contains the only "I" command from Abraham found in the speech and it is the only section which is not extensively dependent upon the Old Testament or *1 Enoch*. In fact, *Jubilees* 20:7 appears to be entirely the author's own work: "I exhort you, my sons, love the God of heaven, and be joined to all of his commands. And do not go after their idols and after their defilement."

The entire speech follows these two themes: to love God and follow his commands as opposed to following idols which leads to defilement. The worthlessness of worshipping idols is described in verse eight and is much like Abraham's earlier speech to his father which also addressed the vanity of

⁸⁴VanderKam has, ". . . they should love one another, that they should be like this in every way so that they could go against each one (who was) against them, and do what is just and right on the earth (20:2). *The Book of Jubilees*, CSCO 510-511, *Scriptores Aethiopi* 1:87-88 (Louvain: Peeters, 1989), 2:116.

idol worship. In both speeches Abraham contends that idol worship is worthless because idols have no spirit, they are created by human beings whereas the true God is he who created everything (12:4) and sends rain (12:4; 20:9).

The speech may best be described in the following outline:

1. The result of corruption (especially of a sexual nature) is cursing and judgment (20:6).
2. It is necessary to love God and follow his commands and not to go after idols and their defilement (20:7).
3. Making and worshipping idols is worthless (20:8).
4. But, worshipping the Most High God and doing what is righteous leads to great blessing (20:9).
5. The result of worshipping and obeying God is becoming a blessing upon the earth (20:10).

A major theme of the earlier Abraham account is evident. Abraham is concerned with following God and his commands while avoiding idols and their sure defilement. Since the Gentiles were those outside of the covenant community who were regarded as idol worshippers, in effect Abraham is commanding avoidance of Gentile ways and Gentile idol worship.

Additionally, if one follows the observation made earlier that the author's use of speeches may be similar to that of the precedent set by Thucydides, he may be capitalizing upon this theme as an especially important one for the reader to draw from the Abraham narrative.

Abraham's second speech is his testament to Isaac. In Jewish literature, testaments are among the last words of an important character, which may emphasize not only what the author considered pertinent in the previous narrative concerning that character, but also what the author is trying to express to his readers at the present time.⁸⁵

⁸⁵See John C. Endres, Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees, CBQMS 18 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 198; Walter

In order to ascertain the central message of Abraham's testament it will be analyzed according to the components of the covenant formulary found in the work of Klaus Baltzer. Baltzer maintains that the testament closely follows the covenant formulary in its components. Of the three final speeches, Abraham's testament to Isaac is the only one which fits the form delineated precisely, as follows:

Preamble: Who is concerned (Isaac)

The age of the patriarch (175)

1. Antecedent History: (21: 2 - 3)

I have remembered the Lord and sought to do his will. . . and walk uprightly. . . I hated idols, and those who serve them I have rejected.

Statement of Faith: (21:4)

He is holy. . . righteous. . . executes judgment with all who transgress his commandments and despise his covenant.

2a. Statement of Substance (21:5)

And you, my son, keep his commandments and ordinances and judgments, and do not follow pollutions or graven images or molten images.

2b. Corpus of Individual Stipulations (21: 6 - 20)

Items included here are: prohibition of eating the blood of beasts or birds and the proper way to offer burnt offerings.

3. Conclusion (21: 21 - 26)

I see. . . every deed of mankind, that (they are) sins and evils. . . Be careful not to walk in their ways. . . so that he [God] will hide his face from you. . . and your name and seed will perish from all the earth.

Turn yourself aside from all their deeds and from all their defilement; and keep the commands of God Most High. . .

And he will bless you. . . and raise up from you a righteous plant in all the earth throughout all the generations of the earth; and my name and your name shall not cease from beneath heaven forever.⁸⁶

Harrelson, "The Significance of 'Last Words' for Intertestamental Ethics," Essays in Old Testament Ethics, James L. Crenshaw and John T. Willis, eds., (New York: KTAV Pub. Hse. 1974), 205 - 223.

⁸⁶Adapted from Klaus Baltzer, The Covenant Formulary, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 137 - 141. See also A.B. Kolenkow, "The Genre Testament and Forecasts of the Future in the Hellenistic Jewish Milieu," JSI VI.I (1975) 57 - 71 who argues that while Baltzer's form is useful in regard to the ethical message of the testament involved it speaks less to the

The most noticeable section here for the purposes of this thesis is 2a, the statement of substance. What is significant is the similarity between this statement and the summary statement found above in *Jubilees* 20:7, "I exhort you, my sons, love the God of heaven and be joined to all of his commands. And do not go after their idols and after their defilement." In both statements Abraham adjures the hearers to keep the commands of God, and not to go after idols and pollution.

Before the final speech, Abraham is described as celebrating Shebuot. As noted previously, the feast of Shebuot is central to the *Book of Jubilees*. Its significance lay in its being the anniversary of the first covenant between God and Noah after the deluge (*Jub.* 6:17). The celebration of Shebuot at the final encounter between Abraham and Jacob emphasized the continuity of the covenant through Jacob.⁸⁷ This continuity is underlined in the prayer of Abraham at the conclusion of the feast:

O my God, may your mercy and your peace be upon your servant and upon the seed of his sons so that they might become an elect people for you and an inheritance from all the nations of the earth from henceforth and for all the days of the generations of the earth forever (22:9).

Abraham's final speech is a blessing of Jacob. Because this speech takes place at the time of Abraham's death and contains his final advice for the primary continuator of the covenant, its themes are of utmost importance.

"general questions of testamental form -- and especially to. . . revelation about future judgement." (57). However, Abraham's testament to Isaac is highly ethical in content. Unlike testaments like those found in *1 Enoch* 91 - 94, in *Jub.* 21 the future of those listening is conditional, based upon whether or not they follow the commandments of God.

⁸⁷Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees*, CBQMS 18 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 40. See also Annie Jaubert, *La Notion D'Alliance dans Judaïsme: Aux Abords de l'Ère Chrétienne*, *Patristica Sorbonensia* 6 (Paris: Seuil, 1963), 100 - 102 and Michel Testuz, *Les Idées Religieuses du Livre des Jubilés* (Geneva: Droz; Paris: Minard, 1960), 148 - 149.

The first section contains a series of "may the Lord. . ." statements, including Abraham's wishes that Jacob be given righteous seed, sanctified sons, nations that bow down before him, "righteous ways. . . in order to be a holy people," all the blessings of his forefathers, cleansing from sin and defilement, inheritance of the earth, covenant renewal, and that Jacob belong "to his inheritance forever. . . And he will be God for you and for your seed in truth and righteousness throughout all the days of the earth" (22:11 - 15).

The main point of the speech appears in verses 16 - 19:

And you also, my son Jacob, remember my words,
and keep the commandments of Abraham, your father.
Separate yourself from the Gentiles. . .
and all of their ways are contaminated, and despicable,
and abominable. . .
And they have no heart to perceive,
and they have no eyes to see what their deeds are,
and where they wander astray
saying to the tree 'you are my God,'
and to a stone 'you are my lord, and you are my savior',
and they have no heart.
But (as for) you, my son Jacob,
may God Most High help you,
and the God of heaven bless you.
And may he turn you from their defilement,
and from all their errors.

The speech continues with a description of the coming judgment for Canaanites and those who worship idols as well as a final blessing upon Jacob. Once again, the speech revolves around the idea of keeping the commandments (this time of Abraham) and separating oneself from the Gentiles. Endres contends, "the command to separate from the Gentiles provides a focal point of the covenant renewal for this author; as he viewed

the life of his Jewish community, its primary obligation was to remain free of Gentile influences."⁸⁸

The entire account of Abraham in *Jubilees* ends with another blessing upon Jacob (22: 25 - 30) and echoes many similar themes previously noted such as the God of Abraham as Creator and Abraham's inheritance of both land and descendants. When Abraham finally dies, Jacob is in his bosom sleeping. Abraham's epitaph is as follows: "For Abraham was perfect in all of his actions with the Lord and was pleasing through righteousness all of the days of his life. And behold, he did not complete four jubilees in his life until he grew old in the presence of evil (and) his days were full" (22:10).

2.4 Conclusion: The Function and Significance of Abraham in *Jubilees*

Within the *Book of Jubilees*, Abraham has several functions. With Noah and Jacob, he is a central transmitter of the covenant. Like others, he is obedient to the law of Moses before it is even given because it has been ordained in the heavenly tablets: he celebrates the feast of Shebuot and the Feast of Tabernacles. It is through him that human circumcision is first instituted; the angels have been circumcised since the day of creation.

As portrayed by the author of *Jubilees*, Abraham is also the premier anti-idolator and monotheist. He burns the temple of idols and is the first among the sons of Noah to search for and find the true God and Creator. He recognizes the folly of idolatry. He announces separation from Gentiles because of their idolatry and because of their sin which is a consequence of this idolatry.

⁸⁸J. Endres, Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees, CBQMS 18 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 45.

Abraham knows Hebrew and he is a man of prayer. He is faithful when tested. When he invented the improved seed - plow it contributed to the benefit of society. He successfully battles against Mastema. In short, Abraham is the perfect patriarch and example.

What does the character and function of Abraham described in the text of *Jubilees* mean in reference to implied norms of behavior for the Jew especially in regard to the historical and cultural circumstances of *Jubilees* described earlier?

First, Abraham is the first person from among the sons of Noah to believe in the one true God and follow his commandments. We are told that Mastema is responsible for the delusion of the sons of Noah (11:4 - 5), otherwise known as the Gentiles. It is Abraham alone who separates from his father (11:16) and begins to pray to and seek the true God and his ways (11:17). After Abraham exhorts his father not to worship the idols who are mute and created by human beings in contrast to the true God who creates by his word (12: 2 - 5), his father replies tellingly, "I know. . . my son. . . if I speak to them in righteousness, they will kill me because their souls cleave to them. . ." (12:6 - 7). It seems reasonable that Terah, who knows the truth yet fears for his life if he does not worship idols, represents the Jewish people. Terah represents the Jews who at present worship idols or even Jews who previously worshipped them under Antiochus Epiphanes' command that Jews worship idols or die (cf. 1 Macc 1:47).

By using the second person plural in the speech attributed to Abraham in *Jubilees* 12, the author simultaneously commands his readers to forsake the folly of idol worship. Abraham is so zealous that he burns the house of idols which his family worships (12: 12 - 14). He even sees beyond astrology and recognizes the Creator God (12: 17 - 20). Abraham represents the ideal Jew

who worships the true God and even destroys idols, although it may cost him his life.

Even though Abraham is an ideal Jew in his separation from the Gentiles, the author of *Jubilees* also portrays him as one who contributes benevolently to the society in which he lives. Because of their monotheism and laws which resulted in different degrees of non - association with Gentiles, the Jews were often perceived as being separatist and of no real use to society at large. Here Abraham is the inventor of the plow which hides the seed in the earth so that birds cannot eat it. In an agriculturally based economy this was significant. The father of the Jews contributed to the welfare and survival of the society in which he lived.

According to the author of *Jubilees*, Abraham obeys aspects of the law. He celebrates feasts (cf. *Jub.* 15, 22) and he circumcises his son and his household (15: 23 - 34). The author adds a warning of the annihilation of those Jews who were not circumcised on the eighth day (15:26). Faithlessness regarding circumcision is even predicted (15:33 - 34), presumably a *vaticinium ex eventu*. The wrath of God will fall upon those who do not circumcise their sons. The Jewish reader is being warned that if the circumcision of sons is or continues to be forsaken, the wrath of God can be expected. One case of Jewish avoidance of circumcision occurred under the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes IV when he proclaimed that any Jew who circumcised a son was to die (1 Macc 1:48-50). If the assimilationist Jewish faction in Palestine was particularly strong at the time *Jubilees* was written, Jews who bore the marks of circumcision could very well be subjected to mild to severe persecution. Abraham provides the example of one who circumcises his son and his household according to the ordinance in the heavenly tablets.

The celebration of feasts also became associated with persecution. According to another decree by Antiochus Epiphanes, the Jewish people were "to profane sabbaths and festivals" or die (1 Macc 1:45; NRSV). As in the case of circumcision, the author of *Jubilees* attributes eternal validity to the keeping of the sabbath and festivals because they were ordained in the heavenly tablets. Abraham was depicted as observing both the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Weeks. If the readers of *Jubilees* were to emulate Abraham, obviously they were to observe their holy days -- perhaps even in the face of persecution.

Those who do not follow the commands of the Lord, even if they are Jews, can expect the wrath of God to fall upon them. Lot and his daughters, having committed incest, are judged just like Sodom (16:5 - 9). This is the kind of sin about which the author warns his readers using Abraham as his mouthpiece. Much of the sin consists of sexual impurity (cf. 20:6), although the eating of sacrifices incorrectly offered is also sin (21: 6 - 20). For the most part, sin is attributed to Gentiles (22: 16 - 19) who worship and offer sacrifices to idols (22: 17 - 18). The true Jew is to separate (22:16) from Gentiles lest with association come assimilation and sin. The Jewish readers are then strictly warned; those who associate with Gentile idolators run the risk of taking on the sins of the Gentiles and consequently the wrath and judgment of God.

Thus, like Abraham, the readers of *Jubilees* are to forsake idolatry and sin by remaining true to their God and his commandments, even though the cost of this loyalty may be death. The author of *Jubilees* considers this to be an extremely important message for his readers who are caught between the polemical ideologies of the nationalistic and assimilationist Jewish factions.

The author's purpose is to provide an uncompromising warning of the consequences of their behavior should they forsake their religion. Even

though they may die for the observance of the very aspects of Judaism which made them unique--circumcision, holy days, and monotheism--the exhortation of *Jubilees* still stands. If their forefather Abraham was willing to die instead of worship his father's idol, why should these Jews not avoid association with Gentiles? The only outcome of such an association could be idol - worship and departure from following the commands of God.

The foundation for obedience is their election; God has chosen Israel from among all the nations of the world to be under his rule (*Jub.* 15: 31 - 32). He will remain faithful to them, but they must also follow the stipulations of monotheism and the law -- the future welfare of their nation depends on it.

Chapter Three

Abraham in the Genesis Apocryphon

3.1 The Genesis Apocryphon

The *Genesis Apocryphon* is one of seven major scrolls found in Qumran Cave 1 in the Spring of 1947. The scroll itself lacks the beginning and the end of the original text; the tops and bottoms of the first nine existing columns are also missing.¹ From the outset this lack of the whole text presents a problem for the interpretation of the text because one cannot place Abraham within the entirety of what the author was trying to express. In fact, the account of Abraham ends at the equivalent to Genesis 15.

The work is dated anywhere from the second century B.C.E. to the first century C.E. by contemporary scholars. Many base their conclusions upon the type of Aramaic contained in the scroll because it is similar to but later than that contained in the book of Daniel.² For example, Fitzmyer maintains,³

In the *Genesis Apocryphon* we have a substantial literary text, whose Aramaic is best described as a transitional type between the Biblical Aramaic of Daniel and that of the Palestinian Targums or Christian Palestinian Aramaic. It belongs to what we prefer to call 'middle Aramaic' (200 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.).

¹Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary*, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 1 - 3.

²In addition, see H. H. Rowley, "Notes on the Aramaic of the 'Genesis Apocryphon,'" *Hebrew and Semitic Studies*, ed. G. R. Driver, (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1963), 129.

³Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary*, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 22.

In his comparison of the *Genesis Apocryphon* with Biblical Aramaic on the one hand, and Palmyrene and Nabatean (first century B.C.E. to 272 C.E.) and Jerusalem Aramaic (pre-70 C.E.) inscriptions on the other, E.Y. Kutscher places the work in the first century B.C.E. though possibly the first century C.E.⁴ Fitzmyer further asserts that since Kutscher's study points to a composition date of 100 B.C.E. to 100 C.E., and because the scroll itself dates to 50 B.C.E. to 70 C.E., it is possible we may have the autograph.⁵

The text of Genesis used is apparently an early Palestinian one.⁶ Since this type of text appears to have been suppressed by 100 C.E.,⁷ its presence provides some indication of the latest possible date of composition and the place of composition. This information lends credence to the proposed date of composition (100 B.C.E. - 100 C.E.) and points to Palestine as the place of composition.

If we date the text between 100 B.C.E. and 70 C.E. with preference given to the first century B.C.E., it was composed during a time of increasing political and internal strife under the Hasmoneans and the simultaneous increase in power and dominance of the Roman Empire, to whom Israel finally relinquished its independence in 63 B.C.E. The Hasmoneans had become increasingly hellenized, at least from the time of Simon. Under the reign of

⁴Kutscher, "Dating the Language of the Genesis Apocryphon," *IBL* 76 (1957) 288 - 292.

⁵Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary*. (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 19.

⁶J. VanderKam, "The Textual Affinities of the Biblical Citations in the Genesis Apocryphon," *IBL* 97.1 (1978) 45 - 55.

⁷D. J. Harrington, "Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies," *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*. SBLBML 2 eds. Robert A. Kraft, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 241.

his son John Hyrcanus (135/4 - 104 B.C.E.), the social unrest that resulted from the increasing hellenization of the Hasmoneans "serves as the first major state for division between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, with the Hasmonean ruler abandoning his traditional ties with the former party and joining forces with the latter."⁸ Under Hyrcanus' son, Alexander Jannæus^a (103 - 76 B.C.E.), internal dissension developed into outright rebellion as illustrated, for example, by Josephus in his story of Jannaeus being pelted with lemons on the Feast of Tabernacles while he stood before the altar about to offer sacrifice. Jannaeus' reply was to have six thousand Jews massacred.⁹

The Romans represented oppression by those who were not among God's chosen. One of the legacies of Hasmonean rule was the Jewish opposition to being ruled by Rome instead of by their own leaders. Jewish opposition occurred not only when Judaea was cut down geographically to those regions occupied primarily by Jews and became a vassal state under the last of the Hasmonean rulers (63 - 38 B.C.E.) but also to a larger extent under Herod (37 - 4 B.C.E.) who became known for his tyrannical nature and devotion to hellenism. Under direct Roman rule some tranquility was restored. However, that too began to deteriorate under Pontius Pilate (26 - 36 C.E.). Emperor Caligula (37 - 41 C.E.) incurred the hostility of the Jewish people by

⁸Isaiah Gafni, "Historical Background," Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period, CRINT 2.2 Michael E. Stone, ed., (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 14. See also J. Murphy O'Connor, who contends that the historical reason for an influx of Jews at Qumran was "the extremely troubled situation of Judea at the end of the reign of John Hyrcanus and during the whole of the reign of his successor Alexander Jannaeus." "The Essenes and their History," RB 81 (1974) 241.

⁹Ant. 13.372 - 373; J.W. 1.88 - 89. E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint ed., 1987), 1: 223. For further literary and historical examples of rebellion under Janneus, see Isaiah Gafni, "Historical Background," Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period, CRINT 2.2, Michael E. Stone, ed., (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 16.

his attempt to have a statue set up in the Jewish Temple. By the time of the last Roman governors "total anarchy seems to have prevailed in Judaea."¹⁰

In content, the scroll is also similar to many parts of *1 Enoch*¹¹ and *Jubilees*.¹² Scholars differ as to which served as the original source from which the other texts were derived. If, with Fitzmyer¹³ and Kutscher,¹⁴ one relies upon philology and places the date of the composition of the *Genesis Apocryphon* within the first century B.C.E. with the possibility of its being written in the first century C.E., it is more likely that the author of the *Genesis Apocryphon* used *Jubilees* (161 - 140 B.C.E.).¹⁵ That the author of the *Genesis Apocryphon* used traditions similar to those used by the author of *Jubilees* is also possible. The common traditions will be considered from both perspectives below.

As one might imagine, the authorship of the *Genesis Apocryphon* is contested. Some scholars believe that an Essene was responsible for the

¹⁰Isaiah Gafni, "Historical Background," Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period, CRINT 2.2 Michael E. Stone, ed., (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 20.

¹¹For example, see the story of the birth of Noah in *1 Enoch* 106 - 107 and *1QapGen* 2 - 5.

¹²See *Jub.* 13: 8 - 10 and *1QapGen* 19 and the discussion below.

¹³Fitzmyer, The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 19. Some have argued for a first century B.C.E. date based upon presumed correspondences between the names of kings found in the *Genesis Apocryphon* and those in power during this time. However, the correspondences seem somewhat weak. For a discussion see Fitzmyer, *Ibid.*, 18 - 19.

¹⁴Kutscher, "Dating the Language of the Genesis Apocryphon," IBL 76 (1957) 288 - 292.

¹⁵See chapter two, "Abraham in *Jubilees*."

scroll.¹⁶ However, one cannot automatically assume that because the scroll was found at Qumran the Qumran community was responsible for its composition. The scroll contains concepts which are different from those contained within other scrolls found at Qumran (see below). If, as J. Murphy O'Connor suggests, the Essene movement was much broader than the group at Qumran,¹⁷ our author may have been an Essene who was not a member of the Qumran community.

The theological interests of the author of the *Genesis Apocryphon* are apparently different from the authors of several of the other Qumran scrolls. For example, the author of the *Genesis Apocryphon* is not as concerned as the author of the *War Scroll* to show the explicit dualism between good and evil which he illustrates as a war between those who are of God (the sons of light) and those who are of Satan (the sons of darkness). These members of opposing camps are governed by opposing spirits of light and of darkness. "Each spirit stands for an entire domain, in outside reality as well as in man's heart. . . there is a camp of truthful spirits and angels headed by the Angel of Light, and there is a camp of evil angels, commanded by Belial, the Angel of Evil. . ."18

¹⁶Fitzmyer, The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 11 - 14 for his discussion of these views.

¹⁷J. Murphy O'Connor, "The Essenes and their History," RB 81 (1974) 215 - 244. He suggests, ". . . it is highly probable that the Essenes represented the ultra - conservative branch of Babylonian Jewry" (226). See also J. Murphy O'Connor, "The Damascus Document Revisited," RB 92.2 (1985) 223 - 246 and P. R. Davies, The Damascus Covenant: An Interpretation of the "Damascus Document", JSOTSup 25 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1983) who strongly supports the Babylonian origin of the Essenes.

¹⁸D. Dimant, "Qumran Sectarian Literature," Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period, CRINT 2.2, Michael E. Stone, ed., (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 534.

The literature of the Essene community provides evidence of their agreement with the majority of contemporary Jews that fidelity to the Covenant entailed obedience to the law. However, to the Essene, one had to have special guidance or special wisdom in order to interpret the Scripture correctly, especially in reference to the end of time. "The surviving Bible commentaries. . . are almost all concerned with predictions concerning the ultimate destiny of the righteous and the wicked, the tribulations and final triumph of the 'House of Judah' and the concomitant annihilation of those who had rebelled against God."¹⁹ The Teacher of Righteousness was particularly endowed by God with true insight into the Scripture (*1 QpHab* 2.4). The concerns of obedience to the law, the final destiny of the wicked and the righteous, and the Teacher of Righteousness are all missing from the *Genesis Apocryphon*. Similarly, the *Genesis Apocryphon* does not contain the themes of predestination, election, and messianism, which are themes found in other Qumran scrolls.²⁰

What does seem to be the case in the *Genesis Apocryphon* is an interest in wisdom, especially mantic wisdom. As will be further discussed in the section on the interpretation of Abraham in the text, the author portrays Abraham as the interpreter of a symbolic dream. Dreams were often considered to be divine revelations in the ancient near east, and those who had the supernatural ability to interpret them were considered to be diviners.

¹⁹G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, (London: Penguin, 3rd ed., 1987), 40.

²⁰For further descriptions of the religious ideas found in the Qumran scrolls, see D. Dimant, "Qumran Sectarian Literature," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT 2.2, Michael E. Stone, ed., (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 532 - 542.

Leo Oppenheim describes a portion of dreams in The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East with a Translation of an Assyrian Dream Book as mantic dreams in which forthcoming events are prognosticated.²¹ Mantic dreams, according to Oppenheim, were primarily symbolic. During the time frame in which the *Genesis Apocryphon* is believed to have been written, it is thought by some scholars that because of a reaction against the rationalism of hellenistic culture, a resurgence of various forms of near eastern religions occurred.²² These religions intermingled with one another, and "among them was the thoroughly religious mantic wisdom that had continuously been practiced in Mesopotamia for millennia."²³ That the text reflects the resurgence of this mantic wisdom will become more evident in the following discussion.

²¹A. Leo Oppenheim, The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East with a Translation of an Assyrian Dream Book, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1956), 206.

²²For example, see James C. VanderKam, Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition, CBQMS 15 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 7; M. Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), ET John Bowden, 1: 212. See also J. Z. Smith, "Wisdom and Apocalyptic," Religious Syncretism in Antiquity: Essays in Conversation with Geo Widengren, ed. B. A. Pearson, (Santa Barbara, CA: Scholars Press for the AAR and Institute of Religious Studies, 1975), 131 - 156. For the connection between mantic wisdom and apocalyptic, see Hans - Peter Müller, "Mantische Weisheit und Apokalyptik," VTSup 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 268 - 293.

²³James C. VanderKam, Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition, CBQMS 15 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 7.

3.2 The Interpretation of Abraham in the *Genesis Apocryphon*

In columns 19 through 22, the author rewrites Genesis 12 through fifteen.²⁴ In 19:7 as in Genesis 12:8b, Abraham builds an altar and calls upon God. In the *Genesis Apocryphon* this presumably happens in Bethel, because column 21:1 mentions the rebuilding of an altar at Bethel. In the *Genesis Apocryphon* Abraham's ultimate destination may be missing in the lacuna (19:9); we are only told that Abraham heads southward²⁵ to Hebron. Slight differences appear in the Genesis account where Abraham builds the altar east of Bethel (between Bethel and Ai) and proceeds southward²⁶ to the Negev (Gen 12:7 - 9). Hebron is indeed south of Bethel, but the Negev is further south and closer to Egypt. In the Genesis account, it is not until after Abraham returns from Egypt and is separated from Lot that he moves to Hebron (Gen 13:18). This account in the *Genesis Apocryphon* is comparable to that in *Jubilees* (13:10), where Abraham goes to Hebron and dwells there for two years before moving on to Egypt.²⁷ Both the *Genesis Apocryphon*

²⁴Whether or not column 18, which is missing, contained anything about the Tower of Babel or Abraham from Gen 11 is not known. The beginning of column 19 is also missing. Fitzmyer contends, "The lost beginning of column nineteen must have corresponded to Genesis 12:1 - 7, for it is at this point in the Genesis story that the correspondence begins." Fitzmyer, The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 105.

²⁵דרום לדרומא = southward.

²⁶In Gen 12:9, the NRSV translates וַיִּסַּע אַבְרָם חִלּוֹךְ וְנִסּוּעַ הַנְּגִבָה as "journeyed on by stages toward the Negev." The use of the infinitive absolute indicates that the journey is progressive.

²⁷See B. Z. Wacholder, "How Long did Abram Stay in Egypt?" *HUCA* 35 (1964) 43 - 56 for a discussion of the accounts of Abraham's stay in Egypt as reported in the *Genesis Apocryphon* and in *Jubilees*.

and *Jubilees* explain how it is that Abraham moves south by including his stop in Hebron.²⁸

Further differences appear between the *Genesis Apocryphon* 19: 7 - 8 and Genesis 12: 7b. In contrast to Genesis where the narrative about Abraham is in the third person, the author of the Genesis account writes in the first person; it is as if Abraham himself is narrating the story. Additionally, unlike Genesis, the *Genesis Apocryphon* contains the very words which Abraham spoke when he built the altar, "You are indeed to [me the eterna]l [Go]d. . . ."²⁹

3.2.1 Abraham's Mantic Dream

As in Genesis 12:10, in the text at hand Abraham leaves the area because of famine and heads to Egypt where food may be found.³⁰ During his first night in Egypt, Abraham dreams of a cedar and a beautiful date palm. Some men come to cut down the cedar, leaving the date palm. However, the date palm "remonstrated and said, 'Do not cut down the cedar, for we are both from one family.' So the cedar was spared with the help of the date - palm"

²⁸The antiquity of Hebron is mentioned both in *Jub.* 13:12 and later by Josephus, see *J.W.* 4.530; *Ant.* 1.170.

²⁹Fitzmyer's translation and reconstruction of the Aramaic, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary*, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 59. *Jubilees* contains virtually the same proclamation. The concern found in *Jubilees* to portray Abraham as obedient to the law mentioned in the previous chapter is further illustrated when, after the proclamation, Abraham offers up a burnt offering on the altar, a deed not found in *1QapGen*.

³⁰The mention of prosperity in Egypt does not occur in this portion of Genesis. Perhaps the author is contemporizing the account of Abraham; during the time of composition Egypt was known for its foodstuffs which were shipped throughout the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. John E. Stambaugh, David L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, Library of Early Christianity, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 39; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, eds. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint ed., 1987), 2:68 - 69. However, it is also interesting that the only other place in the Bible where it speaks of grain being found in Egypt is in Gen 42: 1 - 3 where it is mentioned three times. This is of note because it is Joseph who, besides Daniel, is the great interpreter of symbolic dreams in the Old Testament.

(19:16). Psalm 92:12 uses the analogy of the palm tree and cedar to describe the righteous, "The righteous flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon" (NRSV). In using this symbolism, our author is simultaneously accentuating the righteousness of Abraham and Sarah.³¹

Abraham awakens Sarah, tells her the dream and interprets it for her (19:19 - 21). When they seek to kill Abraham but spare Sarah, she is to say that Abraham is her brother in order to save his life. This "insertion into the Genesis story seems to be intended as an explanation which Sarai will have to tell to cover up the real identity of Abram, her husband."³² As is the case with many texts which used the process of 'rewritten Bible,' unsavory accounts concerning figures important to Judaism are whitewashed. This explanation suggested by the dream is even given divine sanction because such symbolic dreams were thought to be of divine origin and their messages were considered to be divine revelation.

Abraham's dream fits the description of a mantic/symbolic dream. Oppenheim states, "A person who has just experienced a dream of the 'symbolic' type of which the meaning remains enigmatic reacts -- according to all dream - reports of antiquity -- by immediately communicating the content of his dream to a friend or relative, or to anybody at hand."³³ Abraham not only reports the content of his dream to Sarah, but he interprets it as well.

³¹Rabbinic literature often relates this verse to the story of Abraham and Sarah, as in *Gen. Rab.* 41.1.

³²Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary*, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 110.

³³A. Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East with a Translation of an Assyrian Dream Book*, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1956), 210.

Those who decoded symbolic dreams were considered to be wise interpreters.³⁴ The practice is known as oneiromancy and was one of the mantic arts.³⁵

Another important point to note is that "dreams, at least symbolic dreams, were traditionally a Gentile mode of revelation. A good Israelite like Joseph might interpret the dreams of a Gentile, but the Hebrew prophets had visions rather than dreams."³⁶ This is contrary to one of the essential points developed by Susan Niditch who is interested in showing that "certain varieties of divination - namely those involving dreams - would have been an acceptable and long - pedigreed means of receiving divine communication in Israel itself."³⁷ However, in the Old Testament examples she uses, except for those in Daniel, we find revelatory phenomena which are accompanied by interpretations provided by the Lord or by an angel.³⁸ The description we have of Abraham in the *Genesis Apocryphon* is more like the description of Joseph (Gen 40 - 41) and Daniel (1 - 6) who themselves interpret the actual dreams of others which are symbolic. While Abraham is like earlier Hebrew

³⁴Helmer Ringgren, *Religions of the Ancient Near East*, (London: SPCK, 1973), 43, 93, 166; John J. Collins, "The Court - Tales in Daniel and the Development of Apocalyptic," *IBL* 94 (1975) 230.

³⁵James C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition*, CBQMS 15 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 59 - 60.

³⁶John J. Collins, "The Court - Tales in Daniel and the Development of Apocalyptic," *IBL* 94 (1975) 230.

³⁷S. Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision in Biblical Tradition*, HSM 30 (Chico, Calif: Scholars Press, 1983), 175.

³⁸For example, she cites Amos 7:1 - 9 and 8:1 - 3 where the Lord is said to have shown a wall and plumb line and summer fruits to Amos and immediately explains them. In Zech 4:1 it states that the angel woke him up in order to show him another symbolic vision of the bowl, lampstand, lamps, and olive trees which are explained by the Lord. See also Jer 1:11 - 12, 13 - 19, 24; Zech 5:1 - 4; 4:1 - 6a, 10b - 14; 2:1 - 4; 1:7 - 17; 6:1 - 8; 5:5 - 11; 2:5 - 9.

prophets in that it is he who receives the revelation, this revelation is not then explained by a divine agent. Abraham has to interpret a message about the future which is given cryptically in the form of a dream.³⁹ In describing ancient Mesopotamian divination via dreams, Oppenheim states, "Normally, the dream offers nothing more than an 'omen,' which means that the dream is meaningful *only when correctly interpreted by an expert.*"⁴⁰

Josephus' description of the Essenes as those who made predictions about the future is important to remember. He describes an Essene named Judas, who is called a mantic (μάντις),⁴¹ who made predictions "which never. . . proved erroneous"⁴² and Menahem who correctly foretold the future of Herod the Great.⁴³ He even includes a story about Simon the Essene who was summoned to Archelaus near the end of his reign. Archelaus had experienced a symbolic dream and told Simon about the symbols. In the midst of those who were supposed to be skilled in interpreting dreams (τοὺς μάντις οἷς περὶ ὀνείρατα ἦσαν αἱ ἀναστροφαί) yet whose interpretations

³⁹See John J. Collins who makes a similar delineation between Jewish apocalyptic and biblical prophecy when he states, "In prophecy revelation consisted of the direct transmission of the word of God. In apocalyptic it involves the interpretation of mysterious realities which are given cryptically in scripture, dreams and other phenomena." "Jewish Apocalyptic against its Hellenistic Near Eastern Environment," BASOR 220 (1975) 32

⁴⁰A. Leo Oppenheim, Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization, (Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1964), 222. Italics mine.

⁴¹J.W. 1.80; *Ant.* 13.313.

⁴²J.W. 1.78; see also J.W. 2.159

⁴³*Ant.* 15.373 - 379.

were in disagreement, it is Simon who interprets the message of the dream correctly.⁴⁴

If it is true that symbolic dreams and their interpretation are the components of a type of near eastern mantic wisdom, then the description of Abraham in the *Genesis Apocryphon* is of one who is endowed with this mantic wisdom. And, if Josephus' descriptions of the mantic characteristics of the Essenes are true, it seems reasonable to suggest that the author could be an Essene with a present or past association with near eastern mantic wisdom.

3.2.2 The Wisdom of Abraham

Abraham's dream begins to be realized when after five years, three of the "nobles of Egypt [came] of the Pharaoh Zoan concerning [my] words and my wife. They gave [me many gifts and asked of me] kindness, wisdom, and truth. And I read before them the [book] of the words of [En]och(?)" (19:23 - 25)⁴⁵ The Genesis account contains no clue that the Egyptians are interested in the wisdom of Abraham. In the *Genesis Apocryphon*, in contrast, the quest for wisdom is one of their primary reasons for seeking out Abraham.

⁴⁴*Ant.* 17.345 - 348; *J.W.* 2.113. The dream was about the demise of the reign of Archelaus. In Josephus, *μαντεία* means divination while a *μαντις* indicates a seer or soothsayer. Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, ed., *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), 3:55. Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson hold the Essenes are not so much leaders of movements or deliverers of oracles but "Essene prophets mentioned by Josephus are all seers who make *predictions*. . ." *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 155.

⁴⁵Translation from Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary*, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 61. The lacuna where Fitzmyer discerns the word Enoch does present problems as Fitzmyer admits on page 118. However, it does seem to be the best option in view of the texts of *1QapGen* (cf. 2:20 - 21) which speaks of the knowledge given to Enoch and *Jubilees* 21:10 where Abraham speaks of having read the words of Enoch and *Jub* 12:27 where Abraham is depicted as reading and studying his father's books, presumably those which were written by Enoch mentioned in *Jub.* 4:21.

Fitzmyer points out that this depiction of Abraham may parallel the Solomon and Queen of Sheba motif as found in 1 Kings 10: 1 - 3, when the Queen arrives with gifts seeking wisdom.⁴⁶

Considering the significance of Abraham reading from Enoch may also prove to be fruitful. In his work, Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition, James C. VanderKam has shown: ⁴⁷

Enoch was a Jewish literary crystalization of Sumero - Akkadian lore about the seventh antediluvian king Enmeduranki. This mythical sovereign appears in texts as the founder of a guild of diviners. . . It is sufficiently clear that in Jewish literature Enoch bore divinatory associations (though they were modified by Jewish theology), and it is precisely this figure who appears as the seer in a number of the earliest apocalypses.

If the *Genesis Apocryphon* was written against a background associated with a kind of near eastern mantic wisdom, it may be that divination also would be associated with Enoch and literature about him. Earlier we noted that either the author of the *Genesis Apocryphon* may have drawn traditions from *Jubilees*, or that both *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon* drew from common traditions. In *Jubilees* 4: 16 - 25, the depiction of Enoch is that of a diviner. He enjoys the society of celestial beings who make information known to him (*Jub.* 4:21), which VanderKam describes as characteristics of

⁴⁶Fitzmyer, The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 118. Egyptian wisdom is mentioned in connection with Solomon's wisdom in 1 Kgs 4: 29 - 30, "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and largeness of mind like the sand of the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt."

⁴⁷Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition, CBQMS 15 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 8.

the Mesopotamian founder of diviners, Enmeduranki.⁴⁸ He bears other characteristics of a diviner: he sees the future as he sleeps and writes it down for future generations (*Jub.* 4:19),⁴⁹ he is involved in astrology,⁵⁰ and writes down the signs of the months (*Jub.* 4:17), perhaps as omens, for the benefit of future generations.⁵¹ Although most of the story of Enoch is missing in the *Genesis Apocryphon*, in 2:20-22 Enoch is said to enjoy the society of celestial beings who "make everything known to him."⁵² *Jubilees* attests to a similar tradition about Enoch, "And he [Enoch] was with the angels of God six jubilees of years. And they showed him everything which is on earth and in

⁴⁸James C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition*, CBQMS 15 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 188.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 59 - 62

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 58 - 59. Mesopotamia is famous for astrology. One kind of astrology revealed in texts from the fifth and third centuries, B.C.E. are horoscopes "which mention the date of birth -- in an isolated instance, the date of conception -- followed by an astronomical report, concluding with predictions of the future of the child. . . The important fact about these texts is that their dates prove this type of astrology to be a late development in Mesopotamia, or better, in Babylonia, rather than under the stimulus of Greece, as was previously assumed." A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, (Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1964), 224 - 225.

⁵¹James C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition*, CBQMS 15 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 53 - 56. VanderKam states that omens were not only divinatory in nature, but also were attempts "to list fully and to classify phenomena which is an essential ingredient of scientific endeavor." (55). In regard to writing down events by Mesopotamian diviners, such as the movement of stars or unusual actions of animals, Oppenheim states, "they first made reports on specific events, then assembled observations of each kind in small collections. The purpose was clearly to record experiences for future reference and for the benefit of coming generations." A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, (Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1964), 210.

⁵²Fitzmyer's translation, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary*, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 53. Admittedly, a lacuna exists where Fitzmyer translates the discernible letters as "the Holy Ones." However the clear text in *1QapGen* states that "they made everything known to him" (2:21) which, from parallel traditions about Enoch (cf. *Enoch* 1:2; *Jub.* 4:21) would provide evidence that the ones being spoken about who gave Enoch knowledge are some kind of celestial beings. See also the parallel tradition about the birth of Noah in *Jub.* 4: 28 and *1QapGen* 2:3.

the heavens, the dominion of the sun" (*Jub.* 4:21). Given the clues about Enoch in the *Genesis Apocryphon* and the supporting traditions found in *Jubilees*, the wisdom that the Egyptians seek from Abraham could indeed be mantic wisdom.⁵³

The first seven lines of column twenty found in the *Genesis Apocryphon* extol the beauty of Sarah. Fitzmyer points out that many passages exist which extol Sarah's beauty, "but none of these rabbinical passages is so extensive in its actual description as the *Genesis Apocryphon*."⁵⁴ Sarah is also said to have "wisdom" (20:7). What kind of wisdom she possesses is not described in the text. Perhaps she functions as the female aspect of wisdom which accompanies Abraham the male, either in the sense of the Old Testament portrayal of the female wisdom⁵⁵ or, better yet, as the female counterpart to the near eastern interpreter of dreams, both of whom "are attested throughout the entire history of Mesopotamian religion."⁵⁶

⁵³It may be significant that it is Egyptians who come to Abraham seeking mantic wisdom because in the ancient near east they were particularly known for dream interpretation, A. Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East with a Translation of an Assyrian Dream Book*, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1956), 238; see also 206 - 210. Pseudo - Eupolemus also depicts Abraham as an astrologer and as one experienced in the "Chaldean arts," which could refer to divination, especially dream interpretation. See Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 9.17.

⁵⁴Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary*, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971),120. See also Gen. 12:1 in which Sarah is praised before Pharaoh.

⁵⁵Wisdom is portrayed as a woman in Proverbs (cf. Prov 1:20; 9:1) and among documents found in Qumran, such as *11QP^a*, 18.

⁵⁶A. Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East with a Translation of an Assyrian Dream Book*, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1956), 225, see also 223.

3.2.3 Abraham's Prayer and Power over Evil Spirits

The king listens to the words which praise Sarah, and has her brought to him. As predicted in the dream, the king seeks to kill Abraham. Sarah tells the king that Abraham is her brother, and he is spared (20:10). Abraham weeps bitterly (20:10 - 11) in response to Sarah being taken from him. This depiction of the grief of Abraham is notable in the *Genesis Apocryphon* because it puts Abraham in a better light than the Genesis account where no emotional response is found.⁵⁷

Abraham prays to God that justice be meted out to Pharaoh, and that he "not be able to defile my wife tonight -- that it may be known about you, my Lord, that you are the Lord of all the kings of the earth" (20: 15 - 16). Abraham prays not only to be vindicated, but that his God might be glorified. Abraham is not depicted as praying after the abduction of Sarah in either of the Genesis accounts. However, for the author of the *Genesis Apocryphon*, the tradition is important enough to add at this juncture; here Abraham is able to move God to action through his emotional and intense prayer (20:12).

As a result of this prayer an "evil spirit" or a "spirit of pestilence" (20:16) is sent to the house of Pharaoh which keeps him from defiling Sarah for two years (20:16 - 18). The Genesis account only states that the pestilence is sent because of the abduction of Sarah who is the wife of Abraham (Gen 12:17). Additionally an apologetic concern is manifested here because the author makes clear why Pharaoh could not touch her in Genesis twenty,⁵⁸ while

⁵⁷Cf. Gen. 12:15; 20:2. The *Genesis Apocryphon* contains further additions of the emotions of the characters in the narrative. See 2:25; 7:7; 19:21; 29:8 - 9, 12, 16; 21:7; 22:5.

⁵⁸Cf. Gen 20:6; it is implied that the reason was some sort of physical ailment that afflicted Abimelech in addition to an illness which kept his wife and female slaves from bearing children, cf. 20:17 - 18.

establishing that Sarah remained faithful to Abraham which is not clear in Genesis twelve.⁵⁹

Of particular note in the *Genesis Apocryphon* is the portrayal of Abraham as an exorcist. Hirqanos,⁶⁰ who headed up the party which abducted Sarah from Abraham in the first place, returns to him and begs Abraham to come and pray over the king and lay his hands upon him that he might be cured because the king had seen Abraham in a dream (20:21 - 22).⁶¹ Significantly, none of the wise men of Egypt could cure the king of the pestilence. Lot answers the request of Hirqanos with a condition: since Abraham cannot pray for the king while Sarah is with him, Sarah must be returned to Abraham, after which he will pray for the king. Abraham is summoned to the court of the king where Pharaoh berates him for his being duped into thinking that Sarah is Abraham's sister and returns her to Abraham.

The motif of the wise man in the court of a king whose own wise men could not heal the king is certainly not new with the *Genesis Apocryphon*, Joseph and Daniel and later the Essene mentioned by Josephus were

⁵⁹Cf. Gen 12:14 - 16.

⁶⁰If the reign of John Hyrcanus engendered internal dissension among the Jewish people, this could ostensibly refer to him. However, why would the author then put him in a position inferior to the ruler in the story? Perhaps the reference is to Hyrcanus II who, according to Josephus preferred a quiet life (*Ant.* 13.16). Problems exist with the transfer from the Greek form of the name to an Aramaic form. After a lengthy discussion (124 - 127), J. Fitzmyer concludes, "There is unfortunately no way of identifying the personage with certainty, and perhaps it was not intended by the author himself, who makes out of [Hirqanos] a minor official at most." *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary*, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 126.

⁶¹The dream of the king here is an expansion upon the dream of Abimelech in Gen 20:3 in which Abimelech is told that Sarah is a married woman. The difference is that in Abimelech's dream he is told of Abraham's true identity while in Pharaoh's dream he is apparently told of Abraham's healing powers.

successfully able to interpret the symbolic dreams of their respective kings. J. Collins outlines three emphases found in the court tale of Daniel 1 - 6 which are also found here:⁶²

(a) The tale may emphasize the wisdom or ability of the courtier. . the crisis. . . setting. . . and action of the courtier are of secondary importance.

(b) The tale may focus on the drama of danger or humiliation followed by salvation. The wise man is for some reason threatened or imprisoned. However, he is eventually released and exalted more greatly than before.

(c) The tale may be used for the message of the courtier. The tale may be cast in the message of proverbial sayings or the interpretation of dreams.

We have already seen how the wise man, Abraham, had his life threatened by the Egyptians which corresponds to Collins' point b, above. The drama continues when Abraham lays his hands upon the king's head whereby "The plague was removed from him and the evil [spirit] was commanded to depart [from him],and he was cured" (20:29).

First this laying - on of hands is noteworthy because it is not found in the Genesis account where it states that Abraham prayed to God who in turn healed Abimelech.⁶³ Secondly, while the laying - on of hands is found in the New Testament, "the laying - on of hands for healing purposes is not found in the Old Testament, nor in Rabbinical literature (as far as we know). . . "⁶⁴

⁶²John J. Collins, "The Court-Tales in Daniel and the Development of Apocalyptic," *IBL* 94 (1975) 219.

⁶³Gen 20:17; cf. Dan 4 where God cures Nebuchadnezzar when he recognizes the sovereignty of God.

⁶⁴D. Flusser, "Healing Through the Laying - on of Hands in a Dead Sea Scroll," *IEJ* 7 (1956 - 57) 107. See also A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*. (Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1964), 223 - 224 , which describes an exorcist going to a

Josephus mentions that the Essenes did have an interest in healing in general.⁶⁵ However, both the "conception of demon - maladies"⁶⁶ and the laying - on of hands are known in accounts of Assyrian and Babylonian magic, "The laying on of hands is part of the exorcism by which the spirit is driven out and the person is cured. Though such a rite is without Old Testament precedents, it is known in older Assyrian and Babylonian texts."⁶⁷

The Dead Sea Scrolls provide us with another example of a Babylonian king who turns to a Jewish exorcist for healing. However, in the case of this king, Nabonidus, the healing of his ulcer is connected with the forgiveness of sin.⁶⁸

I was afflicted [with an evil ulcer] for seven years. . . and an exorcist pardoned my sins. He was a Jew from among the [children of the exile of Judah, and he said], "Recount this in

home to heal someone. "Even the names of the diseases mentioned are not medical but point as a rule to the deity or demon that has caused them" (224). Dupont - Sommer points out that although the laying on of hands appears in the Old Testament in the course of a variety of purposes, it is never for healing. (Although Naaman alludes to such a practice in 2 Ki 5:11). "Exorcismes et Guérisons dans les Écrits de Qumran," VTSup 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 251.

⁶⁵"They display an extraordinary interest in the writings of the ancients, in particular those which make for the welfare of soul and body; with the help of those, and of the treatment of diseases they make investigations into medicinal roots and the properties of stones." *J.W.* 2.8.

⁶⁶A. Dupont - Sommer, "Exorcismes et Guérisons dans les Écrits de Qumran," VTSup 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 250.

⁶⁷Fitzmyer, The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 140. Oppenheim speaks of professional exorcists known from a variety of texts in The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East with a Translation of an Assyrian Dream Book, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1956), 238 and Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization, (Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1964), 81, 106 - 108. The authority of professional exorcists, like the diviners, lay in their training and personal potential alone. Although they were connected with the temple, "spiritual power was not invested in them through the temple" (107 - 108).

⁶⁸G. Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, (London: Penguin Books, 3rd ed., 1987), 4*QprNab*, 274.

writing to [glorify and exalt] the Name of the [Most High God. And I wrote this]: I was affected with an [evil] ulcer in Teiman [by decree of the Most High God.] For seven years [I] prayed to the gods of silver and gold, [bronze and iron], wood and stone and clay, because [I believed] that they were gods. . .

As in the account of Abraham in the *Genesis Apocryphon*, a physical malady is connected to some sort of demonic presence which must be exorcised (cf. *1QapGen* 20:24-29). In both accounts, the illness can be attributed to sin in the life of the one who is ill. In the case of Nabonidus, this sin was presumably the worship of idols. In the case of Pharaoh, what constitutes the sin is unclear. The physical illness apparently kept Pharaoh from the sin of intercourse with Sarah; perhaps the sin was the mere possession of Sarah and his intention of defilement. However, unlike the account of the exorcism performed by Abraham, the account of Nabonidus makes it clear that the healing is connected with the forgiveness of sin. In the *Genesis Apocryphon*, Abraham is not able to perform the healing/exorcism until Sarah is removed from the possession of Pharaoh. Whether Abraham is also simultaneously forgiving the sin of Pharaoh while he is healing him is debatable.⁶⁹

Given Collins' assertions about court - tales above, namely that the actions of the courtier are of secondary importance and that the message of the courtier is the purpose of the tales, the most important similarity between the account of the healing of Nabonidus and that of the healing of Pharaoh is the glorification of the God of the Jewish people. In the story of Nabonidus,

⁶⁹Dupont - Sommer contends that in the *Genesis Apocryphon* Abraham was forgiving sin as he was healing Pharaoh, because one could not be healed while sin remained. He states, "in Qumran, as according to the gospel, the plague is tied up with sin and is caused by a demon and the healing happens at the same time as dispelling the demon and in the remittance of sins." "Exorcismes et Guérisons dans les Écrits de Qumran," *VTSup* 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 261.

the power of the Jewish God was able to heal him while his idols proved to be worthless in this endeavor. The Jewish courtier is reported as saying that Nabonidus should recount his story in writing "to glorify and exalt the Name of the Most High God."⁷⁰ In the story of Abraham and Pharaoh, the message is found in Abraham's prayer that Sarah not be defiled and that justice be served to Pharaoh in order "that it may be known about you, my Lord, that you are the Lord of all the kings of the earth."⁷¹

At this juncture it is important to consider the work of H. C. Kee on the Semitic root גער⁷² found in the pericope of Abraham driving out the evil spirit. Kee states that "the term as it appears in 1QGA xx.28 - 9 cannot be understood as describing the technique of an exorcist. . . "⁷³ Additionally, in the description of the exorcism of King Nabonidus, the noun form of a different root is used "[where it] seems to be the designation for a professional exorcist who is called in to release the poor, mad king from his plight."⁷⁴ Kee contends that in the *Genesis Apocryphon* it is not so much that the evil spirit was brought under control but that "the departure of the plagues is effected by

⁷⁰G. Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, (London: Penguin Books, 3rd ed., 1987), 274.

⁷¹1QapGen 20:12 - 16.

⁷²Howard Clark Kee, "The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories," NTS 14 (1967 - 68), 232 - 46

⁷³Ibid., 235.

⁷⁴Ibid., 239.

the commanding word of Abram, in a manner resembling that of an exorcist."⁷⁵

His observation about the root in light of other Qumran documents is also helpful, where he contends that the root can be understood as referring to "a way of subjugating the evil spirits in order that God's dominion might become a reality."⁷⁶ The dominion of God on earth has already been realized in his communication to Abraham in a symbolic dream, and in Abraham's ability to heal the Pharaoh where all others failed. Abraham's God can communicate the contents of the future because he alone controls it. By the power of his God alone, Abraham was able to keep his wife pure and to heal Pharaoh from his demon illness. Through all of this, Abraham's God was exalted; the God of the Jewish nation was shown to have true dominion.

At the end of this Qumran court - tale, Abraham is exalted not only because his wisdom and his God are superior to those of all others, but also because the king gives gifts to both Sarah and Abraham (20:30 - 34; cf. Gen 20:14 - 18). Abraham had been threatened by death and by the loss of Sarah. As in other court - tales, the wise man "who was once threatened is exalted more greatly than before."⁷⁷

Abraham returns to Bethel, where he formerly had built an altar, builds another altar, sacrifices burnt offerings to God,⁷⁸ and praises God not only for

⁷⁵Howard Clark Kee, "The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories," *NTS* 14 (1967 - 68), 233.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 235.

⁷⁷John J. Collins, "The Court - Tales in Daniel and the Development of Apocalyptic," *IBL* 94 (1975) 219.

⁷⁸See *Jub.* 13:16 where Abraham is also said to make a burnt offering, as he was said to do previously in *Jub.* 13:9.

the gifts he received but for safety (21:1 - 4). Lot departs from Abraham and settles in the valley of Jordan, buying a house in Sodom (21:5 - 6; see Gen 1 - 13).⁷⁹

3.2.4 Abraham Takes Possession of the Land

God appears to Abraham in a vision of the night (21:8; cf. Dan 2:19), while he is dwelling at Bethel. Again, Abraham receives divine revelation in the form of a dream; in Genesis, God merely tells him to raise his eyes (Gen 13:14). In the dream, Abraham is instructed to go up to Ramath Hazor where God will show him his land inheritance (21:10) and make his promise that not only Abraham, but also his descendants will inherit the land forever (20:12).

The land Abraham is promised stretches from the Nile to the Euphrates rivers. Fitzmyer notes that the details were "those in current use as the boundaries of the 'Promised Land' and concretely recall the boundaries of the Davidic Kingdom."⁸⁰ By exploring the extent of the land given to him and his descendants, Abraham is taking possession of the land⁸¹ in contrast to the Genesis account where he is told to "arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land. . ." (Gen 13:17) but never actually does so.

⁷⁹Strangely, no mention is made of the sin (Gen. 13:13) or the future destruction (Gen 13:10) of Sodom.

⁸⁰Fitzmyer, The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 148. The boundaries of the Jewish nation under the Hasmoneans, especially John Hyrcanus and Alexander Jannaeus, extended almost as far as the boundaries of the promised land depicted here. E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, eds. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint ed., 1987), 227 - 228. If the author of the *Genesis Apocryphon* was anti - Hasmonean, and if he held that a Hasmonean should not be the king in place of a descendant of David, the boundaries supplied might be in terms of a reminder of the true kingdom.

⁸¹Fitzmyer, The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 152.

D. J. Harrington contends that there may be some contacts between the *Genesis Apocryphon* and the *Testament of Abraham*. "The tour over the land that is based on Gen 13:17 in *1QapGen* 21: 8 - 19 and the world tour in *TAbr* 10 are somewhat similar."⁸² While it is true that both texts depict Abraham as taking a tour, the *Testament of Abraham* depicts a world tour as seen from heaven in which Abraham condemns sinners. The account in the *Genesis Apocryphon* accentuates Abraham's taking possession of the promised land.

Earlier it was said that the dominion of God was made manifest in the midst of the Egyptians through Abraham's dream interpretation and healing Pharaoh. In this pericope, it was God who communicated to Abraham that he should go up to Ramath Hazor to view the land (21:8 - 12) which God was giving to him and his numerous descendants. God's dominion also encompasses the land which has been given to Abraham; God's dominion will continue through Abraham's descendants. Abraham ends his lengthy ramble by not only building an altar, but again by sacrificing a burnt offering to God (21:20).

3.2.5 Abraham Rescues Lot

The remainder of columns 21 and 22 contain the highest proportion of close translation from the Hebrew text. Consequently traditions about Abraham which differ from those found in the Genesis account are few. One new tradition is that Abraham invites " three Amorite brothers, (who were) my friends; and they ate together with me and drank with me" (22:21). These

⁸²Daniel J. Harrington, "Abraham Traditions in the Testament of Abraham and in the 'Rewritten Bible' of the Intertestamental Period," Studies on the Testament of Abraham, SBLSCS 6 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 167.

three brothers, Mamre, Arnem and Eshcol, do not dine with Abraham in the Genesis text (Gen 13:18).

Fitzmyer contends that Abraham's reason for the invitation was in order to make a pact with them.⁸³ The meal Abraham eats with them is a covenant meal⁸⁴ which ensures that the three of them will "set out with Abraham in pursuit of the Mesopotamian kings (22:6 - 7)."⁸⁵ After the battle in which Abraham and his companions are triumphant, he insists on their rights to their portion of the booty (22:24) in his dealings with the king of Sodom.

In the *Genesis Apocryphon* (22:1 - 12) as in Genesis (14:13 - 16), Abraham successfully rescues his nephew Lot from the warring kings. Just as Abraham wept when Sarah was abducted by the Egyptians (20:10-11), so he is depicted again as weeping when he hears about Lot's plight (22:5). Abraham also meets with Melchizedek; but it is one of the most undeveloped accounts in the scroll (cf. Gen 14: 18 - 20; *1QapGen* 22:14).⁸⁶

In the final lines of the *Genesis Apocryphon* God's promise comes to Abraham in a vision. Abraham's departure from Haran and his years in Egypt and afterward are recounted. God points out that Abraham's wealth has greatly expanded since the day he left Haran and promises his continued

⁸³Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary*, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 156.

⁸⁴Like the covenant meal found in Gen 26:26 - 31.

⁸⁵Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary*, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 156.

⁸⁶This is surprising in light of the scroll found at Qumran in which Melchizedek has the qualities of a heavenly deliverer, of protecting the covenant, and who was instrumental in executing judgment. For a translation of *11Q Melchizedek* and comments, see M. De Jonge and A. S. Van Der Woude, "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," *NTS* 12 (1965 - 66) 301 - 26.

protection over Abraham. While recognizing that God has indeed blessed him, Abraham responds with a heartfelt plea for just one son who could inherit all that he has, in lieu of his household servant Eliezer. God responds, "This one shall not inherit you, but the one who shall go forth. . . ." (22:34). What the author of the *Genesis Apocryphon* would have done with the rest of the story of Abraham, unfortunately, must remain a mystery.

3.3 Conclusion: The Function and Significance of Abraham in the *Genesis Apocryphon*

In this text, Abraham functioned as the mantic wise man. He dreamed a symbolic dream and correctly interpreted its implications for the future. His wisdom is so great that it was sought by the Egyptians who were also known to possess forms of mantic wisdom. He released Pharaoh from a demon through the Assyrian/Babylonian method of the laying-on of hands.

Abraham functioned as one devoted to the true God. He prayed that the glory of the Most High might be made evident after the abduction of his wife Sarah, and his prayer was answered: he was able to heal Pharaoh when none of Pharaoh's magicians were able to heal him. His inheritance from God is the promised land, of which he takes possession. Although he is righteous, he is also human; he weeps at both the abduction of Sarah and of Lot.

Palestine is the most likely provenance for the writing of the text. The biblical text type, its similarity with portions of *Jubilees*, and the indication within the text of the author's knowledge of the cities in the promised land indicate this. Yet, the portrayal of Abraham in the text as a mantic sage provides evidence that the author was acquainted with near eastern mantic wisdom. Whether this means that the author had himself lived in the near east or whether the traditions about such wisdom were well enough known

in Palestine for him to have written in such a way is difficult to ascertain. However, it is obvious that in some way the author had been influenced by the precepts of mantic wisdom and wrote for an audience who would understand them.

The difference between the portrayal of Abraham in *Jubilees* and in the *Genesis Apocryphon* is striking. In *Jubilees*, Abraham was characterized as being obedient to law, separating from Gentiles, and as the premier monotheist and anti - idolator. To the reader it was clear what was required. In the *Genesis Apocryphon*, on the contrary, he is very assimilationist; Abraham does all the things that a mantic sage should do. How should the Jewish reader find any encouragement or application in such a text?

Although the author of this text does not espouse many of the theological tenets found in other scrolls from the Qumran caves, such as a clear-cut dualism between good and evil, it is evident that those who look to God and who are members of his domain will be exalted over and blessed beyond those who look elsewhere and who are not members of his domain.

It is hard to know how the text would apply to the political situation in Palestine. Is the author responding to the increasing Gentile affiliation on the part of the Hasmoneans? In that case, Abraham might portray the true Israel which is within God's domain while the powerless ruler represents the Hasmoneans who ultimately look elsewhere and suffer the consequences. Or, is the helpless ruler a Roman in Egyptian garb? In that case Abraham represents the Jewish nation who has wisdom which is superior to her Gentile oppressors. The promised land is truly hers and Israel will ultimately triumph. Since both of these scenarios are tenuous at best, it is best to concentrate on the implicit message of the text.

Implicitly, what the text tells its reader is that the Most High God of the Jews endows those who are faithful to him with superior wisdom and power. Those who are within the domain of God will ultimately be blessed. The God of the Jewish people will always triumph over the religious wisdom of the Gentiles. The author used Abraham to show his readers that those who are devoted to the true God, the God of Abraham, will eventually triumph.

Chapter Four

Abraham in the *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo - Philo

4.1 The *Biblical Antiquities*

The *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo - Philo¹ can be classified along with *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon*² as another example of the type of literature produced according to the process known as 'rewritten Bible.' While it does contain material common to that found in the later midrashim,³ and both midrash and the *Biblical Antiquities* are concerned to make the text of the Hebrew Bible relevant to the contemporary concerns of

¹It is obvious upon reading the text that the *Biblical Antiquities* is not by Philo because the style is noticeably different from his allegorical approach. It may have been first attributed to Philo because the text occurs *in manuscripts together with translations of genuine Philonic writings*. Scholars maintain that it bears some similarities to the *Antiquities* of Josephus, and that because Josephus had his *Antiquities* this work may have been similarly named to give Philo the same. See Guido Kisch, *Pseudo - Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, Publications in Medieval Studies (Notre Dame, IN: U. of Notre Dame, 1949), 4; M. R. James, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, (London: SPCK, 1917; reprint, N.Y.: KTAV Pub. Hse., 1971), 27; D. J. Harrington, "Pseudo - Philo: Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum," *Outside the Old Testament*, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 B.C. to A.D. 200, M. deJonge, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1985), 6; Louis H. Feldman, "Prolegomenon," *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, by M. R. James, (London: SPCK, 1917; reprint, N.Y.: KTAV Pub. Hse., 1971), lviii.

²D. J. Harrington, "Pseudo - Philo: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 2:302; "Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies," *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 242; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT 2.2, (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 107.

³See the common material pointed out by Richard Bauckham in "The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum of Pseudo - Philo and the Gospels as 'Midrash,'" *Gospel Perspectives: Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, vol. III, R. T. France, David Wenham, eds., (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 33 - 76.

their respective readers,⁴ the *Biblical Antiquities* is not technically midrash.⁵ This becomes clear if we again refer to the differentiation made by D. Dimant between texts which are concerned primarily with exposition as opposed to those which are primarily concerned with composition, "In the exposition the divine word is introduced in order to interpret it as such, while the composition is employed when the biblical element is subservient to the independent aim and structure of its new context."⁶

Although the work covers the material from Adam up to the death of Saul, the compositional structure of the *Biblical Antiquities* is built around theological interests similar to those found in the book of Judges.⁷ First, the cycle of sin, divine punishment by means of an enemy, repentance, and salvation through a divinely appointed leader is found in the

⁴ Richard Bauckham, "The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum of Pseudo - Philo and the Gospels as 'Midrash,'" *Gospel Perspectives: Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, vol. III, R. T. France, David Wenham, eds., (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 40; Jacob Neusner, "Genesis Rabbah: The Rules of History Set Forth By Revelation," *A Midrash Reader*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 75.

⁵Even Richard Bauckham states, "I am using the word 'midrash' in the extended sense now common, referring to Jewish exegesis of the NT period, in contrast to those writers who restrict the word to the Rabbinic midrashim. But the inverted commas are in deference to the strictly correct usage of the later." "The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum of Pseudo - Philo and the Gospels as 'Midrash,'" *Gospel Perspectives: Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, vol. III, R. T. France, David Wenham, eds., (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 68, n. 1.

⁶D. Dimant, "Use and Interpretation of Mikra in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," *Mikra*. CRINT 2.1, M. J. Mulder, ed., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 382. See also the discussion by Charles Perrot in C. Perrot, Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, *Pseudo-Philon Les Antiquités Bibliques*. (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976), 2:24 - 25 and Chapter One, "Abraham in *Jubilees*."

⁷Of the biblical material available to him, Pseudo - Philo devoted the largest section of his work to that from Judges (23 chapters), followed by 1 Samuel (16 chapters) and Genesis (eight chapters).

Biblical Antiquities and in Judges. In the presentation of the cycle, the author's concern is "Can Israel survive the present onslaught of its enemies?"⁸ The author's answer is in the affirmative based upon Israel's status as God's chosen covenant people. Secondly, the author structures the composition around the great Israelite leaders, most of whom come to rescue the nation from sin and the onslaught of national enemies.

Angelology is another major aspect of the text.⁹ Many of the angels are sent on a benevolent mission by God on behalf of a member or members of the chosen people such as the angel who comes to announce the birth of Samson to his mother, Eluma (42:3). The author also reveals a distrust of angels which is especially notable in the case of Abraham. It is because the angels are jealous of Abraham that God tells him to sacrifice Isaac (32: 1 - 2).

Repentance for sin is often mentioned (6:11; 49:3), and although God will have mercy on the living because of those who have died (35:3), repentance is not possible after death (33:2), when not even the fathers of the Israelites can intercede on their behalf (33:5).

The greatness of both the race of Israel (9:3 - 4) and the law are stressed (9:8). The law and the covenant are Israel's alone, and are said to be eternal (11:1, 5).¹⁰ The law is the foundation of understanding which God had

⁸G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded," Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period, CRINT 2.2, (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 107 - 108.

⁹For further examples, see 27:10; 32:3; 42:3 - 10.

¹⁰For a fuller treatment of the theme of the eternal covenant in Pseudo-Philo, see Frederick J. Murphy, "The Eternal Covenant in Pseudo-Philo," JSP 3 (1988) 43-57.

prepared from the creation of the world (32:7); it will not pass away (11:5).¹¹

For Pseudo - Philo, marriage with Gentiles (21:1) and idolatry are the worst of sins. Idolatry is the root of all evil (44:6) and is the cause of the sinful behavior of the tribes (25: 9 - 13). Aod (34), Gideon (36:3), Jair (38) and Micah (44:1 - 5) all lead the people astray by idolatry.

The majority of scholars agree that Pseudo - Philo composed the *Biblical Antiquities* in the first century, C.E. A more precise dating of the text is difficult and controversial. *Some scholars have attached significance to 19:7* in which God says to Moses that he will show him "the place where they will serve me for 740 years. . . it will be turned over into the hands of their enemies, and they will destroy it, and foreigners will encircle it. . ." ¹² This could ostensibly be a reference to the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., as some scholars contend. On the other hand, it could refer to the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus Epiphanes, or Pompey.¹³

¹¹In *Jubilees*, the law is said to have been instituted at creation and written in the heavenly tablets; in Philo, the Mosaic law is a codification of the natural law. Pseudo - Philo's description of the law is somewhere between the two; it was prepared at creation, but is called a "foundation of understanding." Harrington notes that the foundation of understanding refers to "the Law, or divine wisdom in general." D. J. Harrington, "Pseudo - Philo: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 2:301.

¹²All quotations of the *Biblical Antiquities* are from D. J. Harrington, "Pseudo - Philo: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 2:297 - 377.

¹³D. J. Harrington, "Pseudo - Philo: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 2:299. Cf. J. K. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1956), 366 - 368.

Cohn contended that the *Biblical Antiquities* was written after the destruction of the second Temple because "no importance is attached to sacrifices and the service of the Temple. All references to sacrifice are of a purely historical nature. The strict observance of the laws concerning sacrifice and of those concerning purity is never advocated."¹⁴ M. R. James later agreed with Cohn's post-Temple destruction date based, in part, upon the lack of mention of the Temple or ceremonial law in the text while "the moral law and especially the Decalogue, is dwelt upon again and again."¹⁵ However, James admits that sacrifices are mentioned in the text, because "it was impossible for the author to avoid all mention of the Tabernacle and its vessels. . . but the space devoted to them is strikingly small."¹⁶

Although Pseudo - Philo does not concentrate upon the Temple, he perhaps does not completely ignore it. Both Feldman¹⁷ and Harrington¹⁸ point out that in the *Biblical Antiquities* 22: 8 - 9 the continuation of the

¹⁴L. Cohn, "An Apocryphal Work Ascribed to Philo of Alexandria," *JQR* 10 (1898) 435.

¹⁵ M. R. James, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*. (London: SPCK, 1917; reprint, N.Y.: KTAV Pub. Hse., 1971), 32; For further support of a post - destruction date, see G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT 2.2, (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 109 and M. Wadsworth, "A New Pseudo - Philo," *IJS* 29 (1978) 185 - 191.

¹⁶M. R. James, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*. (London: SPCK, 1917; reprint, N.Y.: KTAV Pub. Hse., 1971), 32.

¹⁷L. Feldman, "Prolegomenon," *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, by M. R. James (London: SPCK, 1917; reprint, N.Y.: KTAV Pub. Hse., 1971), xxviii.

¹⁸D. J. Harrington, "Pseudo - Philo: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 2:299, 332, note h.

Temple sacrifice is implied since it refers to sacrifice being offered "unto this day": "Now at the new altar that was in Gilgal Joshua had decreed even *unto this day* what holocausts would be offered every year by the sons of Israel. For until the house of the Lord was built in Jerusalem and sacrifice offered on the new altar, the people were not prohibited from offering sacrifice there."¹⁹

James also based his post - Temple destruction date on what he perceived to be similarities between the *Biblical Antiquities* and 4 Ezra (c. 100 C.E.) and 2 Baruch (c. 100 C.E.).²⁰ While some still agree with James on this point,²¹ in more recent years, these suggested similarities have also been questioned on the grounds of theological differences.²²

The type of text used by Pseudo - Philo really does not get us closer to an exact date of composition. The text used is thought to have been a Hebrew

¹⁹From D. J. Harrington, "Pseudo - Philo: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 2:332, italics mine.

²⁰M. R. James, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, (London: SPCK, 1917; reprint, N.Y.: KTAV Pub. Hse., 1971), 46 - 58; see also the discussion by Louis H. Feldman, "Prolegomenon," *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, by M. R. James, (London: SPCK, 1917. reprint, N.Y.: KTAV Pub. Hse., 1971), liv - lv.

²¹Such as G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT 2.2, (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 109; "Good and Bad Leaders in Pseudo - Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*." *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism*, SBLSCS 12, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, J. J. Collins, eds., (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 63; Louis H. Feldman, "Prolegomenon," *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, by M. R. James, (London: SPCK, 1917; reprint, N.Y.: KTAV Pub. Hse., 1971), liv - lv.

²²See D. J. Harrington, "Pseudo - Philo: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 2:299.

text,²³ in fact the same text used by the author of *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon*, which was an early Palestinian type.²⁴ It is believed that use of this text was suppressed by 100 C.E.²⁵ Although this suggests that the place of writing was Palestine, it does not provide a further indication of whether the *Biblical Antiquities* was composed before or after 70 C.E.

A consideration of the characteristics of the text itself may be helpful at this point. As mentioned above, the compositional structure of the *Biblical Antiquities* is based on themes similar to those found in Judges: the cycle of sin, divine punishment by means of an enemy, repentance, and salvation through a divinely appointed leader. Pseudo - Philo has intentionally pulled this paradigm out of Israel's past. He lives in an age when the nation of Israel is searching for a leader. Pseudo - Philo "chose a period when Israel was living in the land but was dominated by foreigners."²⁶

²³D. J. Harrington, "The Original Language of Pseudo - Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*," *HTR* 63 (1970) 503 - 14. Hebrew portions of the *Biblical Antiquities* have been found in the *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, but they are probably translated from the later Latin text. See D. J. Harrington, *The Hebrew Fragments of Pseudo - Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum preserved in the Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, SBLTT Pseudepigrapha 3 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974), 5.

²⁴D. J. Harrington, "Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies," *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 241; see also his "The Biblical Text of Pseudo - Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*," *CBO* 33 (1971) 1 - 17. See further F. M. Cross, "The Contribution of the Qumran Discoveries to the Study of the Biblical Text," *IEJ* 16.2 (1966) 81 - 95.

²⁵Harrington, "Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies," *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 241.

²⁶F. J. Murphy, "Retelling the Bible: Idolatry in Pseudo - Philo," *IBL* 107.2 (1988) 286.

As Nickelsburg suggests, the emphasis on the necessity of good leaders would have been especially appropriate during the years surrounding the Jewish wars and the destruction of the Temple.²⁷ During the years of the war with Rome, a variety of people revolted against the Roman government.²⁸ David Rhoads has identified the major revolutionaries as the Zealots, the Sicarii, John of Gischala, Idumaeans, and Simon bar Gioria.²⁹ These revolutionary factions never became united into one anti - Roman force, even at the end of the wars.³⁰ "What they all shared. . . was a commitment to fight for national freedom from the Romans. In this, they fought together for national freedom with the conviction that God was on their side."³¹ At least Simon bar Giora, if not the others, may have understood his actions in terms of waging a holy war against God's hated enemies.³²

²⁷G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded," Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period, CRINT 2.2, (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 109.

²⁸See Per Bilde, Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome : His Life, his Works, and their Importance, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 36. See also Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 29 - 43.

²⁹David M. Rhoads, Israel in Revolution: 6 - 74 C.E., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 94 - 149; See also E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint, 1987), I:484 - 513; Richard A. Horsley with John S. Hanson, Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 118 - 127; 190 - 241.

³⁰For a discussion of the factors that contributed to internecine struggle among the revolutionaries, see David M. Rhoads, Israel in Revolution: 6 - 74 C.E., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 148 - 149.

³¹*Ibid.*, 149.

³² *Ibid.*, 180. Examples of passages in the *Bib. Ant.* which mention Israel in relation to oppressive enemies are found in 32: 7, 10, 11.

Although political and economic factors motivated the revolutionaries, they were equally motivated by their belief in Israel's religious identity as the people of God. Because Israel was God's chosen people, they believed the nation was meant for independence, not domination by a foreign power. David Rhoads states,³³

Even the deteriorating relationship between Jews and Romans which threatened these institutions was interpreted by many as the suffering which was to precede God's deliverance. . . the religious understanding of their national life undoubtedly helped many Jews to articulate and deepen the institutional loyalties which the populace shared in common.

In the section of the *Biblical Antiquities* which is fashioned upon the biblical account of Deborah, Pseudo - Philo portrays the people of Israel voicing their concern after the humiliation of Israel by the armies of Sisera. Here, Pseudo - Philo is putting words into the mouths of the Israelites who lived long ago in order to voice the concerns of his day. The concern about oppression by their enemies is evident; at the same time they look for deliverance from their God.

We say that we are more blessed than other nations, and behold now we have been humiliated more than all peoples so that we cannot dwell in our own land and our enemies have power over us. And now who has done all these things to us? Is it not our own wicked deeds, because we have forsaken the Lord of our fathers. . . perhaps God will be reconciled with his inheritance so as not to destroy the plant of his vineyard?(30:4).

In the *Biblical Antiquities*, Pseudo - Philo uses the speeches of leaders of Israel from the past to voice and to answer the concerns of Jews who are his

³³Ibid., 179.

contemporaries.³⁴ This is particularly true in the case of Deborah, where she is depicted by the author as saying,

And. . . the Lord will take pity on you today, not because of you but because of his covenant that he established with your fathers and the oath that he has sworn not to abandon you forever. . . On account of this the Lord will work wonders among you and hand over your enemies into your hands. For our fathers are dead, but the God who established the covenant with them is life" (30:7).

The hope of deliverance is expressed in the speech of Deborah. The foundation of their hope is the covenant God made with their fathers. In the midst of catastrophe, Pseudo - Philo assures the people of God through the voice of Deborah that God will be faithful in spite of their sin and in spite of the present circumstances.

According to Rhoads, Josephus indicates that the Jewish revolutionaries believed they were struggling against assimilation and idolatry when they attacked their own compatriots:³⁵

It is also clear from [Josephus'] narrative that the exclusion of Rome was understood by many revolutionaries in a religious way. The brigandage and assassination against the Jewish authorities on the part of the Sicarii especially were seen as a repression of idolatrous contact with heathen masters, perhaps to 'cleanse the land' of those who refused exclusive allegiance to God.

³⁴Pseudo - Philo's assumption that his readers would already know the history and traditions behind the text suggest that he wrote for a Jewish audience. For example, see 35:7, 56:7 and 63:5 which all refer the readers to incidents in other "Books" which are found in the Hebrew Bible.

³⁵David M.Rhoads, Israel in Revolution: 6 - 74 C.E. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 180.

The way that success against the enemy could be achieved was by renewed devotion to God and his law. This meant the exclusion of all Gentile influence and even the "violent repression of Jews who cooperated with the gentiles."³⁶

By structuring his composition around the frame of good and bad leaders, Pseudo - Philo provides evidence that Israel is a nation in the midst of turmoil. The nation is responsible for its present situation and can only be redeemed through a righteous leader with the help of God. Kenaz is portrayed as such a leader. With the help of the angel Ingethel, Kenaz slays forty - five thousand Amorites. When he returns to the Hebrews, they are surprised. Kenaz responds, "Is the way of men like the ways of God? For among men a great number prevails, but with God whatever he has decided. And so if God wished to save this people by my hands, why are you amazed?"(27:12). The response of the people to Kenaz echoes the concern for devotion to God, "Now we know that the Lord has decided to save his people. He does not need a great number but only holiness" (27:14).

Nickelsburg's suggestion about the historical time frame of the *Biblical Antiquities* being during the Jewish Wars (66 - 74 C.E.) seems plausible.³⁷ Pseudo - Philo is searching for a way out of foreign oppression by the enemy who in this case are the Romans. Taking his cue from Judges, he writes about righteous leaders who have risen up in the past and implicitly one who

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded," Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period, CRINT 2.2, (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 109.

might rise up to lead the nation of Israel to victory over their Roman oppressors. In order for the nation to be saved from their enemies, they must repent and return to single - minded devotion to their God and his law. Yet, their victory is not as dependent upon their repentance and devotion to God as it is upon God's faithfulness to his covenant with their forefathers.

4.2 The Interpretation of Abraham in the *Biblical Antiquities*

The most extensive portrayal of Abraham in the *Biblical Antiquities* is found in chapter six. Pseudo - Philo gives the Abraham story a unique slant by including Abraham in the story of the Tower of Babel. The genealogy which alone separated the accounts of the Tower of Babel and of Abraham in Genesis 11:10 - 26 has been moved.

In the chapters leading up to this point the reader has already been prepared for the story of Abraham. Abraham was born in the lineage of the sons of Shem. Melcha, the wife of one of Shem's descendants, gives birth to Serug. On the day of her delivery, she prophesies, "From him there will be born in the fourth generation one who will set his dwelling on high and will be called perfect and blameless; and he will be the father of nations, and his covenant will not be broken, and his seed will be multiplied forever." (4:11).³⁸ How this prophecy comes true will be shown later in the *Biblical Antiquities*.

4.2.1 Abraham's Refusal to Practice Idolatry

Soon after the prophecy, the author sets up an antithetical relationship between the family of Serug and the rest of the inhabitants on earth. The

³⁸In the *Bib. Ant.*, Serug begets Nahor who begets Terah who begets Abraham (4:11 - 15; see also Gen.11: 20 - 27 which contains the same genealogy).

others "observe the stars" and use them to make predictions (4:16). As we have already seen, astrology was a particularly Babylonian method of divination.³⁹ Because Terah was known to have lived in Ur, there may be some connection between ending the genealogy with him and the remarks about astrology.⁴⁰ The other people on earth had their children "pass through the fire" which is another pagan practice in which parents burned their children in fire as sacrifices to pagan gods.⁴¹ It is made clear that Serug and his sons were different, because they "did not act as these did" (4:17).

A comparison between the tradition of the ancestors of Abraham in the *Biblical Antiquities* and in *Jubilees* is necessary here. In *Jubilees* Serug, who dwells in Ur, is said not only to worship idols, but to practice astrology and divination as well (11:1 - 8). Abraham is strikingly different from his family because of his worship of one God (*Jub.* 11:16-17). But in the text at hand, it is the family of Abraham that is different from those outside. Pseudo - Philo "implicitly rejects the story that Terah, Abraham's father, was an idolater."⁴² This contrast between the portrayal of Abraham's family found in *Jubilees* and the *Biblical Antiquities* helps to underline the contrasting purposes of

³⁹See the discussion of Babylonian wisdom in the previous chapter, "Abraham in the *Genesis Apocryphon*."

⁴⁰D. J. Harrington, "Pseudo - Philo: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 2: 309 n. s2.

⁴¹For example, see Deut 18:10, "No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through the fire. . ." See also Deut 12:31; 2Kgs 16:3; 17:17, 31; 21:6; 23:10; Jer 7:31.

⁴²M. R. James, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, (London: SPCK, 1917; reprint, N.Y.: KTAV Pub. Hse., 1971), 86, n. on IV.16.

the texts. In *Jubilees*, the author was concerned to contrast faithful with unfaithful Jews. Given the historical context of assimilationist and nationalistic Jewish factions within the Judaism which he addresses, this concern is understandable. Abraham stood for the faithful Jews. Pseudo - Philo, however, is concerned to contrast the Jewish people with those outside. Frederick J. Murphy points out that as described in the *Biblical Antiquities* 4: 16, "All humanity is characterized as idolatrous. . . Abraham comes from a family which alone, of all the inhabitants of earth, distinguishes itself by its rejection of idolatry."⁴³ The practice of idolatry, then, becomes more clearly dissociated from the Abrahamic line.

In Pseudo - Philo's account of Abraham in Babylon, he is given an opportunity to add a brick with his name written upon it to the Tower of Babel.⁴⁴ The purpose of building the tower is so that those building it can make a name for themselves⁴⁵ and a glory upon the earth. Abraham and eleven men refuse to participate in this building scheme. When asked why they will not participate, they answer, "We know the one Lord and him we worship. Even if you throw us into the fire with your bricks we will not join you" (6:4).

⁴³F. J. Murphy, "Retelling the Bible: Idolatry in Pseudo - Philo," *IBL* 107.2 (1988) 276.

⁴⁴Harrington points out that the word is literally "stones," but that the context demands the translation "bricks." "Pseudo - Philo: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 2:310 n.6a.

⁴⁵This reason is found also in Gen. 11:4.

In the context of the contrast of the piety of the Jewish people with those outside, it may well be that the twelve who refused to succumb to contributing bricks to the towers ideally represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Why contributing bricks to a tower could be understood as idolatry is not apparent at first glance.⁴⁶ However, given that the author has already set up an antithesis between the Jewish nation and the Gentiles, any kind of participation in a project in which they assimilated to Gentile persuasion and which glorified anyone other than their God would ostensibly be perceived as idolatry. The twelve are so devoted to their God that they even suggest the method in which they should die if they do not participate in Gentile idolatry (6:4).

The twelve men are to be thrown into the fire unless they join their neighbors by adding bricks to the edifice. Joktan, who is a "chief of the leaders" (6:6)⁴⁷ announces a proviso: the twelve will be given seven days to repent and cast in bricks. In the meantime he plans to take the twelve into the mountains to hide. Eleven of the men agree; only Abraham refuses to escape. He is willing to take his chances and face death if necessary. He states, ". . . as he in whom *I trust* lives, I will not be moved from my place where

⁴⁶According to the Palestinian Targum on Gen 11:4, the tower is considered in effect like the support of the dwelling of an idol on a peak. See also *Bib. Ant.* 44:2. Charles Perrot, Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, *Pseudo-Philon Les Antiquités Bibliques*, (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976), 94. It may also have something to do with their names being written on the bricks, cf. *Bib. Ant.* 6:2.

⁴⁷Joktan is not only said to be a descendant of Shem (5:1), but he is said to have "served God" (6:6).

they have put me. If there be any sin of mine so flagrant that I should be burned up, let the will of God be done" (6:11).

After seven days, at the demand of the people, Abraham is taken and thrown into the fire with the bricks. But his God himself comes to his rescue; an earthquake occurs which causes all of those around the furnace to be burned (83,500). Abraham is not the least bit injured (6:17). Abraham finds the eleven men who come down after hearing his report and the place of the furnace is named in honor of Abraham (6:18).⁴⁸

Abraham is depicted as one whose "devotion to God and trust in his justice and deliverance. . . lead him to defy death."⁴⁹ By placing Abraham in the fiery furnace, Pseudo - Philo not only explains how it is that Abraham escapes from the **אֵשׁ** of the Chaldees,⁵⁰ but makes the account very much like that found in Daniel three. Nickelsburg points out that in Daniel three "all three protagonists speak in concert and commit themselves to a common death (Dan 3: 16 - 18). Here, although all twelve resist the pressure to commit

⁴⁸For further examples of Abraham in the fiery furnace found in Rabbinic materials see G. Vermes, Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961), 85 - 90; Charles Perrot, Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, Pseudo-Philon Les Antiquités Bibliques, (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976), 96 - 97. Josephus also knows of a place in the region of Damascus named after Abram, *Ant.* 1.160. See further in Feldman, "Prolegomenon," in The Biblical Antiquities of Philo, by M. R. James, (London: SPCK, 1917; reprint, N.Y.: KTAV Pub. Hse., 1971), lxxix.

⁴⁹G.W. E. Nickelsburg, "Good and Bad Leaders in Pseudo - Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum." Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism, SBLSCS 12, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, J. J. Collins, eds., (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 51.

⁵⁰**אֵשׁ** is the Hebrew word for "fire." Cf. Gen 15:7, "I am the Lord who brought you from the Ur of the Chaldees. . . "

idolatry, Abraham is the only one of them who refuses to escape and accepts the possibility of death"⁵¹ (*Bib. Ant.* 6:11).

Another concern of Abraham's was how he and his God would appear to those in Babylon. "Behold, today I flee to the mountains. And if I escape the fire, wild beasts will come out of the mountains and devour us; or we will lack food and die of famine; and we will be found fleeing from the people of this land but falling in our sins" (6:11). The twelve had already stated that they knew the one Lord (6:4). A lack of trust in their God's action on their behalf would certainly be evident from their escape. Abraham is the one who manifests this trust by his willingness to die in order to prove the triumph of his God over the idolatrous plans of the Gentiles. The result of Abraham's deliverance from the fire is the same as that of the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego: the God whom they serve is glorified.⁵²

Abraham appears as the prototypical good leader in the *Biblical Antiquities*. Like the other good leaders, Abraham's trust is put into action. Unlike the other leaders he actually states that he trusts in God. As a consequence trust in God is most explicit in the account of Abraham (6:11). Unlike the Abraham depicted in *Jubilees*, in the *Biblical Antiquities*

⁵¹G.W. E. Nickelsburg, "Good and Bad Leaders in Pseudo - Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*." *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism*, SBLSCS 12, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, J. J. Collins, eds., (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 52.

⁵²The elements of Joktan's speech come true because their God is shown to be powerful, and they are saved. He is depicted as reassuring the twelve on the night they went into the mountains saying, "Be confident and do not fear, for you will not die. For the God in whom you trust is powerful, and therefore be steadfast in him because he will free you and save you" (6:9).

Abraham does not obey the Mosaic law as such. However, by turning from idolatry he is in effect obedient to the first commandment. "Even before the law is given, Abraham renounces idolatry."⁵³ Because of Abraham's opposition to idolatry,⁵⁴ God elects him to receive land, his covenant (7:4), and descendants (7:4; 8:3). Abraham separates from Babylon and heads for the land promised to him (8:1).⁵⁵ Murphy sums up the story by stating, "Israel begins with Abraham's rejection of idolatry and the choice to serve God. Such service separates Israel from the rest of humanity. This alerts us to the converse, viz., mixing with the nations leads to disloyalty to God."⁵⁶

The story of Abraham substantiates the earlier prophecy that Abraham would be blameless and blessed. In his speech before his fellow Jews he asks that he be burned if he has any flagrant sin (6:11). By the very fact that he was not burned up in the fire he is shown to be perfect and blameless. Because of

⁵³G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Good and Bad Leaders in Pseudo - Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum," Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism, SBLSCS 12, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, J. J. Collins, eds., (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 61. The first commandment is given in 11:6. More space is devoted to Moses than any other leader in the *Bib. Ant.* It is within this section that Pseudo - Philo accentuates the importance of the law. It is everlasting (11:2), it is related to his eternal covenant (11:5), and it is the Law of God (12:2). In chapter 11 Moses reads the decalogue, and in 13: 4 - 7 God declares the festivals which are to be observed.

⁵⁴See also *Bib. Ant.* 23:5 where the story is summarized and the blessings are perceived to be a result of Abraham's monotheistic stance.

⁵⁵P. M. Bogaert points out that one of the positive results of putting Abraham in the Tower of Babel story is that the story of the departure of Abraham from the land of the Chaldeans is seen in relation to the confusion of tongues and the dispersion of nations. "La Figure d'Abraham dans les Antiquités Bibliques du Pseudo - Philon," in Abraham dans la Bible et dans la Tradition Juive, Publications de l'Institutum Judaicum Bruxelles, vol. 2 (Bruxelles: Institutum Judaicum, Colloque de Louvain, 1977), 44.

⁵⁶F. J. Murphy, "Retelling the Bible: Idolatry in Pseudo - Philo," IBL 107.2 (1988) 276.

his trust in God, he will have land and descendants and an eternal covenant (7:4).

4.2.2 The Offering of Isaac

Although the *Biblical Antiquities* 6:1 - 8:3 contains Pseudo-Philo's condensed version of the life of Abraham, the patriarch's influence is found in much of the rest of the text. For example, his offering of Isaac is found in three different chapters.

The account of Balaam is set within the story of Moses much as it is in the Hebrew Bible. Balak, the king of Moab, asks Balaam⁵⁷ to curse the Israelites who threaten the Moabite kingdom. Balaam prays to God and is answered with the story of the offering of Isaac.

Is it not regarding this people that I spoke to Abraham in a vision, saying, 'Your seed will be like the stars of heaven,' when I lifted him above the firmament and showed him the arrangements of all the stars?⁵⁸ And I demanded his son as a holocaust. And he brought him to be placed on the altar, but I gave him back to his father and, because he did not refuse, his offering was acceptable before me, and on account of his blood I chose them. And then I said to the angels who work secretly, 'Did I not say regarding this, "I will reveal everything I am doing to Abraham. . ."' And do you propose to go forth with them to curse whom I have chosen? But if you curse them, who will be there to bless you? (18: 5 - 6).

This is the first time in the *Biblical Antiquities* that Abraham is mentioned in connection with the offering of Isaac. (See also 32:2 - 4 and 40:2

⁵⁷Balaam is called an "interpreter of dreams" and lives in Mesopotamia (18:2). Once again a Jewish text contains evidence of this type of divination known to have been practiced in Babylon. Abraham is portrayed as just such a diviner in *1QapGen*. See the preceding chapter, "Abraham in the *Genesis Apocryphon*."

⁵⁸For a discussion on the depiction of Abraham on a heavenly journey, see the discussion in chapter seven below, "Abraham in the *Testament of Abraham*."

- 3). Abraham's offering is said to be acceptable because he does not refuse the Lord's request. Although blood was not actually spilled, Israel⁵⁹ is said to have been chosen "for the sake of his blood." Whether the blood actually had any expiatory function as some suggest,⁶⁰ or whether it was even the blood of Isaac⁶¹ is not altogether clear from the text.

Isaac's gladly agreeable demeanor as he is placed as an offering is an example to Jephthah, just as the rejoicing of Abraham should be to her father, in another allusion to the offering of Isaac: ". . . Do you not remember what happened in the days of our fathers when the father placed the son as a holocaust, and he did not refuse him but gladly gave consent to him, and the one being offered was ready and the one who was offering was rejoicing? And now do not annul everything you have vowed, but carry it out."(40:2). Although in both stories fathers are to sacrifice their willing children, the contrast between them is notable, ". . . the pious Abraham whose obedience is rewarded by the rescue of his son, and the foolishness of Jephthah which is punished by the death of his daughter."⁶²

⁵⁹From the context of the discussion between God and Balaam about the chosen status of Israel in 18:5-6, I am assuming that "them" refers to the nation of Israel.

⁶⁰Daly prefers to see this as meaning the blood had an "essential expiatory function," "The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac," *CBO* 39 (1977) 63. Harrington states that even though blood was not really shed, "it is still seen as having atoning value," "Pseudo - Philo: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 2:325 n. 18g.

⁶¹B. D. Chilton and P. R. Davies, "The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History," *CBO* 40.4 (1978) 528.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 526.

In the hymn of Deborah, another of the good leaders of Israel, she sings of the history of Israel beginning with Abraham:

And he chose our nation and took Abraham our father out of the fire and chose him over all his brothers and kept him from the fire and freed him from the bricks destined for building the tower. And he gave him a son at the end of his old age and took him out of a sterile womb. And all the angels were jealous of him, and the worshipping hosts envied him. And since they were jealous of him, God said to him, 'Kill the fruit of your body for me, and offer for me as a sacrifice what has been given to you by me.' And Abraham did not argue, but set out immediately. And as he was setting out, he said to his son, 'Behold now, my son, I am offering you as a holocaust and am delivering you into the hands that gave you to me'. . . And when he had offered the son upon the altar and had bound his feet so as to kill him, the Most Powerful hastened and sent forth his voice from on high saying, 'You shall not slay your son, nor shall you destroy the fruit of your body. For now I have appeared so as to reveal you to those who do not know you and have shut the mouths of those who are always speaking evil against you. Now your memory will be before me always, and your name and his will remain from one generation to another.' (32: 1 - 2, 4).

The conclusion which many have attempted to draw concerning the significance of the offering of Isaac as proof of the development of the Aqedah in pre - Christian Jewish literature which later influenced New Testament soteriology is debatable.⁶³ As Chilton and Davies have shown, these

⁶³ The view is represented by R. J. Daly, "The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac," CBO 39 (1977) 47 - 75; Martin McNamara, The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch AnBib 27 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966), 164 - 168; H. J. Schoeps, "The Sacrifice of Isaac in Paul's Theology," JBL 65 (1946) 385 - 392; G. Vermes, "Redemption and Genesis xxii -- The Binding of Isaac and the Sacrifice of Jesus," Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961), 193 - 227.

conclusions are tenuous.⁶⁴ In light of the probable historical background of the *Biblical Antiquities* and its strong theological theme of God's continued faithfulness to Israel based upon the remembrance of their forebears (see further above 4.1 and below, 4.2.3), the interpretation by Chilton and Davies of Isaac as an example of martyrdom, or the inheritance of immortality through self-sacrifice, seems most likely.⁶⁵

After encapsulating the story of Abraham in the furnace, Pseudo - Philo offers his interpretation of the offering of Isaac. The central character of the story is Abraham; God's reason for testing Abraham is to shut the mouths of the angels and the worshipping hosts.⁶⁶ Because Abraham did not argue with God, but followed his commands immediately, Abraham will be remembered not only by God but also by future generations.

4.2.3 Abraham and the Faithfulness of God

Abraham is appealed to in references to God's faithfulness to his people based upon his eternal covenant with Abraham.⁶⁷ One illustration of this

⁶⁴B. D. Chilton and P. R. Davies, "The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History," *CBO* 40.4 (1978) 514 - 546.

⁶⁵ B. D. Chilton and P. R. Davies, "The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History," *CBO* 40.4 (1978) 525-528. Chilton and Davies also point out that although the depiction of the righteous martyr whose death atones for the sins of Israel is found in 2 Macc, the depiction of Isaac in the *Biblical Antiquities* does not include this theme (525; cf. 2 Macc 7:11, 23; *Bib. Ant.* 32:3). On the parallel with martyrdom, see also Charles Perrot, Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, *Pseudo-Philon Les Antiquités Bibliques*. (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976), 171.

⁶⁶See the discussion earlier in the chapter about the portrayal of angels in the *Biblical Antiquities* and the possible parallel tradition in *Jub.* 17:15 in the chapter, "Abraham in Jubilees."

⁶⁷F. J. Murphy notes that in *Bib. Ant.* 7:4 and 8:3 when God establishes his covenant with Abraham he "follows Genesis 17. . . it is the only one of the three Genesis accounts of the

covenant fidelity theme occurs in the depiction of Amram, Moses' father, when the Egyptians are killing the Israelite boys by throwing them into the river and keeping the Israelite girls to give to their slaves as wives (9:1). The Israelite people mourn their misfortune and even plan to have no more offspring because it is likely that their daughters will marry Gentiles and become idolators: "lest the fruit of . . . wombs be defiled and our offspring serve idols" (9:2). Amram reassures them that the race of the sons of Israel is eternal and "there will be fulfilled the covenant that God established with Abraham. . ." (9:3). He recalls God's covenant with Abraham to encourage his compatriots to trust in their God, especially in regard to descendants. Amram is like Abraham because he is "set off from his God - fearing compatriots as an example of one whose trust in God leads him to act in defiance of the authorities and the people of the land."⁶⁸

In the context of the *Biblical Antiquities*, God's remembrance of Abraham indicates God's continuing faithfulness to Israel even when they had not been obedient to God's law. For example, in 35:3, Gideon is depicted as saying, ". . . you have not been mindful of the commandments of God that those who were before you commanded you, so that you have come into the displeasure of your God. But he will have mercy, as no one else has mercy,

covenant with Abraham where it is said to be eternal." Frederick J. Murphy, "The Eternal Covenant in Pseudo-Philo," *JSP* 3 (1988) 45.

⁶⁸G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Good and Bad Leaders in Pseudo - Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*," *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism*, SBLSCS 12 G. W. E. Nickelsburg, J. J. Collins, eds., (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 52 - 53. During a vacuum of leadership, God's promise to Abraham that he would have many descendants is invoked when the people of Israel are again oppressed by their enemies (49:6; see Gen. 16:10).

though not on account of you but on account of those who have fallen asleep." Similarly, in 30:7 Deborah states, "And behold now the Lord will take pity on you today, not because of you but because of his covenant that he established with your fathers. . . ." It is clear from the *Biblical Antiquities* 61:5 that Abraham is considered to be one of the fathers of Israel: "And David set out, and he took seven stones and wrote on them the names of his fathers (those of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses and Aaron) and his own name and the Most Powerful."⁶⁹ Abraham's refusal to worship idols, his trust in the true God, and his obedience to God have been demonstrated. Because of this faith and obedience, God will remain faithful to Abraham's descendants, the nation of Israel.⁷⁰

In a dream vision, God gives Joshua the words he is to say to the people of Israel concerning the covenant which will be established with the people (23:3). These words begin with Abraham,

There was one rock from which I quarried out your father. And the cutting of that rock bore two men whose names are Abraham and Nahor, and out of the chiseling of that place were born two women whose names are Sarah and Melcha, and they lived together across the river. And when all those inhabiting the land were being led astray after their own devices, Abraham believed in me and was not led astray with them. And I rescued him from the flame and took him and brought him over all the land of Canaan and said to him in a

⁶⁹In 2 Maccabees, in the story of Judas and the invasion of Ptolemy's military commander Nicanor, the people of Israel are depicted as praying to God "if not for their own sake, then for the sake of the covenants made with their ancestors. . ." (2 Macc 8:15).

⁷⁰The merit accorded to Israel based upon Abraham's obedience is expanded upon in later Rabbinic material. For examples, see S. Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature. (N.Y.: KTAV, 1971), 90 - 92.

vision, "To your seed I will give this land." And that man said to me, "Behold now you have given me a wife, and she is sterile. And how will I have offspring from that rock of mine that is closed up" And I said to him, "Bring me a three-year-old calf and a three-year-old goat and a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a dove." And he brought them as I commanded him. Now I sent upon him a deep sleep and encompassed him with fear and set before him the place of fire where the deeds of those doing wickedness against me will be expiated, and I showed him the torches of fire by which the just who have believed in me will be enlightened. And I said to him, "These will be a witness between me and you, that I will give you offspring from one who is closed up. . ." (23:4 - 7).

Pseudo - Philo expands upon the metaphor of the rock from which Israel was quarried found in Isaiah 51:1 - 2 where the prophet tells those who pursue righteousness and who seek God to look to the rock and the quarry meaning Abraham and Sarah. The prophet Isaiah "finds in the exiles' descent from Abraham and Sarah a proof that they may confidently expect to enjoy Yahweh's favour once more."⁷¹

Abraham was the one who believed in God and was not led astray (23:5). This summation of the character of Abraham reflects *Biblical Antiquities* chapter six where Abraham alone is willing to face death rather than commit idolatry and God subsequently saves him from the fire (see above, 4.2.1). Nahor, one of the sons of Serug, did not practice the arts of astrology and pagan sacrifice like the others in Babylon (4: 16 - 17); he also is said to have been chiseled from the rock. Although the reference to both Nahor and

⁷¹R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40 - 66*, NCBC (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott; reprint Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 155.

Abraham and phrases from Joshua 24: 1 - 3 are used,⁷² Pseudo - Philo has redeemed the characters of Nahor and Abraham who were said to have worshipped other gods (Josh 24:2). The covenant speech of Joshua now reflects Pseudo - Philo's version of the life of Abraham.

In the narrative of the *Biblical Antiquities* the reference back to their forefather Abraham gives the Israelites under Joshua's leadership hope even though enemies of Israel were still upon the land (23:1). The context of the passage from Isaiah is that of hope in reference to the restoration of Israel after her exile in Babylon, especially as that restoration had to do with the rebuilding of the Temple.⁷³ Pseudo-Philo also offers the late first-century reader hope based upon their forefather Abraham. The theme of restoration found in Isaiah would make especially good sense if the first-century reader also needed the reassurance of God's promised restoration not only of the nation of Israel but also of the Temple if it had already been destroyed.

God takes Abraham through the land which he will possess, and promises that his descendants will inherit the land (cf. Gen. 12:7). In response to Abraham's query about his infertile wife, God tells Abraham to bring him animals for sacrifice, which is also found in the story of Abraham in Genesis 15. However in Pseudo-Philo's rendition (cf. 23:7) "symbolical explanations are given of the mention of each animal."⁷⁴

⁷²Cf. the phrases "beyond the river" and "I took [him] . . . and led him through all the land of Canaan." Josh. 24: 3, NRSV.

⁷³John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*. WBC 25 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 204.

⁷⁴Leopold Cohn, "An Apocryphal Work of Philo of Alexandria," *IQR* 10 (1896) 316.

Also as in the account in Genesis, Abraham falls into a deep sleep in which God gives him a revelation,⁷⁵ but in the *Biblical Antiquities* it takes the form of a dream rather than consisting in words alone. Abraham is shown fire by which the deeds of the wicked will be expiated and the torches of fire which will serve to enlighten those who, like Abraham, believed in God.⁷⁶ The dream served as a form of a covenant, by which God pledges himself to give Abraham offspring but also by which those who would benefit must follow after the example of Abraham.

4.3 Conclusion: The Function and Significance of Abraham in the *Biblical Antiquities*

Abraham's position against idolatry and his trust in the one God are his most notable functions. Additionally, he was so obedient to God that he was willing to sacrifice his only son. His anti - idolatrous stance and trust in the one God resulted in God bestowing upon him a covenant and many blessings, not only for himself but also for all of his descendants for all time. His obedience brought about his remembrance before God with the result that God would always be merciful towards Israel.

Abraham was portrayed as the first good leader. He trusted in God and acted upon that trust to the extent that he alone was willing to face death. His

⁷⁵Abraham is also depicted as being given a revelation at the cutting of the covenant (Gen 15) in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (see the chapter below), and of heaven and hell in 2 Bar 4:4; 4 Esdras 3:14 and the *Testament of Abraham* 11 - 14 (see chapter below). See further discussion in Charles Perrot, Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, Pseudo-Philon Les Antiquités Bibliques, (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976), 146.

⁷⁶Fire in *Bib. Ant.* 26:6 is shown to have two of its best known functions; it both cleanses and illumines.

faith in the one God was so strong that he would rather die in flames than practice idolatry. As the first to spurn idolatry and maintain allegiance to the true God, Abraham set the pattern for the leaders to come. Those who were good leaders such as Kenaz and Amram were those who maintained devotion to the one God. In contrast, the bad leaders were most often known for practicing idolatry. More often than not, this idolatry came about as a result of association with nations outside of Israel.

For example, one of the bad leaders, Jair, built a sanctuary to Baal and attempted to burn those who would not worship Baal in the fire. Nathaniel, the "angel who was in charge of the fire" (38:3) came and extinguished the fire, saving those devoted Jews who would not participate in Baal worship. Instead, it is Jair who is burned with the fire, and who is told by God, those "who were burned with corruptible fire, now are made alive with a living fire and are freed; but you die, says the Lord, and in the fire in which you will die there you will have a dwelling place" (38:4). Jair, Baal, and 1000 others are destroyed. The story of Abraham has paradigmatic value for Pseudo - Philo in the account of Jair. Jair, who worshipped idols, is killed by the very flames which he intended for those who were true to God. Abraham, in contrast, was saved by the flames because of his refusal to participate in idolatry.

How does Abraham function as a cipher for the Jewish people in the late first - century C.E. context of the *Biblical Antiquities*? In this context, the idolatry in which Abraham refused to participate was not the worship of a tangible idol, but the participation in the activities of those who were idolators and who intended to glorify and make a name for themselves.

Abraham would not assimilate to the self - aggrandizing intentions of idolatrous people because he saw this assimilation as idolatry.

In first century Palestine, the Jewish people perceived the Romans as idolatrous people. Through Abraham Pseudo - Philo is telling his reader that the assimilation with the self - aggrandizing plans of the Romans is idolatry. For those with the mindset of the Jewish revolutionaries of the time, the Jews who assimilated to Roman schemes were also in actuality idolators. To be like their forefather Abraham, the Jewish people had to maintain unstained devotion to their God by separation from the Romans and exclusion of all things which were of Gentile derivation. Not only that, but to be like Abraham meant that devotion to the one God was so paramount that they should be willing to face death rather than practice idolatry.

Chapter Five:

Abraham in Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*

5.1 Introduction: Josephus

Unlike the literature in the previous chapters which was written by unknown authors, in the case of the *Antiquities of the Jews* we know the author was Josephus. Josephus was a member of an aristocratic priestly family who could trace their roots back to the era of the Hasmoneans under the rule of John Hyrcanus.¹ During his upbringing he studied Jewish law and traditions² and, as a member of ^{the} Jewish aristocracy, he probably received "at least the rudiments of Greek learning."³

When war broke out against the Romans (66 C.E.), Josephus says he sought to dissuade the Jewish insurgents.⁴ To his chagrin, Josephus was unsuccessful. And, "like other aristocrats having the same attitude toward

¹E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint ed., 1987), 1:44. See also *Vita* 1 - 6.

²See *Vita* 8, 9 where he probably overstates his success when he claims that when he was fourteen he was consulted by the chief priests and other men of the city on points of law.

³Harold W. Attridge, "Josephus and His Works," Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period, CRINT 2.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 185 - 232.

⁴For a description of tensions between the Romans and the Jews before the war and the various revolutionary factions within Judaism, see the previous chapter "Abraham in the *Biblical Antiquities*." See further, David M. Rhoads, Israel in Revolution: 6 - 74 C.E., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 94 - 149; Tessa Rajak, Josephus: The Historian and His Society, (London: Duckworth, 1983; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 104 - 143; Richard A. Horsley with John S. Hanson, Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

the Revolt, Josephus sought refuge. . ."5 and hid in the inner court of the Temple.⁶

Although Josephus claimed to be supportive of Jewish law and practice,⁷ he also had the characteristics of prominent Jews of the time in his acceptance of Roman power and his mixing with Greeks.⁸ When he did become involved in the war against the Romans, it was as a commander in Galilee.⁹ Vespasian defeated the Galileans in the Spring of 67 C.E.. Josephus' command ended with the fall of the fortress of Jotapata.¹⁰

The motivation behind Josephus' behavior after the fall of the fortress has been a point of contention among scholars of Josephus for decades. For two days after the Roman victory, Josephus, along with "forty persons of distinction"¹¹ and adequate provisions, hid in a cave. It was only after the group was betrayed by a captured member that Josephus faced the Roman

⁵Per Bilde, Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, his Works, and their Importance, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 37.

⁶*Vita* 20.

⁷Josephus described himself as living according to the rules of the Pharisees, see *Vita* 12. For a good discussion of the scholarship on the possible religious affiliation(s) of Josephus, see Harold W. Attridge, The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus, HDR 7 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 6 - 16.

⁸Tessa Rajak, Josephus: The Historian and His Society, (London: Duckworth, 1983; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 4.

⁹For different perspectives on Josephus' command in Galilee, see Cecil Roth, Geoffrey Widoger, eds., Encyclopaedia Judaica, (Jerusalem: MacMacillan, 1971), s.v. "Josephus Flavius" by Abraham Schalit; Per Bilde, Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, his Works, and their Importance, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 44 - 45; H. Attridge "Josephus and His Works," Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period, CRINT 2.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 185 - 190.

¹⁰J.W. 3.328

¹¹J.W. 3. 342.

tribunes.¹² While Josephus was deliberating over his next course of action, he claims to have remembered the

nightly dreams, in which God had foretold to him the impending fate of the Jews and the destinies of the Roman sovereigns. He was an interpreter of dreams and skilled in divining the meaning of ambiguous utterances of the Deity; a priest himself and of priestly descent, he was not ignorant of the prophecies in the sacred book. (J. W. 3.352).

At his announcement that he intended to surrender, his compatriots surrounded him and accused him of being a traitor. He devised a suicide scheme according to which he and his compatriots should draw lots for the order in which they would slay one another.¹³ The lots were cast in such a way that all others had died except for Josephus and one other, after which he persuaded his countryman that they both should remain alive.¹⁴

According to Josephus' account when he was led before Vespasian, he predicted the future emperor's elevation to the throne.¹⁵ Because of the prediction Josephus' life was spared. Two years later, when the prophecy was fulfilled as Vespasian was proclaimed emperor, Vespasian granted Josephus his freedom as a mark of gratitude.¹⁶

As a result of these actions scholars have both maligned and exalted the character of Josephus. For example, writing from the standpoint that Josephus' motivations were less than commendable, Schalit contends that

¹²J.W. 3.344.

¹³ J.W. 3.387 - 390.

¹⁴J.W. 3.391.

¹⁵J.W. 3.399 - 408.

¹⁶J.W. 4.622 - 629.

"Josephus artfully cast the lots, deceitfully managing to be one of the two last men left alive, and then persuaded his companion to go out with him and surrender to the Romans. . . To convince the Romans, Josephus attributed to himself the qualities of a diviner. . . "17 Thackeray calls Josephus an "egoist. . . flatterer of his Roman patrons. . . He was not one to sacrifice his life in a great cause: no warlike liberator of his country like Judas Maccabaeus. . . "18

In more recent years, two major works on Josephus have given him the benefit of the doubt, if not outright praise. Tessa Rajak is merciful in her appraisal of Josephus' actions, "What happens to him is still, in part, a reflection of his class position and attitudes; but we have also to reckon . . . with individual, personal attributes. Ingenuity, quick thinking, unscrupulousness and good fortune all contributed to the way he came out of the affair."¹⁹ In his appraisal of Josephus' actions at Jotapata, Per Bilde goes so far as to say that in keeping with important themes in the *Jewish Wars* as a whole, "this incident depicts Josephus as a prophet unappreciated and persecuted by his own people. . . who. . . is saved solely by the hand of God. . . as one who acted solely on God's word and as his servant, because God gave

¹⁷Cecil Roth, Geoffrey Widoger, eds., *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. (Jerusalem: MacMacillan, 1971), s.v. "Josephus Flavius" by Abraham Schalit. See also L. H. Feldman, "Flavius Josephus Revisited: the Man, His Writings, and His Significance," *ANRW* II.21.2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), 784.

¹⁸H. St. John Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian*. (New York: KTAV, 1967), 19. Norman Bentwich condemns Josephus' actions in *Josephus*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Pub. Soc. of America, 1945), 52 - 57.

¹⁹Tessa Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*. (London: Duckworth, 1983; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 168.

him a message to bring to both Vespasian (Rome) and to his own people."²⁰ Cohen takes a position that mediates between overly negative and overly positive viewpoints when he contends that Josephus did not act in a treasonous manner as much as his vanity got the better of him.²¹

Rather than die at Jotapata Josephus surrendered; he sold his services to the Romans as the price for his life. Josephus' vanity probably played a part here. . . He considered himself much too important for a death in a cave near an obscure fortress in the country district of a small province. He must have been born for greater things.

5.2 The Jewish Wars and the Antiquities of the Jews

However one appraises Josephus' true motivations, his actions during the Jewish war affected the rest of his life and his writings. His first work, the *Jewish War* covers Jewish history from the Hasmonean period through the siege and conquest of Jerusalem until the aftermath of the war "down to the destruction of the last remaining insurgents."²² He completed the work while he was given preferential treatment by Vespasian.²³ The degree to which Josephus felt obligated to the Roman emperor as he wrote his history

²⁰Per Bilde, Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, his Works, and their Importance. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 52. See also J. Blenkinsopp, "Prophecy and Priesthood in Josephus," *JIS* 25 (1974) 239 - 262. See also the sympathetic account of Josephus' life in Beryl D. Cohon, Men at the Crossroads, (South Brunswick, NJ: Thomas Yoseloff, 1970), 151-172.

²¹Shaye J. D. Cohen, Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 229-230.

²²Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, eds. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint ed., 1987), 1:47.

²³*Vita* , 422 - 423. See also Per Bilde, Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, his Works, and their Importance, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 57 - 60.

and how much this influenced his work is debatable.²⁴ However, that his dependency on the Flavians did at least influence some of the tendencies of the work is generally accepted.²⁵

His literary work which is most relevant for the concerns of this thesis is the *Jewish Antiquities*. Written in 93 - 94 C.E.,²⁶ the twenty - volume work covers the story of the Jewish people from creation until the administration of the last procurators before the war with Rome. The *Jewish Antiquities* was written according to the process of 'rewritten Bible,' much like the works treated in previous chapters. Many of the non - scriptural details in Josephus' rendition of the biblical text "are paralleled in various re - writings of Scripture from the Second Temple period, such as *Jubilees* and the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*. . . Josephus may have used such materials or may have relied on oral traditions familiar from his youth in Jerusalem or from diaspora exegetical traditions."²⁷ The biblical text Josephus used is thought to be of an early Palestinian variety. According to E. C. Ulrich's study, it was a

²⁴Cf. Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*. (London: Duckworth, 1983; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 196 - 197, and Schalit, Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Widoger, eds., *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, (Jerusalem: MacMacillan, 1971), s.v. "Josephus Flavius" by Abraham Schalit.

²⁵ For example, see H. Attridge, "Historiography," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT 2.2 (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1984), 192, 195 - 196; Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*. (London: Duckworth, 1983; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 203; Per Bilde, *Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, his Works, and their Importance*. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 76.

²⁶*Ant.* 20.267; H. Attridge, "Josephus and His Works," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT 2.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 210.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 212.

text fitting the description of the proto - Lucianic Greek text which reflected the Hebrew text used in Palestine.²⁸

What were Josephus' purposes when writing the *Antiquities*? Certainly one of his main purposes was to provide an apologetic for Judaism. One of his stated motives was to publish a history of important affairs for the benefit of the public.²⁹ A large portion of his reading audience would be Greek or Roman. He later states in *Against Apion*, "In my history of our *Antiquities*. . . I have. . . made sufficiently clear to any who may peruse that work the extreme antiquity of our Jewish race, the purity of the original stock, and the manner in which it established itself in the country which we occupy today."³⁰ Among Greco-Romans in Josephus' time, antiquity was extremely significant -- the older was the better. His aim in writing the *Antiquities* was to "prove the age and dignity of the Jewish people apologetically to the Greco - Roman world. With this as his purpose. . . Josephus attempts to present the history of the Jews from the beginning, and he places emphasis on its establishment and antiquity, precisely as Dionysus from Halicarnassus. . . [has] done with regard to Rome."³¹

Josephus depends upon the biblical books especially in the early parts of the *Antiquities* where he describes the foundation of the Israelite nation. He states repeatedly that he uses the Hebrew scriptures as a major source,

²⁸E. C. Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*, HSM 19 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 257 - 259; D. J. Harrington, "Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies," *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, SBLBMI 2, eds. Robert A. Kraft, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 241.

²⁹*Ant.* 1.3 - 4.

³⁰*Ap.* 1.1

³¹Per Bilde, *Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, his Works, and their Importance*, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 93; see also Tessa Rajak, "Josephus and the 'Archaeology' of the Jews," *JJS* 33 (1982) 465-477.

sometimes with statements such as ". . . I have recounted each detail here told just as I found it in the sacred books"³² or "The precise details of our Scripture records will. . . be set forth. . . I have promised to follow [them] throughout this work, neither adding nor omitting anything."³³ However, when one reads the work, it seems obvious to a twentieth - century eye that he indeed has added and omitted several traditions. Bilde points out that translation at the time of Josephus, was "more a question of rendering the essential contents of a text as it was understood by the translator rather than literally transposing it from one language to another."³⁴ For Josephus, these sacred books contain the evidence of the antiquity and nobility of the Jewish nation. In his rendering of the books he did so "by virtue of his Hellenistic transformation and modernization of their form. . ." ³⁵ An example of this Hellenistic transformation is his use of Hellenistic political language to describe aspects of Judaism, such as his using the term "constitution" in regard to the Jewish law.³⁶ In this way he provided a comprehensible version of the foundation of Israel for his Hellenistic contemporaries to accept or reject. Concerning Josephus' statement that he neither added to nor omitted from the Scriptures, Cohen suggests that his pronouncement is an

³²*Ant.* 2.347.

³³ *Ant.* 1.17.

³⁴Per Bilde, Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, his Works, and their Importance, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 96.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 97

³⁶For example, see *Ant.* 1.5 and further, H. Attridge, The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus, HDR 7 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 62 - 63.

historiographical commonplace and that "such pronouncements are not to be taken very seriously. . . "37

A second important aim of the *Antiquities* is to provide the foundation of religious morality:

the main lesson to be learnt from this history by any who care to peruse it is that men who conform to the will of God, and do not venture to transgress laws that have been excellently laid down, prosper in all things beyond belief, and for their reward are offered by God felicity; whereas, in proportion as they depart from the strict observance of these laws, things (else) practicable become impracticable, and whatever imaginary good thing they strive to do ends in irretrievable disasters (*Ant.* 1.14 - 15).

We later learn that these laws laid down by God correspond to the law given by Moses, the "lawgiver" in the *Antiquities*, which is "set forth in keeping with the nature of the universe."³⁸

While Josephus aims to include accounts from the law which will demonstrate these convictions about morality, he also provides an apologetic for the religion of the Jews. Those who hold to the doctrines given by the lawgiver participate in the virtue of God and can expect to be rewarded; those who do not can expect otherwise. Much like Dionysus of Halicarnassus upon whose work Josephus modelled several aspects of the *Antiquities*, Josephus

³⁷Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 28 - 29; see also Feldman, "Flavius Josephus Revisited: the Man, His Writings, and His Significance," *ANRW* II.21.2, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), 789.

³⁸*Ant.* 1.24. The idea that the Jewish law is in keeping with nature may indeed come from Philo, or at least from a philosophical tradition about the law similar to the one Philo used. The works of Josephus bear further similarities to those of Philo. For a discussion, see Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian*, (New York: KTAV, 1967), 93 - 96 who contended that Josephus came under the influence of Alexandrian thought; see also Attridge *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus*, HDR 7 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 36 who is skeptical of any suggestion of close dependence on Philo. See also the chapter "Abraham in the Works of Philo".

is attempting to educate his reader not only on the subject of personal morality,³⁹ but also by providing an explanation and a defense of his national traditions. "His *Antiquities* . . . is an attempt to illustrate and inculcate a religiously based morality and to demonstrate the significance of Jewish tradition."⁴⁰

Whether or not Josephus was attempting to reconcile himself with fellow Jews who saw him as a traitor while providing an apologetic work for his Greek and Roman readership is debatable. In the *Antiquities*, Josephus cites numerous Roman documents which testify to the privileges granted to the Jewish people.⁴¹ Apparently, many people had refused to believe that the documents were authentic.⁴² Josephus gives his motivation for citing these decrees in order to show that in former times the Jewish people "were treated with all respect and were not prevented by . . . rulers from practising any of [the] ancestral customs but, on the contrary. . . had the co-operation in preserving. . . religion and [their] way of honouring God."⁴³ He states that he mentions the decrees in order "to reconcile the other nations to us and to remove the causes for hatred which have taken root in thoughtless persons among us as well as among them."⁴⁴ Bilde maintains, "It is equally clear -- first by citing the pro - Jewish decrees, but secondly also with *Ant.* in its

³⁹Cf. *Ant.* 1.23 - 24; *Ant. Rom.* 1.5.1-3.

⁴⁰H. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus*, HDR 7 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 56.

⁴¹*Ant.* 14.185 - 267

⁴²*Ant.* 14.187

⁴³*Ant.* 16. 174

⁴⁴*Ant.* 16. 175

entirety -- that the purpose is to defend the Jewish people and their rights in the Roman Empire."⁴⁵ The *Antiquities*, then is apologetic not only in the way that it presents the validity of Jewish religion and the antiquity of their people, but also in Josephus' concern to assist the Jewish people in their political relationship with Rome. His audience was most probably composed primarily of educated Greco - Romans with some educated Jews.⁴⁶ Although the apologetic motif is foremost in his mind, he is also offering his compatriots assistance. Given his education and his connections in Rome, he is well placed to offer assistance in this way. Although reconciliation with those among his fellow Jews who considered him such a traitor may not be possible, he offers a work to the educated world which not only supports better treatment of the Jewish people but provides an account of their history in such a way that it could only be admired by its Hellenistic readers.

5.3 The Interpretation of Abraham in Josephus' *Antiquities*

5.3.1 Josephus' Portrayal of Abraham as the Educated Hellenist: Abraham the First Monotheist

While it has been the practice of classical scholarship on Josephus to look negatively upon Josephus as a person and relate this judgment to his literary works, labeling him as someone who did not produce anything of originality,⁴⁷ in this section I presume that although Josephus may include

⁴⁵Per Bilde, Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, his Works, and their Importance, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 100 - 101.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 102 - 103; Schalit holds that the work was written to non - Jews. Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Widoger, eds., Encyclopaedia Judaica, (Jerusalem: MacMacillan, 1971), s.v. "Josephus Flavius" by Abraham Schalit.

⁴⁷See the good overview of scholarship on Josephus in Per Bilde, Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, his Works, and their Importance, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 123 - 171.

traditions about Abraham from a variety of sources and even his own upbringing, in composing the account he sometimes provides the reader with creative reworkings of the life of Abraham.⁴⁸

Josephus' portrayal of Abraham is found in the *Jewish Antiquities* 1.148 - 1.256. Josephus moves from his genealogy of Shem⁴⁹ to the beginning of the Abraham account where he states, "I shall now speak of the Hebrews." The first interesting twist to Josephus' rendition is his portrayal of Sarah as Abraham's niece rather than his half - sister as found in the Genesis account.⁵⁰ As has already been observed, the tendency to "whitewash" important people from Israel's past is not uncommon in literature written through the process of 'rewritten Bible.' Marrying one's sister or half sister was considered to be an abomination according to Mosaic law.⁵¹ Josephus' intention here is to show Abraham as law - abiding; marrying one's niece was well within the law.⁵² This is especially important given one of his themes in the *Antiquities* noted earlier, viz., that those who live virtuously can expect to "prosper in all things beyond belief, and for their reward are offered by God

⁴⁸Whether or not Josephus worked with the aid of assistants in composing in the Greek language is debated. See the work by Thackeray, "Josephus and Hellenism: his Greek Assistants," *Josephus: The Man and the Historian*, (New York: KTAV, 1967), 100 - 124. See an opposing view in Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*, (London: Duckworth, 1983; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 232 - 236.

⁴⁹It is interesting that in his account of the genealogy of Shem that contrary to *Jubilees* and the *Biblical Antiquities*, Josephus does not deal with the practice of idolatry either by his ancestors or by those in the surrounding area. In contrast to *Bib. Ant.* particularly, he is consequently not separating Abraham from his neighbors based on the basis of a religious belief.

⁵⁰Gen 20:12.

⁵¹See Lev 20:17.

⁵²See Lev. 18:12 - 14; 20: 19 - 21.

felicity."⁵³ For Josephus, the Mosaic law was a guide to virtuous living. Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, becomes a model of this law of the Jewish people.

Therrus leaves Ur of the Chaldees "because of the loss of his lamented Aran."⁵⁴ In the Genesis account, no reason is given for Terah leaving Ur. Thus Josephus adds a psychological motivation by noting that Therrus "had come to hate Chaldaeae" on account of Aran's death. This example of an inner motive as the "cause" for an action within an historical account was foreign neither to Hellenistic historians⁵⁵ nor to Hellenistic novelists.⁵⁶ Already Josephus has added something to the account which will make his history of the Jewish people more interesting to the reader who is familiar with Hellenistic literary forms.

Josephus continues describing Abraham:

He was a man of ready intelligence on all matters, persuasive with his hearers, and not mistaken in his inferences. Hence he began to have more lofty conceptions of virtue than the rest of mankind, and determined to reform and change the ideas universally current concerning God. He was thus the first boldly to declare that God, the creator of the universe, is one, and that, if any other being contributed aught to man's welfare, each did so by His command and not in virtue of its own inherent power. This he inferred from the changes to which land and sea are subject, from the course of

⁵³*Ant.* 1.14, see above.

⁵⁴*Ant.* 1.151. In the *Jubilees* account the reason for Haran's death is his attempt to save the idols in the house of idols, see *Jub.* 12:14. As with the genealogy of Terah, Josephus does not mention the idolatry in Abraham's background.

⁵⁵Peri Vellalba I Varneda, *The Historical Method of Flavius Josephus*. (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 4, 24 - 25.

⁵⁶See also *Ant.* 1.163, 165 and N. Cohen, "Josephus and Scripture: Is Josephus' Treatment of the Scriptural Narrative Similar throughout the *Antiquities* I - XI?" *JQR* 54 (1963 - 64) 319.

sun and moon, and from all the heavenly conjunctions;⁵⁷ for, he argued, were these bodies endowed with power, they would have provided for their own regularity, but since they lacked this last, it was manifest that even those services in which they cooperate for our greater benefit they render not in virtue of their own authority, but through the might of their commanding sovereign, to whom alone it is right to render our homage and thanksgiving. (*Ant.* 1.154-156).

According to Josephus' description of Abraham discerning the existence of the one, Creator God from the changes of the land and sea, the course of the sun and moon, and all the heavenly conjunctions, Abraham is a natural theologian⁵⁸ and a superior philosopher.⁵⁹ His "proof is in the form of the proofs for the existence of G-d promulgated by the Greek philosophic schools, notably the Stoics. . . who first presented the teleological argument that the orderly state of the universe manifests a design perfected by the rational power of an infinite mind."⁶⁰ However, opposed to most teleological arguments which are based on the regular movements of the stars and planets, Abraham reasons inversely that since their movement is irregular, then there must be a "commanding sovereign"⁶¹ (*Ant.* 1.156),

⁵⁷ In some places in the text I have replaced some of Thackeray's translation in favor of less archaic language.

⁵⁸ T. W. S. Franxmann, Genesis and the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Iosephus, BibOr 35 (Rome: Bib. Institute Press, 1979), 119.

⁵⁹ By portraying Abraham as the first to declare the existence of one God, Josephus attempts "to enter Abraham into competition with Greek philosophers; that he wins the competition hands down is owing to the fact that he was the first (πρῶτος) to promulgate a monotheistic view of God, thus upstaging Pythagoras, among others." Carl H. Holladay, Theios Aner in Hellenistic Judaism: A Critique of the Use of This Category in New Testament Christology, SBLDS 40 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 73.

⁶⁰ Feldman, "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus," TAPA 99 (1968) 146.

⁶¹ Feldman notes that the word for commander (τοῦ κελεύοντος) is another favorite Stoic image "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus," TAPA 99 (1968) 147; see Epictetus, *Ench.* 7.

or a God.⁶² The phrase Josephus uses to describe these celestial phenomena -- "those services in which they cooperate for our greater benefit"⁶³ -- sounds strangely like a description of the theory behind astrology, in which the stars and planets cooperated together in determining the steps of human beings. Concerning the astrology of the Chaldeans, Philo states,⁶⁴

The Chaldeans have the reputation of having. . . elaborated astronomy and the casting of nativities. . . Following as it were the laws of musical proportion, they have exhibited the universe as a perfect concord or symphony produced by a sympathetic affinity between its parts. . . These men imagined that this visible universe was the only thing in existence, either being itself God or containing God in itself as the soul of the whole. And they made Fate and Necessity divine, thus filling human life with much impiety, by teaching that apart from phenomena there is no originating cause of anything whatever, but that the circuits of sun and moon and of the other heavenly bodies determine for every being in existence both good things and their opposites.

⁶²The Stoics were best known for this type of argumentation. That Abraham argues from the dissimilarity of the movement of the planets here is unusual, but it is not unique. Feldman calls Josephus a philosophic innovator because he was the first to have "taken Cleanthes' third argument from the irregularity of sublunar phenomena and extended it to the heavens themselves." (Cicero, *N.D.* .2.14 - 15). However, in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, the difference of the movement of the planets in comparison with one another is used as a proof for the existence of some being which presides over them, ". . . the five stars carried along. . . unchangingly keeping the same courses, in spite of the mutual difference of their movements, and the aspects of the heavens. . ." *Tusculan Disputations* 1.28. For the relationship between Paul and other works which argue the knowledge of God from his creation see C. Bussmann, Themen der paulinischen Missionspredigt auf dem Hintergrund der spätjüdisch hellenistischen Missionsliteratur, Europäische Hochschulschriften XXIII/3 (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1971), 112 - 120.

⁶³πρὸς τὸ χρησιμώτερον ἡμῖν συνεργούσι. Feldman points out that Stoic authors speak of the "arrangement and usefulness of heavenly bodies as proof of providential guidance." "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus," *TAPA* 99 (1968) 147. Franxman states, ". . . the arguments of Philo against the Chaldaean astrology seem to be echoed in this passage, especially in the emphasis on the good which the heavenly powers are capable of performing." Franxmann, Genesis and the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus, *BibOr* 35 (Rome: Bib. Institute Press, 1979), 119.

⁶⁴*Migr. Abr.* 178 - 179

Philo attests to a similar tradition of Abraham discerning God from nature in *De Abrahamo*:⁶⁵

The Chaldeans were especially active in the elaboration of astrology and ascribed everything to the movements of the stars. They supposed that the course of the phenomena of the world is guided by influences contained in numbers and numerical proportions. . . they glorified visible existence, leaving out of consideration the intelligible and invisible. But while exploring numerical order as applied to the revolution of the sun, moon, and other planets and fixed stars, and the changes of the yearly seasons and the interdependence of phenomena in heaven and on earth, they concluded that the world itself was God, thus profanely likening the created to the Creator. In this creed Abraham had been reared and for a long time remained a Chaldean. Then, opening the soul's eye as though after profound sleep. . . he followed the ray and discerned. . . a charioteer and pilot presiding over the world and directing in safety his own work, assuming the charge and superintendence of that work, and of all such parts of it as are worthy of the divine care.

Both Josephus and Philo thus depict Abraham as discerning the existence of God and his care for the world from the phenomena of the natural world around them. But unlike some Stoics who concluded that no God existed outside of reason and fate,⁶⁶ or that a variety of gods were responsible for fate,⁶⁷ Abraham discerns that one God exists. In Philo it is clear that Abraham had been reared in the practice of astrology. In Josephus, one might not know that Abraham had seen through the presuppositions of astrology unless one knew that Chaldea was particularly known for astrological

⁶⁵ *De Abr.* 68 - 70

⁶⁶H. Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 149, 157 - 159; see also *Migr. Abr.* 179.

⁶⁷*The Manual of Epictetus*. ed. Whitney J. Oates, trans. P. E. Matheson, *The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers*. (New York: Random House, 1940), 476.

knowledge. Through the teleological argument, Abraham is able to infer that the one Creator God exists and acts on behalf of all humankind.

If we contrast the attitude towards Abraham's practice of astrology in *Jubilees* with Josephus' attitude towards astrology in the *Antiquities*, a significant difference of opinion is noticeable. In *Jubilees*, through Abraham the author rejects the practice of astrology outright. In the *Antiquities* Josephus does not so much condemn the practice as some of the presuppositions which exist behind the practice. It is not the stars which act upon their own power for the benefit of humankind, but the one Creator God who does so. Astrology in this passage is not necessarily equivalent to idolatry; idolatry in this passage is the non-recognition from the natural phenomena that one God exists and works for the benefit of humankind.

In regard to their attitude to the surrounding culture, Josephus and the author of *Jubilees* are on opposite ends of the spectrum. Josephus represents the progressive Jew in terms of Hellenism; he has no problem portraying Abraham in the garb of an intelligent Hellenistic rhetorician who uses the philosophical proofs of the time to make his own deductions. Josephus has turned Abraham into such a Hellenist that he even uses the word δημιουργός to describe God as the Creator. The word δημιουργός originally meant "artisan." However, if "δημιουργός is also used in [Greek] religion and philosophy for the power which fashions the world, this is because the δημιουργός τοῦ κόσμου has made the world out of existing material as the ordinary δημιουργός does his products out of his materials."⁶⁸ The essential thing for the Greeks is bringing the world out of ἀταξία into a κόσμος. The

⁶⁸Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965; reprint, 1982), s.v. "κτιζω" W. Foerster.

word Abraham uses for the Creator, then, is consonant with a Hellenistic view of the creation of the world, that is, that the universe (κόσμος) was created from already existing material. The δημιουργός made order (κόσμος) out of disorder (ἀταξία). In Abraham's proof, the stars and planets were irregular in their movements, unable to produce εὐταξία (order; uniformity)⁶⁹ among themselves; thus, they could not be the Creator (δημιουργός). His Abraham has assimilated with the Hellenistic culture but come out using it successfully for the propagation of the idea that one Creator God exists.

In contrast, the author of *Jubilees* portrays Abraham as the explicitly law-abiding separatist Jew. Abraham's slogan is separation from all things Gentile. To the author of *Jubilees*, taking on the attributes associated with Hellenism is tantamount to taking on the idolatry upon which the degenerate Gentile ways are based.

However, that they both make use of the same traditions to speak to their respective audiences, one from the standpoint of progressive Judaism and one from the standpoint of a more reactionary Judaism, suggests the existence of a collection of either oral or written traditions about Abraham. These traditions would have been that Abraham was the first to recognize that God was the Creator of the universe and that God indeed was one; that Abraham recognized the one Creator God from his observation of the natural phenomena;⁷⁰ that his compatriots reacted negatively to his belief in the one

⁶⁹Feldman points out that εὐταξία was a favorite Stoic word, for example, in Sext. *Emp. Adv. phys.* 1.26. "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus" *TAPA* 99 (1968) 146 - 147 n. 13.

⁷⁰Abraham also reasons that God exists from the natural phenomena in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (see below); cf. Salomo Rappaport, *Agada und Exegese bei Flavius Josephus*, (Wien: Verlag der Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1930), 15, 101, who finds the same depiction of Abraham in Rabbinic and Arabic literature.

God;⁷¹ that in leaving his homeland behind Abraham also leaves behind his former idolatry.⁷²

Josephus has made both Abraham and Judaism attractive to his Greco-Roman readers. The Greco-Roman world was used to a plurality of gods in a variety of forms. "Jewish refusal to accept such gods incurred the charges of atheism and misanthropy (*Apion* 2.14) and sometimes ridicule . . . Josephus denies the charge of atheism and challenges polytheism by affirming the superiority of Jewish monotheism, the origin of which he attributes to the Jewish patriarch and philosopher Abraham."⁷³

5.3.2 Excursus: Josephus' Ancient Sources

In the *Antiquities* 1.158 - 160, Josephus writes about a number of the sources he used in his account of Abraham and the information they contain. According to Josephus' identification, Berossus states, "In the tenth generation after the flood there lived among the Chaldaeans a [righteous]⁷⁴ man and great and [experienced]⁷⁵ in [the phenomena of the heavens]"⁷⁶

⁷¹Jdt 5:7 - 8 also records the suffering of the Jews in Mesopotamia based on their belief in the one God and their flight, although it does not explicitly mention Abraham.

⁷²See further, T. W. S. Franxmann, Genesis and the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus, BibOr 35 (Rome: Bib. Institute Press, 1979), 120 - 121.

⁷³John R. Bartlett, Jews in the Hellenistic World: Josephus, Aristeas, the Sibylline Oracles, Eupolemus, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200, I.i., eds. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1985), 146 - 147. See also Jacob Jervell, "Imagines und Imago Dei aus der Genesis - Exegese des Josephus," Josephus Studien: Untersuchungen zu Josephus, dem antiken Judentum und dem Neuen Testament. Otto Michel zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet, Otto Betz, Klaus Haacker and Martin Hengel, eds., (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 197-198.

⁷⁴The word in the text is δίκαιος. Thackeray has translated it as "just".

⁷⁵ἐμπειρος; Thackeray translated it "versed."

⁷⁶τὰ οὐράνια; Thackeray translated it "celestial lore."

(*Ant.* 1.158).⁷⁷ Josephus mentions that Berossus does not actually identify the man as Abraham; Josephus assumes from the information given that the man written about must be Abraham.

Berossus was a priest of Marduk in early third century B.C.E. Babylon. He wrote *Babyloniaca* "in order to make the culture and antiquities of his Babylonian people available to Greek readers. . . he claimed to have based his presentation on very ancient sources."⁷⁸ Because Babylonia was famous for the practice of astrology, the origin of the practice would have been important to Berossus. Josephus used the information from Berossus to support and perhaps clarify his story in which Abraham knew astrology and used this knowledge to prove the existence of God.

Other ancient authors not found in Josephus attested to the tradition that Abraham was the founder of astrology. Artapanus, an Egyptian Jew who wrote before 100 B.C.E.⁷⁹ wrote that Abraham taught Pharaoh astrology.⁸⁰ Thus, to Artapanus, Abraham was responsible for an aspect of Egyptian culture.⁸¹ Eupolemus or perhaps Pseudo - Eupolemus⁸² also attests to the

⁷⁷This citation from Berossus is also found in Eusebius *Evang. Praep.* 9.16

⁷⁸J. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition*, CBQMS 15 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 26.

⁷⁹H. Attridge, "Historiography," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT 2.2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 168.

⁸⁰See the fragment in Eusebius *Praep. Evang.* 9.18.

⁸¹Artapanus also states that some of Abraham's household remained in Egypt when Abraham left. Thus, the Jews are not recent immigrants to Egypt. See R. Doran, "The Jewish Historians Before Josephus," *ANRW* II.20.1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987), 257, 263.

⁸²Whether or not the fragments in Eusebius *Praep. Evang.* 9.17. 2 - 9 and 9.18.2 are from Eupolemus is debated. For the view that they are by Pseudo - Eupolemus, see H. Attridge, "Historiography," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT 2.2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 165 - 166; for the opposing view, see R. Doran, "The Jewish Historians

tradition that Abraham was the founder of astrology and the Chaldean science.⁸³ He later states that really Enoch was the founder of astrology⁸⁴ but that Abraham also taught astrology to the Phoenicians before passing on into Egypt.⁸⁵ Considering that these historians verify the information that Abraham was connected in some way with astrology, and given Josephus' previous portrayal of Abraham discerning God as the ruler of the stars, it is not surprising that he would assume that the subject of Berossus' tradition was Abraham.⁸⁶

Josephus attributes his second source to Hecataeus of Abdera, who is said to have left a book composed about Abraham (*Ant.* 1.159). This book,

Before Josephus," *ANRW* II.20.1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987), 263 - 274. Eupolemus is thought to have been a Palestinian from the 2nd century B.C. E., Pseudo-Eupolemus a Samaritan from roughly the same time period. For a good discussion of Abraham in Pseudo-Eupolemus see Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Historians*, (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 170-187.

⁸³In the greek, Χαλδαικῆν. Concerning the term, Hengel states that it may refer to "manticism and visions of the future." M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 2 vols., ET John Bowden, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 1:90, 2:61, n.253. Perhaps this refers to the kinds of divination found in the ancient near east and discussed in the chapter on Abraham in the *Genesis Apocryphon*. If these writers were all privy to the same traditions about Abraham, it could be that the author of the *Genesis Apocryphon* had in mind the tradition like that found here about Abraham and the "Chaldean science" when he portrayed Abraham as a kind of Mesopotamian diviner in his text.

⁸⁴*Praep. evang.* 9.17.8

⁸⁵*Praep. evang.* 9.18.2. Sandmel notes that while the rabbis attest that Abraham knew astrology, they "do not, as do the Greek writers, depict Abraham as teaching astrology to the other peoples." *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature*, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 55.

⁸⁶See also the compilations of traditions about Abraham in Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, eds. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint ed., 1987), 2:349 - 350; 3:611 and in Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, ET John Bowden, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 1:89 - 91, 95.

Abraham and the Egyptians, which Clement of Alexandria also cites,⁸⁷ is actually by Pseudo-Hecataeus.⁸⁸ Attridge contends that some of the non-biblical material about Abraham in Josephus may derive from this source.⁸⁹

Nicholas of Damascus (first century B.C.E.) cites the tradition that Abraham had ruled in Damascus after invading from Babylon, the land of the Chaldees. Soon afterwards, Abraham is said to have left Damascus for Judea where "he settled, he and his numerous descendants" (*Ant.* 1.160). Nicholas of Damascus further states that "the name of Abram is still celebrated in the region of Damascus, and a village is shown that is called after him, 'Abram's abode.'"⁹⁰ Although the Bible does not refer to this sojourn of Abraham in Damascus, the tradition "derives from the fact that the road from Haran,

⁸⁷Clement of Alexandria cites a fragment of *Abraham and the Egyptians* :

One in very truth, God is One
Who made the heaven and the far-stretching earth
The Deep's blue billow, and the might of winds
But of us mortals, many erring far
In heart, as solace for our woes have raised
Images of gods – of stone, or else of brass,
figures wrought of gold or ivory;
And sacrifices and vain festivals
To these appointing, deem ourselves devout
(*Strom.* 5.14; cf. Eusebius *Praep. evang.* 13.13).

⁸⁸ Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*. (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974), 22.

⁸⁹H. Attridge, "Historiography," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*. CRINT 2.2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 170.

⁹⁰The tradition of a city named after Abraham is also found in the *Biblical Antiquities* 6:18, "And they named that place by the name of Abram and in the language of the Chaldeans, 'Deli', which means 'God.'"

where Abraham had been staying after leaving Ur, to the land of Canaan, led through Damascus."⁹¹

Josephus has furnished his reader with sources of some antiquity which make reference to Abraham's experience with astrology, his invasion of and rule over Damascus, and his travels to Judaea with many descendants. Abraham was obviously of enough importance to have a whole book devoted to him. By using sources of antiquity, Josephus is underlining the importance of Abraham and thus the Jewish nation in history and in culture.

5.3.3 Abraham the Educated Hellenist: Abraham as Logician, Rhetorician, Philosopher and Scientist

As found in the biblical account, Abraham travels to Egypt because of a famine in the land (Gen. 12:10; *Ant.* 1.161). But according to Josephus, Abraham's foundational reason for travelling to Egypt was that he "was of a mind to visit them, alike to profit by their abundance and to hear what their priests said about the gods; intending, if he found their doctrine more excellent than his own, to conform to it, or else to convert them to a better mind should his own beliefs prove superior" (*Ant.* 1.161). His journey of inquiry leads him to learn from the priests of the Egyptians like a student in a philosophical school.⁹² Feldman points out that one of the "recurrent

⁹¹Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974), 1:234. Some scholars hold that Josephus relied very heavily on Nicholas' work, *Historiae*, in his composition of the *Antiquities*.

⁹²He is described as being "ἀκροάτης"(1.161) which means a person who comes to hear a public speaker, or a disciple. See Feldman, who not only notes the portrayal of Abraham as a disciple, but that the word is akin to ἀκροωμένοις which described those who heard Abraham's persuasive arguments (*Ant.* 1.154) "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus," *TAPA* 99 (1968) 151. Marrou speaks of "Hellenistic lecturers who came to Rome on diplomatic missions and then gave 'auditions' – ἀκροάσεις--just as they would have done at home." H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 245.

characteristics of the pre-Socratic philosophers as viewed in Hellenistic times, is that they visited Egypt to become acquainted with Egyptian science and other esoteric lore and to engage in discussions with Egyptian wise men."⁹³ Abraham is a true philosopher; what he holds about God depends upon which doctrine is superior. As portrayed by Josephus, he apparently would have no problem converting to Egyptian beliefs should their arguments prove superior.⁹⁴

In the *Antiquities* (1.163 - 165), as in the biblical account of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt (Gen 12:10 - 20), because of Sarah's beauty and Abraham's fear of the Egyptian response, Abraham pretends to be her brother, and instructs Sarah to play the part of his sister. Everything happens as Abraham predicted (1.163). Pharaoh takes Sarah but his desire for her is thwarted by an outbreak of disease and political disturbances (1.164) sent by God. Pharaoh's priests notify him that these calamities were due to his desire for Sarah,⁹⁵ after which he goes to Abraham with a defense. He confesses that he had believed her to be Abraham's sister, and actually he had wished to contract a marriage alliance. Pharaoh gives Abraham abundant riches.

According to Franxman's study of the account of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt in the *Antiquities* in comparison with that found in Genesis, Josephus uses information from both the accounts of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt

⁹³L. Feldman "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus," *TAPA* 99 (1968) 151.

⁹⁴Abraham is portrayed as a type of missionary here, as he is portrayed in Rabbinic material but with one great difference -- in Rabbinic material he dogmatically makes converts. Feldman, "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus," *TAPA* 99 (1968) 152.

⁹⁵In Gen 20: 3 -7, Abimelech is told in a dream that Sarah is the wife of Abraham.

(Gen 12: 10 - 20) and in Gerar (Gen 20:1 - 18).⁹⁶ What is most striking about Josephus' adaptation is his omission of the king's complaint against Abraham (Gen. 12: 18 - 19; 20:9 - 10). Abraham and Sarah come out "looking blameless of *anything*."⁹⁷

But foremost in Josephus' mind is not purifying Abraham's character but how to make Abraham look increasingly like someone worth the admiration of his Gentile readership. The story of Abraham in Egypt is merely embedded in his account of Abraham the supreme Hellenist. Josephus continues,

Abraham consorted with the most learned of the Egyptians, whence his virtue and reputation became still more conspicuous. For, seeing that the Egyptians were addicted to a variety of different customs and disparaged one another's practices and were consequently at enmity with one another, Abraham conferred with each party and, exposing the arguments which they adduced in favour of their particular views, demonstrated that they were empty⁹⁸ and contained nothing true. Thus gaining their admiration at these conversations⁹⁹ as a man of extreme wisdom¹⁰⁰, gifted not only with high intelligence but with power to convince his hearers on any subject which he undertook to teach, he introduced them to arithmetic and transmitted to them the laws

⁹⁶Genesis and the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus, BibOr 35 (Rome: Bib. Institute Press, 1979), 129-131. In the *Ant.* 1.207 - 212 Josephus includes the account of Abraham and Sarah in Gerar. Abraham is not as noble in this account as in Josephus' earlier portrayal of the couple in Egypt, although it is emphasized again that Sarah is his niece (1.211).

⁹⁷T. W. S. Franxman, Genesis and the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus, BibOr 35 (Rome: Bib. Institute Press, 1979), 131.

⁹⁸κενός = empty, vain. It is noteworthy that Josephus describes the Egyptians in terms which were often used for Jews. "Josephus is in effect saying in the passage. . . that it is the Egyptians who had peculiar customs. . . the very charge made against the Jews." "Hellenizations in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* : The Portrait of Abraham," Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity, L. Feldman, G. Hata, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 142.

⁹⁹συνουσία = social intercourse, communion, conversation.

¹⁰⁰συνετός = intelligent, sagacious, wise.

of astronomy.¹⁰¹ For before the coming of Abraham the Egyptians were ignorant of these sciences, which thus travelled from the Chaldaeans into Egypt, whence they passed to the Greeks (*Ant.* 1.165 - 168).

In the *Antiquities*, Abraham becomes the Hellenistic philosopher without equal. The trip to Egypt ends with Abraham participating in the debate foretold at its beginning (1.161). Apparently Abraham was not at all convinced by their arguments, and was even able to show how empty they were of truth.¹⁰² Abraham is portrayed as such a convincing teacher that he was able to convince his hearers on any chosen subject. If we again refer back to the introduction to the trip to Egypt, we find that Abraham intended to discuss their respective doctrines about the gods (*Ant.* 1.161). One would conclude that one of the subjects in which Abraham was convincing was his doctrine of monotheism.

According to Feldman, Josephus depicts Abraham as gifted "in the very areas most cultivated by the Hellenistic Greeks, namely logic, philosophy, rhetoric, and science."¹⁰³ Through the depiction of Abraham exposing empty arguments and teaching in such a manner that he always convinced his listeners Josephus portrays Abraham as the supreme logician and rhetorician. His mastery of philosophy was found in his proof for the existence of God. Finally, by teaching the Egyptians arithmetic and astrology Josephus portrays

¹⁰¹Thackeray notes that in a few manuscripts the text reads ἀστρολογία. *Jewish Antiquities Books I - IV*. LCL vol. 4, ET by H. St. J. Thackeray, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U., 1930), 82 n. 2.

¹⁰²Feldman notes how Josephus' portrayal of Abraham's ability to demonstrate the Egyptian arguments as empty of truth is in the fashion of a hellenistic philosopher like Cotta in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* who exposed arguments as empty. "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus," *TAPA* 99 (1968) 153.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 153.

Abraham as gifted in the sciences (1.167 - 168).¹⁰⁴ Abraham's virtue, announced earlier,¹⁰⁵ has now become conspicuous. Because virtue could refer to "excellence of achievement, to mastery in a specific field. . . or to endowment with higher power. . . or often both" Abraham's mastery of several fields and his extreme wisdom and intelligence as portrayed by Josephus provide the evidence for his virtue.¹⁰⁶

Obviously Josephus portrays Abraham purposefully. At the end of the section he reminds us that before Abraham, the Egyptians were ignorant of astronomy and arithmetic which were then passed on to the Greeks. Not only is Abraham a well - educated Hellenist, but he is responsible for important aspects of culture being given to the Egyptian and Greek cultures.¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, even Roman readers owe this scientific knowledge to Abraham himself.

In *Against Apion* Josephus specifies some of the charges against the Jews with which he must deal. He states that Apollonius Molon has been "reviling us . . . as atheists and misanthropes. . . he adds that we are the most

¹⁰⁴Oppenheim has contended that in the first millenium B.C.E. both mathematical astronomy and astrology were being developed in Babylon. He continues, "Eventually both mathematical astronomy and what was to become horoscopic astrology spread from Mesopotamia throughout the civilized world." L. Oppenheim, "Divination and Celestial Observation in the Last Assyrian Empire," *Centaurus* (1969) 14.1 (97-135) 126. See also Strabo (d. 25 CE), *Geography*, 16.1.6, "In Babylonia a settlement is set apart for the local philosophers, the Chaldaeans, as they are called, who are concerned mostly with astronomy. . . There are also several tribes of the Chaldaean astronomers. . . divided into different sects which hold to various different dogmas about the same subjects. . . the mathematicians make mention of some of these men."

¹⁰⁵See *Ant.* 1.165, above.

¹⁰⁶Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965; reprint, 1982), s.v. "ἀρετή" by O. Bauernfeind.

¹⁰⁷Plato's knowledge of mathematics which included arithmetic and astronomy was copied from Egyptian practices. H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 73.

stupid of all barbarians and are consequently. . . the only people who have contributed no useful invention to civilization"(2.147 - 149). Apollonius was not alone in his anti - Jewish sentiments. Because the Jews would not participate in the worship of Hellenistic gods, this exclusivity even led to the charge that the Jews were actually atheists.¹⁰⁸ In his portrayal of Abraham, Josephus has crafted a narrative based on Genesis which defends the Jews against such accusations. Abraham was no atheist; in fact he was the first to believe in the one God. The Jews are not misanthropes; in fact their forefather Abraham was the first to teach the Egyptians astronomy and arithmetic for which the Greeks and Romans should also be thankful.¹⁰⁹ The biblical story about Abraham and Sarah in Egypt was used in the rendition of the story of Abraham found in the *Genesis Apocryphon*. But in that text the author chose to use the idea of a dream from the account of the dream of Abimelech (Gen 20) to interpret the trip so that Abraham became a mantic sage. Here Josephus has used the same tradition but with a different outcome. For the benefit of his Hellenistic readers and ultimately for the benefit of the Jewish people, while Abraham is in Egypt he is the prototype of the educated, Hellenistic gentleman.

¹⁰⁸Jerry L. Daniel, "Anti - Semitism in the Hellenistic - Roman Period," *IBL* 98/1 (1979) 61. Although there were some Gentiles who appreciated the Jews' monotheistic stance such as Varro who applauded the Jews' imageless worship, saying "the only ones who have discovered what God really is are those who have adopted the view that he is the soul which covers the world by a movement which accords with reason."(August. *De Civ.* IV. 31. 2) and Strabo who credits the forefathers of the Jews with "acting righteously and being truly pious toward God"(*Geography* 16.2.37).

¹⁰⁹At this time the terms for astrology and astronomy were more or less interchangeable; astronomy as a theoretical interest was inseparable from astrology which was increasingly popular in Greco-Roman society. H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 182. See also H. Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 157.

5.3.4 Abraham the Military hero

Josephus condenses the land division section where Lot and Abraham separate (1.169 - 170). After the division Abraham dwells in Nabro, which Thackeray notes is biblical Hebron.¹¹⁰ Nabro is "more ancient by seven years than Tanis in Egypt."¹¹¹ Josephus deliberately foreshadows the story of the destruction of the city when he describes Lot's choice which is in the southern end of the Jordan valley, "not far from the city of Sodom, which was then prosperous but has now by God's will been obliterated: the cause of its fate I shall indicate in its place" (1.170).

Abraham is next portrayed in the account of the battle with the kings (1.171-185).¹¹² Josephus adds several details to his account of Abraham's battle which are not found in the Genesis account.¹¹³ This is hardly surprising because Josephus was a military commander in the Jewish war against the Romans.¹¹⁴ When Abraham hears that many from the Sodomite army perished in battle and that Lot, an active member of their army has been taken prisoner, he is moved with fear and compassion and sets out in haste

¹¹⁰Josephus, Jewish Antiquities Books I - IV, LCL vol. 4, ET by H. St. J. Thackeray, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U., 1930), 84 n. a.

¹¹¹This tradition concerning the antiquity of Hebron is also found in *Jub.* 13:12. See also *Num* 13:22.

¹¹²For detailed differences between the battle of the kings in *Gen* 14:1 - 12 and *Ant.* 1.171 - 175, see Franxman, Genesis and the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus, *BibOr* 35 (Rome: Bib. Institute Press, 1979), 133 - 135.

¹¹³Josephus also makes additions which tell of the descendants of Abraham being involved in campaigns to establish colonies in other lands, see *Ant.* 2.239 - 241.

¹¹⁴For a brief summary of Josephus' handling of Moses, Phineas, Saul, David, and Judas Maccabaeus' as military commanders, see L. Feldman, "Abraham the General in Josephus," Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel, F. E. Greenspahn, E. Hilgert, B. L. Mack, eds., (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984) 43 - 45. See also section 5.1, above.

(1.177).¹¹⁵ Already Abraham looks like a better character who is loyal to both his relative and neighbours and is willing to undergo danger on their behalf.¹¹⁶

Acting as a decisive military commander, Abraham sets out and conquers the Assyrians near Dan in a night raid (1.176-178). Particularly noteworthy is the contrast Josephus makes between the army of the Assyrians and Abraham's army. The Assyrian soldiers are surprised by the attack-- some have no time to arm, some are killed in their beds, and some are incapable of fighting as a result of their drunkenness and run away. Abraham chases those who escape his sword into another country. Josephus later comments on the readiness (*προθυμία*) of successful combatants which, when combined with the addition of the drunkenness of the Assyrian soldiers provides a contrast between the self-control of Abraham's army and its lack among the Assyrian troops.¹¹⁷

To Feldman, "Josephus looks upon it [the battle] as a human victory of a masterful general and sees in it lessons for the student of military science; Abraham's success, he says proves that military victory depends not on

¹¹⁵Josephus also depicts Abraham as a man of compassion in the account of the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael. Abraham is reticent to let Hagar go, "thinking nothing could be more brutal than to send off an infant child with a woman destitute of the necessaries of life" (*Ant.* 1.216). Finally, "seeing that Sarra's behests were sanctioned by God, he yielded," sending Hagar away with only bread and water (*Ant.* 1.217).

¹¹⁶Gen 14:14 states, "When Abram heard that his nephew had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred eighteen of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan."

¹¹⁷Seneca condemns drunkenness and lauds self-control. Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic* (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1969; reprint, 1979), 83.24; 83.31.

numbers. . . and multitude of hands. . . "118 (*Ant.* 1.178). Instead, Abraham's victory depends on the readiness and courage of the combatants. Abraham's victory is even more impressive because this is the same army that beat the Sodomites previously.¹¹⁹ Feldman rightly states that in contrast to the work of Philo where "Abraham trusted not in his small force but in G-d" in Josephus, the victory "is a personal triumph of generalship by Abraham himself."¹²⁰ However, that Josephus considered Abraham to be battling at least under the auspices of God is found in another text (*Ant.* 2.214)¹²¹ when God speaks to Amram in a dream, recalling Abraham's deeds of bravery in battle.

Josephus simultaneously has a personal interest in the military deeds of Abraham. In *Against Apion* 2.148, Josephus defends the Jewish people against Apollonius who had been reproaching them as cowards. Abraham as portrayed here provides an example of the forefather of the Jewish people who is known for his bravery in battle. But the personal interest in Abraham on the part of Josephus does not end here. In the *Jewish War*, while urging

¹¹⁸L. Feldman, "Abraham the General in Josephus," Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel, F. E. Greenspahn, E. Hilgert, B. L. Mack, eds., (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 47.

¹¹⁹See the description of the Assyrian military strategy in *Ant.* 1.172 and the description of the most recent, difficult battle between the Sodomites and Assyrians in *Ant.* 1.175.

¹²⁰. . . he [Abraham]. . . advanced with three battalions. Yet he did not trust in these, for they were but a small fraction of the kings' forces, but in God, the champion and defender of the just." *De Abr.* 232. L. Feldman, "Abraham the General in Josephus," Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel, F. E. Greenspahn, E. Hilgert, B. L. Mack, eds., (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 47.

¹²¹God states that Abraham battled "κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν" which Thackeray translates "under my auspices".

the Jews to surrender Jerusalem to the Romans, Josephus portrays himself as using examples from history. One such example is Abraham:

Pharaoh. . . the reigning king of Egypt came down with a prodigious host and carried off Sarah. . . What action, then, did her husband Abraham, our forefather take? Did he avenge himself on the ravisher with the sword? He had, to be sure, three hundred and eighteen officers under him, each in command of a boundless army. Or did he rather not count these as nothing, if unaided by God, and uplifting pure hands towards this spot which you have now polluted enlist the invincible Ally on his side? And was not the queen. . . sent back? (J.W. 5.380)

First, in context, Josephus is using the depiction of Abraham to argue that the Jews should surrender to the Romans because God is obviously on their side. Secondly, Abraham is portrayed as a wise military commander. Although he is in command of 318 officers, each of whom in turn commands a boundless army, he does not attack Pharaoh without the aid of his Ally. Thirdly, Josephus identifies with the military characteristics which he portrays Abraham as having. Feldman says it well, "In any case, in the main body of Josephus' presentation of Abraham, the emphasis is on his own [Josephus'] military qualities."¹²²

After the battle Abraham returns to Judea with the Sodomite prisoners and his nephew Lot. He is received by the "king of Solyma, Melchisedek; this name means 'righteous king'. . . he was moreover made priest of God. . ." (Ant. 1.180).¹²³ According to Josephus, Melchizedek provided "abundantly"

¹²²L. Feldman, "Abraham the General in Josephus," Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel, F. E. Greenspahn, E. Hilgert, B. L. Mack, eds., (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984) 47.

¹²³Josephus identifies Solyma (Salem) with Hierosolyma (Jerusalem) (Ant. 1.180). The identification of Salem with Jerusalem is also found in Ps 76:2 where Salem and Zion are said to be the same location. For Rabbinic sources which identify Salem with Jerusalem, see Franxman, Genesis and the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus, BibOr 35 (Rome: Bib. Institute Press, 1979), 136.

for the needs of Abraham's army and gave them a celebrative feast (1.181). In Genesis, Melchizedek merely provides bread and wine and blesses both God and Abraham (Gen 14:19 - 20). Franxmann points out the exaggerative element here, saying, "bread and wine can scarcely connote a banquet."¹²⁴ At the feast Melchizedek praises Abraham and blesses God for having delivered Abraham's enemies into his hand.

From the Hebrew Bible it is not clear whether Abraham gave a tenth or received it from Melchizedek.¹²⁵ Josephus is careful to point out that Abraham gives the tithe and Melchizedek receives it. "Among the qualities prized by the ancients there is almost none more important than to be a good host and to be a good guest."¹²⁶ What can be said is that Josephus elevates the character of Abraham from what is found in Genesis through the feast given in his honor and the fact that Melchizedek offers him praise rather than mere blessing.¹²⁷

¹²⁴Franxman, Genesis and the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus BibOr 35 (Rome: Bib. Institute Press, 1979), 136.

¹²⁵Gen 14:20: וַיִּתֵּן־לוֹ מֵעֶשֶׂר מַכֹּל See also *Jub.* 13: 25 - 27; *1QapGen* 22:17 and Heb 7:4 which all interpret the passage to mean Abraham gave a tenth of the tithes to Melchizedek.

¹²⁶L. Feldman, "Hellenizations in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*: The Portrait of Abraham," Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity, L. Feldman, G. Hata, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 140.

¹²⁷Melchizedek is lauded in Hebrews 7:1 - 10 as being greater than Abraham and in *11QMelch* as a kind of warrior - angel. Josephus does not mention the characteristics of Melchizedek found in these texts. For further information see H. Attridge, The Epistle to the Hebrews, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 186 - 197; M. De Jonge and A. S. Van Der Woude, "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," NTS 12 (1965 - 66) 301 - 26.

5.3.5 Abraham's Rewards: Land and Descendants.

In his version of the Abraham story, Josephus changed Genesis 12: 1 - 3 where God not only commands Abraham to leave his homeland, but chooses him, blesses him, and promises him that he will be a great nation. Josephus merely reports, "and at the age of seventy - five he [Abraham] left Chaldaea, God having bidden him to remove to Canaan. . . " ¹²⁸ It is especially noteworthy that Josephus removes the promise of God to Abraham that his offspring will receive the land of Canaan in Genesis 12:7.¹²⁹ Instead, it is stated, "and there he settled, and left the country to his descendants."¹³⁰ We later find out that the reason Abraham left Chaldaea was because his opinions about monotheism roused the hostility of the people of Mesopotamia.¹³¹

Josephus noticeably has missed God's promise of land to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 12:7). Abraham leaves the land to his offspring, it seems, merely as a result of his having settled there.¹³² In fact in the account of Abraham, Josephus avoids all mention of the covenant.¹³³ By contrast, in Genesis, "The covenant involves not just a *gift* of nationhood, but also the *gift* of a particular land, and God's special relationship to it and to the people

¹²⁸*Ant.* 1.154. In Genesis 12:4, Abraham is said to depart from Haran, not Chaldaea. In *Ant.* 1.151, however, Therrus is said to migrate to Charran (Haran).

¹²⁹"Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land.' So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him." (Gen 12:7).

¹³⁰*Ant.* 1.154.

¹³¹*Ant.* 1.157.

¹³²Later in the *Antiquities*, God predicts to Moses that the Hebrews would occupy the land "wherein Abraham dwelt, the forefather of your race. . ." *Ant.* 2.269.

¹³³Actually, in the *Antiquities* Josephus never uses the term διαθήκη before book 13.

who dwell in it. . ."134 The fidelity of the people who dwell in the land is "defined in terms of believing that God will indeed keep his covenant."135 The fundamental relationship established between the land, God, and the people in the time of Abraham is then renewed with each of the succeeding patriarchs.

In her study of land theology in Josephus' *Antiquities*, Amaru discovers that predictions about acquiring land are a result of the providential assistance of God rather than a result of it being a divine gift.¹³⁶ The acquisition of land as a result of this alliance in the *Antiquities* is conditional to a large degree upon morality and obedience.¹³⁷ Later in the *Antiquities*, Josephus connects the observance of the law with the retention of the land. He depicts Moses as saying,

For should ye be carried away. . . into a contempt and disdain for virtue, ye will lose even that favour which ye have found of God; and, having made Him your enemy, ye will forfeit that land. . . and, dispersed throughout the habitable world, ye will fill every land and sea with your servitude. And when ye undergo these trials, all unavailing will be repentance and recollection of those laws which ye have failed to keep (*Ant.* 4.190 - 191).

However, the land in which Abraham settles is not as a result of a covenant with God as it is in the Genesis account. In fact, throughout his account of Abraham, Josephus avoids all mention of the land of Canaan as

134B. H. Amaru, "Land Theology in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*," *IQR* 71 (1980 - 81) 203. Italics mine.

135Ibid., 203 - 204.

136Ibid., 208.

137Ibid., 211.

being covenanted. Amaru rightly states, ¹³⁸

for Josephus the problem is not covenant *per se* but a covenanted people limited to a covenanted land. Whether the problem arises out of a desire to speak in more universal terms to a Roman audience, or out of Josephus' own personal perspective as a diaspora Jew. . . his commitment is to a diaspora coexisting with a homeland. He builds this idea into his history of the patriarchs by strengthening the promises of great peoplehood and weakening the covenanted land promise. Josephus' alliance structure makes acquisition of the land conditional on morality and obedience, or even the fortuitous swing of God's rod.

In Josephus' portrayal of Abraham one can see that the Jews do have a homeland, but it has nothing to do with a covenant. If he admits to the land being part of the eternal covenant between Israel and her God, how does he explain to the Roman reader why it is that his officials now actually rule over that land? What kind of a God does Israel worship if that God cannot make good his promises? Apart from his apologetic concerns, Josephus must also have wondered himself, as had other Jews in the diaspora, what had happened to God's promise of land? In what he regards as an exposition of the text, Josephus tells a different story of the land being given on the basis of obedience and providence, not on the basis of it being a divine gift which was only one component of an eternal covenant. Josephus will continue to restructure the Abraham account in such a way as to avoid the theme found in Genesis that the land was an eternal blessing as a part of God's covenant with Israel.

Between the account of Abraham in Egypt and the division of land between Abraham and Lot, Josephus entirely omits a section where God

¹³⁸Ibid., 211.

makes a promise of land to Abraham.¹³⁹ Abraham is told to "Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you" (Gen 13:17). The contrast between the way the author of the Palestinian text, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, handles the text and Josephus' handling of the text indicates their respective points of view. In the *Genesis Apocryphon* the author takes this verse and actualizes it -- Abraham literally travels around the land -- which he does not even do in the Genesis narrative. For a Palestinian Jew who believes in the efficacy of the promises of God in respect to the land of Israel, portraying Abraham as taking possession of the land via his walking through it is only natural. However for Josephus whose ideas about the land have switched from it being a divine gift to it being something gained as a reward for obedience, God could not be depicted as promising the gift of land to Abraham and his descendants.

For the first time in Josephus' portrayal of Abraham, God speaks to Abraham directly after his defeat of the Assyrians and his banquet with Melchizedek (*Ant.* 1.183). As a divine elaboration upon Melchizedek's earlier praise for Abraham (1.181) God's first spoken words are to praise Abraham, but in this case the praise is in respect to the virtue (*ἀρετή*) exhibited by Abraham in his noble loyalty to Lot and his neighbouring Sodomites and in his bravery in battle.¹⁴⁰ Josephus then writes that Abraham would receive rewards as his "due for such good deeds" (1.183; cf. Gen 15:1). The inclusion

¹³⁹Cf. Gen 13:14 - 18; *Ant.* 1.169-170.

¹⁴⁰For loyalty and bravery as among the best attributes of human beings, see Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic*. (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1969; reprint, 1979), 83.31. In earlier centuries, by the time of Homer, *ἀρετή* was used to "to denote one particular achievement, namely, 'manliness' or martial valour." Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965; reprint, 1982), s.v. "*ἀρετή*" by O. Bauernfeind.

of this last unscriptural phrase "emphasizes the notion of retribution here."¹⁴¹

Abraham's reward will be his posterity whose number will be "so great as to be comparable in number to the stars" (1.183). He sacrifices the same kinds of animals as found in Genesis, but no mention is made of him falling asleep, or of the ensuing covenant (1.184).¹⁴² A "voice divine" predicts Israel's Egyptian captivity, exodus, and victory over the Canaanites from whom they would take possession of their land and cities (1.185).¹⁴³ As Abraham fought for Lot and the Sodomites his descendants will have to fight for land.

After Josephus' Hellenized¹⁴⁴ reinterpretation of the animosity between Hagar and Sarah and the birth of Ishmael (1.186 - 190) God announces to Abraham that Isaac would be born through his wife, Sarah (1.191). Josephus' reworking of Genesis seventeen reveals more fully his avoidance of anything to do with God's covenant with Israel. Abraham would bear a son by Sarah named Isaac (Gen 17: 19; *Ant.* 1.191) and nations and kings would come from

¹⁴¹H. W. Attridge, The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus, HDR 7 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 79.

¹⁴²Cf. Gen 15:18, "On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates. . .'" For differences in the mode of sacrifice and the timing of the theoloquy, see Franxman, Genesis and the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus, BibOr 35 (Rome: Bib. Institute Press, 1979), 137.

¹⁴³Cf. Gen. 15:13-14, "Then the Lord said to Abram, 'Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years; but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve and afterward they shall go out with great possessions.'"

¹⁴⁴Josephus' hellenizing touches are seen when, as Hagar is travelling through the wilderness having been dismissed by Sarah, an angel appears and says that she "would attain a happier lot through self - control" (*Ant.* 1.189).

him (Gen 17: 5 - 6). Abraham's descendants would also possess land, but as a result of victory in war (*Ant.* 1.191), not as a result of his sojournings.¹⁴⁵

The most important item in the account of the birth of Isaac is Josephus' short discussion of circumcision. This was "to the intent that his posterity should be kept from mixing with others, God charged him to have them circumcised and to perform the rite on the eighth day after birth" (*Ant.* 1.192). True to form, Josephus avoids the original meaning of circumcision as a sign of God's everlasting covenant (Gen 17:13). Attridge contends that circumcision as a sign of God's covenant with Abraham in Gen. 17: 9 - 10, "becomes a distinguishing feature of the offspring of Abraham, to keep them separate from their neighbors, but not a covenantal bond between the people and God."¹⁴⁶ Josephus alludes to his expounding the reason for circumcision elsewhere in a volume he never wrote or we no longer possess. Abraham acts without question. Giving thanks to God, he immediately obeys the command, circumcising himself and his household (1.193).¹⁴⁷

In Josephus' rewriting of the Abraham account, no covenant promises exist. Abraham's reward is his descendants; they in turn will have to fight for the land. Not even circumcision is related to the covenant. Circumcision in

¹⁴⁵Cf. *Ant.* 1.191 - 192, "... they would win possession, by war, of all Canaan from Sidon to Egypt." Gen 17:8, "... I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God."

¹⁴⁶H. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus* HDR 7 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 80.

¹⁴⁷For further differences between the Genesis text and *Antiquities* in the stories of the birth of Ishmael and the announcement of the birth of Isaac, see Franxman, *Genesis and the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus*, *BibOr* 35 (Rome: Bib. Institute Press, 1979), 138 - 141. In *Ant.* 1. 214, Isaac is circumcised on the eighth day, and "from that time forward the Jewish practice has been to circumcise so many days after birth. The Arabs defer the ceremony to the thirteenth year, because Ishmael, the founder of their race. . . was circumcised at that age." See *Ant.* 1.193.

the story of Abraham in the *Antiquities* is only a symbol of the separation of the descendants of Abraham from those around him.

5.3.6 The Hospitality of Abraham

Josephus once again connects the story of Abraham with the history of the Sodomites. At this point, the Sodomites have lost favor in the eyes of God because they have become proud and have forgotten God's benefits to them (1.194). Evidence of this insolence is that they hated foreigners (μισόξενος) and declined all association with others. God intends to deal with their misconduct by devastating their city and land (1.195).

In contrast, one day Abraham is sitting before his court-yard when he sees three angels, which he takes to be strangers (ξένος). He rises to greet the strangers and invites them to lodge with him and partake of his hospitality (ξενία) (1.196). For the Greeks, "hospitality was a decisive mark of culture."¹⁴⁸ One was not to be hospitable in order that the hospitality would be returned, but rather out of fear of the gods and love for people (φιλοανθρωπία).¹⁴⁹

After the strangers pretend to eat,¹⁵⁰ they declare that Sarah will be a mother when they return and reveal their true identity as angels of God. They state that one of them had been sent to announce the birth of Isaac, while the remaining two were to destroy the Sodomites (*Ant.* 1.198). Upon

¹⁴⁸G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965; reprint, 1982), s.v. "ξένος" by G. Stählin. See further, "Hellenizations in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*: The Portrait of Abraham," *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*. L. Feldman, G. Hata, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 140.

¹⁴⁹G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965; reprint, 1982), s.v. "ξένος" by G. Stählin.

¹⁵⁰In Gen 18:8 they actually do eat.

hearing this, Abraham prays for the Sodomites and bargains with God, after which God agrees not to destroy them if ten are found who are righteous.¹⁵¹

When the angels arrive in Sodom, Lot invites them to be his guests, because he was kindly to strangers (περὶ τοὺς ξένους φιλόνηθρος). This, according to Josephus, he learned as a pupil of the generosity of Abraham (1.200). The angels are treated by the inhabitants of Sodom in much the same way as they are in Genesis nineteen and Sodom is destroyed.

Insofar as the hospitality of Abraham is concerned, it is likely that Josephus is again defending the Jewish people in regard to disparaging remarks made by Gentiles. The description of the Sodomites who hated foreigners and declined association with outsiders sounds very much like an accusation which could be made against the Jews who were thought to be exclusive.¹⁵² One such charge was that the Jewish people were misanthropes¹⁵³ which Josephus is taking great pains to show is not the truth in his description of the generous Abraham who is immediately hospitable to strangers.

¹⁵¹Josephus probably has apologetic reasons for his interpretation of the events where Abraham is in contact with the Sodomites. First, it is not only Lot whom Abraham goes to save when he does battle with the Assyrians, but also the Sodomites (see above and *Ant.* 1.176; Gen 14:14). Secondly, he is depicted as grieving as he prays for Sodom and Gomorrah which is missing from the Genesis account (*Ant.* 1.199; Gen 18:22 - 33). He is probably refuting the charge that although the Jews were loyal to one another, "toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity." Tacitus, *History* V.v. See also "Hellenizations in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* : The Portrait of Abraham," *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, L. Feldman, G. Hata, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 142.

¹⁵²In *Ant.* 11.212, Haman reports to the king that the Jews are "... unfriendly and unsocial and neither [have] the same religion nor practised the same laws as others. . ." In Acts 10:28 Peter admits, "You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a gentile. . ."

¹⁵³*Ap.* 2.148; In *Ap.* 2.291 Josephus defends the Jewish law against the charge that it causes μισανθρωπία.

5.3.7 Josephus' Account of the Birth and Offering of Isaac

In Josephus' narration of the birth of Isaac, he retains the advanced ages of both Sarah and Abraham (1.213). Josephus states that eight days after the birth of Isaac, as God commanded Abraham, he is circumcised and "from that time forward the Jewish practice has been to circumcise so many days after birth" (1.214). Circumcising Isaac on the eighth day was in line with the command given by God and recorded earlier.¹⁵⁴ But in the account of the birth and circumcision of Isaac, Josephus makes Abraham and Sarah the model¹⁵⁵ for subsequent generations, which the story of Isaac's birth in Genesis does not.¹⁵⁶ Through this explicit model, Josephus explains the origin of the practice of circumcision to his non-Jewish readers.

The final extensive pericope of Abraham is the sacrifice of Isaac. Isaac is not only virtuous and obedient to his parents, but has zeal for the worship (*θησικεία*) of God (*Ant.* 1.222).¹⁵⁷ Abraham's happiness is entirely dependent upon the hope that the son born to him in his old age would still remain when he himself died (1.223). Josephus brings an added touch of pathos by using the Homeric phrase in describing his birth as being "on the threshold of

¹⁵⁴See *Ant.* 1.192; cf. Gen 17: 9 - 14.

¹⁵⁵"Eight days later they promptly circumcised him; and from that time forward the Jewish practice has been to circumcise so many days after birth" (*Ant.* 1.214).

¹⁵⁶"And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him " (Gen 21:4).

¹⁵⁷Feldman notes that in his portrayal of the offering of Isaac Josephus may have been dependent upon Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* "with its similar situation of a father called upon to sacrifice his child. . ." in "Josephus' Version of the Binding of Isaac," Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers, ed. Kent H. Richards, (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 116.

old age"¹⁵⁸ (1.222). God decides to test Abraham's devotion (θρησκεία) towards himself, requiring him "to offer up that son by his own hand as a sacrifice and victim to himself" (*Ant.* 1.224). By this action Abraham would manifest his devotion (θρησκεία),¹⁵⁹ since he put doing what pleased God above the life of his child.

The vocabulary used by Josephus here is of special significance. Both Isaac and Abraham are described as having θρησκεία or devotion towards God.¹⁶⁰ According to Attridge, the word as used here "encompasses the whole response of the religious individual to God. While it does have cultic overtones, it is almost synonymous with 'εὐσέβεια' [piety]"¹⁶¹ which, in the *Antiquities*, "is the proper response to the fact of God's providence."¹⁶² It is Abraham's devotion that God is testing.

Faced with the destruction of his son, whom he had received as his reward for his conduct in battle (1.183) and in whom he has such an emotional stake, Abraham decides to sacrifice him without any indication of hesitation. "By eliminating . . . the direct command of G-d to Abraham, as well as Abraham's laconic response 'Here I am', and by putting the whole

¹⁵⁸From Homer's *Iliad* 22.60, in a speech well - known at the time, where Hector pleads with Priam not to go to his death. See Feldman, "Hellenizations in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* : The Portrait of Abraham," *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, L. H. Feldman, G. Hata, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 146; "Josephus' Version of the Binding of Isaac," *Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent H. Richards, (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 114-115.

¹⁵⁹It is stated in both 1.223 and 224 that by offering up his son Abraham would be showing his devotion to God.

¹⁶⁰In the case of Isaac, I followed Thackeray 's translation, "worship".

¹⁶¹H. W. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus*, HDR 7 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 89 n. 2.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*, 116.

scene in indirect discourse, Josephus. . . indicates that Abraham took all this in his stride."¹⁶³ According to Josephus, Abraham considered that "nothing would justify disobedience to God and that in everything he must submit to his will since all that befell His favoured ones was ordained by His providence [πρόνοια]" (2.225). The theme of the providence of God weaves itself throughout the *Antiquities*. God exercises πρόνοια which may be understood "as watchful, concerned forethought and consideration . . . Abraham agreed to sacrifice his son because of his belief that whatever came the way of those favored by God came through his providence."¹⁶⁴

The idea that providence (πρόνοια) ruled the world was a popular Stoic concept. Not all Roman Stoics, however, agreed on what was responsible for providence: Nature, the Mind of the universe, or the universal Law, to name a few proposals.¹⁶⁵ Stoics believed that they could show that the whole world was "the planned and providential work of God, that human reason if correct must think in the same way as the divine reason, and that man should therefore accept willingly all that happens."¹⁶⁶ Piety was the proper response to the providential work of the gods, as Epictetus writes, "For piety (εὐσέβεια) towards the gods know that the most important thing is this: to have right opinions about them--that they exist, and that they govern the

¹⁶³L. H. Feldman, "Josephus' Version of the Binding of Isaac," in Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers, ed. Kent H. Richards, (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 113.

¹⁶⁴H. W. Attridge, The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus, HDR 7 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 71 - 72.

¹⁶⁵E. V. Arnold, Roman Stoicism, (New York: The Humanities Press, 1958), 205 - 206.

¹⁶⁶F. H. Sanbach, The Stoics, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975), 69.

universe well and justly--and to have set yourself to obey them. . ."¹⁶⁷
Abraham's pious response to the requirement of God that he sacrifice his son
is in keeping with this Stoic concept.¹⁶⁸

Concealing his purpose from his wife and household, "lest he should be hindered from doing God's service,"¹⁶⁹ Abraham takes Isaac and two servants and heads for the "Moriah Mount".¹⁷⁰ On the third day he and Isaac alone reach the mount where Josephus states "king David afterwards erected the temple."¹⁷¹ Isaac is reported to be twenty - five years old by this time; as they construct the altar he inquires about the whereabouts of the victim. Abraham replies that "God would provide for them, seeing that He had power alike to give men abundance of what they had not and to deprive of what they had those who felt assured of their possessions: He would therefore grant him too a victim, should He vouchsafe to grace his sacrifice

¹⁶⁷ The Manual of Epictetus, ed. Whitney J. Oates , ET P. E. Matheson, The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers. (New York: Random House, 1940), 476.

¹⁶⁸. . . the whole Aqedah, with its emphasis on freedom from emotion, is a prime example for Josephus of how Jewish values coincide with those of the Stoics. . . Josephus is . . . presenting Abraham as seeking the Stoic goal of happiness as identified with *ἀπάθεια*." L. H. Feldman, "Josephus' Version of the Binding of Isaac," Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers, ed. Kent H. Richards, (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 116-117.

¹⁶⁹*Ant.* 1.225; In this way Josephus explains why Abraham rises early in the morning (Gen 22:3).

¹⁷⁰*Ant.* 2.224; cf. *Ant.* 7.333. In his account, Josephus stresses that it was on the Moriah Mount where Abraham offered up Isaac that David later built the Temple (*Ant.* 1.226). "Quite clearly, Josephus intends to have the reader associate the readiness of Abraham to sacrifice his son with the sacrifices that were, in effect, surrogate offerings at the site of the Temple itself, though Josephus, in his eagerness to avoid theological issues, omits the direct statement connecting the Aqedah with these sacrifices. . . [which] would probably have been too much for a Greek audience and would have been incriminating toward Abraham." L. H. Feldman, "Josephus' Version of the Binding of Isaac," in Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers, ed. Kent H. Richards, (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 119, 122.

¹⁷¹*Ant.* 2.227.

with his presence." In Josephus' rendition of the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham's answer to his son provides an explanation of divine providence.

When everything is ready and Isaac laid on the altar, Abraham makes a speech to his son in which he outlines the happiness which he has brought him. But since God requested that he sacrifice Isaac Abraham does so in return for God's gracious favour to him. The pathos of this speech, as Josephus has written it, is the happiness which Abraham expresses as a result of his son, yet his complete devotion to God in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac.¹⁷²

Isaac responds with joy, saying that he would not have deserved to have been born "were he to reject the decision of God and of his father. . . "(1.232) and he rushes to the altar. That Isaac was an adult at this point and that he rushes to the altar of his own volition may have served to diminish the harshness of Abraham's action, especially in view of Josephus' non-Jewish reader.¹⁷³ But God stands in the way of the slaughter saying that the reason he had given command for the slaughter of Abraham's son was to test his obedience. God now recognized the depth of Abraham's piety (θρησκεία)

¹⁷²L. Feldman, "Hellenizations in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* : The Portrait of Abraham," *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, L. Feldman, G. Hata, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 147.

¹⁷³B. D. Chilton and P. R. Davies, "The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History," *CBQ* 40.4 (1978) 521. They also suggest that Isaac may represent one who served in the war against Rome as a kind of volunteer martyr (522). Explaining the sacrifice to non-Jewish readers who would find it offensive may also be the motivation behind the speech which Josephus attributes to God in which he states that he asked Abraham to slay the boy "from no craving for human blood" (*Ant.* 1.233). Feldman, "Hellenizations in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* : The Portrait of Abraham," *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, L. Feldman, G. Hata, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 144; "Josephus' Version of the Binding of Isaac," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent H. Richards, (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982) ,118.

(1.234) and rewards it by stating that forever after he would regard Abraham and his descendants with tender care.

Josephus ends his portrayal of the offering of Isaac happily: "And they, restored to each other beyond all hope and having heard promises of such great felicity, embraced one another and, the sacrifice ended, returned home to Sarra and lived in bliss, God assisting them in all that they desired" (*Ant.* 1.236). Thus, Josephus has succeeded in his intentions to show how those who "conform to the will of God, and do not venture to transgress laws that have been excellently laid down, prosper in all things beyond belief and for their reward are offered by God felicity. . . ."(*Ant.* 1.114).

Additionally, Feldman rightly emphasizes Josephus' concern to play down the theological aspects of the account, especially those aspects having to do with theodicy, while playing up the virtuous character of Abraham.¹⁷⁴ To secure his depiction of Abraham as deserving the admiration of the Hellenist reader, Josephus concludes his portrayal of the life of Abraham saying, "Abraham died, a man in every virtue supreme, who received from God the honor which was due for his zeal in His service" (*Ant.* 1.256).

5.4 Conclusion: The Function and Significance of Abraham in the *Antiquities* of Josephus

Whether or not Josephus wrote the *Antiquities* from a desire to clear his name with his compatriots is not ultimately discernible from the text. That he was well acquainted with the Jewish law and that he knew Greco-Roman culture and literature, however, is evident. And, that he used this knowledge to write a timely apologetic for the Jews has been established.

¹⁷⁴ "Josephus' Version of the Binding of Isaac," in Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers, ed. Kent H. Richards, (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 127.

That Abraham was part of this apologetic agenda is obvious. Josephus' portrayal of Abraham was that which would have spoken best to his Hellenistic, non-Jewish readers. He is the first to proclaim monotheism, creatively using a popular philosophic proof of God. Abraham is able to refute empty arguments and persuade his audience convincingly on any topic he chooses. He graciously shares his scientific knowledge of arithmetic and astronomy with those in Egypt who in turn will pass it on to the rest of the then civilized world. Abraham is an example of the educated Hellenistic gentleman.

Secondly, Abraham is a military genius. His quick, decisive action and zealous, self-controlled troops enable him to be victor over the slumbering, drunken Assyrian army. At the same time that he is brave and valiant, he is compassionate towards both Lot and his neighbors, the Sodomites. His descendants will similarly use their military prowess to conquer Canaan and acquire it for their homeland.

Thirdly, Abraham is hospitable. He entertains those who are strangers before he realizes that they are angels. His nephew later attests to Abraham's love for humankind.

Fourthly, according to Josephus, those who hold to the doctrines given by the lawgiver participate in the virtue of God. Abraham was shown to obey particular Jewish laws, like circumcision and marriage to Sarah who in Josephus' story had become his niece. Because of Abraham's willingness to submit to the will of God in the offering of Isaac, Abraham is granted felicity. And, because Abraham was so highly virtuous before the law was given, he was simultaneously obedient to the essence of Jewish law--virtue.

Why did Josephus portray Abraham in such a way? First, he was providing an apologetic for Judaism for non-Jewish readers. Jews had been

accused of atheism, misanthropy, offering nothing to civilization, and cowardice. In his portrayal of Abraham, Josephus is showing how the story of the forefather of the Jewish nation refutes all of these charges. In fact, Abraham is said to be "in every virtue supreme" (*Ant.* 1.256). In Hellenistic society, someone could be said to have virtue in reference to such qualities as military prowess, morality, culture, achievement, and knowledge. Abraham was shown to be virtuous in all of these.

Finally, Josephus shows how it is that those who are morally virtuous are rewarded with a happy life. In spite of the dire consequences which were apparent to Abraham from a human level, he was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac, his only source of happiness, in obedience to God's providence. For this action he was given his due in a life of bliss. The message to the Hellenistic reader is that living according to such virtue leads to a happy life. And, since the Jewish law is in keeping with this virtue, the Jewish law is a highly reasonable code by which to live. Abraham's example proves this to be the case.

Chapter Six
Abraham in the Works of Philo

6.1 Introduction

Philo, an Alexandrian Jew (c. 15 B.C.E. - 50 C.E.) belonged to one of the wealthiest and most prominent families in Alexandria.¹ His education was similar to many of the upper-class Hellenistic Jews of his day. When he was young he participated in what was known as the *enkyklios paideia* or general education in which he studied subjects such as grammar, geometry, rhetoric and music.² However, to Philo, these subjects were only in preparation for what he and many other writers of antiquity considered to be the most worthy of subjects, philosophy.³ From his writings it is evident that he was familiar with Stoic, Pythagorean, and Platonic traditions, Greek literature, and Hellenistic mystic philosophy.⁴

¹One of the reasons for this appraisal is that his brother, Alexander Lysimachus, was probably chief inspector of customs on the eastern border of Egypt and guardian of the Emperor Tiberius' mother. See further, Peder Borgen, "Philo of Alexandria," CRINT 2.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 252 - 254. Another reason is that Philo was chosen to head a delegation sent by the Jewish community of Alexandria to the Emperor Caligula. See *De Leg. Gaium* 178 - 182.

²*De Cong.* 74 - 78; *De Cher.* 105. For a further description, see Alan Mendelson Secular Education in Philo of Alexandria. (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1982), 1-45.

³Alan Mendelson, Secular Education in Philo of Alexandria. (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1982), xxiii.

⁴Examples of research into the Hellenistic mystic thought in Philo are E. Bréhier, Les Idées Philosophiques et Religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie, (Paris: Librairie Alphonse

It is also evident from his writing that he received some training in Jewish philosophy from one or more of the synagogues in Alexandria.⁵ His writings may have been used later in a synagogue-school where Philo "taught the higher vision of scripture to a select group of initiates."⁶ Philo's works reveal a Judaism that is strongly Hellenistic. Mendelson has gone so far as to say that although Hellenism permeated the Mediterranean world, the "fusion of Judaism and Hellenism actually reached its acme not in Palestine, but in Alexandria."⁷ Isaak Heinemann was convinced that Greek philosophical traditions had transformed the meaning of Judaism for the Jews in Alexandria in a way distinct from and independent of Palestinian directions.⁸

By Philo's lifetime, the Jewish people had been in Egypt for hundreds of years. Even Artapanus, who is thought to have lived in Alexandria in the third to second centuries B.C.E., provided an apologetic for the ancient history of the Jewish people in Egypt in order to prove that they were not recent immigrants.⁹ E. M. Smallwood contends that the community of Jews in Alexandria at the time of the appointment of Agrippa I (37-44 C.E.) was probably "the largest and most important single Diaspora community in the

Picard & Fils, 1908); E. R. Goodenough, By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism, (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1935).

⁵In *De Som.* 2.127.

⁶R. A. Culpepper, The Johannine School, SBLDS 26 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 211, 212. See *De Spec. Leg.* 2.62; 4.137, 140.

⁷Alan Mendelson, Secular Education in Philo of Alexandria, (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1982), xvii.

⁸Philons griechische und jüdische Bildung, (Breslau: M&H Marcus Verlag, 1932).

⁹Eusebius, *Praep. Evan.* 9.18.1.

world at that time."¹⁰ The Jewish people formed a cross section of the Egyptian population, "of all grades of wealth and social position."¹¹

Because it had been founded by a "conquering foreign dynasty and [was] wholly Greek in character and municipal organization,"¹² Alexandria was a unique city. Under Greek rule, the majority of those with the status of citizenship were Greek; few of the oppressed Egyptians held such status. In fact, the Egyptians became "assimilated with the lower elements of the Greek population."¹³

Whether or not the Jews possessed citizenship in Ptolemaic or even Roman Alexandria has been a matter of debate.¹⁴ They were concentrated in at least two of the five sections of Alexandria.¹⁵ Their official form of government, known as a *politeuma*, was "a recognized, semi-autonomous civic body, [which] had its own constitution and administered its internal affairs as an ethnic unit through officials distinct from and independent of those of the host city."¹⁶ Separate administration and the concentration in

¹⁰E. M. Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 220.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 222-223.

¹²*Ibid.*, 224.

¹³P. M. Fraser, Ptolemaic Alexandria, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 54.

¹⁴*Ibid.*; E. M. Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 227-235; Aryeh Kasher, The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: The Struggle for Equal Rights, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1985), 75-105.

¹⁵*Flaccus* 55. Some Jews apparently also lived in the remaining three quarters of the city, *De Leg. ad Gaium* 132; M. Stern, "The Jewish Diaspora," CRINT I.1 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974), 123.

¹⁶E. M. Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 225.

areas of the city simultaneously ensured that the Jews retained their cohesion as a racial entity.¹⁷

Although relations between the Jews and the Ptolemies had been harmonious, anti-Jewish tensions grew with the annexation of Egypt by the Romans in 30 B.C.E. The Jews in Alexandria benefitted from the Roman annexation "by coming automatically under the protection which it was by then Roman policy to afford to all Jews in the empire in the practice of their religion and the preservation of their national identity."¹⁸

Tension grew when the Romans based the rate of the poll tax upon personal status. Those who were citizens of the Greek cities were exempt from the tax, while the Hellenes of the provincial towns paid a lower rate. The native Egyptians paid the tax in full. "For the Jews the matter of their personal status was therefore of considerable importance, and they seem to have been resolved to hold out for equal status with the Greeks and for being considered citizens of Alexandria."¹⁹

"Greek education and the gymnasium were burning issues to the Jews in Alexandria, since they served as the condition for full civil rights. The encyclical therefore played an important part both in matters of taxes and in the question of gaining access to political offices."²⁰ Philo supported the policy

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 230.

¹⁹M. Stern, "The Jewish Diaspora," CRINT I.1 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974), 125.

²⁰Peder Borgen, "Philo: Survey of Research since World War II," ANRW 21.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 116; see also Victor Tcherikover, Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews. (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University for the Jewish Publication Society of America, 1966), 311-314.

that Jews should participate actively in the social life of Alexandria. Peder Borgen has contended that Philo's allegory of Genesis 16:1-16 in which Abraham proceeds from Hagar and Ishmael to Sarah and Isaac represents "the encyclical education. . . which the Jews have in common with the pagan surroundings; the other school [Sarah] is the genuine, Jewish philosophy."²¹

Tension further increased with the accession of Gaius Caligula in March, 37 C.E. Although Avilius Flaccus, the Roman governor of Egypt, had governed excellently until this point,²² his position was precarious under the new emperor and his post was eventually terminated. Consequently, Flaccus held the office for the present, but his recall was inevitable. At this point, the Greek nationalist party posed as Flaccus' friends and took advantage of the situation. They promised to intercede on behalf of Flaccus at the imperial court, provided he supported them in their conflict with the Jews.

Initial violence against the Jews occurred in the form of a counter-demonstration to a visit from Agrippa I who made an ostentatious parade through the streets of Alexandria. Flaccus made no attempt to prevent the Greeks from chanting gibes and mocking the Jewish ruler.²³ The Greek mob burned or demolished many synagogues in parts of Alexandria where comparatively few Jews lived and in the Jewish districts they made the synagogues unfit for use by placing portraits of Gaius in them.²⁴

²¹Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo, NovTSup 10 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 109; cf. *De Mut. Nom.* 253-263; *De Cong.* 35.

²²*Flaccus* 8. According to Philo, Flaccus "excelled all his predecessors."

²³*Flaccus* 25-35.

²⁴*De Leg.*^{ad}*Gaium* 132-139.

The situation was only to get worse, as attested by Philo's statements in *Flaccus* 53-54:

he [Flaccus] proceeded to another scheme. . . the destruction of our citizenship, so that when our ancestral customs and our participation in political rights, the sole mooring on which our life was secured, had been cut away, we might undergo the worst misfortunes with no cable to cling to for safety. For a few days afterwards he issued a proclamation in which he denounced us as foreigners and aliens and gave us no right of pleading our case but condemned us unjudged.

According to Aryeh Kasher, the problem with Flaccus' actions was not so much that it curtailed the hopes of the Jews for full citizenship, but that it dissolved the rights accorded to those in the *politeuma*. The political organizational structure of Alexandria was a collection of *politeumata*. What concerns Philo about the decree that they are now "foreigners and aliens" is the loss of their protection in reference to their ancestral laws, to their property and to themselves. "Consequently, the Jews were no longer recognized as an organized group with political privileges, and being 'foreigners and aliens' they were handed over to the *polis* (as individuals) for good or for evil."²⁵ Thus, the request on the part of the Alexandrian Greeks that the Jewish people be surrendered to them was granted.

The Greeks put Flaccus' ruling into effect of their own accord. They chased Jews into the one part of the city where Flaccus ordered the Jews to concentrate which became a virtual ghetto, or they cruelly tortured or massacred them before they could take refuge.²⁶ People died not only from

²⁵Aryeh Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: The Struggle for Equal Rights*, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1985), 242; see also S. Applebaum, "The Legal Status of the Jewish Communities in the Diaspora," CRINT I.1 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974), 434-40.

²⁶*Flaccus* 55-72; see also *De Leg.*^{ad}*Gaium* 120-131.

the famine and sickness which resulted from such actions but also from being burned alive in the middle of the city.²⁷ Finally, on Gaius' birthday, numbers of Jews were taken to the theatre and were scourged, some of them to death, or they were tortured. ²⁸

Two embassies went to Rome. The Greeks went to exculpate themselves and to keep the Jews in their unprivileged position. The five Jews who went under the leadership of Philo sought redress for their injuries and the restoration of their rights and the reinstatement of the politeuma. The Jews drew up a statement to submit to the emperor which was based upon matters raised by the riots. ²⁹ When Gaius returned from his European campaigns he was virtually no help to them at all but, as Philo reports, he seemed to be most concerned about why they could not consider him to be a god.³⁰

After Gaius' death, Claudius became emperor. It was he who, after listening to both delegations, decided in favour of the Jews. He reaffirmed the traditional Augustan policy of allowing the Jews to observe their laws freely but warned them not to try to win more privileges than they formerly had.

^{ad}
²⁷*De Leg. Gaium* 130; *Flaccus* 68.

²⁸*Flaccus* 73-85, 95-96.

²⁹ The statement included "their religious liberty and exemption from the imperial cult, which had been called into question by the attack on the synagogues, and that of their civic rights and position in Alexandria, which had been undermined by Flaccus' proclamation." E. M. Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 243. See also the good summary of the life of Philo by Ronald Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo*, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200BC to AD 200 I.ii, eds. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1989), 1-27.

^{ad}
³⁰*De Leg. Gaium* 350-372.

The synagogues in Alexandria were safeguarded and the *politeuma* was reinstated.³¹

6.2 Philo's Literary Works

The vast amount of literature which was written by Philo can most readily be broken up into four categories. First, literature based on the Pentateuch which "lacks an opening series of verses and the content of which flows from the title of the particular essay"³² which I will designate as the "Pentateuch in Rewritten Form."³³ Secondly, literature which begins "with a series of biblical verses, the content of which is shaped by these verses."³⁴ I will call this type of literature "The Exegetical Commentaries."³⁵ A third type of literature I will designate "Pentateuchal Principles Applied to Contemporary Issues and Events"³⁶ contains a few works in which "contemporary issues and conditions are more in the foreground" than in Philo's other works, and "they are interpreted on the basis of the Pentateuchal principles which Philo has set forth in his interpretation of the Laws of

³¹See also *Ant.* 19.280-5.

³²Samuel Sandmel, Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction, (New York, Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1979), 30.

³³From Peder Borgen, Philo, John, and Paul: New Perspectives on Judaism and Early Christianity, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 17 - 18. I have chosen Borgen's titles over Sandmel's titles (respectively, "Exposition of the Law" and "Allegory of the Law") because while Philo uses more allegory in the second type of literature, he uses allegory in both types, thus Sandmel's titles can be misleading. See Samuel Sandmel, Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction, (New York, Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1979), 30.

³⁴Samuel Sandmel, Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction, (New York, Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1979), 30.

³⁵Also from Peder Borgen, Philo, John, and Paul: New Perspectives on Judaism and Early Christianity, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 17 - 18.

³⁶*Ibid.*

Moses."³⁷ The fourth type are the works which can simply be called "Questions and Answers" because they follow the form of the asking of a brief question about the meaning of a biblical passage or verse and the answer in response.

The texts that will be used in this study of Abraham in Philo and fall under the category of the Pentateuch in Rewritten Form are: *On Abraham*, *On the Virtues* and *On Rewards and Punishments*. Texts which fall under the category of Exegetical Commentaries used in this chapter are *The Migration of Abraham*, *The Allegorical Laws*, *On Drunkenness*, *Who is the Heir of Divine Things*, *On the Cherubim*, *On Flight and Finding*, *On the Giants*, *On the Change of Names*, and *On Dreams I and II*. No literature from the third category will be used, but citations from the fourth category are taken from *Questions and Answers on Genesis* and *Questions and Answers on Exodus*.

For whom were Philo's works intended? Philo was probably writing for both Jewish and Gentile readers.³⁸ Sandmel asserts that the more literal portrayal of Abraham found in *De Abrahamo* may have been written to non-Jews while the more allegorical portrayal of Abraham found in the *Migration of Abraham* may have been written to Jews.³⁹ Even considering Philo's pro-Jewish bias when he writes about the severe persecution of the Jews at the hands of the Greeks in *Flaccus* and *Embassy to Gaius*, it is still obvious that

³⁷Ibid., 41; see also 41 - 51.

³⁸This is the position held by Peder Borgen, "Philo of Alexandria," CRINT 2.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 233.

³⁹Samuel Sandmel, *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature*. (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 107.

animosity existed between the two groups. It is reasonable to assume that one of Philo's underlying motives may have been to provide an apologetic for Judaism and its distinctive beliefs and practices to the Hellenistic Gentile reader.

Another reason for Philo's work was to prevent Jews who were sympathetic with Hellenism and on the verge of apostasy from totally forsaking Judaism. From Philo's accounts, it appears that there were not only Jews in Alexandria who were opposed to the kind of philosophical allegorizing of the law that Philo practiced, but also those who were so allegorical in their treatment of the law that they rejected the literal sense of the law.⁴⁰ In his work *On Providence* Philo is depicted as debating the belief in divine providence with his nephew, Tiberius Julius Alexander, whom Wolfson categorizes as belonging to the class of apostates known as "uprooted Jewish intellectuals."⁴¹ This type of presentation would reasonably find readership among those Jews who had similar concerns.

⁴⁰*Migr. Abr.* 92. For a discussion, see Harry A. Wolfson, Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, rev. ed., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1947; reprint, 1948), 1:57-68.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 1:82. Wolfson classifies other types of Jewish apostates as those who forsook the law because of their own weaknesses and desires and as those who are apostates because of their own social ambition, 1.73-85.

In a more recent work V. Nikiprowetzky has stated,⁴²

Il est certain que c'est toute l'oeuvre exégétique de Philon, et non pas seulement une partie de cette oeuvre, que est marquée du caractère apologétique. . . toute l'oeuvre exégétique de Philon est née du désir de comprendre l'Écriture d'une manière légitime. Cette explication philosophique et scientifique de la Bible rend Philon capable de méditer, ou de contempler, en quelque sorte, la parole de Dieu. . . Une telle exégèse doit réconcilier *par voie de conséquence*, les Juifs perplexes avec la Loi de leurs pères; aux païens elle doit montrer tous les motifs qu'ils ont de respecter la législation de Moïse ou même de l'adopter.

While these are Philo's apologetic concerns, he must be understood as an exegete who "only expresses his ideas as a function of the scriptural text."⁴³

Peder Borgen has argued that within Philo's works, particularly his exegetical commentaries, are homilies which were preached in Alexandrian synagogues.⁴⁴ Although the contention that they are homilies has met with

⁴²"It is certain that all the exegetical work of Philo, and not solely a fraction of this work, is marked by an apologetic character. . . all the exegetical work of Philo is born of the desire to understand Scripture in a legitimate manner. This philosophical and scientific explication of the Bible makes Philo capable of meditating on or of contemplating the word of God in some way. . . Such an exegesis must, *by way of consequence*, reconcile those Jews who are perplexed with the Law of the fathers; to Gentiles it must show them the grounds that they have to respect the legislation of Moses, or even to adopt it." V. Nikiprowetzky, Le commentaire de l'écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie, ALGHJ 11 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 182-183; see also P. Borgen, "Philo of Alexandria," CRINT 2.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 233.

⁴³ V. Nikiprowetzky, Le commentaire de l'écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie, ALGHJ 11 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 181.

⁴⁴Peder Borgen, Bread from Heaven, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 28-58. Borgen concludes that both Jewish Hellenistic homilies and Palestinian homilies had homiletic patterns in common. He bases his work in part upon the analysis of the Jewish Hellenistic homilies in comparison with Hellenistic diatribe found in H. Thyen, Der Stil der Jüdisch-Hellenistischen Homilie, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955) who earlier conjectured that Philo's allegorical commentaries were preached in the Alexandrian synagogues, esp. 117-120.

disagreement,⁴⁵ what has been supported is that Philo's works are a product of the activities of the Alexandrian synagogue. "Philo's various descriptions of the gatherings in the synagogue. . . suggest that his writings to a large extent should be regarded as a product of exegetical traditions and methods from the activities in the synagogue."⁴⁶

That Philo's work is to be viewed in terms of a systematic philosophy⁴⁷ has been contested in recent years by scholars such as Burton Mack. Mack contends that fundamentally there has been "a failure to recognize the form and intention of the Philonic corpus as scriptural interpretation, as well as a failure to explore the possibility that the corpus may *contain a great deal of material from the traditions of Jewish interpretation which can not be attributed directly to Philo at all* ."⁴⁸ Hamerton-Kelly has suggested that one of the methods of procedure which is pertinent to the study of the composition of Philo's works is source analysis. By source analysis he does not mean merely a written source but something less definable. "One must be prepared to entertain as a source -- or more precisely, a tradition -- something less defined than a verbatim reproduction of a written document -- for instance, notes expanded by Philo on

⁴⁵R. A. Culpepper, The Johannine School, SBLDS 26 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975) 211.

⁴⁶P. Borgen, "Philo. Survey of Research since World War II," ANRW 2.21.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 115.

⁴⁷For example, as found in the work of H. A. Wolfson, Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, rev. ed., 2 vols., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1947; reprint, 1948).

⁴⁸B. Mack, "Philo Judaeus and Exegetical Traditions in Alexandria," ANRW 2.21.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984) 231, italics mine.

the basis of oral tradition."⁴⁹ His methodological suggestions for source analysis are: 1. attention to explicit references to sources; 2. incongruity and inconsistency within the works; 3. comparison with non-Philonic texts; 4. comparison with other Philonic texts; 5. etymologies as indicators of a source; 6. an impression of Philo's thought as a whole; 7. some attention to form of argument or composition.⁵⁰ These will be kept in mind as a study of the traditions of Abraham in Philo is pursued.

6.3 The Interpretation of Abraham in the Works of Philo

Because the concern of this thesis is the traditions of Abraham in Philo, this section is divided according to the major traditions of Abraham found in Philo's works. The focus of the research is on the works which fall into the category "The Pentateuch in Rewritten Form," particularly *On Abraham*, because these works provide the most concrete evidence of extra-biblical traditions about Abraham. Where the works from the Exegetical Commentaries and from *Questions and Answers on Genesis* substantially supplement the works from the first category, they will also be discussed or noted.⁵¹

⁴⁹Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, "Sources and Traditions in Philo Judaeus: Prolegomena to an Analysis of His Writings," *Studia Philonica* 1 (1972) 16.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 15.

⁵¹Part of this methodology is based on the statement of Samuel Sandmel which I perceive as being correct that "Abraham is not a different character in *De Abrahamo* (possibly written for non-Jews) from the Abraham of the *Allegory* [Exegetical Commentaries] (written, probably, for Jews)." *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature*. (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 107.

6.3.1 Abraham the First Monotheist

Abraham as the First Monotheist in the Pentateuch in Rewritten Form

In *On Abraham*, Philo describes Abraham's migration from Chaldea in both the literal and the allegorical senses (*De Abr.* 62-88). Literally, Abraham is a man of wisdom.⁵² Wisdom was a revered characteristic in Philo's world; the kind of wisdom which Abraham is described as having is contemplative wisdom. Abraham emigrates for the noblest of reasons--he has neither, for example, been banished nor is he interested in making money via commerce. Abraham's emigration is "one of soul rather than body" (*De Abr.* 66). Allegorically, Abraham is in search of the true God (*De Abr.* 68-69).⁵³

Philo uses allegory much like the Stoics who converted Homeric personalities into symbols representing:

aspects of human characteristics or dispositions [which] could enable one to continue a sense of personal connection with the ancient past, this by making it contemporary and universal in the sense that these human characteristics still abided among men.⁵⁴

One example of such allegory from the *Odyssey* is the maxim attributed to Ariston of Chios, "Those who neglect philosophy and spend their time on ordinary studies are like the Suitors who desired Penelope but slept with her maid."⁵⁵ Hellenistic allegory used by Philo was characterized by being

⁵²*De Abr.* 68; cf. *De Cher.* 18; *De Post.* 27.

⁵³Cf. *De Abr.* 85-87.

⁵⁴Samuel Sandmel, "Philo: The Man, His Writings, His Significance," ANRW 2.21.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 13.

⁵⁵Kathleen Freeman, Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948), 139; see further, F. H. Colson, "Philo on Education," JTS 18 (1916-1917) 151-162, esp. 153-154.

"entirely unhistorical; it took no account at all of the historical situation, and very little of the original meaning of the material allegorized."⁵⁶ It is the device by which Philo interprets Scripture "as a huge repository of Platonism and Stoicism."⁵⁷ This belief that Greek philosophy could be found in the Jewish Scriptures attested to the greater antiquity of Judaism in comparison with the Greek world and provided an apologetic for Judaism.⁵⁸

Abraham Migrates from Chaldea and Astrological Knowledge

According to Philo's rendition, Abraham's migration from Chaldea to Haran was, allegorically, from the worship of the Creation to the worship of the Creator.

The migrations as set forth. . . are made. . . according to the laws of allegory by a virtue-loving soul in its search for the true God. For the Chaldeans were especially cultivated⁵⁹ in astronomy⁶⁰ and they ascribed everything to the movement of the stars. They supposed that the course of the phenomena of the world⁶¹ is guided by influences contained in numbers (*ἀριθμός*) and numerical proportions (*ἀριθμῶν ἀναλογίαι*). Thus they glorified the visible (*ὄρατός*) existence, leaving out of consideration the invisible (*ἀόρατος*) and intelligible (*νοητός*). But while exploring numerical order as applied to the revolution of the sun, moon, and other planets and fixed stars, and the changes of

⁵⁶Richard Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, (London: SCM Press, 1959), 62.

⁵⁷Samuel Sandmel, "Philo: The Man, His Writings, His Significance," *ANRW* 2.21.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 14.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹F. H. Colson translates *διαπινέω* as "active." *My adaptation.*

⁶⁰Literally "*ἀστρονομία*", but in Philo's culture it would mean the same thing as "astrology," which is Colson's translation; For the Chaldean involvement in astrology, see also *Quaest. et Sol. Gen.* 3.1.

⁶¹Literally "*τὰ ἐν κόσμῳ*" which Philo will define in the next few lines.

the yearly seasons and the interdependence of phenomena in heaven and on earth, they concluded that the world itself was God, thus profanely likening the created (τὸ γινόμενον) to the Creator (*De Abr.* 68-69).

Philo continues by saying that Abraham had been a "Chaldean" for a long time (*De Abr.* 70).⁶² To Philo and much of the Roman world, being called a Chaldean connoted someone who foretold the future based upon astrology. The Chaldeans "established a profession of astrologers, whose craft it was to observe the position of sun, moon and stars at a man's birth or at some other critical hour, and thence to decide his future character or career. These wanderers, called by the Romans 'Chaldaei' or 'Mathematici' spread over all Europe. . . "⁶³

A similar depiction of Abraham is found in *On the Virtues* :

The most ancient member (πρεσβυτάτος) of the Jewish nation was a Chaldaean by birth, the son of an astrologer (ἀστρονομικός) who study the lore of that science⁶⁴ and think that the stars and the whole heaven and universe are gods, the authors, they say, of the events which befall each man for good or for ill, and hold that there is no originating cause (αἴτια) outside the things we perceive by our senses. What could be more grievous or more capable of proving the low birth of the soul than this, that its knowledge of the many,

⁶²For an investigation of the possible system of those whom Philo called the 'Chaldaean' see B. Mack, Logos und Sophia: Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie im hellenistischen Judentum, SUNT 10 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1973), 122-130.

⁶³ E. V. Arnold, Roman Stoicism, (Cambridge, Cambridge U. Press, 1911; New York: The Humanities Press, 1958), 6. Cf. *De Abr.* 71, 77. For notes on Χαλδαικήν in Pseudo-Eupolemus, see the previous chapter, "Abraham in Josephus."

⁶⁴Literally "περὶ τὰ μαθήματα διατριβόντων." Colson points out that although μαθήματα usually refers to mathematics in Philo, here it is definitely restricted to astrology.

the secondary (δευτερος), the created (γενητός) only leads it to ignore the one (ένος), the Primal (πρεσβυτάτος), the Uncreated (ἀγενήτος) and Maker of all (ποιητοῦ τῶν ὅλων) . . . (*De Virt.* 212-213).⁶⁵

Again, Abraham is described as coming from a nation that practices astrology. Philo noticeably makes a play on words which contrasts Abraham the eldest (πρεσβυτάτος) of the Jewish nation and the primary being (πρεσβυτάτος), God. He also places the base belief that what is secondary (δευτερος) is God in contrast to the one (ἓ) who is God, and according the created (γενητός) divine status in contrast to the Uncreated (ἀγενήτος) and maker of all (ποιητοῦ τῶν ὅλων).

Specifically, Philo is condemning a kind of Stoic belief in which everything contained some aspect of the divine. Stoics believed that of the four elements (earth, water, air, fire), fire has a divine nature,⁶⁶ and all the other elements in turn contain some proportion of fire.⁶⁷ Consequently, everything on earth has a part of the divine nature in it.

But Stoicism was not strictly pantheism.⁶⁸ Arnold points out that "the more central position of Stoicism is that the deity bears the same relation to

⁶⁵Cf. *De Abr.* 77-80 where besides describing Abraham in ways very similar to those in *De Virt.* 212-213 above, Philo deletes all mention of the promise of land to Abraham, although he is exegeting Gen. 12:7. The land promised to Abraham is either overlooked or allegorized in Philo. For example, see *Quis Her.* 96-98, where the land is allegorized as wisdom; cf. *De Som.* 2.255-256.

⁶⁶ *Aug. Civ. De.* 8.5.

⁶⁷E. V. Arnold, *Roman Stoicism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1911; New York, The Humanities Press, 1958), 181.

⁶⁸E. R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism*, (New Haven, CT: Yale U. Press, 1935), 138. Both Goodenough and Sandmel call it a "materialistic pantheism." *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature*, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 115; cf. E. V. Arnold, *Roman Stoicism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1911; New York, The Humanities Press, 1958), 185 .

the universe as a man's soul to his body, and the universe is therefore no more all divine than a man is all soul."⁶⁹ Just as it was questioned whether the soul was situated in the head or in the heart, in the case of the universe it was questioned whether its "principate" was in the sun,⁷⁰ or the sky generally.⁷¹

To the Stoics, the mind (*νοῦς*) was what the human being had in common with the divine. In contrast to Aristotle who believed in four causes of creation,⁷² and Plato who added the fifth (the "idea"),⁷³ to the Stoics, only one cause (*αἴτιος*) existed who was the maker of the universe. "The first cause can be none other than the primal creative fire in a new aspect; equally it is the creative word."⁷⁴ Seneca speaks of the cause not only as being single, but as "creative reason, the deity. . . 'the maker.'"⁷⁵

By concentrating on numerical proportions (*De Abr.* 68-69), Philo may be condemning the Pythagoreans who believed that the universe was controlled by numbers (*ἀριθμός*) and the proportions between numbers (*ἀριθμῶν ἀναλογίαι*). Aristotle spoke of the Pythagoreans as those who believe "that numbers are the ultimate things in the whole physical universe, they

⁶⁹E. V. Arnold, *Roman Stoicism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1911; New York, The Humanities Press, 1958), 185; See Augustine's discussion of Varro in *Aug. Civ. De.* vii.6.

⁷⁰As was the belief of Cleanthes, *Eus. Praep. Evan.* 15.15, 7.

⁷¹*Diog. L.* vii.138.

⁷²Matter, the workman, the form, and the purpose (*Seneca Ep. Mor.* 65.4-5).

⁷³*Seneca Ep. Mor.* 65.7.

⁷⁴E. V. Arnold, *Roman Stoicism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1911; New York, The Humanities Press, 1958), 162.

⁷⁵*Seneca, Ep. Mor.* 65.11-14.

assumed the elements of numbers (τῶν ἀριθμῶν στοιχεῖα) to be the elements of everything (στοιχεῖα πάντων), and the whole universe to be a proportion or number (ἄρμονίαν . . . καὶ ἀριθμόν).⁷⁶ While Philo does not speak literally of "harmony" (literal musical intervals),⁷⁷ which the Pythagoreans believed to be the outcome of the movement of the planets, the proportions between the planets is reflected in his choice of words. Because not everything could be counted, the idea of proportion between numbers was a central Pythagorean principle.⁷⁸

It seems most reasonable to assume that Philo is reacting against some of the presuppositions of Stoicism and Pythagoreanism: that matter contained an element of the divine, that the planets were themselves gods, and that everything was controlled by arithmetic and numerical principles.

Abraham leaves the presuppositions of astrology behind (i.e., Chaldaea) in order to seek the true God. He is described as beginning to see and discern "a reinsman (ἡνίοχος) and pilot (κυβερνήτης)⁷⁹ presiding over the world and directing in safety his own work . . ." (*De Abr.* 70). According to David Runia's interpretation of the Logos in Philo, "the Logos permeates and holds together the entire cosmos. Heaven is . . . the highest and chief residence of the divine Logos in the cosmos. Philo likes to illustrate this with the image

⁷⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.5.2; See also W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 1, *The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1962), 295-301.

⁷⁷W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 1, *The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1962), 298.

⁷⁸Edwin L. Minar, *Early Pythagorean Politics in Practice and Theory*, (Baltimore, MD: Waverly Press, Inc., 1942), 114-115.

⁷⁹See also Plato, *Sym.* 187.

of the chariot, familiar to him from both the Platonic *Phaedrus* myth and Judaic tradition. . . "80 According to the *Phaedrus* myth Zeus, "the great leader in heaven, drives a 'winged chariot'"81 from which he arranges everything. Paraphrasing Plato, in *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, Philo states, "'Heaven is a flying chariot' because of its very swift revolution which surpasses in speed even the birds in their course."82 Of this chariot the Logos is the reinsman and God its charioteer. "The charioteer passes on to the reinsman the directions necessary for the correct guidance of the universe. . . "83

Abraham Migrates to Haran or the Knowledge of God Based upon Self-knowledge

Abraham's migration to Haran is caused when, in order to establish the sight which had been revealed to Abraham, the holy word (λόγος) encourages Abraham to find the great by self-observation. In *De Abrahamo*, Haran is symbolic for the senses which are of no use unless the invisible mind (νοῦς ἀόρατος) is there to govern them. From this observation Abraham comes to apprehend what it is he wanted to know: that just as he has an invisible mind to rule his own senses, so the world is governed by an invisible king (ἀόρατος ὁ βασιλεύς). Philo continues by saying, "Anyone who reflects on these things . . . will know for certain that the world is not the primal God (ὁ

⁸⁰David Runia, *Philo Judaeus and the Timaeus of Plato*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 214.

⁸¹Plato, *Phaed.* 246e

⁸²*Quaest. et Sol. Gen.* 3.3.

⁸³David Runia, *Philo Judaeus and the Timaeus of Plato*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 215. Cf. *De Som.* 1.157; *De Fug.* 101.

πρῶτος θεός) but a work of the primal God (ἀλλ' ἔργον τοῦ πρώτου θεοῦ) and Father of all. . ." (*De Abr.* 74-75).

Philo's description of Abraham's reasoning to the existence of God from analyzing himself sounds much like the description of Reason which rules the world in comparison with that which rules the body offered by the Stoics.⁸⁴

The world. . . is ordered by reason and providence. . . inasmuch as reason pervades every part of it, just as does the soul in us. For through some parts it passes as a "hold" or containing force, as is the case with our bones and sinews; while through others it passes as intelligence, as in the ruling part of the soul. Thus, then, the whole world is a living being, endowed with soul and reason. . .

Philo's argument using the figure of Abraham proves "as is contended by the Stoics, that as there is a mind within man so there must be a mind within the world."⁸⁵

Even Abraham's change of name is based upon his turning from his former beliefs in astrology to his recognition of the one who governs the world (*De Abr.* 81-84). His former name, Abram, signified one "called astrologer and meteorologist who takes care of the Chaldean tenets as a father would of his children"⁸⁶ while his new name, Abraham, signifies the "elect father of sound" who is called elect based upon his merits. Philo then describes the basis of the merits, "Now to the meteorologist nothing at all seems greater than the universe, and he credits it with the causation of

⁸⁴ *Diog. L.* vii.138-139 .

⁸⁵ E. R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism*, (New Haven, Yale, 1935), 138.

⁸⁶ Cf. *De Cher.* 4, 7; *De Gig.* 62, 64; *De Mut. Nom.* 66-67.

what comes into being. But the wise man with more discerning eyes sees something more perfect perceived by mind, something which rules and governs, the master and pilot of all else" (*De Abr.* 84).

At the conclusion of this section on the migration of Abraham, Philo says that he has shown how Abraham was drawn away from his former life, "and his mind (νοῦς) did not remain. . . in the realm of sense (τὸν ὄρατὸν κόσμον), nor suppose that the visible world was the Almighty and Primal God, but using its reason (λογισμῶ) sped upwards and turned its gaze upon the intelligible order (νοητός) which is superior to the visible and upon Him who is maker and ruler of both alike" (*De Abr.* 88).

The "reason" (λογισμῶ) which Abraham used is described by Plato as being the highest nature in a human being.⁸⁷ And, again, in tandem with one aspect of Stoic cosmology, Abraham's mind (νοῦς) saw the corresponding intelligible (νοητός) order which is the Maker and Ruler of the world. Unlike some Stoic ideology in which the visible creation was believed to contain the divine, Abraham saw beyond the visible to the Primal, Creator God.

Abraham the Monotheist in the Exegetical Commentaries

Most of the depictions of Abraham in this category are found in *On the Migration of Abraham*. His migration consists of a variety of stages, many of which Philo allegorizes from Genesis 12: 1-3. The first stage towards full salvation is removal from three localities: land (body), kindred (sense perception) and his father's house (speech). Abraham is adjured to "make

⁸⁷E. V. Arnold, *Roman Stoicism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1911; New York, The Humanities Press, 1958), 57. The concept of "seeing" as intellectual discernment is often found in Plato. See J. C. B. Gosling, *Plato*, in *The Arguments of the Philosophers*, Ted Honderich, ed., (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 122; see also below.

thyself a stranger to them in judgment and purpose; let none of them cling to thee, rise superior to them all. . . " (*Migr. Abr.* 7).⁸⁸

After expounding allegorically upon a number of subjects including Abraham and the law (see also below), Philo resumes his allegory with Genesis 12:4⁸⁹ saying:⁹⁰

Abraham migrated from Chaldea and dwelt in Haran, and. . . after his father's death there, he removes from that country also. . . What remark does this call for? The Chaldeans have the reputation of having, in a degree quite beyond that of other peoples, elaborated astronomy and the casting of nativities. They have set up a harmony between . . . heavenly and earthly. . . These men imagined that this visible universe was the only thing in existence, either being itself God or containing God in itself as the soul of the whole (τὴν τῶν δλων ψυχὴν). And they made fate (εἰμαρμένη) and necessity divine, thus filling human life with much impiety by teaching that apart from phenomena there is no originating cause (αἴτια). . . but that the circuits of sun and moon and of the other heavenly bodies determine for every being in existence both good things and their opposites (*Migr. Abr.* 177-179).

Philo proceeds with the interpretation of finding God allegorically (*Mig. Abr.* 184-185). Although the text is based upon the account of Abraham, he does not refer to Abraham but exhorts his reader to migrate, just as Abraham was depicted as migrating in *On Abraham*. In order to leave Chaldea

⁸⁸In this section, I am interested in finding out how Philo portrays Abraham finding God allegorically and what this means for his reader. In Sandmel's work, his allegorical Abraham "is the record of the process through which Abraham becomes the man of perfect piety and virtue." Seeing God is only a part of this process. For an in-depth look at the entire migration of the allegorical Abraham, see "[Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature](#)." (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 141-211.

⁸⁹"So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran."

⁹⁰It is also said that in departing from Chaldea Abraham is departing from astrology in *Quaest. et Sol. Gen.* 3.1; *Quis. Her.* 96-99. See a similar description of the folly of the Chaldeans and the belief of Abraham in *De Mut. Nom.* 15-16.

allegorically, the reader is to relinquish astrology, realizing that the universe is not the primal God but the handiwork of the primal God, and that the movements of the constellations are not the causes of fortune (*Migr. Abr.* 194).

Next, the reader is to examine the inner self.⁹¹ Just as this examination should lead to the discovery of the reason which is master of all that is good and bad within itself, so should it lead to the discovery that there is a mind in the universe that controls it (*Migr. Abr.* 185-186). This self-examination should lead to the discernment of the Universal Father (*Migr. Abr.* 195) through a mystical detachment⁹² from the physical self of senses (Haran) (*Migr. Abr.* 195).⁹³

In his description of migration from Chaldea to Haran to God, Philo makes his migration of Abraham found above in *On Abraham* directly applicable to the reader. The analogy between his depiction of the migration of Abraham and the reader is direct; he describes aspects of human characteristics which have a personal connection with the ancient past. He makes the migration of Abraham contemporary and universal in the sense that these human characteristics still existed among people.

But what specifically is he telling his readers to do? It seems most reasonable from the earlier discussion based upon *On Abraham* to assume that he is addressing some of the beliefs of the Stoics, viz, that the created universe itself was a god or gods, and that apart from what exists there is not

⁹¹Cf. *De Som.* 1.52-60.

⁹²Cf. *Migr. Abr.* 190 and Colson's note 4. 246.

⁹³Cf. *Quis. Her.* 69-70.

an originating Cause. In the above citation from the *Migration of Abraham*, Philo also speaks of the soul and of fate. Both of these were important concepts in Stoicism. The idea of the soul of the world represents the view of the Stoics "whose God. . . is variously described by them either as the . . . "mind of the world," or "the soul of the world."⁹⁴ And, the idea of fate or εἰμαρμένη was equally important to the Stoics. It is in fact related to the concepts of the Chaldeans,⁹⁵

The heavenly bodies move incessantly in their orbits; there is no force either within or without them that can turn them aside a hair's breadth, or make their pace quicker or slower. No prayers of men, no prerogatives of gods can make them change. . . What will be, will be; what will not be, cannot be. . . all things take place according to fate; and fate is . . . the system by which the universe is conducted.

Philo is acting against a kind of determinism manifested in the signs of the stars and planets. Nothing is outside of this system of the phenomena of the world. Philo's problem with deifying fate is that this system then becomes God, rather than the First Cause which is outside of the system. Philo is defending the concept of Jewish monotheism: "This attack on the 'Chaldaeans' is for Philo an important element in his defence of Jewish monotheism against the threats to it contained in philosophies contemporary not with Abraham but with himself."⁹⁶

⁹⁴Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1947; reprint, 1948), 1:176-177.

⁹⁵E. V. Arnold, *Roman Stoicism*, (Cambridge, Cambridge U. Press, 1911; New York: The Humanities Press, 1958), 200.

⁹⁶R. Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo*, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200, eds. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1989), 30.

In the Exegetical Commentaries we find that although Abraham reaches the level of the logos, he has not yet reached the essence of God. This is stated, for example, in Philo's interpretation of the apparent discrepancy in Genesis 22:3b - 4 where Abraham is said to have both reached the place and to be looking at it from afar.⁹⁷

. . . But when he has his place in the divine Word he does not actually reach Him Who is in very essence God, but sees (ὁράω) Him from afar. . . all he sees (ὁράω) is the bare fact that God is far away from all Creation, and that the apprehension of Him is removed to a very great distance from all human power of thought. . . what is signified is something like this: 'he came to the place and looked up and saw with his eyes' (ἀναβλέψας τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς εἶδεν) the place itself to which he had come, that it was a long way off from God for Whom no name nor utterance nor conception of any sort is adequate (*De Som.* I.66-67).

Through his interpretation of Genesis 22: 3b - 4, Philo shows that "though what is said appears to involve a contradiction, there is no contradiction if the statement in question is interpreted allegorically."⁹⁸ Although Abraham has found that God exists through the evidence of his handiwork, and had intended to go further in his understanding of God, he stops "because he sees, once the eyes of his understanding have been opened, that he has been in chase of an elusive quarry difficult to capture and always leaving its pursuers far behind."⁹⁹ Although Philo believes in the superiority of reason, he is

⁹⁷"Abraham rose early in the morning. . . took two of his young men . . . and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away." Cf. also *De Post.* 18-20.

⁹⁸Ronald Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo*, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200, I.ii, eds. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1989), 189.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 190.

also aware that reason has limitations in the search for the knowledge of God. "All that even the wisest mind can know of God is in fact that he exists."¹⁰⁰

Israel: the Nation that "Sees" God

Another important theme connected with Abraham in the works of Philo is that he "sees" that God exists. In the examples above, the word for seeing (ὁράω) is used in the sense of comprehending. While it is true in the above examples that Abraham sees or comprehends that he knows that God exists but he does not know the essence of God, Philo's portrayal of Abraham "seeing" God has further significance. For example, in the citations above under the category of the Pentateuch in Rewritten Form, Abraham has already been described as "seeing" or discerning that God existed.¹⁰¹

Built upon the example of their forebears who have "seen" God, Israel is often called the "nation of vision."¹⁰² Abraham, who discerned or saw the Maker of the world by contemplating nature¹⁰³ is the "founder of the nation and the race since from him as root sprang the young plant called Israel, which observes and contemplates all the things of nature" (*Quis Her.* 279) and which "has eyes to see Him that IS. . ." (*Mig. Abr.* 54). "In spite of the harsh attitude which Philo often displays towards sense-perception in general, there are numerous passages where he singles out the sense of sight

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹He is described as beginning to see (βλέπειν ἀρξάμενος) and discern (καθοράω) "a charioteer and pilot presiding over the world and directing in safety his own work . . ." (*De Abr.* 70). After Abraham left astrology, ". . . his mind then saw for the first time with its recovered sight" (*De Abr.* 78).

¹⁰²*De Mut. Nom.* 258; *Quod Deus Immut.* 144; *De Abr.* 57.

¹⁰³*Quis Her.* 96-99

for praise."¹⁰⁴ It is also true that in Philo an intimate connection between seeing and contemplation exists.¹⁰⁵ Wisdom and philosophy have their origin in the sense of sight because by considering the cosmos, one considers who its creator is and what living according to nature requires.

Scholars have argued whether Israel who "sees God" represents the concrete nation of Israel or whether it is developed as a spiritualized concept only. Strangely enough, Goodenough represented both views.¹⁰⁶ Wolfson¹⁰⁷ and more recently Borgen have contended that the nation that "sees God" is a description of Judaism. Borgen states, ". . . the concept of the vision of God is used by Philo as a distinctive characteristic of the Jewish nation. . . the nation of vision is the people that is selftaught by nature. . ." ¹⁰⁸

Earlier the suggestions of Hamerton-Kelly concerning the discernment of traditions were noted.¹⁰⁹ One of his suggestions was that etymologies can be

¹⁰⁴David Runia, Philo Judeas and the Timaeus of Plato, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 270.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 273-274.

¹⁰⁶"Seeing God. . . is not a reference to the race of Israel, but first to the Patriarchs, and then to those who got the vision, whether Jew or Gentile, and only to those." E. R. Goodenough, By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism, (New Haven, Yale, 1935), 136. "The Jews are Israel, which means, he says, "seeing God." The mystic vision given to Jews, vision of that Deity which is beyond all categories, even the categories of virtue, is hidden from other men. . ." The Politics of Philo Judaeus: Practice and Theory, (New Haven, NJ: Yale U. Press, 1938), 12.

¹⁰⁷Harry A. Wolfson, Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, rev. ed., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1947; reprint, 1948), 2:51-52.

¹⁰⁸P. Borgen, Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 117-118.

¹⁰⁹See above, section 6.2 and Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, "Sources and Traditions in Philo Judaeus: Prolegomena to an Analysis of His Writings," Studia Philonica 1 (1972) 16.

evidence of a source that Philo used. From *Quaest. et Sol. Gen.* 3.49 and elsewhere¹¹⁰ it appears that Philo's understanding of Israel as the nation that sees God is based upon an etymology, "that nation to which was given the command to circumcise (children) on the eighth (day) is called "Israel" in Chaldean, and in [Greek]¹¹¹ (this means) 'seeing God.'"¹¹²

It is reasonable to assume Philo has gleaned this etymology from exegesis practiced in the synagogues in Alexandria. And, since Abraham is spoken of as being the founder of the nation that "contemplates all the things of nature" (*Quis Her.* 279, see also above), it is also plausible that the tradition is contingent upon extra-biblical traditions about Abraham as well.

In the portrayal of Abraham discerning the existence of God in *On Abraham*, he discerns that the aspects of creation around him, particularly the heavenly phenomena, are not God but are the evidence for God (*De Abr.* 68-71; cf. *Migr. Abr.* 176-179, 194). Abraham is said next to look within and see that just as his mind rules his body and the emotions therein, so God rules the universe (*De Abr.* 72-76; 185-186). However, in another passage found in *De Somniis* (*De Som.* 1.52-60), Philo writes that Abraham and his family left astrology and speculation about the heavenly phenomena behind without mentioning that this was the occasion when Abraham first discerned the existence of God. On the contrary, in *De Somniis*, Abraham first discerns God

¹¹⁰*De Abr.* 57; *Quis Her.* 78.

¹¹¹The word in the text is "Armenian." Thackeray notes, "Here, as elsewhere, the Arm. translator substitutes "Armenian" for "Greek" (*Quaest et Sol. Gen.* 3.49, n. b).

¹¹²The etymology of the Israel who sees God is based upon the Hebrew **רִאָה אֱל** **אִישׁ** or **יִשְׂרָאֵל**. These two phrases sound like "Israel" and mean "one who sees or beholds 'el'." Of course, Philo translated the phrase into Greek.

by looking into himself. It is as if Philo feels that it is necessary to include the tradition about Abraham and the stars even though it does not lead to Abraham's recognition of God. If we use Hamerton-Kelly's suggestion about discerning the traditions of Abraham via incongruity within Philo's works,¹¹³ then this incongruity in *De Somniis* may be telling. Philo continues to portray Abraham in a way that it related to astrology even when it does not exactly fit his argument about how Abraham discovered the existence of God.¹¹⁴

6.3.2 Excursus: Genesis 15:6 in the Works of Philo

Abraham is spoken of as the first to believe in God in Genesis 15:6. In *On the Virtues*, Philo describes Abraham by saying, ". . . he is spoken of as the first person to believe in God, since he first grasped a firm and unswerving conception of the truth that there is one Cause above all and that it provides for the world and all that there is therein" (*De Virt.* 216).¹¹⁵ Philo later clarifies how it is that Abraham might be viewed in his day as "the standard of nobility for all proselytes, who, abandoning the ignobility of strange laws and monstrous customs which assigned divine honours to wood and stones and soulless things in general, have come to settle in a better land, in a commonwealth full of true life and vitality, with truth as its director and president" (*De Virt.* 219).¹¹⁶ Abraham is not only the first one to believe in

¹¹³Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, "Sources and Traditions in Philo Judaeus: Prolegomena to an Analysis of His Writings," *Studia Philonica* 1 (1972) 16.

¹¹⁴Cf. also B. Z. Wacholder who maintains that "the belief concerning Abraham's mastery of the Chaldaean science [astrology] was a major motif of Jewish folklore." B. Z. Wacholder, "Pseudo-Eupolemus' Two Greek Fragments on the Life of Abraham," *HUCA* 34 (1963) 103.

¹¹⁵Cf. *De Praem et Poen.* 27; *De Abr.* 262 and below.

¹¹⁶Cf. *De Ebr.* 106-110.

God, but because of his leaving behind astrology which Philo equates with idolatry, he is the prototype of the Gentile proselyte who leaves behind his idols of wood and stone for the worship of the one, true God.

Another of Philo's interpretations of Abraham based on Genesis 15:6 has to do with merit. Philo interprets Genesis 15:6a, "Abraham believed God" as meaning that Abraham distrusted what was created, and trusted in God alone (*Quis. Her.* 93). Philo continues by saying that Abraham's faith is greater than the faith of others because his faith "is a task for a great and celestial understanding which has ceased to be ensnared by aught of the things that surround us" (*Quis. Her.* 93). In his subsequent interpretation of Genesis 15:6b, Philo states, "And . . . 'his faith was counted to him for justice,' for nothing is so just or righteous as to put in God alone a trust which is pure and unalloyed" (*Quis. Her.* 94). Philo reasons that since Abraham had such a celestial understanding, that his faith itself is considered to be an act of justice, and nothing more (*Quis. Her.* 95).

Runia maintains that to Philo, different types of human beings exist after their souls come to dwell in their bodies. Some are men of earth, who are ensnared by their bodily desires; some are men of heaven, who are hardly hindered by their bodies at all; and some are men of God, who are enrolled in the noetic world. Abraham began as one who was a Chaldean, a man of heaven, but progressed to become a man of God. As such, he is privileged by being given the knowledge of God.¹¹⁷ And, the idea that Abraham's

¹¹⁷David Runia, *Philo Judaeus and the Timaeus of Plato*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 124-125.

faith is meritorious here is doubtful.¹¹⁸

Conclusion: Abraham the Monotheist in Philo

In the chapter on Josephus it was shown how Abraham was the first to discern from his observation of the natural phenomena that one God existed. In Philo, Abraham also comes to his belief by reasoning that it is not the physical universe which is divine, but that God is its governor. For example, in *On Abraham*, above, Philo was cited as saying that Abraham did not believe that what he could sense was divine, but believed in the Deity which lay behind it. A similar concept of Abraham finding God through observing the natural phenomena was seen in *Jubilees*.¹¹⁹

That the nation which "sees God" and is "selftaught by nature" is a reference to the Jewish nation is also supported by traditions of Abraham. As was concluded above, Philo uses the same traditions of Abraham as many of the authors already studied. He portrays Abraham as the first to believe in the one God, as the first to leave idolatry behind, and as able to discern God from nature. His portrayals of Abraham most naturally reflect those things which are distinctive to the Jewish nation and have already been found in the Jewish literature previously studied. And if, as has been noted above, Abraham is the founder of the nation that contemplates God, he is the

¹¹⁸Cf. *Leg. All.* 3.228; *Migr. Abr.* 44. See further, Samuel Sandmel, "Abraham's Knowledge of the Existence of God," *HTR* 44 (1951) 137-139; W. L. Knox, "Abraham and the Quest for God" *HTR* 28 (1935) 55 - 60.

¹¹⁹See Chapter 1, "Abraham in *Jubilees*."

founder of that nation which is distinctively Jewish--the nation that "sees God".

As W. L. Knox said, "In Judaism, the great 'convert' is Abraham. . ."120 In Josephus, as in Philo, it was shown that Abraham left astrology behind. However, Philo is clearer in the belief that Abraham's leaving astrology behind was equivalent to his forsaking idolatry. Similarly in the chapter on *Jubilees* it was shown how Abraham separated himself from his family who practiced idolatry in order to follow the one God. And, in the *Biblical Antiquities*, the description of Abraham is of one who is so devoted to the one God that he is willing to die rather than practice idolatry.

Unlike Josephus, Philo is not attempting to glorify the figure of Abraham as much as he is interpreting the Pentateuch using philosophy he believes is allegorically inherent in the text. Abraham is a philosopher who reasons that one invisible, intelligible Cause, Ruler and Creator exists above all, and that what is visible certainly is not God but leads to belief in the existence of God. The traditions about Abraham the first monotheist and anti-idolator he uses certainly are not found in the Genesis text, although Abraham is said to have been an idolator in Joshua.¹²¹ These are the traditions that Philo has in common with the other Jewish authors mentioned above. Because these traditions already existed in *Jubilees*, and are later found in the *Biblical*

¹²⁰W. L. Knox, "Abraham and the Quest for God," *HTR* 28 (1935) 55; Williamson states that Abraham was "celebrated in Judaism as the hero who broke away from polytheism for a monotheistic faith." Ronald Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo*, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200BC to AD 200, I.ii, eds. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1989), 30.

¹²¹"Long ago your ancestors -- Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor -- lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many" (Josh. 24: 2-3).

Antiquities and the works of Josephus, it is reasonable to assume that they existed in Jewish communities other than those in Alexandria. In this case, they are examples of the traditions which Hamerton-Kelly refers to as those Jewish traditions which cannot be attributed to Philo.¹²² If Philo's work is the "product of exegetical traditions and methods from the activities in the synagogue"¹²³ in first century Alexandria, it is also reasonable to assume that these traditions about Abraham were not only known to Philo, but were prevalent in the synagogues of Alexandria.

6.3.3 Abraham and the Law

Abraham and the Law in the Pentateuch in Rewritten Form

"For Philo, as for Paul and for the rabbis, a fundamental problem regarding Abraham is the relationship between Abraham, the ancestor, and the descendant, Moses, and his Law. If Moses' Law was the divine law, how could Abraham (and the other patriarchs) have flourished without it?"¹²⁴ Philo gives part of his answer in *De Abrahamo* when he states,

. . . since it is necessary to carry out our examination of the law in regular sequence, let us postpone consideration of particular laws, which are, so to speak copies, and examine first those which are more general and may be called the originals of those copies. These are such men as lived good and blameless lives, whose virtues stand permanently recorded in the most holy scriptures, not merely to sound their praises but for the instruction of the reader and as an inducement to him to aspire to the same; for in these men we have laws endowed with life and reason (λογικός), and Moses extolled them for two reasons. First he wished to

¹²²Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, "Sources and Traditions in Philo Judaeus: Prolegomena to an Analysis of His Writings," *Studia Philonica* 1 (1972) 15.

¹²³P. Borgen, "Philo: Survey of Research since World War II," *ANRW* 21.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 115.

¹²⁴Samuel Sandmel, *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature*, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 107.

show that the enacted ordinances are not inconsistent with nature; and secondly that those who wish to live in accordance with the laws as they stand have no difficult task, seeing that the first generations before any at all of the particular statutes was set in writing followed the unwritten law with perfect ease, so that one might properly say that the enacted laws are nothing else than memorials of the life of the ancients. . . they gladly accepted conformity with nature (φύσις), holding that nature itself was. . . the most venerable of statutes, and thus their whole life was one of happy obedience to law (*De Abr.* 3-6).

The law of nature was a popular philosophical concept at the time of Philo. Nature and natural law can only be grasped rationally. Meeks defines the natural law as simply, "the rational structure of the universe."¹²⁵

To Philo, the law of nature and the law of Moses are identical. The law of nature which the cosmos obeys must be transposed to the level of humanity. This is achieved by the Law of Moses, which has God as ultimate author.¹²⁶ To Philo the Law of Moses was the only truly natural law. Wolfson points out that "the concept of natural law in Greek philosophy was to show that, according to Plato, Polemo, Aristotle, and the Stoics, enacted laws, if they are enacted by wise legislators on the basis of reason, are in a certain sense also laws in accordance with nature."¹²⁷ But despite all this, these enacted laws, even when based on reason, are the work of people and not the work of nature. As such, "the 'natural law'. . . sought by the Greek philosophers, could not possess the universality and eternity possessed by the Law of Moses,

¹²⁵Wayne A. Meeks, The Moral World of the First Christians. (London: SPCK, 1987), 47.

¹²⁶V. Nikiprowetzky, Le commentaire de l'écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie. ALGHJ 11 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 117-131.

¹²⁷H. Wolfson, Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, rev. ed., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1947; reprint, 1948), 179.

revealed by God, the sole Creator of nature."¹²⁸ To Philo, only law which was revealed by God, the Creator of nature, can really be in accordance with natural law. This law, being the work of God, "is like nature itself, and like nature it is universal and eternal and immutable."¹²⁹ In contrast to the rabbis who "take as their norm the Mosaic (and Oral) Law, and . . . bring Abraham up to the norm by portraying him as an observer. . . Philo. . . takes Abraham (and the Patriarchs) as the norm, and shows in what way the Law of Moses fits in with the norm."¹³⁰

In the section from *On Abraham* above, Philo is writing in order that his readers might follow the examples of the Jewish forefathers. He proceeds to name the forefathers whom he has in mind: Enos, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. According to Philo obedience to the Jewish law is not too difficult because even though those who lived before the Mosaic law did not have a written law to follow, they followed the law of nature. In contrast, the readers do have a written law which they can follow.

Abraham belongs to the second and greater trinity (the first trinity being Enos, Enoch, and Noah). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are described as being "God-lovers and God-beloved" (*De Abr.* 50). Of the three, Abraham is known

¹²⁸Ronald Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo*, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200BC to AD 200, I.ii, eds. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1989) 201-202.

¹²⁹H. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, rev. ed., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1947; reprint, 1948), 180.

¹³⁰Samuel Sandmel, *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature*, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 108.

as the one who acquires his virtue by teaching.¹³¹ Philo further describes Abraham as one who was "filled with zeal for piety, the highest and greatest of virtues" and as being "eager to follow God and to be obedient to his commands; understanding by commands not only those conveyed in speech and writing but also those made manifest by nature (φύσις) with clearer signs" (*De Abr.* 60).¹³²

Abraham was one of those who obeyed the natural law and whom the later Mosaic law copied. Abraham was himself a law: "the law of Moses derives its specifications from those specific things which Abraham (and other patriarchs) did."¹³³

Philo ends his discussion of Abraham by saying,¹³⁴

... to these praises of the Sage. . . Moses adds this crowning saying, "that this man did the divine law and the divine commands." He did them, not taught by written words, but unwritten nature gave him the zeal to follow where wholesome and untainted impulse led

¹³¹Isaac acquires his virtue through nature and Jacob acquires virtue through practice *De Abr.* 52-53. By describing Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in this way, Philo is relating them to his Hellenistic audience. "Aristotle had asked the question how happiness and virtue could be acquired, and he had considered, in one passage, three possibilities: by learning. . . or by habit. . . or practice." S. Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 142-143. To Philo, "anyone who contemplates the order in nature and the constitution of the cosmos needs no teacher." (*De Abr.* 60-61). "The implied contradiction, that is, the lack of need of a teacher, and Abraham as the symbol of perfection through being taught, is Philo's. The contradiction is more apparent than real, for to Philo the true wisdom, beyond mere knowledge, is revealed, not taught." Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 110 and n. 28.

¹³² See further, Ronald Williamson, Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200BC to AD 200, I.ii, eds. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1989), 202.

¹³³Samuel Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 107.

¹³⁴In the citation Philo was speaking of Gen. 26:5, ". . . Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

him. . . such was the life of the first, the founder of the nation, one who obeyed the law, some will say, but rather, as our discourse has shown, himself a law and an unwritten statute (*De Abr.* 275-276).

Abraham and the Law in the Exegetical Commentaries

By interpreting Genesis 12:4, Philo describes Abraham as obedient to the law in the *Migration of Abraham*:

We are told. . . that 'Abraham journeyed even as the Lord spoke to him.' This is the aim extolled by the best philosophers, to live agreeably to nature; and it is attained whenever the mind, having entered on virtue's path, walks in the track of right reason (λόγος) and follows God, mindful of His injunctions, and always and in all places recognizing them as valid both in action and in speech. For 'he journeyed just as the Lord spoke to him': the meaning of this is that as God speaks--and He speaks with consummate beauty and excellence--so the good man does everything, blamelessly keeping straight the path of life, so that the actions of the wise man are nothing else than the words (λόγος) of God. So in another place He says, 'Abraham did all My law' (*Migr. Abr.* 129-130; cf. Gen. 26:5).

In the context of the *Migration of Abraham*, the patriarch has been on the upward path to perfection and the rational part of his soul has triumphed. He walks on the path of right reason. "He follows God and is mindful of His injunctions. Since the injunctions are right reason, the verse 'Abraham did all my law' means that Abraham 'did' the divine reason.¹³⁵ The actions of Abraham are the *logoi* of God."¹³⁶

Excursus: Circumcision in Philo

When Philo mentions circumcision, he usually gives it an allegorical meaning. For example, in *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 3.46 he states,

¹³⁵The LXX uses φυλάσσω which Philo quotes as ποιέω; that Abraham had both the natural and the written (positive) law, see *Migr. Abr.* 94.

¹³⁶Samuel Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 166; Cf. *Migr. Abr.* 128-129 and *De Abr.* 5, above.

"For that which is . . . male in us is the mind, whose superfluous growths it is necessary to cut off and throw away in order that it may become pure and naked of every evil and passion, and be a priest for God."¹³⁷ Abraham's circumcision can be understood as his "pruning off of the appetites of the body."¹³⁸ While he discusses circumcision from an allegorical standpoint, this does not mean that Philo perceives that the literal practice is unimportant. In the *Migration of Abraham* 92 he clarifies the importance of the literal observance of circumcision, "It is true that receiving circumcision does indeed portray the excision of pleasure and all passions, and the putting away of the impious conceit, under which the mind supposed that it was capable of begetting by its own power: but let us not on this account repeal the law laid down for circumcising."¹³⁹

According to Philo in *Questions and Answers in Genesis* 3.49, the nation which was "given the command to circumcise (children) on the eighth day¹⁴⁰ is called 'Israel' in Chaldaean, and in [Greek] ¹⁴¹ (this means) 'seeing God'."

¹³⁷Cf. *Quaest. et Sol. Gen.* 3.51.

¹³⁸Samuel Sandmel, *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature*. (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 160.

¹³⁹See also *Quaest. et Sol. Gen.* 3.52.

¹⁴⁰Gen. 17:2.

¹⁴¹The word I have replaced is actually "Armenian." R. P. Marcus notes that "Here, as elsewhere, the Arm. translator substitutes 'Armenian' for 'Greek.'" Philo, *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, supp. 1, ET Ralph P. Marcus, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1979), 249 n. b.

Thus, circumcision is a sign of those who "see God," meaning the nation of Israel.¹⁴²

6.3.4 The Characteristics of Abraham in Philo

How *De Abrahamo* and other works of Philo which address the life of Abraham are edifying to the founder of the Jewish nation is found to a large extent in the characteristics which Philo gives to Abraham.

Abraham in Egypt

As was the case in the *Antiquities* of Josephus, Philo portrays Abraham in ways which Hellenistic readers would find attractive. In *On Abraham*, a work belonging to the first category of literature which I have designated the Pentateuch in Rewritten Form, we find that after Philo has discussed Abraham's removal from astrology to an understanding of the existence of God, that he is called the "friend of God."¹⁴³ God's next reward to the worthy Abraham is protection from the Egyptians despite the good and beautiful Sarah.¹⁴⁴ The King of Egypt who desires Sarah, according to Philo, showed little respect and "gave rein to his licence and determined nominally to take

¹⁴²Whether or not Philo believed that circumcision was necessary for the proselyte to Judaism has been debated, largely based upon *Quaest. et Sol. Ex. 2.2*, "in reality the proselyte is one who circumcises not his uncircumcision but his desires and sensual pleasures and the other passions of the soul." See Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, rev. ed., 2 vols., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1947; reprint, 1948), 2:369-372, who finds uncircumcised proselytes in Philo. N. J. McEleney, "Conversion, Circumcision, and the Law," *NTS* 20 (1974) 319-341 who, using Philo as part of his evidence, takes the position that "Jews of the Hellenistic world seem much more ready to accept someone who refused circumcision as a convert to Judaism and as a brother Jew, provided that in all things else he kept the ordinances and customs." (332). See also John Nolland, "Uncircumcised Proselytes?" *JSJ* 12.2 (1981) 173-194.

¹⁴³See also *De Som.* I.193-195; *De Sob.* 55-56.

¹⁴⁴In *De Abr.* 93 Philo states that Abraham "had a wife distinguished greatly for her goodness of soul and beauty of body, in which she surpassed all the women of her time."

her in marriage, but in reality to bring her to shame" (*De Abr.* 94). Such a description of an Egyptian in this rewritten text could only be an indication of Philo's view of the despised Egyptians.¹⁴⁵ Abraham at this point is said to be helpless because he was "menaced . . . by the terror of stronger powers" (*De Abr.* 95). However, both Sarah and Abraham fled to God who mercifully brought disease upon the king of Egypt who loses all desire for Sarah. Philo concludes his literal version of the story of Abraham and Sarah and Egypt by saying that God granted this rescue of their marriage, "that marriage from which was to issue not a family of a few sons and daughters, but a whole nation, and that the nation dearest of all to God, which, as I hold, has received the gift of priesthood and prophecy on behalf of all mankind" (*De Abr.* 98).

Philo has changed the account of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt. Abraham does not have to tell the king that Sarah is his sister; the licentiousness of the Egyptian king is so great that it seems that the question of Sarah's present marriage makes no difference. The mention that Abraham is helpless in the face of stronger powers absolves him from any condemnation in the eyes of the reader.¹⁴⁶ Philo omits Pharaoh's sending Abraham out of Egypt.¹⁴⁷ And, finally, the depiction of Abraham finding refuge in God, which is not

¹⁴⁵See also *De Abr.* 107, "I have described the inhospitality and licentiousness of the Egyptians."

¹⁴⁶Philo also explains Abraham's falling down and laughing at the announcement of future descendants (Gen. 17:17) in a good light in *De Mut. Nom.* 154-156.

¹⁴⁷Samuel Sandmel, *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature*. (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971) 118.

found in the Genesis accounts,¹⁴⁸ reinforces Philo's depiction of Abraham as a man of nobility and piety (*De Abr.* 98).

The depiction of Abraham in prayer upon the abduction of Sarah is not an unusual one. The same portrayal was found in the *Genesis Apocryphon*, but with much greater detail. In that depiction, Abraham's prayer is accompanied by a great outpouring of grief over the state of affairs, and a prayer that God might be glorified in spite of the circumstances.

The main intention of Philo is to show that the origin of the nation of Israel is not illegitimate but was protected by God. This nation, in Philo's eyes, is dearest to God and embodies the gifts of priesthood and prophecy for all humanity. If the intended readers of *De Abrahamo* were Gentiles, as Sandmel (above) has suggested, this kind of depiction would serve to dispel any doubts on the part of Hellenistic Gentile readers that the origins of the Jewish people might be questionable.¹⁴⁹

Abraham the Hospitable

Another of the attributes Philo gives to Abraham is that of hospitality. In his version of the visit of the three angels, Philo emphasizes this attribute in contrast to the inhospitality of the Egyptians.

I have described the inhospitality (^{τὸ} ἄξενον). . . of the Egyptians. Turning to the victim of this outrage, we may well admire his kindness of heart (φιλιανθρωπία). When at noon he saw three travellers in the form of men, for their diviner nature was not apparent to him, he ran to them and earnestly begged of them

¹⁴⁸Neither story of Abraham and Sarah in foreign lands (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-28) portrays Abraham as praying to God after the abduction of Sarah.

¹⁴⁹Cf. *Quaest. et Sol. Gen.* 4.60.

not to pass his tent but to enter as was fitting and partake of hospitality (ξένια) (*De Abr.* 107).¹⁵⁰

Philo describes the quickly ensuing baking of bread cakes and slaughtering of the fatted calf (*De Abr.* 108-109). He comments, "for in a wise man's house no one is slow in showing kindness (φιλανθρωπία) but men, slaves, and free are full of zeal to do service to their gifts." Abraham's reward for such a show of generosity and goodwill is the promise of the birth of a son born in wedlock.

Philo moves towards finishing his literal interpretation of the passage by saying, "We have described Abraham's hospitality (φιλόξενον) which was but a by-product of a greater virtue. . . piety (θεοσέβεια)" (*De Abr.* 114). In order for the angels to have even entered Abraham's tent, Philo assumes that the house must have been in good order, under a single authority, and under the inspiration of perfect virtue (*De Abr.* 116).

Philo's allegorical interpretation of the event is that it was actually the Father of the Universe who entered the tent of Abraham with his two Potencies, God and Lord (*De Abr.* 122). Abraham saw them as one, and spoke to them as one (*De Abr.* 124-125),¹⁵¹ when he asked them to enjoy his hospitality. By turning the literal into allegory, "Philo is enabled to assess the incident in terms of Abraham's spiritual development. . . the initiated mind, when purified, sees God as one. . . The incident of the three travellers. . . is a

¹⁵⁰See also *Quaest. et Sol. Gen.* 4.8 where Philo comments on Abraham's hospitality in reference to Gen. 18:6-7.

¹⁵¹Cf. Gen. 18: 3, 10.

demonstration that Abraham belongs to the best class of those who receive the mystic vision."¹⁵²

While, allegorically, Philo's interpretation of Genesis 18 proves the higher mind of Abraham, literally Philo interpreted Abraham as a man of hospitality. While Genesis 18: 1-8 surely depicts Abraham as being hospitable, it does not explicitly use the term "hospitable" of Abraham, as does Philo. To Philo, φιλανθρωπία which can be translated also as humanity, was highly placed in his hierarchy of virtues.¹⁵³ "Humanity itself is perhaps best defined by Philo as generous and brotherly treatment of others, Jews, strangers, and non-Jews alike, and as giving help to those in need."¹⁵⁴

As was mentioned in the chapter on Josephus, hospitality was an important quality for one to have in the Greco-Roman world—it was a "decisive mark of culture."¹⁵⁵ One was not to be hospitable in order that the hospitality would be returned but out of fear for the gods and love for people (φιλόανθρωπος).¹⁵⁶ And like Josephus, Philo uses the story previous to the story of Abraham and the angels in order to contrast the inhospitality of

¹⁵²Samuel Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature. (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 122.

¹⁵³See also *De Virt.* 51, where humanity is said to be "nearest in nature to piety" and *De Abr.* 208 where Abraham is said to have both piety (εὐσέβεια) and humanity (φιλόανθρωπος).

¹⁵⁴Ronald Williamson, Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo. Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200BC to AD 200, I.ii, eds. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1989), 223.

¹⁵⁵G. Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965; reprint, 1982), s.v. "ξένος" by G. Stählin.

¹⁵⁶L. Feldman, "Hellenizations in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, The Portrait of Abraham," Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity, L. Feldman, G. Hata, eds., (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), 140.

another nation (the Egyptians)¹⁵⁷ with that of the founder of the Jewish nation. ¹⁵⁸ In this way, Josephus proved that the Jewish people were not as xenophobic as the Hellenistic Gentile world was led to believe. It would seem reasonable to assume that Philo has a similar intention in his portrayal of Abraham,¹⁵⁹ although his intention is also to portray Abraham allegorically as the possessor of the higher, mystical mind.

The piety of Abraham as exemplified in the sacrifice of Isaac

If humanity is the great virtue in respect to other human beings, piety is the great virtue in respect to God. "The outstanding quality of Abraham is his piety (εὐσέβεια)."¹⁶⁰ First, Abraham's piety is seen in relation to his obedience to the natural law and his eagerness to follow God, as seen in the discussion above.¹⁶¹ Secondly, Abraham was rewarded for his piety as exhibited in his eagerness to follow God by God's intervention in Egypt on behalf of the pious Abraham's marriage.¹⁶² Thirdly, his piety was exhibited by its by-product,

¹⁵⁷The Egyptians were known for being inhospitable, cf. Wis 19:14.

¹⁵⁸In the case of Josephus it was the Sodomites, cf. *Ant.* 1.194-195.

¹⁵⁹That Abraham was especially known for his hospitality as constantly embellished by the Jews in their depictions of him is noted by B. Beer, Leben Abrahams nach Auffassung der jüdischen Sage, (Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1859), 37-43, 152-165.

¹⁶⁰Samuel Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 110.

¹⁶¹*De Abr.* 60. "Abraham, then, filled with zeal for piety (εὐσέβεια), the highest and greatest of virtues, was eager to follow God and to be obedient to His commands. . . "

¹⁶²*De Abr.* 90, 98 "God, approving of the action. . . related, at once rewards the man of worth with a great gift. . . the chastity of the woman was preserved, while the nobility and piety of the man was evidenced by God. . . "

hospitality.¹⁶³

However the fourth mention of Abraham's piety is his obedience to God's command that he sacrifice his son, Isaac. Philo begins by saying that Isaac was born to Abraham his "only and dearly-cherished son, a child of great bodily beauty and excellence of soul. For already he was showing a perfection of virtues beyond his years, so that his father, moved not merely by a feeling of natural affection but also by such deliberate judgement as a censor of character might make, cherished for him a great tenderness" (*De Abr.* 168). Following this laudatory statement about Isaac, Philo says that a "divine message came to Abraham that he should sacrifice his son."

Again, much like what was found in the story of the offering of Isaac in the *Jewish Antiquities*, Philo builds a sense of pathos into the story by adding a laudatory description of Isaac. Not only is Isaac Abraham's cherished and only son, but Isaac has bodily beauty and excellence of soul with a perfection of virtues of great maturity, for which any judge of character would be thankful. While Philo usually depicted the body as a "severe hindrance to the soul in its striving for virtue,"¹⁶⁴ he also had to accept that "the life of

¹⁶³Cf. *De Abr.* 114; cf. Samuel Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 106.

¹⁶⁴Ronald Williamson, Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200, I.ii, eds. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1989), 212; *Leg All.* 1.108.

virtue has to be achieved on earth within the human frame."¹⁶⁵ One can assume, then, that by having bodily beauty, excellence of soul, and perfection of virtue, Isaac is an example of perfection itself. Isaac here fits Philo's representation of him as natural perfection.¹⁶⁶

Because he was "mastered by his love for God," Abraham overcomes his affection for Isaac, and sets out in order to sacrifice his son without telling anyone at his home (*De Abr.* 170).¹⁶⁷ When he sees the place of sacrifice, he tells his two accompanying servants to stay there, and gives Isaac the fire and wood to carry.

In Genesis 22:6, Isaac does not carry the fire, only the wood. Sandmel contends that this is one of the lapses of memory "which justify the conclusion that Philo does not have Genesis open before him in writing the treatise."¹⁶⁸ Instead, it may be that Philo wants to explain how they got the fire to the place where ultimately they offered a lamb as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:13) and to add to the pathos of the story since Isaac is carrying everything necessary for his own sacrifice except for the knife. Philo continues, saying that Abraham gave Isaac the wood and fire to carry "for he thought it good that the victim himself should bear the load of the instruments of sacrifice, a light burden indeed, for nothing is less toilsome than piety" (*De Abr.* 171).

¹⁶⁵Ronald Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo*. Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200, I.ii, eds. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1989), 212.

¹⁶⁶*De Abr.* 52.

¹⁶⁷*Cf. Ant.* 1.225; *De Abr.* 189.

¹⁶⁸Samuel Sandmel, *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature*, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 126 n. 118.

In saying that Isaac and Abraham "walked with equal speed of mind rather than body along the short straight road at the end of which is holiness and the appointed place" (*De Abr.* 172),¹⁶⁹ Philo "has indicated that there is something more to the story than only the obedience of a Sage. The story is an example of Abraham's mystical experience."¹⁷⁰

When they arrive at the place appointed for sacrifice, Isaac asks about the whereabouts of the victim for sacrifice.¹⁷¹ When he answers, Abraham contains his emotions¹⁷² and says that "God will provide himself a victim, even in this wide wilderness. . . know that to God all things are possible, including those that are impossible or insuperable to men." Abraham's use of his mind to contain his emotions in this event fits Philo's idea of virtue: "for Philo, virtue does not mean the absence of emotion and feeling, but their moderate control. . ." ¹⁷³ In this way Philo disagrees with the Stoics who

¹⁶⁹Philo turns the walking of Abraham and Isaac side by side into the allegory of the virtue by teaching (Abraham) having risen to the stage of the virtue by nature (Isaac) in *Migr. Abr.* 166-167. "The perfection attained through teaching ultimately equals perfection by nature. . ." Samuel Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 173.

¹⁷⁰Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 126; see also *De Som.* I.66-67 and the section above, "Abraham the Monotheist in the Exegetical Commentaries."

¹⁷¹Philo turns this question of Isaac into an allegory in *De Fug.* 132-135.

¹⁷²"To anyone else. . . these words would have brought confusion and tearfulness. . . But Abraham admitted no swerving of body or mind (*διάνοια*) and with visage and thought (*λογισμός*) alike unmoved. . ." (*De Abr.* 174-175).

¹⁷³Ronald Williamson, Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200, I.ii, eds. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1989), 206.

believe "virtue excludes emotion."¹⁷⁴ Because Philo portrays the emotions involved on the part of Abraham, his following statement of trust in God's provision of the sacrifice is given greater profundity.

Abraham seizes Isaac, lays him on the altar and prepares to sacrifice him "in a fully cultic rite with Abraham as priest,"¹⁷⁵ based on Philo's statement that Abraham was "beginning the sacrificial rite as priest with the very best of sons for victim" (*De Abr.* 198). He is stopped midway by God. Philo focuses on God's calling Abraham twice,¹⁷⁶ presumably to draw out Abraham's unswerving devotion to God and his commands. While the sacrifice was not completed, the action on the part of Abraham is considered to be "complete and perfect" because God returned his gift of Isaac and "used the offering which piety rendered to Him to repay the offerer. . . ." (*De Abr.* 177).¹⁷⁷

Following the account Philo immediately jumps in with a response to those who "misconstrue everything and . . . do not think Abraham's action great or wonderful. . ." (*De Abr.* 178). The arguments such people provide are that many other people have sacrificed their children to redeem their nation

¹⁷⁴Ronald Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo*, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200, I.ii, eds. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1989), 205; *De Abr.* 204.

¹⁷⁵B. D. Chilton and P. R. Davies, "The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History," *CBO* 40.4 (1978) 520. Chilton and Davies contend that because Philo's description of the sacrifice is following the law of burnt offering, including dismemberment, that "Philo has in mind the Tamid offering," thereby ruling out the Passover sacrifice, contra R. J. Daly, "The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac," *CBO* 39 (1977) 47-75.

¹⁷⁶In Genesis 22: 11 it is the angel of the Lord that calls twice to Abraham saying, "Abraham, Abraham!"

¹⁷⁷In *Leg. All.* 3.203-208, God swears "by himself" in reference to his promise of many descendants to Abraham.

from calamity, or as an act of piety before the gods. Philo responds by saying that because there was no custom in Babylonia of sacrificing children, and he was not under pressure from calamity, Abraham was under no compulsion to sacrifice Isaac. He did not offer up his son in an attempt to win praise because he was in solitude where no one else was present and he was prepared to offer his son himself rather than counting on a priest to do it (*De Abr.* 183-190).¹⁷⁸ The motivation behind the offering was Abraham's practice of obedience to the commands of God, even in view of the uniqueness of the request and his love for his only son born in his old age.¹⁷⁹ Philo concludes the literal account by saying, "Thus we see that he did not incline partly to the boy and partly to piety, but devoted his whole soul. . . to holiness. . . everyone . . . must be overwhelmed with admiration for his extraordinary piety" (*De Abr.* 198-200).¹⁸⁰

While both Josephus and Philo have depicted the great piety of Abraham in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, a difference exists in their apologetic intentions. In the saga as written by Josephus, Isaac willingly runs to the altar which was an action presumed to be included in order not to offend the Hellenistic reader.¹⁸¹ From Philo's perspective, however, it is apparently not

¹⁷⁸This is why Abraham told his servants to stay a distance away from the place where he would sacrifice Isaac (*De Abr.* 171).

¹⁷⁹Both Josephus and Philo play upon the fact that Isaac was born when Abraham was very old. See *Ant.* 1.222.

¹⁸⁰According to *Leg. All.* 3.209, Abraham's piety is shown in that he was willing to sacrifice his only happiness to the Creator. This is similar to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his reason for happiness in his later years as found in the interpretation of the offering of Isaac in Josephus. See the chapter "Abraham in Josephus," above.

¹⁸¹See the chapter "Abraham in Josephus," above. Josephus reports that Isaac is 25 years old at the time of offering, *Ant.* 1.227.

so much child sacrifice which is the problem--he speaks generally of the existence of such practices and even specifies the Indian practice of suttee.¹⁸² Philo's apologetic, in contrast to that of Josephus, is given in the face of child sacrifice being relatively widespread and apparently not of a particularly offensive character. His slant must then be those motivations behind all other reasons for child sacrifice in contrast to the motivation of piety and obedience behind Abraham's attempted child sacrifice.

Allegorically, because Isaac means laughter, the sacrifice of Isaac stands for the sacrifice of Abraham's joy. Philo describes this joy as the "good emotion of the understanding" (*De Abr.* 201). This joy is most closely associated with God, because humanity is subject to grief and fear (*De Abr.* 202). God is portrayed as saying he is glad to return joy to those who are worthy (*De Abr.* 204). Philo concludes this section of *De Abrahamo* saying, "These examples must suffice for our treatment of Abraham's piety (εὐσέβεια), though others might be found in great plenty" (*De Abr.* 208).¹⁸³

Abraham the Exemplary Hellenist

After his discussion of Abraham's relation to God, Philo turns to Abraham's relation with people (*De Abr.* 208-276). His human qualities are discussed in "terms of the Greek four great cardinal virtues, justice, courage, self-control, and wisdom."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸²*De Abr.* 182-183.

¹⁸³*De Som.* I.194.

¹⁸⁴Samuel Sandmel, *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature*. (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 106; E. R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism*. (New Haven, Yale, 1935), 142; E. V. Arnold, *Roman Stoicism*. (Cambridge, Cambridge U. Press, 1911; New York: The Humanities Press,

Abraham's justice is displayed in his handling of the strife between his livestock and that owned by his nephew Lot (*De Abr.* 208-225; Gen. 13:1-13). Lot is shown to be a moody and unstable person (*De Abr.* 212). He cannot control his herdsmen, and a fight breaks out between the herdsmen of Abraham and those who work for Lot. When Abraham hears that his herdsmen are winning, "knowing that his own party was more distinguished in strength and number, did not allow the quarrel to be terminated by a victory, as he did not wish to distress his nephew through seeing his own party defeated" (*De Abr.* 214). Abraham decides the only solution is to separate the herds; he gives Lot his choice of land.

The allegory of the story is that Abraham represents the one who honors things which are primal and dominant: "wisdom, temperance, justice, and courage and virtue." Lot, on the contrary, represents the one who honors things "subject and lowest in the list": wealth, reputation, office and good birth (*De Abr.* 218-219). It is noteworthy that in this portrayal Lot seems to represent those things which the Greeks of Alexandria had, and which many of the Jewish people desired. By his representation of Abraham as being concerned with the superior things, he is simultaneously portraying for Gentiles what is really important for Jews (in agreement, of course, with Greek philosophy) while for the Jewish reader he is using Abraham as an example to be emulated.

1958), 305-313. Cf. *De Abr.* 219; Abraham is also said to be endowed with excellent reason and speech (rhetoric) in *Migr. Abr.* 70-73.

Secondly, Philo provides a description of Abraham's courage.¹⁸⁵ "So . . . the man of worth was not merely peaceable and a lover of justice but courageous and warlike, not for the sake of warring. . . but to secure peace for the future" (*De Abr.* 225). The Sodomites rebel against the rule of the four kings. The four kings defeat the Sodomites in battle and take, among others, Abraham's nephew as a prisoner.

Upon hearing the report of the capture of his nephew, Abraham becomes exceedingly distressed. "He could no longer rest, so severe was the shock, and mourned for the living with greater sorrow than if he had heard of his death" (*De Abr.* 230). But Abraham did not remain distressed for long. Although he was a stranger in the land, and "at a loss for allies . . . and no one dared to oppose the invincible forces of the kings. . . ,"¹⁸⁶ he obtained allies based upon his intended deeds of justice and kindness. Abraham collects his home-bred servants, distributes them into centuries and advances with three battalions. "Philo is influenced here by some military knowledge. Scripture reports no more than that Abraham took 318 slaves. Philo turns this number into three battalions of a hundred men."¹⁸⁷ Taking the enemy by surprise, Philo attacks them speedily when they had eaten and were preparing to go to sleep. All are either killed in their beds or in battle, "mightily overcome more by his courage of soul than by the resources at his command. . . His nephew he

¹⁸⁵Cf. *Quis Her.* 5

¹⁸⁶*De Abr.* 231

¹⁸⁷Samuel Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 133-134.

brought back in the triumph of his brilliant and magnificent victory. . . " (*De Abr.* 234).

While Philo portrays Abraham as being courageous, he composes the account in such a way as to depict Abraham as having his ultimate trust in God. Abraham did not trust in his battalions, "for they were but a small fraction of the kings' forces, but in God, the champion and defender of the just" (*De Abr.* 232). Later, when the "high priest of the most high God" comes out to meet Abraham and his unhurt army after the battle, Philo adds that the priest "was astonished. . . and, thinking. . . that such success was not won without God's directing care and help. . . he stretched his hands to heaven and honoured him with prayers. . . offered sacrifices of thanksgiving. . . and feasted handsomely those who had taken part in the contest. . ." (*De Abr.* 235). Like Josephus, Philo turns the bread and wine offered by Melchizedek in Genesis 14 into a feast. However, in contrast to Josephus who portrays Abraham foremost as a lauded military hero,¹⁸⁸ Philo depicts Melchizedek as giving sole praise to God for his assistance in Abraham's victory.

In his allegory of the account of Abraham's victory which represents the establishment of democracy within the soul (*De Abr.* 236-244), the five kings are equal to the five senses while the four kings represent one's passions. These were at war within the soul, but were conquered by the truly divine and holy Word, whom Abraham represents, and whose stronghold is in the

¹⁸⁸*Ant.* 1.171-185; see also "Abraham in Josephus," above.

virtues, and who "comes to the contest and with the help of the mightier power of God, wins an easy victory over the said overlords" (*De Abr.* 244).¹⁸⁹

The self-control and wisdom of Abraham are handled in the remainder of *On Abraham*. Although Abraham's wife was extremely praiseworthy,¹⁹⁰ when she died Abraham chose moderation of feeling over indifference or unrestrained grief (*De Abr.* 257). Although Abraham wept for a time, he rose, "holding further mourning. . . to be out of keeping with wisdom" (*De Abr.* 258). The rulers of the country came to sympathize and saw his moderation in mourning, unlike theirs which was characterized by wailing, chanting, and beating of breasts. Sandmel states that "the picture here is a completely Hellenistic one, in all its aspects, especially in its standards of proper and improper mourning."¹⁹¹ They extol his sober air, and proclaim him to be "a king from God among us" (*De Abr.* 261).¹⁹²

Abraham is shown subsequently to exhibit the characteristics of faith and wisdom.¹⁹³ Philo states that in the words of Moses, it is said that Abraham "trusted in God" (ἐπίστευσε τῷ θεῷ; Gen. 15:6; *De Abr.* 262). Philo proceeds to point out what is not worthy of faith: high office, fame, honours, wealth,

¹⁸⁹The perfection of Abraham is treated more fully in the exegetical commentaries. For an overview, see Samuel Sandmel, *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature*, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 141-151.

¹⁹⁰See Philo's discussion of her exemplary life in *De Abr.* 245-254.

¹⁹¹*Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature*, (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 137. It may be that the list represents Jewish practices of which Philo disapproves because these do not accord with moderation.

¹⁹²Cf. Gen. 23: 5-6.

¹⁹³Although at first Philo speaks much of faith of Abraham, he later speaks of Abraham's wisdom, see *De Abr.* 270-271.

noble birth, health, efficacy of the senses, strength, and beauty (*De Abr.* 263-267). Each of these things is precarious for one reason or another, and not worthy of faith.¹⁹⁴

For Philo, God alone is worthy of faith.

Faith in God. . . is the one sure and infallible good, consolation of life, fulfillment of bright hopes, dearth of ills, harvest of goods, inacquaintance with misery, acquaintance with piety, heritage of happiness, all-round betterment of the soul which is firmly stayed on Him Who is the cause of all things and can do all things yet only wills the best (*De Abr.* 268).

For Philo, belief in those things which are "bodily and external" is equivalent to disbelief in God, while disbelief in the "bodily and external" is belief in God (*De Abr.* 269). "Philo . . . has allocated faith as something pertaining to the intelligible world. . . This opposition between the perceptible and the intelligible as applied to faith, serves to emphasize even more sharply that Philo's thinking inevitably seems to adjust itself to Hellenistic modes of expression."¹⁹⁵ Because God is allocated to the intelligible world in the works of Philo, "true faith operates only in the realm of the intelligible."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴It is interesting that while pointing out why beauty is not worthy of faith, Philo says that some of the "lifeless objects can beat and surpass the comeliness both of men and women" (*De Abr.* 267). In then describing these "lifeless objects," Philo says that they are images, statues, pictures, and "in general all the creations of the painters and the sculptors which achieve success in either art and rouse the enthusiasm of Greeks and barbarians alike, who set them up in the most conspicuous places to adorn their cities." His sentiments against images in general sounds particularly Jewish in nature. His division of people into the categories of "Greeks" and "barbarians" sounds particularly like one of the Jewish elite; presumably the Egyptians would fall into the "barbarians" category.

¹⁹⁵Samuel Sandmel, *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature*. (New York: KTAV Pub. House, 1971), 139.

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*

Returning to his description of Abraham, Philo states that he possesses the "queen of the virtues, faith in the existent," but he is also the first of whom they speak as elder.¹⁹⁷ Although previous to Abraham others lived longer lives, to Philo the true elder is "shown as such . . . by a laudable and perfect life" (*De Abr.* 270). Because Abraham is "enamoured of sound sense and wisdom and faith in God," he may justly be called elder, a name of "like significance to 'first.'" To Philo, the Sage "is the first of the human race, as a pilot in a ship or a ruler in a city or a general in war, or again as a soul in a body and a mind in a soul, or once more heaven in the world or God in heaven" (*De Abr.* 272). God marvelled at Abraham's faith and repaid him with faith by confirming "with an oath the gifts which He had promised" speaking to Abraham "as a friend with a familiar" (*De Abr.* 273). To all this, Philo adds the "crowning saying 'that this man did the divine law and the divine commands'¹⁹⁸. . . Such was the life of the first, the founder of the nation, one who obeyed the law, some will say, but rather, as our discourse has shown, himself a law and an unwritten statute" (*De Abr.* 275-276).

Through the figure of Abraham, Philo is showing the validity of faith in the one God and Cause of all that exists. He has argued that everything which is part of the sensible world is not worthy of faith, and God alone is worthy of that faith. His message to the Jewish reader is that his faith should be in the God of Abraham alone--all else which looks attractive to him in the physical world is not worthy of his trust. To the Gentile reader Philo provides an apologetic not only for the faith of the Jewish people in their God, but an

¹⁹⁷See Gen. 24:1, πρεσβύτερος, LXX.

¹⁹⁸See Gen. 26:5; see also comments on Abraham and the law in Philo, above.

argument for the belief of Gentiles in that same God based upon the faith of Abraham.

6.4. Conclusion: The Function and Significance of Abraham in the Works of Philo

As does Josephus, Philo portrays Abraham in the garb of one who possesses the virtues prized in the Hellenistic world. He is hospitable, courageous, just, self-controlled, and wise. While these qualities attributed to Abraham are based upon biblical texts, the degree to which Philo embellishes them gives them an extra-biblical character. Philo's Abraham is much like the Abraham found in Josephus: he is hospitable and he is courageous in battle. However, unlike Josephus' portrayal of Abraham, the hospitality of Abraham found in Philo is connected to his increasing discernment of God. Similarly, in Philo, the success of the courageous warrior Abraham is attributed more to the workings of God than to the military acumen of Abraham, as it is in Josephus.

More important than these Hellenistic characteristics of Abraham in Philo are the traditions of Abraham as a monotheist who leaves idolatry behind in the form of astrology. Just as in *Jubilees* and the *Antiquities*, the underlying tradition behind Abraham's monotheism is his discernment that one God exists. This reasoning is couched in the philosophical language of the day: Abraham sees that the One Cause, the Intelligible, the Creator exists apart from his creation. The similarities between the description of Abraham's belief in the invisible Creator over against the visible creation in Philo and Paul's description of those who sin by worshipping the creation rather than the Creator in Romans 1 are striking and will be further explored in chapter ten.

Abraham, as we have seen, is also the prototype of the proselyte. This is because he is said to be the first who believed in God (Gen. 15:6), meaning monotheistic belief, and the first to leave behind idolatry in the form of astrological determinism. The tradition of Abraham as the first to discern or "see" God provides the foundation for the title for the nation of Israel as the nation that "sees" God. As was discussed earlier, this title was distinctive to the nation of Israel in Alexandria. It appears reasonable to assume that the belief in one God based upon the figure of Abraham who was the first to "see" the one, true God was a not only a tradition distinctive to the nation of Israel but also a tradition which, to some extent, defined that nation.

It was also shown that a tradition of Abraham found in Philo was that he followed the law, albeit the natural law. For Philo, the natural law was the basis for the later Mosaic law. Abraham was actually a living law. Again, this tradition of Abraham following the law has already been seen in earlier chapters. This is particularly true of *Jubilees* where Abraham was depicted as obeying literal aspects of the law contained in the heavenly tablets before the Mosaic law was actually given. How the tradition of Abraham and the law impinges upon an interpretation of Galatians and Romans will be seen in the final two chapters.

The question that remains, however, is how is the reader to respond to the depiction of Abraham found in the works of Philo? If Abraham signifies what the Jew is supposed to be, what is it that the Jew in Alexandria is supposed to do? One of the most telling depictions of Abraham in this regard was his relationship with his nephew. It is interesting that within the account Philo never names Lot, but continually and only refers to him as Abraham's "nephew." This aversion to specifying who it is he is contrasting

to Abraham may be significant. By making the story of Abraham and Lot less specific, he allows the story to be even more allegorical. The "nephew" of Abraham is "every-Jew."

In the story of Abraham and Lot, we find that Lot honors fleeting things: wealth, reputation, office, and good birth. On the other hand, Abraham not only honors the four cardinal virtues, but he ultimately puts his faith in God, who alone is worthy of that faith. In section 6.1 it was shown how status in the Hellenistic world became increasingly important to the Jew of Alexandria. In this Alexandrian context, Philo is telling his Jewish readers not to put too much faith in the accoutrements of status acquired in the Hellenistic world. The true Jew is to put his or her faith in the one God who alone is worthy of that faith.

The Gentile readers of the stories of Abraham should be persuaded that the Jewish people are descended from Abraham and Sarah. Additionally, they should see that although Abraham eschewed some aspects of contemporary philosophy that gave the creation divine attributes which belonged to the Creator alone, Abraham's discernment of God was according to respected philosophical practices of the day. Abraham discerned the existence of God via the natural phenomena in a way similar to the discernment of God by the Stoics. But also central to the portr^o of Abraham in Philo was Abraham's discernment of the one God based upon the Stoic paradigm of the parallel between the mind which governs the body and the mind which governs the universe. In these ways Abraham discerns God in a way that is very respectable to the Hellenistic Gentile reader.

The true Jew is to obey the literal law. Abraham, who did not have the Mosaic law, was able to obey the natural law. The Mosaic law of the Jews is

based upon the natural law, and the God of the Jews is Creator of both. In essence, Philo is telling the Jews of Alexandria that they have an easier task than Abraham did, seeing that the law is now in written form. Furthermore, he is telling Jews who may be on the verge of apostasy that their law is valid and worthy of obedience.

But Philo is speaking to Gentiles here as well. They are to see that the law of the Jews was given by the Creator who is responsible for the natural law. In essence, according to Philo, the law of the Jews is the only written law which is valid because it is the only law which was revealed by the Creator God. Gentiles, then, will be following the revealed, natural law of God if they will but follow the Jewish law.

In the works of Philo Abraham stands for those things which make the Jews distinctive from their Gentile neighbors in Alexandria: monotheistic faith and obedience to the Mosaic law. Assuming that Philo wrote most of his works previous to the problems under Flaccus and the embassy to Rome, his works may have been produced and read at a time when, although the tension between Jews and Greeks had not yet resulted in clashes in violence, it called for an apologetic by a Jew who understood his Hellenistic environs. Such a Jew was Philo, who provided an apologetic based, in part, upon extra-biblical traditions about Abraham.

Chapter Seven

Abraham in the Testament of Abraham

7.1 Introduction

Although it is called a testament, the *Testament of Abraham* is not actually a testament. As defined by J. J. Collins, a testament is:¹

a discourse delivered in anticipation of imminent death. Typically, the speaker is a father addressing his sons, or a leader addressing his people, or his successor. The testament begins by describing in the third person the situation in which the discourse is delivered, and ends with an account of the speaker's death. The actual discourse, however, is delivered in the first person.

In the work under consideration Abraham eventually dies, but he never actually gives a testament. "Genesis 25: 5-6 seems to be the focal point of the tradition that Abraham did not give a testament. In contrast to the stories of Isaac (Gen. 27:27ff) and Jacob (Gen. 48:9), the Genesis texts do not show Abraham giving a testament of any kind."² Part of the author's reason for writing the work is to explain why it is that Abraham, the founder of the Jewish nation, never gave a testament.³ While the inclusion of the *Testament of Abraham* within the apocalyptic genre is disputed,⁴ it is

¹John J. Collins, "Testaments," Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period, CRINT 2.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 325.

²Anitra Bingham Kolenkow, "The Genre Testament and the Testament of Abraham," Studies on the Testament of Abraham, SBLSCS 6, G.W.E. Nickelsburg, ed., (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 140.

³Anitra Bingham Kolenkow, "What is the Role of Testament in the Testament of Abraham?" HTR 67.2 (1974) 182-184. Further examples of testaments in the Old Testament are found in Gen 46; Deut 33; Josh 23; 1 Sam 12; 1 Kgs 2:1-9; 1 Chr 28-29.

⁴Enno Janssen, "Testament Abrahams," ISHRZ 3 (1975) 196.

considered by some scholars to belong to this genre⁵ primarily because Abraham is depicted as journeying through the heavens.

The *Testament of Abraham* is now largely held to be a Jewish work,⁶ and is most closely related to two other works, *The Testament of Isaac* and *The Testament of Jacob*. Together, the three works make up what is known as the *Testaments of the Three Patriarchs*.⁷ The language of the text of the *Testament of Abraham* is unquestionably a Semitized Greek.⁸ Whether this reflects a translation from a Semitic language remains an open question.⁹

⁵Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity*. (London: SPCK, 1982), 53, 258, 266; John J. Collins lists *T. Abr.* 10-15 (Rec. A) and 8-12 (Rec. B) as "Otherworldly Journeys with Only Personal Eschatology" in "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979) 15; cf. idem., *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity*. (New York: Crossroad, 1984) 201, where he leaves the issue of type of genre undecided.

⁶G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Stories of Biblical and Early Post-Biblical Times," CRINT 2.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 62; Mathias Delcor, *Le Testament D'Abraham*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 67-73; Erno Janssen, "Testament Abrahams," *ISHRZ* 3 (1975) 199; cf. M. R. James, who held that the book was of Christian origin, *The Testament of Abraham*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1892), 25; see also K. Kohler, "The PreTalmudic Haggada IIC: The Apocalypse of Abraham and Its Kindred," *IQR* 7 (1895) 581.

⁷E. P. Sanders, "Testaments of the Three Patriarchs," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1 :869-918.

⁸R. A. Martin, "Syntax Criticism of the Testament of Abraham," *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*, SBLSCS 6, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, ed. (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1976), 95-120; Nigel Turner, "The 'Testament of Abraham': Problems in Biblical Greek," *NTS* 1 (1954-55) 220. For James' Greek text with English translation, see Michael E. Stone, trans., *The Testament of Abraham: The Greek Recensions*, SBLTT 2, Pseudepigrapha Series 2, (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1972).

⁹G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Stories of Biblical and Early Post-Biblical Times," CRINT 2.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 64. For the view that the original was written in Hebrew, see Mathias Delcor, *Le Testament D'Abraham*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 33-34.

The text contains Egyptian influences, and the provenance is thought to be Egyptian.¹⁰

Because there are no references to historical events in the work, and its doctrines are not datable to a narrow historical period, estimates of the date have varied widely.¹¹ In more recent years, scholars have placed the work in the late first century C.E. based upon Egypt as the document's place of origin. Tcherikover notes that when the Jewish people lived in a community, then their adherence to the Mosaic law remained strong. But after the revolts of the Jews against the Greeks in Egypt c. 117 C.E., when the Jews of Alexandria and of much of the rest of Egypt were killed in reprisal,¹² Tcherikover infers that Jews no longer lived in community. In this case, because Jews "appeared as isolated individuals among the great mass of foreigners, [they] could not overcome the influence of their environment or retain the elements of Jewish culture. . ." ¹³ In this case, "it is doubtful if Egyptian, especially Alexandrian, Judaism was sufficiently intact after A.D. 117 to allow the production of such literature, especially a work like the Testament of Abraham, which does not distinguish Jew from Gentile in the judgment."¹⁴

¹⁰Enno Janssen, "Testament Abrahams," *ISHRZ* 3 (1975) 197; Nigel Turner, "The 'Testament of Abraham': Problems in Biblical Greek," *NTS* 1 (1954-55) 221; M. R. James, *The Testament of Abraham*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1892), 76.

¹¹E. P. Sanders, "Testament of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:874.

¹²Eusebius, *H. E.* iv.2.

¹³*Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University for the Jewish Publication Society of America, 1966), 256.

¹⁴E. P. Sanders, "Testament of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:874.

Parallels with aspects of other Jewish writings, such as the testament literary genre and the motif of resistance to death, also support a date in the vicinity of the first century C.E.¹⁵

The testament itself comes in two recensions: the long recension, A, and the shorter recension, B. Scholars differ as to which is the original recension.¹⁶ Some reject the idea that one recension depends directly on the other and suppose that both can ultimately be traced to a common original.¹⁷ Nickelsburg has shown that recension A probably "retains a more primitive form of the substance of the tradition" because numerous elements "*which are simply present in Rec. B, with no clearly delineated function, are of the essence of the structure and plot of Rec. A.*"¹⁸ Because recension A probably contains the oldest account and because it contains the most complete account, in this chapter, recension A will be discussed with supplements from the shorter recension where these considerations are important.

¹⁵Sanders contends that the tradition of the resistance of Moses to death influenced the author of the *T. Abr.*, E. P. Sanders, "Testament of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:874; see also Samuel E. Loewenstamm, "The Testament of Abraham and the Texts Concerning the Death of Moses," Studies on the Testament of Abraham, SBLSCS 6, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, ed., (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1976), 219-225. John J. Collins, "The Testamentary Literature in Recent Scholarship," Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters, R. A. Kraft, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, eds., SBLBIM 2 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 277.

¹⁶For the view that the longer recension, A, is original, see Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Widoger, eds. Encyclopaedia Judaica. (Jerusalem: MacMillan, 1971), s.v. "Abraham, Testament of" by David Flusser.

¹⁷Erno Janssen, "Testament Abrahams," JSHRZ 3 (1975) 195; Delcor, Le Testament D'Abraham, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 13-14; E. P. Sanders, "The Testament of Abraham," Outside the Old Testament, M. deJonge, ed., Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200, P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1985), 56-70.

¹⁸G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Structure and Message in the Testament of Abraham," Studies on the Testament of Abraham, SBLSCS 6, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, ed., (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1976), 92.

The book contains Christian interpolations. Its availability in Rumanian, Slavonic, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Coptic attests to the popularity of the work in the Church.¹⁹ A Christian scribe may have inserted some Christian additions, but these are considered "superflous and superficial"²⁰ and do not make the work a Christian one.

7.2. The Interpretation of Abraham in the *Testament of Abraham*

7.2.1 Abraham the Hospitable

The *Testament of Abraham* is divided into two parallel and symmetrical sections: chapters 1-15 and 16-20. Each section begins when God "summons the messenger of death, and ends with Abraham on his bed, surrounded by his household. . . the typical testamentary situation."²¹ Although the situation set up by the author is testamentary, Abraham's refusal to die also runs through these two sections. This refusal on Abraham's part to die or even to prepare to die provides a foil to the testamentary form that the author has given the text.

The first messenger sent by God is Michael, his archangel, who is also called the Commander in Chief. Abraham is said to be 995 years old, and to have lived "All the years of his life. . . in quietness, gentleness, and

¹⁹Nigel Turner, "The 'Testament of Abraham': Problems in Biblical Greek," *NTS* 1 (1954-55), 219-223; for a description of the Greek manuscripts and versions available in all languages, see Francis Schmidt, *Le Testament grec d'Abraham: Introduction. édition critique des deux recensions grecques. traduction.* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1986).

²⁰Nigel Turner, "The 'Testament of Abraham': Problems in Biblical Greek," *NTS* 1 (1954-55) 221.

²¹G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Structure and Message in the Testament of Abraham," *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*, SBLSCS 6, G.W.E. Nickelsburg, ed., (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1976), 85.

righteousness" (*T. Abr* 1:1).²² Additionally, Abraham is described as being extremely hospitable (φιλόξενος), so much so that he welcomed "everyone--rich and poor, kings and rulers, the crippled and the helpless, friends and strangers, neighbors and passersby--(all) on equal terms did the pious (ὅσιος), entirely holy, righteous, and hospitable Abraham welcome" (*T. Abr* 1:2). One of the reasons Abraham was depicted as hospitable in the works of Philo and Josephus is that both were concerned to provide an apologetic for Judaism for their readers who were Gentiles. In the Hellenistic world, hospitality (φιλόξενο) was a sign of culture. While it is true that *The Testament of Abraham* is universalistic in its message, it is not at all clear that the work was intended to be an apologetic. Because this is the case, it is reasonable to suppose that the tradition of Abraham being known for his exemplary hospitality was not just something devised by Josephus and Philo for their Hellenistic readers based upon Genesis 18, but that it was a tradition about Abraham known by Jews in the Diaspora if not also in Palestine.²³

In recension B, God's agent Michael, who introduced himself as a stranger (ξένος), has heard of Abraham, how he "[offered hospitality] (ξενοίζω) to angels" in his house (*T. Abr.* 1:10).²⁴ Through the words of the angel Michael, the author of the *Testament of Abraham* is obviously referring to

²²Citations in English are taken from E. P. Sanders, "Testament of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:871-904; the Greek text is found in Michael E. Stone, *The Testament of Abraham: The Greek Recensions* SBLTT 2, Pseudepigrapha Series 2, Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1972.

²³It is also interesting that the author of the *T.Abr.* connected Abraham's hospitality with his piety just as Philo did: "We have described Abraham's hospitality (φιλόξενος) which was but a by-product of a greater virtue. . . piety (θεοσέβεια)" (*De Abr.* 114).

²⁴Sanders translates ξενοίζω as "entertaining," "Testament of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:896.

Genesis 18, where Abraham entertains three visiting strangers who were angels. In reference to the hospitality of Abraham mentioned early on in both recensions, James believed that φιλοξενία is the main moral of this first part of the book. ". . . it may be remarked that in much of this [testamentary] literature, special virtues are inculcated in special books. Thus each of the Testaments of the XII Patriarchs emphasizes a special vice or virtue, Reuben speaks περί πορνείας [concerning fornication]. . . Joseph σωφροσύνης [moderation]. . . and so forth."²⁵ In fact, in both recensions, for the angel to do what God requires, to get Abraham to prepare to die, the angel must be able to count on the hospitality of Abraham to a stranger.

Based primarily on Rabbinic texts, Delcor shows how the tradition about the hospitality of Abraham was connected to his proselytism.²⁶ But what is surprising about the *Testament of Abraham* is that proselytism is not mentioned at all. Considering the depiction of Abraham as the prototypical proselyte in Jewish literature discussed to this point,²⁷ this is a surprising twist to the Abraham tradition. Additionally, what is striking about the text at hand is that there is no need to refer to proselytism, "since all the race of Adam is judged by the same standard"²⁸ (see below).

²⁵M. R. James, *The Testament of Abraham*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1892), 120.

²⁶Mathias Delcor, *Le Testament D'Abraham*. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 35-38.

²⁷For example, see *Jubilees* 11-12, Philo *De Ebr.* 106-110, *De Virt.* 219, and the chapters above.

²⁸E. P. Sanders, "Testament of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:878 n. 51.

Even with all his hospitality, Abraham is still subject to death. "Even upon him came the common and inexorable bitter cup of death and the unforeseen end of life" (*T. Abr.* 1:3). God commands his angel Michael,

go down to Abraham and tell him about his death, so that he may arrange for the disposition of his possessions. For I have blessed him as the stars of heaven and as the sand by the seashore. . . and he is very rich. But above all others he is righteous in all goodness, (having been) hospitable (φιλόξενος) and loving until the end of his life. . . go to Abraham, my beloved friend, announce his death to him, and give him this assurance, "At this time you are about to leave this vain world and depart from the body, and you will come to your own Master among the good" (*T. Abr.* 1:4-7).

The designation of Abraham as the "friend of God" is certainly not new. In this text, this designation seems to be based to a large degree upon Abraham's righteousness as manifested by his hospitality. The authors of previous texts called Abraham the "friend of God" for a variety of reasons. After Philo discussed Abraham's removal from astrology to an understanding of the existence of God, Abraham was called the "friend of God" (*De Abr.* 89).²⁹ In *Jubilees* 19:9 the author wrote,

This is the tenth trial with which Abraham was tried. And he was found faithful, controlled of spirit. . . and he did not say a word concerning the rumor which was in the land that the Lord said he would give it to him and to his seed after him, but he begged a place there so that he might bury his dead because he was found faithful and he was recorded as a friend of the Lord in the heavenly tablets.

In *Jubilees*, the designation seems to be based upon Abraham's faithfulness to God in the midst of trial. In the *Damascus Document* Abraham is called a friend of the Lord because he obeys the commandments of God. Abraham was "accounted a friend of God because he kept the commandments of God and did not choose his own will. And he handed

²⁹See also *De Som.* I.193-195; *De Sob.* 55-56.

them down to Isaac and Jacob, who kept them, and were recorded as friends of God and party to the Covenant for ever."³⁰ Overall, in the texts studied thus far, Abraham's faithfulness to the true God and his love for people are the basis for his being designated the "friend of God." Both of these characteristics are essential to the Jewish law. And, if we consider that true hospitality was given without any hope of reciprocation out of fear of God and love for humanity, fundamentally Abraham is called the friend of God because he puts the will of God before his own.

The Commander in Chief leaves God and finds the righteous Abraham "in the nearby field, sitting beside yokes of plow oxen with the sons of Masek and other servants, twelve in number" (*T. Abr.* 2:1). Abraham was earlier associated with agriculture in *Jubilees* 11, where he is depicted as the inventor of the seed plow. The association of Abraham with agriculture may be related to the LXX, which translates Genesis 21:33, "Abraham planted a tamarisk tree. . ." as "and Abraham planted a field. . ."³¹

When Abraham sees Michael approaching, he rises to meet him, "just as was his custom to greet and welcome all strangers" (*T. Abr.* 1:2). Michael in turn greets him, saying, "Hail, honored father, righteous soul elect of God, true friend of the heavenly One." Again, the hospitality of Abraham is

³⁰CD III in G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin Books, 3rd ed., 1987), 84; P. R. Davies, *The Damascus Covenant: An Interpretation of the "Damascus Document."* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1983), 76-83.

³¹καὶ ἐφύτευσεν Ἀβραάμ ἄρουραν; see M. Delcor, *Le Testament D'Abraham*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 34-35; cf. James Barr, who states that the Hebrew לִשְׁטִיץ was translated by the Greek ἄρουρα because of doubts about the reverence of ascribing to Abraham actions which had associations with a sacred tree, and "especially one which bears a name unpleasantly similar to that of the notorious idolatrous symbol, the *Asherah*." "Seeing the Wood for the Trees? An Enigmatic Ancient Translation," *JSJ* 13 (1968) 14. See also Mathias Delcor, "De L'Origine de Quelques Traditions Continues dans le Testament d'Abraham," *The Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, ed. P. Peli, (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1969), 192-200.

evident in his attitude towards a stranger, and Abraham is again called a friend of God. But the themes of Abraham as father and of his being elect are added. Surprisingly, neither theme is explicitly linked at this point to the Jewish nation. If the work is tailored for the Jewish reader, it is probably expected that the reader understands that Abraham is being described as the father and first elect member of the Jewish nation.

Michael informs Abraham that he has been sent from "the great king to provide for the succession of a true friend of his, for the king summons him." In this case, Michael is being elusive with Abraham, but the author is presenting the heavenly situation in grand earthly terms. The phrase "provide for the succession of" is "διαδοχὴν . . . κομιζόμενος." Sanders notes that the "meaning apparently is that Michael's assignment is to encourage Abraham to make testamentary dispositions."³²

While Michael and Abraham walk from the field where they met towards Abraham's house, a cypress tree cries out in a human voice at the command of God. The tree says, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God who is summoning him to those who love him" (*T. Abr.* 3:3).³³ In recension B, the tree cries out, "Holy are you, because you carried out the purpose concerning (the things for) which you were sent" (*T. Abr.* B 3:3). In both cases, the end result is the same; the death of Abraham. James notes a variety of stories about speaking trees and concludes that certain beliefs existed in the east

³²E. P. Sanders, "Testament of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:883 n. 2d. Cf. *T. Abr.* 1:4 (above); 4:11; 8:11; 15:1.

³³Sanders notes the meaning is probably that God is summoning Abraham to be with those who love God, "Testament of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:883 n. 3a.

which were that "the cypress tree is a distinctive tree of Paradise. . . Certain cypresses gave oracles, and in one instance prophesied approaching death. . . The trees of Paradise praise God and sometimes speak with human voices."³⁴ In both recensions, Abraham conceals the event. The pericope adds to the divine character of the situation and the divine attributes of Abraham's guest (especially in recension B), the identity of whom Abraham does not yet recognize.

It is Isaac who realizes that their guest is no ordinary mortal. He runs up to the angel and falls at his feet. The angel blesses Isaac, saying, "The Lord God will bestow upon you his promise which he gave to your father Abraham and to his seed, and he will also bestow upon you the precious prayer of your father and your mother" (*T. Abr.* 3:6). The actual promises are not mentioned here, but one assumes they are the promises of descendants, land, greatness of name and that Abraham would be a blessing to all nations (Gen. 12:1-7; 22:17). Neither at this point in the *Testament of Abraham*, nor in the Genesis account, had Abraham been depicted as an intercessor. However, Abraham is depicted as praying for his descendants in *Jubilees* 22:9, "O my God, may your mercy and your peace be upon your servant and upon the seed of his sons so that they might become an elect people for you and an inheritance from all of the nations of the earth from henceforth and for all the days of the generations of the earth forever."³⁵

³⁴M. R. James, *The Testament of Abraham*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1892), 63, see also 59-64.

³⁵E. P. Sanders, "Testament of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:883 n. 4 c.

Upon his father's command, Isaac brings water to wash the feet of the stranger. It is here that the second miracle occurs. While Abraham was washing the angel's feet, "his heart was moved and he wept over the stranger" (*T. Abr.* 3:10). Much like the accounts of Abraham in previous chapters, here Abraham is made to be a much more compassionate person than he is found to be in the Genesis account.³⁶ Isaac and the angel both weep with Abraham. The tears of the angel turn into precious stones when they fall into the basin. Abraham sees the stones and takes them secretly, keeping the mystery to himself (*T. Abr.* 3:11-12).

In true hospitable fashion, Abraham orders a room to be made ready for their guest: couches are to be spread out for dining, with a lampstand and an abundantly filled table; linens, purple cloth, and silk are to be spread out; incense is to be burned; fragrant plants should be brought from the garden; and seven lamps should be filled in preparation for a late night (*T. Abr.* 4: 2-3). Michael disappears momentarily, when he ascends to heaven to talk with God. He protests that Abraham is too good a man to bring death upon. ". . . I cannot announce the mention of death to that righteous man because I have not seen upon earth a man like him--merciful, hospitable, righteous, truthful, God-fearing, refraining from every evil deed" (*T. Abr.* 4:6).

Michael returns to earth and dines with Abraham. After the dinner, Abraham prayed, "according to his custom, and the archangel prayed with him" (*T. Abr.* 5:2). During the night, Isaac comes to the tent where Abraham and Michael are sleeping. Isaac is crying; his tears cause both Abraham and Michael also to mourn. Sarah hears the crying, and runs to find out what has

³⁶For example, in *De Abr.* 175 Abraham is portrayed as containing his emotion when he offers up Isaac. And, in the *Genesis Apocryphon* he weeps bitterly (20:10 - 11) in response to Sarah being taken from him.

happened (*T. Abr.* 5:5-14). When Michael speaks, Sarah recognizes him as one of the three holy men who promised them Isaac (cf. Gen. 18:1-8; Rec. B, 6: 10-11). Abraham recognizes that she is right, and brings from his robe the precious stones which had formed from the tears of Michael.

In comparison with the texts previously studied, in the *Testament of Abraham* at this point it might appear that the patriarch is not portrayed in a very favorable light. For example, Josephus rewrites the account of Abraham in such a way as to portray Abraham as a premier philosopher. In the *Genesis Apocryphon*, Abraham was portrayed as a mantic sage who not only had the ability to interpret dreams, but also could cast out demons.³⁷ In contrast, in the *Testament of Abraham*, although he was the one who heard the tree with the human voice and procured precious stones from Michael's tears, Abraham is the last one to recognize that Michael is not a mere human being.

As Samuel Lowenstamm suggests, the author may have used a "retarding epic device, well known from the story of Odysseus' return to his home."³⁸ If Abraham had recognized Michael's true identity at the beginning of the story, there would have been no opportunity to depict examples of Abraham's hospitality. The portrayal of Abraham is of someone who was so concerned for the hospitality shown to his guest that he was not concerned with who the guest actually was. His first command after the prophecy by the cypress is for Isaac to draw water in order that the "stranger's feet" may be washed (*T. Abr.* 3:7). And, just after Michael's tears become stones, he

³⁷See also 1 Macc 2:52, "Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness?" 4 Macc 13:12; 15:28; 16:18-23.

³⁸Samuel E. Loewenstamm, "The Testament of Abraham and the Texts Concerning the Death of Moses," *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*, SBLSCS 6, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, ed. (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1976), 221, 224 n. 4. Cf. Homer, *The Odyssey*, xix.

commands Isaac to beautify the chamber in which they will dine. Abraham was said to provide hospitality to both friends and strangers, on equal terms (*T. Abr.* 1: 1-2). Through his concern for the provision of hospitality for all on equal terms, Abraham literally was unaware that he provided hospitality for an angel.³⁹

7.2.2 Abraham's Reluctance to Die

Isaac relates his dream in which the sun and moon are taken from him by a light-bearing man who descends from heaven (*T. Abr.* 7:2-7). Michael interprets the dream; the sun and moon represent Abraham and Sarah. Speaking to Abraham, Michael says, ". . . the light-bearing man who came down from heaven, this is the one sent from God, who is about to take your righteous soul from you. And now know, most honored Abraham, that at this time you are going to leave the earthly life and journey to God" (*T. Abr.* 7:8-9).

In recension B, Isaac's dream is interpreted differently. Michael states, "Your son Isaac has spoken the truth; for you are (the sun) and you will be taken up into the heavens, while your body remains on the earth until seven thousand ages are fulfilled. For then all flesh will be raised" (*T. Abr.* recension B, 7:15-16).

Abraham realizes that it is Michael whose mission it is to take his soul. When Michael affirms this mission, Abraham answers enigmatically, "Now I know that you are an angel of the Lord, and you were sent to take my soul. Nevertheless, I will not by any means follow you, but you do whatever he

³⁹Which is also the case in the depiction of Abraham's hospitality in Gen 18:1-8; the angels are only described as "three men" in 18:2. Cf. Hebrews 13:2, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." See further, Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 386, nn. 31-34 and chapter nine, "Abraham in Galatians."

commands" (*T. Abr.* 7:12).⁴⁰ Michael again goes to God for advice. God tells Michael to remind Abraham of all the blessings he has received, especially those of land and descendants. Michael should also remind Abraham that all human beings die and not

one of the forefathers has escaped the mystery of death. All have died, all have departed into Hades, all have been gathered by the sickle of Death. But to you I did not send Death. I did not allow a fatal disease to befall you. . . I did not ever want any evil to come upon you. But for your good comfort I sent my Commander-in-chief Michael to you, in order that you might come to know of your departure from the world and that you might make arrangements for the disposition of your house and everything that belongs to you and so that you might bless Isaac your beloved son (*T. Abr.* 8:9-11).

Through the mouthpiece of the angel Michael, the author of the *Testament of Abraham* provides us with a central theme of his work: all human beings die, not even the forefathers of the Jewish nation escape death. It seems that although Abraham is human enough to die, that God also deems him worthy of special treatment since he did not immediately send Death for Abraham. But instead of writing a testament as the author of *Jubilees* did,⁴¹ the author of recension A will endeavor to explain why it is that Abraham leaves no testament behind.

Michael relates to Abraham everything which God has commanded him. Abraham further forestalls death by making the request that while he is in his body, he is enabled to see "all the inhabited world and also the created things.

⁴⁰Recension B omits Abraham's unwillingness to die which is a prominent feature of recension A. If recension A contains the most ancient form of the legend and the author of recension B used it in his composition, James' suggestion that the omission of Abraham's reticence to die is due to motives of reverence on the part of the writer of B seems probable. M. R. James, *The Testament of Abraham*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1892), 64.

⁴¹See *Jubilees* 21 and chapter one, "Abraham in Jubilees."

. . and when I have seen these things, then, if I depart from life, I shall have no sorrow" (*T. Abr.* 9:6). Michael takes the request to God, and it is granted.

7.2.3 Abraham's Heavenly Journey

While the depiction of Abraham on a heavenly journey is most developed in the *Testament of Abraham* and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, references to it are found elsewhere. In the *Biblical Antiquities* 18:5, God is depicted as saying, "Is it not regarding this people that I spoke to Abraham in a vision, saying, 'Your seed will be like the stars of the heaven,' when I lifted him above the firmament and showed him the arrangements of all the stars?" 4 *Ezra* 3:13-14 attests to the same tradition about Abraham, ". . . you chose. . . Abraham; and you loved him and to him only you revealed the end of the times, secretly by night" and, in 2 *Baruch* 4:5 it states, "After these things, I showed [Paradise] to my servant Abraham in the night between the portions of the victims." With the exception of the *Biblical Antiquities*, "all of these texts specify as the time of the revelation the sacrifice described in Gen 15, perhaps because the divine word in Gen 15:13-15 is a revelation of events to come."⁴²

The depiction of Abraham in the heavens is found in the *Testament of Abraham* 10: 1-15:2. Michael takes Abraham up "on a chariot of cherubim" by which he is lifted "up into the air of heaven" onto a cloud (*T. Abr.* 10:1). While he is on the cloud, he is taken over the entire inhabited world. Abraham sees humanity and their activities: plowing, leading carriages, shepherding, herding, dancing, playing music, wrestling, pleading cases, weeping, burying the dead and marrying.

⁴²G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Eschatology in the Testament of Abraham: A Study of the Judgment Scene in the Two Recensions," *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, ed., (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 24.

But upon seeing sin on earth in the form of thievery and murder, illicit fornication and stealing from others' dwellings, Abraham sends judgment upon the sinners in the forms of wild beasts, being swallowed up by the earth, and fire from heaven. God stops the proceedings because he is concerned that if Abraham sees all those who act in sin, he would destroy the whole creation. He says, "for behold, Abraham has not sinned and he has no mercy upon the sinners. I, in contrast, made the world and I do not wish to destroy any one of them, but I await the death of the sinner, until he turns and lives" (*T. Abr.* 10:14). From the statements of God, the author conveys not only the belief that God created the world, but also that God is merciful in his judgment. God waits for the death of a sinner, to see if that sinner might repent and be judged favorably and live. The judgment of God looks merciful in contrast to the harsh judgment by Abraham.

Additionally, what is noteworthy about the story of Abraham judging the sinners is that the sin committed is condemned in all cultures. The sins are not specifically repugnant to a Jew. And, the virtues which have been stressed, as the hospitality of Abraham, are virtues which are universal. "The judgment is of all the children of Adam, which clearly puts Jew and Gentile on equal footing, and all are judged by the same standards."⁴³ In this case, among other themes, "the Testament of Abraham bears witness to the existence of a form of Judaism which insisted on high morals and which

⁴³E. P. Sanders, "The Testament of Abraham," *Outside the Old Testament*, M. deJonge, ed., Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200, P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1985), 58.

stressed compassion, but which did not draw a sharp distinction between Jew and Gentile."⁴⁴

Abraham is next brought to the first gate of heaven where he sees two ways: one straight and narrow, the other broad and spacious.⁴⁵ Because everyone on earth is descended from him, it is Adam who sits on a throne near the two gates:⁴⁶

when he sees many souls entering through the straight gate, then he arises and sits on his throne rejoicing and exulting cheerfully, because this strait gate. . . leads to life. . . when he sees many souls entering through the broad gate, then he pulls the hair of his head and casts himself on the ground crying. . . for the broad gate (the gate) of the sinners, which leads to destruction. . . among seven thousand there is scarcely to be found one saved soul, righteous and undefiled (*T. Abr.* 11: 7-12).

Abraham next is shown the judgment of a single soul by Abel, who sits on a throne inside the gates and between them. Before Abel a book is found, along with angels with papyri and pens, a balance, and a trumpet which "contained within it an all-consuming fire (for) testing the sinners" (*T. Abr.* 12:10).⁴⁷ The soul being judged was found to have sins and righteous deeds

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Here Sanders notes the verbatim agreement between this passage and Mt 7:13f: "the combination of 'gate' and 'way', the use of precisely the same four adjectives, and the phrases that appear later in the chapter, 'which leads to life' and 'which leads to destruction.' E. P. Sanders, "The Testament of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:888 n. 11b.

⁴⁶In rabbinic literature, it is Abraham who sits at the gate of Hell and does not allow anyone to enter who has proved unworthy of his descent from the father of the faithful. M. R. James, *The Testament of Abraham*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U., 1892), 73.

⁴⁷*T. Abr.* 13:13 states, "If the fire tests the work of anyone and does not touch it, this person is justified and the angel of righteousness takes him and carries him up to be saved. . . ." The wording "if the fire tests the work of anyone" is found in a different sequence from 1 Cor. 3:13. For a comparison of the *T. Abr.* and 1 Cor 3:10-15 see Charles W. Fishburne, "1 Corinthians III.10-15 and the Testament of Abraham," *NTS* 17 (1970-71) 109-115. Fishburne held that Paul used the *T. Abr.* However, in light of more recent work in which the *T. Abr.* is held to be

equally balanced as written in the book (*T. Abr.* 12:18). For this reason, Abel "neither turned it over to the torturers nor (placed it among) those who were being saved, but he set it in the middle" (*T. Abr.* 11:18).

The judgment scene may very well contain influences from Greek, Egyptian, and Jewish cultures. G. H. Macurdy stressed the similarities between the literature of Plato and other Hellenistic writers and the *Testament of Abraham*.⁴⁸ This scene where deeds are also said to be weighed on a balance (*T. Abr.* 12:13) may be based in part upon the Egyptian story about the God Osiris who sits on a throne while Anubis watches the result of weighing the deeds and Thoth records the results.⁴⁹ Additionally, a few Jewish texts such as the *Testament of Judah*⁵⁰ and Daniel⁵¹ contain elements found in the judgment scene: two witnesses at the judgment and a book which contains the evidence for the judgment.⁵² The Old Testament

composed later than Paul, the *T. Abr.* may have been influenced by the New Testament. See Sanders, "Testament of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:878-879, esp. n. 54.

⁴⁸G. H. Macurdy, "Platonic Orphism in the Testament of Abraham," *IBL* 41 (1942) 213-226. See also G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Eschatology in the Testament of Abraham: A Study of the Judgment Scene in the Two Recensions," *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, ed., (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 31-33.

⁴⁹Francis Schmidt, *Le Testament grec d'Abraham: Introduction, édition critique des deux recensions grecques, traduction*, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1986), 1:71-74. See also G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Eschatology in the Testament of Abraham: A Study of the Judgment Scene in the Two Recensions," *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, ed., (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 32-39, 46; M. R. James, *The Testament of Abraham*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1892), 76.

⁵⁰*T. Jud.* 20:1-5

⁵¹Dan 12: 1 -3; cf. *1 Enoch* 81:1-2; *2 Enoch* 52:15.

⁵²G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Eschatology in the Testament of Abraham: A Study of the Judgment Scene in the Two Recensions," *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, ed., (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 38.

similarly refers to the use of a balance in judgment. For example, Job 31:6 states, "let me be weighed in a just balance, and let God know my integrity."⁵³ One cannot discover precisely where Jewish thought ends and Egyptian thought begins, or where Greek concepts enter in. They had all influenced one another for centuries.⁵⁴

In Recension B, the scribe is said to be "the one who produces (the evidence). . . the teacher of heaven and earth and the scribe of righteousness, Enoch" (*T. Abr.* 11:3). Enoch's role is to record the sins and the righteous deeds of each person to be used by God in the judgment (*T. Abr.* 11:4). This depiction of Enoch even goes beyond that found in *Jubilees* 4:23-24 where Enoch writes of all the deeds of the "children of men" in preparation for the judgment to come:⁵⁵ in the *Testament of Abraham*, Enoch is assigned the role of the scribe already in the Judgment.⁵⁶

The angel tells Abraham of two more judgments which will come in the future. One judgment will be by the twelve tribes of Israel, who will judge

⁵³M. R. James, *The Testament of Abraham*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1892), 71. Cf. Dan 5:27; Ps 62:9; Prov 16:2.

⁵⁴The depiction of the weighing of souls after death is popular in some Islamic literature. M. R. James, *The Testament of Abraham*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1892), 72. And, in some Rabbinic texts, keeping a record of deeds and the weighing of those deeds after death is popular. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977; reprint ed., 1983), 125-147, esp. 127-132.

⁵⁵" . . . He is there [the garden of Eden], writing condemnation and judgment of all the world, and all of the evils of the children of men. . . so that he might bear witness against all of the children of men so that he might relate all of the deeds of the generations until the day of judgment" (*Jub.*⁴24). In *1QapGen*, Abraham was depicted as espousing wisdom from the book of Enoch, ". . . nobles of Egypt [came] of the Pharaoh Zoan concerning [my] words and my wife. They gave [me many gifts and asked of me] kindness, wisdom, and truth. And I read before them the [book] of the words of [En]och(?)" (19:23 - 25).

⁵⁶Much like the description of Enoch found in *2 Enoch* 53:2; see a similar description of Enoch in Birger A. Pearson, "The Pierpont Morgan Fragments of a Coptic Enoch Apocryphon," *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*. SBLSCS 6, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, ed., (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1976), 238.

"both every breath and every creature" (*T. Abr.* 13:6). This judgment is not described in detail. What is clear is that the Jewish people do have some part in the judgment. Whereas Adam and his son Abel were representatives of humanity as a whole, the twelve tribes are representative of Judaism. This would mean that at the time of the composition of the document, the belief was that the Jewish people played a significant part in a much greater kingdom than any on earth. However, the judgment of all people by the twelve tribes is one of the few distinctively Jewish elements in the work.

The third judgment is by the Master God of all (*T. Abr.* 13:7-8). This judgment of all of humanity by God is commonplace in middle Jewish literature. But the idea that "there will be three separate universal judgments has no sure parallels in Jewish literature."⁵⁷

The judgment scene in recension B differs in a significant way. Upon being told to go through the narrow gate, Abraham delays, because it is too small for his physical size. Michael states, "You will enter through it unimpeded, and all those who are like you" (*T. Abr.* recension B, 9:4). The wording does not reflect the idea that only the descendants of Abraham will enter by the narrow way. The one who is like Abraham, presumably in his righteousness, will enter heaven. The reader is encouraged to be like the righteous Abraham.

At the conclusion of the judgment scene, Abraham asks about the soul whose good and bad deeds balance one another. Abraham intercedes for the soul, that it might be saved. The soul is saved by the righteous prayer of

⁵⁷G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Eschatology in the Testament of Abraham: A Study of the Judgment Scene in the Two Recensions," *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, ed., (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 40; although Delcor assigns the three judgments to the three stages of jurisdiction that existed in Egypt during Roman rule, *Le Testament D'Abraham*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 68.

Abraham. Here we have an example of the merit of the righteous Abraham resulting in the saving of the soul whose deeds balanced one another.⁵⁸ That God was believed by the Jews to have remained faithful to Israel based upon her father Abraham was already found in the *Biblical Antiquities*.⁵⁹ What is significant in the case of the merit of Abraham on behalf of the soul in the *Testament of Abraham* is that the soul is not identified as either Jewish or Gentile. Abraham also prays for the souls which he "cursed and destroyed" (*T. Abr.* 14:11). Abraham repents of his sin, saying, "Now I have come to know that I sinned before the Lord our God. Come, Michael. . . let us beseech God with tears that he may forgive me (my) sinful act and grant them to me" (*T. Abr.* 14:12). God responds from heaven saying that he has forgiven Abraham's sin and called back into life those Abraham had destroyed.

The depiction of Abraham in prayer is certainly not new. He was said to pray after dinner "according to his custom" (*T. Abr.* 5:2) and to have prayed for Isaac (*T. Abr.* 3:6). In previous literature, it was shown how Abraham was a man of prayer.⁶⁰ However, in this case the prayer is not only in gratitude for God's provisions or for his descendants. The righteousness of Abraham which was so lauded earlier in the text became Abraham's weakness. This time he prays for the souls he has condemned and for forgiveness for his own self-righteous act of destroying those on earth.

God commands Michael to return Abraham to his home, again in order that Abraham can make arrangements before he dies. Afterwards, Michael is

⁵⁸G. H. Box, *The Testament of Abraham: Translated from the Greek Text with Introduction and Notes*, (London: SPCK, 1927), 23 n. 2.

⁵⁹ See chapter four, "Abraham in the *Biblical Antiquities*."

⁶⁰For example, see "Abraham in the *Genesis Apocryphon*." See also the depiction of Abraham's intercession for Sodom (Gen 18:22-33) and for the healing of Abimelech (Gen 20:17).

to bring Abraham to God (*T. Abr.* 15:1). But upon returning to earth Abraham once again refuses to follow Michael. The angel returns to heaven, saying that he will not touch Abraham because "from the beginning he has become your friend and he did everything which is pleasing before you. And there is no man like unto him on earth, not even Job, the wondrous man. And for this reason I refrain from touching him. Command, then, immortal king, what is to be done" (*T. Abr.* 15:14-15).

7.2.4 Section Two: Abraham is Summoned by Death

As a last resort, God sends Death⁶¹ "who is called the (one of) abominable countenance and merciless look" (*T. Abr.* 16:1). God commands Death to change his appearance to one of beauty and glory, and not to terrify Abraham, but to "take him with soft speech, because he is my true friend" (*T. Abr.* 16:5). In the form of an angel, Death goes to meet Abraham. Death reveals his true identity and mission, but Abraham does not believe him, nor will he follow him.

Abraham retires to his bed, and Death follows, explaining that it is because of Abraham's "righteous deeds and the boundless seas of [his] hospitality and the greatness of [his] love for God" that he has come in a beautiful form (*T. Abr.* 17:7). To the righteous he comes in beauty and quietness, while to the sinners he comes in decay and ferocity.

At Abraham's request, Death shows him his true form. As a result, seven thousand male and female servants die, and Abraham is close to death. Abraham beseeches Death to return to his beautiful form and asks, "Was it for the sake of this that God sent you here today?" (*T. Abr.* 18:4). Death replies

⁶¹James contends that the depiction of Death in the *Testament of Abraham* is similar to later documents from Egyptian apocryphal works in *The Testament of Abraham*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1892), 57.

that he was not sent to take the servants but Abraham himself. It was not by God's command that the servants died, and only because God was with Abraham that he lived.

At Abraham's request, Abraham and Death pray to God that he would revive those who died untimely deaths (*T. Abr.* 18:9). The servants are revived by God, to whom Abraham gives the glory. Once again, we find that Abraham intercedes on behalf of human beings. There is a sense not only of Abraham's intercession on the behalf of others in his lifetime, but also a sense that he will exercise a distinct function of intercession for sinners in the next world as well.⁶²

After further procrastination as he inquires about the forms and ways of death, Abraham is finally tricked into dying. While lying on his bed, Abraham kisses the hand of Death, to which his soul adheres. "And immediately Michael the archangel stood beside him with multitudes of angels, and they bore his precious soul in their hands in divinely woven linen. . . ." The angels tend Abraham's body with divine ointments and perfumes until the third day after his death, and bury him at the oak of Mamre. Then they escort his soul into heaven, singing praises to God, after which Abraham worships God. God answers, "Take, then, my friend Abraham into Paradise, where there are the tents of my righteous ones and (where) the mansions of my holy ones, Isaac and Jacob, are in his bosom,⁶³ where there is no toil, no grief, no moaning, but peace and exultation and

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⁶²See *T. Abr.* 20:14; 4:13. M. R. James, *The Testament of Abraham*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1892), 72.

⁶³Cf. Luke 16:19-31. It is not logical that Abraham's bosom, Isaac, and Jacob are already in paradise. E. P. Sanders, "Testament of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:895 n. 20 (l).

endless life" (*T. Abr.* 20:14). The work ends with a benediction which was added later. The reader is encouraged to "imitate the hospitality of the patriarch Abraham and to . . . attain to his virtuous behaviour, so that [they] may be worthy of eternal life, glorifying the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit: to whom be the glory and the power forever. Amen" (*T. Abr.* 20:15).

7.3 Conclusion: The Function and Significance of Abraham in the *Testament of Abraham*.

Abraham, who was known for his hospitality based upon interpretations of Genesis 18, was the perfect forefather of Judaism for the author's purposes. Abraham had provided hospitality to angels once before; one would expect that Abraham would provide such hospitality again. This was certainly an easy way to introduce a heavenly mediator into a biblical narrative. All the mediator had to do then was take Abraham on a heavenly journey and show him what was entailed in judgment after death. In this way the author could depict his major themes.

As evidenced by the benediction, an editor understood Abraham's hospitality and righteousness exemplified in the *Testament of Abraham* as an indication that the reader should do the same. And, even though Abraham is depicted at first as being righteous, his self-righteousness in his judgment also serves as a negative example. Thus the account also indicates that one should be compassionate in the judgment of others, just as God is compassionate in his judgment of humanity.

Many characteristics of the apocalyptic genre were found in the account of Abraham's heavenly journey: Abraham receives both visual and auditory revelation about the judgment; he journeys in the otherworld; he is guided

by an otherworldly mediator; and he is a venerable figure from the past.⁶⁴ Unlike many other texts from the apocalyptic genre, the intention of the author is not to provide a view of the history of Israel from an apocalyptic perspective. The apocalyptic elements are not the goal towards which the author strives. Instead, they serve as a device through which the author can provide information about judgment after death. The author is especially concerned to show not only that all die and everyone wants to avoid death, but also that those who die a premature death are not punished for their lack of repentance. The judgment is based upon deeds according to universal principles of morality. Fortunately, it is the God of Abraham who is the final judge and not Abraham himself. God is a more merciful judge than Abraham. In view of the reader, the primary function of the *Testament of Abraham* is to persuade them of the inevitable experience of death and judgment for both Jew and Gentile and of an understanding of God's mercy on their behalf.

⁶⁴J. J. Collins, "The Jewish Apocalypses," *Semeia* 14 (1979) 42-43.

Chapter Eight

Abraham in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*

8.1 Introduction

Although the work presently exists in Slavonic, it is commonly held that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* was originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic.¹ The date of composition appears to be soon after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem because that is the main event to which reference is made.² The apocalypse was probably composed in Palestine.³

Like the book of Daniel, the apocalypse is composed of two parts. Chapters one through eight contain narratives concerning the seer, while chapters nine through thirty-two give the account of the revelation to Abraham. Although some have attributed the narrative section of the story to a different author from the one who wrote the revelatory section,

¹G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, The Apocalypse of Abraham. (London: SPCK, 1918), xv; M. E. Stone, "Apocalyptic Literature," Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period. CRINT 2.2 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1986), 415; R. Rubinkiewicz, "The Apocalypse of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1983), 1:682; Belkis Philonenko-Sayar and Marc Philonenko, Die Apocalypse Abrahams, JSHRZ 5 Apocalypsen. ed. W. G. Kümmel, (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn. 1982).

²"... a crowd of heathens ran out and they captured the men, women, and children. . . And some they slaughtered and others they kept with them. . . and they burned the Temple with fire, and they plundered the holy things that were in it." *Apoc. Abr.* 27: 1-3. All citations of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* are from R. Rubinkiewicz, "The Apocalypse of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1983), 1:681-719; see also James R. Mueller, "The Apocalypse of Abraham and the Destruction of the Second Jewish Temple," Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers, ed. Kent H. Richards, (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 341-349.

³G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, The Apocalypse of Abraham. (London: SPCK, 1918), xvi; R. Rubinkiewicz, "The Apocalypse of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1983), 1:683.

references made back to the narrative in the revelatory section show that it was composed in such a way as to be appended to the narrative section. Additionally, the stories of Abraham in the narrative section form "a fitting preamble to the extensive vision which follows, since they culminate in Abraham's remarkable prayer in which he asks for knowledge of God."⁴ In all, the book forms a coherent literary unit, and was probably composed as such.⁵

The *Apocalypse of Abraham* belongs to the apocalyptic literary genre. In the apocalypse one finds the theme found in many Palestinian apocalypses,⁶ namely how God's historic promises to the Jewish people would be fulfilled and how the Jews would be vindicated over their oppressors although in the present their future looked bleak.⁷ Despite the present circumstances, "the future belongs to the Kingdom of God, that is, to the people of God who are His delegates on earth."⁸ A second concern of the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, which is a concern often found in apocalyptic literature, is how to understand the sometimes catastrophic events in his contemporary world, for example the destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, in light of a

⁴M. E. Stone, "Apocalyptic Literature," Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period, CRINT 2.2 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986), 415.

⁵G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, The Apocalypse of Abraham, (London: SPCK, 1918), xxi.

⁶E. P. Sanders, "The Genre of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypses," Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979, David Hellholm, ed., (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1983; 2nd ed., 1989), 456.

⁷D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, (London: SCM Press, 1964), 18.

⁸Ithamar Gruenwald, "Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," ANRW II.19.1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 89.

heavenly perspective.⁹ A third major theme is the concentration in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* upon the Gentiles as both the oppressors and the corrupters of the Jewish people. The comparatively subtle influences of Hellenistic culture were a challenge to the faith of the Jews because it forced them, in many regards, to conform. This is true especially in regard to idol worship in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.

8.2. The Interpretation of Abraham in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*

8.2.1 The Narrative Section: Abraham the Anti-Idolator

The narrative section of the apocalypse begins with Abraham guarding the gods of his father Terah and his brother Nahor, during which time he performs a number of tests in order to discover which god is the strongest. He enters the temple to sacrifice to the gods on behalf of Terah, and finds the stone god Marumath at the feet of the iron god Nakhin (*Apoc. Abr.* 1:3). Abraham runs to his father for assistance in replacing the heavy stone god. While the two are putting the god back in place, the head of the god falls from the idol accidentally. Terah calls to Abraham to bring him stone-cutting tools from the house. Terah solves the problem by carving a new Marumath.

The portrayal of Abraham's family in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* as not only those who participate in idolatry but as those who actually make idols is significant. Because he manufactures idols, Terah is actually a perpetrator of idolatry. In *Jubilees* 11-12 it was already shown how the author portrayed Terah and his family as being idol worshippers. It is Abraham alone who reasons that the idols cannot be the true God.¹⁰ As has been noted, these

⁹C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, (London: SPCK, 1982), 2.

¹⁰In one of the better manuscripts of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, a note is added which also shows the agreement of the depiction of Abraham between *Jubilees* and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* : "Moses put together the following , which he wrote in the Book of

similar extra-biblical traditions may be based not only upon aspects of the Genesis narrative, but upon Joshua 24:2, "Long ago your fathers, Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the river and served other gods."

Subtly woven into the text already is the idea that participation in the worship of idols is vanity. The name for the god Marumath comes from the Hebrew word for deceit.¹¹ Consequently, it is a sarcastic name given by the author; the idol which Abraham and his father attempt to lift back to its place is in reality a "stone of deceit."¹²

Terah subsequently makes five more gods, which Abraham is commanded to sell outside on the road (*Apoc. Abr.* 2:1). Abraham accompanies some Syrian merchants. The merchants' camel screams, scares Abraham's ass, and three of the gods are smashed. The Syrian merchants with whom Abraham had been conversing pay Abraham for the smashed and the intact gods; Abraham throws the smashed remains of the gods into the river and they disappear (*Apoc. Abr.* 2: 1-9).

It is in chapter three that the author of the apocalypse gives the reader insight into the thought processes of the boy Abraham. Abraham reasons that actually it is the idols who should worship his father, because it is Terah who brings them into being. Marumath could not stand up in his own

the Small Genesis (=Jubilees), how Abraham came to know God. For previously he obeyed the gods of his father Terah the astrologist. . . " R. Rubinkiewicz, "The Apocalypse of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1983), 1:689 1a.

¹¹In Hebrew, מְרִמָּת; Cf. Mic 6:11

¹²G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, (London: SPCK, 1918), xv; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, eds., (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint ed., 1987), III.1:288.

sanctuary, nor could the three smashed gods save themselves. How, then, can such a god as Marumath "save a man, or hear a man's prayer, or give him any gift?" (*Apoc. Abr.* 3:8).

Abraham returns to his father's house with the money from the sale of the idols. Abraham tells his father, "The gods are blessed in you, because you are a god for them, because you made them, for their blessing is their perdition and their power is vain. They did not help themselves; how then can they help you or bless me?" (*Apoc. Abr.* 4:3). Terah becomes furious with Abraham because of the words against his gods.

Another cycle of the narrative begins when Terah calls to Abraham just as he did when he repaired Marumath.¹³ On this occasion, Terah asks Abraham to make him lunch using the wooden chips left over from his carving idols. In the midst of the chips, Abraham finds the god Barisat. Abraham leaves Barisat near the enkindling fire, and commands him to watch the fire so that it does not go out. When Abraham returns, Barisat's feet are burning in the fire. Abraham laughs while Barisat is eventually reduced to ashes. Abraham tells Terah of Barisat's sacrifice for his lunch. Terah replies, "Great is the power of Barisat! I will make another today, and tomorrow he will prepare my food" (*Apoc. Abr.* 5:17).

Once again, the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* has used the name of a god to signify the worthlessness of idols. In this case, the name of the god probably comes from the Aramaic meaning "son of the fire."¹⁴ An additional

¹³Cf. *Apoc. Abr.* 1:7; 5:1-2.

¹⁴In Aramaic, ܢܫܝܢ ܒܝܝܢ; G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, (London: SPCK, 1918), xv; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, eds., (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint ed., 1987), III.1:288.

similarity between the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *Jubilees* ¹⁵ is that in both stories Abraham is responsible for the destruction of at least one idol by fire.

Abraham wonders at the stupidity and ignorance of his father. He again argues with his father concerning Terah's worship of Merumath and Barisat. In his argument he contends that even Nahor's god, which is made partially of gold, will be renewed if it grows old. But Marumath, who is made of stone, cannot be renewed. He further contends that Nahor's gods, made of gold and silver, are at least of some value in the eyes of humanity. But Terah's gods are only made of stone and wood which was once rooted in the earth. Barisat, who is made of this wood, has perished. Abraham cannot understand how it is that his father can actually continue to worship perishable gods which Terah himself has made (*Apoc. Abr.* 6:1-19).

Chapter seven contains the speech of Abraham in which he reasons to the existence of God from his creation. Two forms of the speech exist. In both forms, Abraham's basic argument is the same. In chapter 7:1-6, Abraham argues that one should not believe in the changeable, created, subduable things:¹⁶

Fire is more venerable in formation, for even the unsubdued (things) are subdued in it, and it mocks that which perishes easily by means of its burning. But neither is it venerable, for it is subject to the waters. But rather the waters are more venerable than it (fire), because they overcome fire and sweeten the earth with fruits. But I will not call them god either, for the waters subside under the earth

¹⁵Cf. *Jub.* 12:12-14 and chapter one, "Abraham in *Jubilees*."

¹⁶Chapter seven had a great deal of redactional activity; the hymn has been chosen from what Rubinkiewicz and Lunt deem to be the best manuscripts. Some of the forms of the hymn were preceded by Ps 115 in the manuscripts with more redactional activity. R. Rubinkiewicz, "The Apocalypse of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1983), 1:686-687, 692, n. 7a.

and are subject to it. But I will not call it a goddess either, for it is dried by the sun (and) subordinated to man for his work.

In the remainder of chapter seven, Abraham uses an argument concerning the heavenly phenomena: beyond the planets and stars a Creator and God exists. Abraham reasons that although the sun illuminates the whole universe, it is obscured at night by the moon, and by clouds. But, the moon and stars are not gods, since they are also dimmed. Instead, Abraham encourages his father to worship the true God who creates and empowers the universe. In the conclusion of the chapter, Abraham prays for the true God to reveal himself.

More venerable among the gods, I say, is the sun, for with its rays it illuminates the whole universe and the various airs. Nor will I place among the gods the one who obscures his course by means of the moon and the clouds. Nor again shall I call the moon or the stars gods, because they too at times during the night dim their light. Listen, Terah my father, I shall seek before you the God who created all the gods supposed by us (*to exist*). *For who is it, or which one is it who made the heavens crimson and the sun golden, who has given light to the moon and the stars with it, who has dried the earth in the midst of the many waters, who set you yourself among the things and who has sought me out in the perplexity of my thoughts? If [only] God will reveal himself by himself to us!*

Although Abraham is said to leave idolatry behind in Joshua 24:2-3, the speech made by Abraham to his father is based upon extra-biblical tradition. In these traditions about Abraham and his conversion from idolatry, the depiction of Abraham reasoning that the true God is not contained within but created and controls the cosmos is familiar from our previous study of work

by Philo,¹⁷ Josephus,¹⁸ and the author of *Jubilees*.¹⁹ And as in *Jubilees*, Abraham's speech functions on more than the level of the narrative. Besides blatant idolatry, the author's attack is against the Greek philosophical arguments about the priority and divinity of the elements.²⁰ Those who read the apocalypse are shown that nothing in the created world is worthy of worship. Only the one God and Creator is worthy of the veneration of the readers.

Abraham's abhorrence of idolatry is obvious from his arguments with his father. Terah nonsensically continues to worship his own creations. Abraham has reasoned successfully that neither the created elements of fire, water, earth, nor the created heavenly bodies -- the sun, moon, and stars -- should be worshipped. Instead the One who created them is to be worshipped and it is to this One that Abraham cries out for revelation (*Apoc. Abr.* 7:12).

8.2.2 The Revelatory Section

Juxtaposed with Terah's call of Abraham found in the narrative,²¹ is God's call of Abraham. While Abraham is pondering the subject of his speech, the voice of the "Mighty One" comes down from the heavens in a stream of fire, calling Abraham. God says, "You are searching for the God of

¹⁷For example, *De Abr.* 69-70; see also chapter six, "Abraham in the works of Philo." See further, G. N. Bonwetsch, Die Apokalypse Abrahams: Das Testament der vierzig Märtyrer, SGTk, N. Bonwetsch, R. Seeberg, eds., (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1897), 41-55.

¹⁸*Ant.* 1.155-156; see also the chapter above, "Abraham in Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*."

¹⁹*Jub.* 12:16-18; see also chapter one, "Abraham in *Jubilees*."

²⁰Abraham is depicted as arguing against similar types of philosophy in the works of Philo. See "Abraham in the Works of Philo," above.

²¹*Apoc. Abr.* 1:7; 5:1.

gods, the Creator, in the understanding of your heart. I am he. Go out from Terah, your father, and go out of the house, that you too may not be slain in the sins of your father's house" (*Apoc. Abr.* 8:3-4). As Abraham leaves Terah's house, Terah and his house are burned up by a bolt from heaven.

Again, one finds similarities between the account of Abraham in *Jubilees* and that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. In *Jubilees*, Abraham burns the house of idols in which Haran is killed. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, God burns the house of the idol-maker and its owner. In each case, fire is used as the punishment for idolatry. A word - play on the Hebrew word for fire (אֵשׁ) and the name of the city, "Ur", may be intentional here, as it was said to be in *Jubilees*. In Genesis 12:1, God calls Abraham from "Ur" of the Chaldees. According to the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, he was called forth previous to the fire, having been forewarned of catastrophe by God.

God again calls Abraham, and reveals himself as "Before-the-World and Mighty, the God who created previously, before the light of the age. I am the protector for you and your helper" (*Apoc. Abr.* 9:1-3). Here the author expands upon Genesis 15:1, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." Added to the verse from Genesis is another of God's revelations of himself as the Creator God for whom Abraham had been searching.

For the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the significant events from the rest of Genesis fifteen are not God's promises of land and descendants,²² but the sacrifice and burnt offerings. After commanding Abraham to gather a heifer, she-goat, ram, turtledove, and pigeon, God states,

²²Gen 15:5-6, 7.

And in this sacrifice I will place the ages.²³ I will announce to you guarded things and you will see great things which you have not seen, because you desired to search for me, and I called you my beloved. . . you shall set out for me the sacrifice which I have commanded you, in the place which I will show you on a high mountain. And there I will show you the things which were made by the ages and by my word, and affirmed, created, and renewed. And I will announce to you in them what will come upon those who have done evil and just things in the race of man (*Apoc. Abr.* 9:5-10).

The sacrifice is not used as an affirmation of a covenant made between God and Abraham as it is in Genesis fifteen but as a basis for the revelation of God's mysteries, past and present, to Abraham. Abraham receives this revelation because he did not succumb to idolatry but searched for the true God. The revelation explains what happened when Abraham fell asleep in Genesis 15:12, "As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him." It is in this darkness that God reveals the future of Abraham's descendants in Genesis 15:13-16.

This tradition of a revelation being made to Abraham during the sacrifice in Genesis fifteen, which goes beyond what is found in Genesis, is attested to

²³Some manuscripts add "for you". One of the existing but less reliable manuscripts does substitute "I will set down a covenant" for "I will place the ages." R. Rubinkiewicz, "The Apocalypse of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1983), 693, n. 9c. Although land and descendants are spoken of in the apocalypse, the word "covenant" is missing. In Rubinkiewicz's translation in his commentary he does translate the end of 9:5 as "j 'établira (mon) alliance avec toi" (I will establish my covenant with you). Here he follows a less reliable manuscript which does use the word for covenant. It would seem logical that if God was introducing himself in verses one through three as "Before the World" and the "God who created previously," that in his revelation, God wants to place a panorama of the ages before Abraham. Additionally, if we follow the rule of *lectio difficilior probabilior*, it would seem more likely that a copyist would add the word for covenant to provide what seemed to him to be clarification than the other way around. *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham, en vieux slave: Introduction, texte critique, traduction et commentaire*, (Lublin: Société des Lettres et des Sciences d l'Université Catholique de Lublin, 1987), 125 .

by 4 *Ezra* 3:13-14 ". . . you chose. . . Abraham; and you loved him and to him only you revealed the end of the times, secretly by night" and 2 *Baruch* 4:5, "After these things, I showed [Paradise] to my servant Abraham in the night between the portions of the victims." Nickelsburg concludes "all of these texts specify as the time of the revelation the sacrifice described in Gen 15, perhaps because the divine word in Gen 15:13-15 is a revelation of events to come."²⁴

As with many of the recipients of revelation described in apocalyptic literature, Abraham is overcome when he realizes that he has been listening to the voice of God (*Apoc. Abr.* 10:2-3). He hears God continue to speak when he sends his angel Iael "of the same name." Although the angel is not equal to God, the name of this figure is a combination of the well-known Hebrew terms for God, Yahweh and El. God's dwelling in Iael may be derived from Exodus 23:20-21, "where God promises to send an angel to lead Israel to the place prepared for them, and warns the Israelites not to rebel against this angel, 'for my name is in him.'"²⁵ The angel is to consecrate and strengthen Abraham through the mediation of God's name. The angel appears in the "likeness of a man" (*Apoc. Abr.* 10:4), and stands Abraham on his feet. The angel states twice that God loves Abraham (*Apoc. Abr.* 10: 6, 7). Iael dwells on the seventh expanse. His duties include restraining the cherubim from one another, and teaching the song which is described in enigmatic language as carried "through the medium of man's night of the seventh hour" (*Apoc.*

²⁴"Eschatology in the Testament of Abraham: A Study of the Judgment Scene in the Two Recensions," Studies on the Testament of Abraham, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, ed., (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 24.

²⁵L. Hurtado, One God, One Lord, (London: SCM Press, 1988), 79-80.

Abr. 10:9). It is also revealed that Iael ordered Terah's house to be destroyed (*Apoc. Abr.* 10:12).

Iael declares that he has been sent to Abraham to bless him and the land prepared for him. He tells Abraham to stand up, be bold, and to rejoice, because God has prepared an eternal honor for him. He further commands Abraham, "Go, complete the sacrifice of the command. Behold I am assigned (to be) with you and with the generation which is predestined (to be born) from you" (*Apoc. Abr.* 10:14-16).

Abraham fasts for forty days and nights in the presence of the angel. They come to Horeb, where Abraham questions how it is he will make the sacrifice if he has no animals. The angel points out that the animals needed are following them. The imagery here of the whereabouts of the sacrifice being questioned and of the divine provision of the sacrificial victims is similar to the imagery found in the offering of Isaac.

The angel also instructs Abraham to slaughter the animals, dividing them into halves. The types of animals for sacrifice and the instructions are in accordance with those found in Genesis fifteen. Abraham is to give the sacrifices to the men who will then offer sacrifice to the "Eternal One" (*Apoc. Abr.* 12:9). Abraham is not to cut the birds in half because they will be their vehicles to heaven. Consequently, the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* provides an explanation of why the birds of the sacrifice were not to be cut in half where Genesis 15:10 did not. Additionally, the birds function here as they did in many pagan traditions of the time, where birds or bird-like beings functioned as "psychopomps." Psychopomps were the guides or bearers who

conducted the soul to the next world.²⁶

The similarity between Abraham's actions in chapter twelve and those of Moses are striking. He first travels to the mountain of Horeb, known also in the Old Testament as Mt. Sinai, which is called "God's mountain, glorious Horeb" in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 12:3. Like Moses when he receives the law, Abraham spends forty days and nights on the mountain.²⁷ Abraham is said neither to eat bread nor to drink water because his food "was to see the angel who was with me, and his discourse with me was my drink" (*Apoc. Abr.* 12:1-2). Philo reflects a Jewish tradition of Moses' time on the mount, saying that Moses neglected all meat and drink for forty days, because he had more excellent food than that in the contemplations with which he was inspired from heaven.²⁸ Because Mt. Horeb and Mt. Sinai are names for the same mountain, Abraham receives his revelation from God in the same place that Moses received God's commandments. Finally, as the Lord "was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain" in the Exodus account,²⁹ so the fire on top of Mt. Horeb burns the sacrifices over which Abraham and the angel ascend to heaven where God also appears as fire.³⁰ Mt. Sinai was known for being the place where Moses received revelation from God in the

²⁶E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*. (New York: Pantheon Books for the Bollingen Foundation, 1958), 8:44, 121.

²⁷Exodus 24:18; R. Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham, en vieux slave: Introduction, texte critique, traduction et commentaire*. (Lublin: Société des Lettres et des Sciences de l'Université Catholique de Lublin, 1987), 86-87.

²⁸*De Vita Moses* II.69; G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*. (London: SPCK, 1918), 50 n. 5.

²⁹Exodus 24:17.

³⁰*Apoc. Abr.* 17:1.

form of the law which he then gave to the people of God. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Abraham is on the mountain known for this central revelation of God to his people through Moses. But this time, the tool God uses for revelation is Abraham. The revelation Abraham receives from God has added significance because the author has portrayed it as being received in the same location and in a way similar to the way Moses received the law.

In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* chapter 13, the events of Genesis 15:11 are reinterpreted. According to Genesis 15:11, "And when the birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abraham drove them away." However, the bird which comes upon the carcasses in this apocalypse is the demonic figure called Azazel. The bird gives Abraham reasons for fleeing. Abraham turns to the angel for instruction upon which Iaoel reveals the true character of the bird.

The words of Iaoel assist us in understanding the position of the author. Abraham's portion is in heaven while Azazel's is on earth. God gave Azazel his place on earth. It is because of Azazel that wrath falls upon the unrighteous (13:6-9). However, Azazel cannot tempt the righteous.

For the Eternal, Mighty One did not allow the bodies of the righteous to be in your hand, so through them the righteous life is affirmed and the destruction of ungodliness. . . You have no permission to tempt all the righteous. Depart from this man! You cannot receive him, because he is the enemy of you and of those who follow you and who love what you wish (*Apoc. Abr.* 13:10-13).

Although Azazel has sway over those who search for evil, he has no power over the righteous, of whom Abraham is the father.

In Iaoel's continuing address, he says that the "Eternal One" has chosen Abraham. He orders Abraham to be bold, and to "do through your authority whatever I order you against him who reviles justice [Azazel]" (*Apoc. Abr.* 14:3). Abraham has the ability to reject Azazel and does so according to what

Iaol tells him to say. Upon the order of the angel, Abraham then ceases to answer Azazel (*Apoc. Abr.* 14: 9-14).

The sun sets,³¹ and the smoke from the sacrifice and the sacrificing angels ascend. Abraham ascends with Iaol, surveying Gehenna on his way (*Apoc. Abr.* 15:5-16:5). They hear the voice of God, and worship him. Abraham recites the song which the angel taught him.³²

The smoke imagery found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* is like that in Exodus 19:18,³³ "Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln. . ." It is the smoke and fire from the furnace upon the mountain which signifies the presence of the Lord in the Exodus account. In the apocalypse, the smoke from a furnace similarly signifies God's presence, which as they ascend is realized in the midst of fire.³⁴ In Exodus nineteen, when the Lord descends to the mountain in smoke, Moses ascends to receive instruction. Afterwards, the ten commandments are revealed. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Abraham ascends from the smoke and fire on the mountain to the fiery throne of the Lord, after which he receives revelation.

³¹*Apoc. Abr.* 15:1; Gen 15:17.

³²The use of the name Iaol, the acquisition of secret knowledge, the recitation of hymns, and the ascent to the throne of God are all concepts found in later merkabah mysticism. See Belkis Philonenko-Sayar and Mark Philonenko, *Die Apocalypse Abrahams*. JSHRZ 5 *Apocalypsen*, ed. W. G. Kümmel, (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1982), 419; G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. (New York: Schocken books, 1974), 48, 68-69. Stone goes so far as to say that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* is significant "as providing a link between the apocalypses and the *Merkabah* mystical books." M. E. Stone "Apocalyptic Literature," *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*. CRINT 2.2 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986), 418.

³³R. Rubinkiewicz, "La vision de l'histoire dans l'Apocalypse d'Abraham," *ANRW* II.19.1 (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1979), 147.

³⁴*Apoc. Abr.* 15:1-3; cf. 17:1.

The hymn which Abraham recites contains a number of significant elements. God is said to be Abraham's protector, he receives the petitions of those who honor him but turns away from the petitions of those who restrain him because of their provocations. God redeems those who live in an evil age in the midst of the wicked (*Apoc. Abr.* 17:14-17). Abraham further asks that his prayer be accepted, as well as the "sacrifice which you yourself made to yourself through me as I searched for you" (*Apoc. Abr.* 17:20). Abraham prays for the revelation which has been promised to him.

As a result of the sacrifice Abraham's search for the true God is over. He sees a vision of a throne and heavenly creatures, much like that found in Ezekiel chapter one. The voice of God calls Abraham by name and he answers. God instructs Abraham to look at the expanse of the firmament under his position on the seventh firmament.

8.2.3 God's Revelation to Abraham

From his seventh firmament position, Abraham is commanded to see "that on no single expanse is there any other but the one whom you have searched for or who has loved you" (*Apoc. Abr.* 19:3). Abraham looks at the firmaments above and below himself, and sees the creatures of God: angels and fiery living creatures. The fifth firmament contains "hosts of stars" (*Apoc. Abr.* 19:9).

God again calls to Abraham, and asks him to tell him the number of the stars on the fifth firmament (*Apoc. Abr.* 20:1). Abraham protests that he is unable to do so because he is merely a human being.³⁵ God then proclaims, "As the number of stars and their power, so shall I place for your seed the nations and men, set apart for me in my lot with Azazel" (*Apoc. Abr.* 20:5).

³⁵Cf. *Apoc. Abr.* 20:4 and Gen. 18:27 (LXX), "earth and ashes".

The author has composed an apocalyptic rendition from verses found in the Genesis narrative. The first and most familiar verse is from Genesis 15:5, in which God brings Abraham "outside and said, 'Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.'" The author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* places Abraham in the heavens using the same verse. The difference is that in Genesis, while he is on earth, Abraham must "look up" at the stars, while in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Abraham looks at the stars "from on high" (*Apoc. Abr.* 20:3).³⁶ And, just as Abraham is fearful of requesting too much from God in his prayers for Sodom,³⁷ so Abraham speaks with fear before God in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.³⁸

Abraham is next depicted as saying, ". . . before you led me up, Azazel insulted me. How then, since he is now not before you, did you establish yourself with them?" (*Apoc. Abr.* 20:7). Presumably, Azazel's not being before God refers to his not being included among the heavenly beings that Abraham has just seen. If Azazel has insulted Abraham, whom God has chosen and loved, how can God possibly contradict himself and establish himself with Azazel?

According to the notes on the text of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the entire sentence is obscure.³⁹ Additionally, in 20:5, where God speaks of his

³⁶R. Rubinkiewicz, "The Apocalypse of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1983), 1:699 n. 20a.

³⁷Gen 18:27.

³⁸*Apoc. Abr.* 20:6.

³⁹R. Rubinkiewicz, "The Apocalypse of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1983), 1:699 n. 20h.

"lot" with Azazel, another corruption may exist in the manuscripts.⁴⁰ The reason for these possible corruptions which seem to portray God as being in league with Azazel, the personification of evil, may have to do with a group known as the Bogomils. Rubinkiewicz states that the remarks in 29: 5, 7 in which God is associated with Azazel "reveal that their author wanted to indicate that the God of Abraham is a God of evil."⁴¹ While this sort of depiction is usually associated with the gnostics, again according to Rubinkiewicz, the type of text used in 20:5 shows that it only could be made in the Slavic world. "The only Slavs who claimed that the God of the Old Testament was the God of evil were the Bogomils. . . "⁴² According to Obolensky, not only was the God of Abraham a God of evil to the Bogomils, but to them even the law was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai by Satanael, God's evil son.⁴³

God answers Abraham's question by showing him another vision. This vision is concerned with the history of the world. Abraham looks down upon the terrestrial world. It contains plants and animals and people. The people seem primarily to be impious, yet he also sees their justification. He then sees "the abyss and its torments, and its lower depths and (the) perdition in it" (*Apoc. Abr.* 21:3). He sees the sea and Leviathan, who holds up the world and causes its destruction. Separated from this earth, he sees the garden of Eden, where people perform justice (*Apoc. Abr.* 21:6). Abraham also sees a

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 699 n. 20e.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 684.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³Satanael is opposed to Jesus, God's good son. See Dmitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1948), 209.

"great crowd of men and women and children, half of them on the right side of the portrayal, and half of them on the left side of the portrayal" (*Apoc. Abr.* 21:7).

Abraham asks God to explain this picture of creation. God makes it clear that everything which Abraham sees God has predetermined and created. Abraham asks about the people on the left and the right of the picture. God answers that those on the left are "tribes who existed previously. . . and after you" (22:4). Presumably these are the Gentiles who existed before Abraham and who will continue to exist after him. Some of these Gentiles have been prepared for judgment and order, while others have been prepared for judgment which leads to condemnation (*Apoc. Abr.* 22:4). This kind of view towards the Gentiles, that "some are to be spared while the rest will be annihilated" is in accord with one view within Judaism⁴⁴ but in contrast to another Jewish view that the whole heathen world is doomed to annihilation.⁴⁵

God further explains that those "on the right side of the picture are the people set apart for me of the people with Azazel; these are the ones I have prepared to be born of you and to be called my people" (*Apoc. Abr.* 22:5). In this verse the reading of the text which aligns people with Azazel gives evidence of another probable later Bogomil interpretation and gloss.⁴⁶ The Bogomils were cosmological dualists: to them, the Devil created all of the

⁴⁴Cf. 2 *Bar.* 72:2; *Isa* 66: 18-23; *Pss. Sol.* 17:34.

⁴⁵Cf. 4 *Ezra* 13:37-38 and G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*. (London: SPCK, 1918), 69 n. 2.

⁴⁶R. Rubinkiewicz, "The Apocalypse of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1983), 1:684.

visible world.⁴⁷ People who live on earth, in the created, visible world, would be considered as being with Azazel. It is not surprising that the Bogomils would be drawn to the *Apocalypse of Abraham* with its depiction of Abraham reasoning that God existed beyond the created world.

Abraham himself provides the point of reference between those on the left side of the picture and those on the right. Besides dividing the Gentile group into two parts according to their future judgment, God divides the Gentiles into groups who lived before and after Abraham (*Apoc. Abr.* 22:4-5). Rubinkiewicz assumes that this point of reference is God's covenant with Abraham.⁴⁸ However, the text does not actually state that the covenant with Abraham was the point of division. The question still remains how the Gentiles would be judged and what Abraham had to do with that judgment. Furthermore, if the idea of covenant is less important than Rubinkiewicz has contended, what is it that defines the people of God? Through the remainder of the composition, the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* will reveal what characterizes the people of God and children of Abraham.

The next vision Abraham sees is that of Adam and Eve (*Apoc. Abr.* 21: 1-12). Adam and Eve are said to be "entwined" while Azazel feeds them grapes. The picture represents the "world of men, this is Adam and this is their thought on earth, this is Eve. And he who is between them is the impiety of their behavior unto perdition, Azazel himself" (*Apoc. Abr.* 23:10-11). The fact that it is conjugal relations between Adam and Eve that the author points to

⁴⁷Dmitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1948), 122-123.

⁴⁸R. Rubinkiewicz, "La vision de l'histoire dans l'Apocalypse d'Abraham," *ANRW* II.19.1 (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1979), 147; cf. A. Rubinstein, "A Problematic Passage in the Apocalypse of Abraham," *IJS* 8 (1957) 45-50.

as sin may again be an indication of Bogomil interpretation. The Bogomils supported the avoidance of "all contact with Matter and the flesh, which are the Devil's best influences for gaining mastery over the souls of men. . . the Bogomils condemned those functions of man which bring him into close contact with the world of the flesh, in particular marriage, the eating of meat and the drinking of wine."⁴⁹ The fact that Azazel is feeding Adam and Eve grapes further supports the contention of the Bogomil interpretation of 23:4-11 because "in a Bogomil legend. . . the vine was planted in Paradise by Satanael (the Devil) and. . . it was that very Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil the tasting of whose fruits caused man's downfall."⁵⁰

If we take the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 23:4-11 as Bogomil interpretation, Abraham's inquiry about evil is in response to God's mention of the one "who seduced Eve" (23:1). Abraham asks why he gave the evil one such dominion to ruin human beings. God replies that those who commit evil, whom he hates, were given to Azazel in order that he would have dominion over them. Unsatisfied with this answer, Abraham further asks God why he determined that evil would be desired by some, since God is only angered at what was chosen by himself (*Apoc. Abr.* 23:14). Fundamentally, Abraham is asking about evil and the validity of God's judgment. If God has created human beings with the desire to do evil, how is it that God can then judge them for that evil? In light of the recent destruction of the Temple attested in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (27:1-12), this question about the validity of

⁴⁹Dmitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1948), 127.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 128-129. See also the note that the Slavic for the reference to the vine in 23:6 is "surely secondary" R. Rubinkiewicz, "The Apocalypse of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1983), 1:700 n. 23g.

God's judgment of his chosen people for their evil is relevant. After all, if he created them with the propensity and desire for evil, how can God then judge his people? Abraham here is depicted as upbraiding God for his judgment of his people. More importantly, Abraham functions as a mouthpiece for the author to ask God what he and perhaps many others are asking: Is God, who is our Creator, being fair in judging us so severely by the destruction of our Temple?

God does not solve the problem of evil for Abraham, but answers him with another vision in which he will show Abraham "what will be, and everything that will be in the last days." God shows Abraham "the people of his tribe" and "what is burdened on them" (*Apoc. Abr.* 24:1). The phrase "what is burdened on them"⁵¹ can be understood to mean "things which have been made grievous against" them.⁵² Abraham looks again in the picture and sees those things which had come into being before his time: Adam and Eve, the "crafty adversary," and Cain who had been led by this lawless adversary to murder Abel, whom he also sees. He sees fornication and those who desire it with the place of judgment for it; theft and the system of retribution; naked men who are in shame and the harm against their friends and their retribution; and desire herself who holds every kind of lawlessness in her hand and her destined destruction (*Apoc. Abr.* 24:5-9).

⁵¹Box and Landsman see God's answer of what is a "burden of destiny" on his people as being that God "allows men to desire evil (with its inevitable punishment later) because of the treatment meted out by the nations to the chosen seed (Abraham and his descendants)." The only problem is that what follows in chapter twenty-four is not treatment against the nation of Israel, but seems to be describing the sin of humanity in general in which Abraham's descendants are included. G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham* (London: SPCK, 1918), 71 n. 5.

⁵²R. Rubinkiewicz, "The Apocalypse of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1983), 1:701 24b.

This vision of universal lawlessness serves as the first part of the answer to Abraham's question. The evil of humanity is such that judgment is warranted.

As the vision continues, the evil of those who can only be understood as Abraham's descendants is described. Abraham sees the "likeness of the idol of jealousy" which is like the carpenter's figure which his father made formerly (*Apoc. Abr.* 25:1). In front of this idol is a man who is worshipping it. Opposite the idol is an altar where boys are being slaughtered in the face of the idol. Abraham asks the identity of the idol and the other elements, and the "handsome temple. . . the art and beauty of your glory that lies beneath your throne" (*Apoc. Abr.* 25:3). God answers by saying that the Temple that he has seen and the works of art are his idea of "the priesthood of the name of my glory, where every petition of man will enter and dwell; the ascent of kings, and prophets and whatever sacrifice I decree to be made for me among my coming people, even among your tribe" (*Apoc. Abr.* 25:4).

But the priesthood and the Temple deviated from God's idea of what they should be. He became angered by the priesthood. The idol associated with the Temple was described as the "idol of jealousy" (25:1). The description of the statue as "God's anger" in 25:5 represents the "image which provokes God's jealousy or anger."⁵³ The slaughter of boys on the altar sounds like the offering of children to pagan gods.⁵⁴

⁵³G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham* (London: SPCK, 1918) 73 n. 3. Cf. Ezek 8:3-5.

⁵⁴G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, (London: SPCK, 1918), 73 n. 5.

The actions of the priests in the Temple are similar to the actions of Manasseh described in 2 Chronicles 33:1-9 and 2 Kings 21:1-18.⁵⁵ It was because of Manasseh's idolatrous actions that God is recorded as condemning Jerusalem to fall in 587 B.C.E.⁵⁶ Manasseh not only restored the pagan altars that his laudable predecessor Hezekiah had torn down, but even built intrusive altars in Yahweh's Temple. The altars in the Temple courts are said to have been built "for all the host of heaven"⁵⁷ referring to the practice of astrology and worship of the stars.⁵⁸ He made burnt offerings of his sons to pagan gods in the Hinnom Valley, much like one of his most wayward predecessors, Ahaz.⁵⁹ He resorted to every kind of sorcery, which was the sin of Saul.⁶⁰ "Culminating all else, Manasseh ventured so far as to set up the idol of Asherah in the very temple itself."⁶¹ Just as it was for Manasseh,

⁵⁵G. W. E. Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 297-298.

⁵⁶2 Kgs 21:10-15.

⁵⁷2 Chr 33:5; 2 Kgs 21:5

⁵⁸Cf. Jer 8:2. For the view that the practice was not introduced from Assyria but is western Semitic, see T. R. Hobbs, 2 Kings, WBC 22 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 305; for the view that the practice was introduced by the Assyrians, see G. H. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 2:596.

⁵⁹2 Chr 28:3; 2 Kgs 16:3; 2 Chr 33:4-7; *Ant.* 9.243, "Achaz. . . acting most impiously towards God and violating his country's laws imitated the kings of Israel, for he set up altars in Jerusalem and sacrificed on them to idols, to which he even offered his own son as a whole burnt-offering according to the Canaanite custom." G. W. E. Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 297.

⁶⁰1 Chr 10:13-14.

⁶¹Simon J. De Vries, 1 and 2 Chronicles, vol. XI, The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, R. P. Knierim and G. M. Tucker, eds., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 397; cf. 2 Kgs 21:7.

idolatry is the culminating sin of the descendants of Abraham (*Apoc. Abr.* 25: 5-6) in the first century C.E.

The priests depicted in the Temple who arouse the anger of God are committing idolatry. It is noteworthy that the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* sees sin here especially in a cultic form. Box and Landsman point out that allusions to the cultus are rare in apocalyptic literature.⁶²

Nickelsburg contends that because cultic activity is important in the plot of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, that "it is likely that the author believes the events of 70 C.E. were caused by some sort of wrong cultic activity, which he construes as idolatry."⁶³

In the *Biblical Antiquities*, it was noted that assimilation with Gentile practices could be considered idolatry.⁶⁴ In his work which discusses the political struggles of the Jews in Palestine from 6-74 C.E. based upon the works of Flavius Josephus, Rhoads contends that the revolutionaries such as the sicarii saw their brigandage and assassination against the Jewish authorities as a "repression of idolatrous contact with heathen masters, perhaps to 'cleanse the land' of those who refused exclusive allegiance to God."⁶⁵ According to the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 25:6, the man who is doing the sacrificing makes God angry. Those who performed the sacrifice in the Temple were the priests. In the years previous to the fall of Jerusalem a number of practices

⁶²The Apocalypse of Abraham. (London: SPCK, 1918), 73 n. 2.

⁶³G. W. E. Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 298.

⁶⁴See chapter four, "Abraham in the *Biblical Antiquities*."

⁶⁵David M. Rhoads, Israel in Revolution: 6 - 74 C.E., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 180.

might have been perceived by especially pious Jews as idolatry. Did the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* consider the two daily sacrifices offered in the Temple on behalf of the Roman emperor as idolatry?⁶⁶ Or, was it the gifts and sacrifices brought to the Temple by Gentiles which represented idolatry?⁶⁷ Because the chief priests and many Pharisees did not want these sacrifices stopped, did the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* see them fundamentally as idolators?⁶⁸ The cessation of the practice of offering sacrifices on behalf of the emperor was tantamount to a declaration of war on Rome; the Jewish revolutionaries passionately pursued this course of action. According to Josephus, this action "laid the foundation of the war with the Romans."⁶⁹

It is difficult to know to what the author of the text at hand is referring; what is in the text is that he considered some sort of wrong cultic practice to be equal to idolatry. This cultic practice takes the form of idolatry and the sacrifice of children which was the paradigm of the idolatry of Manasseh that eventually brought about the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E.⁷⁰ Just as the idolatrous practices of Manasseh brought about the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians, so the idolatry of the priests brought about the destruction of the Temple by the Romans.

⁶⁶ J.W. 2. 197, 408-410.

⁶⁷ J.W. 2. 408-410.

⁶⁸ J. W. 2. 411-416.

⁶⁹ J. W. 2. 409.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Apoc. Abr.* 27:10.

Abraham further questions God, this time about why he established the history of his people in this way. God replies with his own question, "why did your father Terah not obey your voice and abandon the demonic worship of idols until he perished, and all his house with him?" (*Apoc. Abr.* 26:3). Abraham replies that it was because Terah did not want to listen to Abraham that he perished, just as Abraham did not listen to his father Terah and lived. God replies, "As the counsel of your father is in him, as your counsel is in you, so also the counsel of my will is ready" (26:5). Thus, it is by their respective judgments and choices that Terah perished and Abraham lived. Both Abraham and Terah were free either to follow idolatry or to turn from it to the true God. As Terah and Abraham were free to make their decisions, so God is free to permit sin and pronounce judgment reserved for the coming days.

Abraham again looks at the picture of history. From the left side of the picture come the heathen who capture men, women, and children on the right.⁷¹ The Gentiles from the left kill some of Abraham's descendants, but keep others. The Gentiles burn the Temple and plunder the holy things within it. In reaction, Abraham cries out,

Eternal One, the people you received from me are being robbed by the hordes of the heathen. They are killing some and holding others as aliens, and they burned the Temple with fire and they are stealing and destroying the beautiful things which are in it. Eternal Mighty One! If this is so, why now have you afflicted my heart and why will it be so? (*Apoc. Abr.* 27: 4-6).

⁷¹The concept of the right side, implying the source of light and purity, while the left is the source of darkness and impurity is found in later gnosticism and eventually in Kabbalah mysticism. G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*. (London: SPCK, 1918), 74 n. 5.

Just as Abraham poignantly cries out to God, so does the author and so do the readers. Why has God allowed the descendants of Abraham to be killed and imprisoned, and why has the Temple been destroyed? God answers,

Listen, Abraham, all that you have seen will happen on account of your seed who will (continually) provoke me because of the body [statue] which you saw and the murder in what was depicted in the Temple of jealousy, and everything you saw will be so (*Apoc. Abr.* 27:7).

Thus the descendants of Abraham will be punished because of their idolatry and the murder depicted in the Temple. The scene of the destruction of the Temple is much like that found in the works of Josephus. According to Josephus, the Temple was not only burned and pillaged,⁷² but the Romans built four ramparts into the city.⁷³

Abraham asks how long his descendants will remain in the condition which God has shown him (*Apoc. Abr.* 28:1-2). God replies in symbolic terms indicating that their situation will remain for hundreds of years to come (28:3-5). Abraham's concern is that of the Jews who live just after the destruction of the Temple. They want to know how long they will be without a Temple and how long they will have to bear Gentile reproach.

Once again Abraham is told to "look down at the picture" (*Apoc. Abr.* 29:4). A man comes out from the left, the heathen side. A great crowd from the left side follows and worships the man. Those from the right, the Jewish side, either insult, strike, or worship the same man. Azazel runs up, kisses

⁷²J.W. 6.229-266; G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, The Apocalypse of Abraham (London: SPCK, 1918), 75 n. 1.

⁷³J.W. 6. 149-151; E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, eds., (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint ed., 1987), 1:506.

and stands behind him. Abraham asks for the identity of the man (*Apoc. Abr.* 29:4-7). The interpretation of the man in the vision is that he is the

liberation from the heathen for the people who will be (born) from you. In the last days. . . I will set up this man from your tribe, the one whom you have seen from my people. All will imitate him. . . (you) consider him as one called by me. . . (they) are changed in their counsels. And those you saw coming out from the left side of the picture and worshipping him, this (means that) many of the heathen will trust in him. And those of your seed you saw on the right side. . . many of them shall be offended because of him (*Apoc. Abr.* 29:8-13).

Scholars of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* have usually understood 29:3-13 to be a Christian interpolation.⁷⁴ Robert G. Hall has recently noted that when the passage is viewed as a Christian interpolation, "certain features of the interpretation conflict with the vision."⁷⁵ Firstly, in the vision the man comes from the heathen side of the picture (29:3), while in the interpretation he comes from the right side, the side of the descendants of Abraham (29:9). Secondly, in the vision, the man is in league with Azazel. But in the interpretation he is to be recognized as one called by God who brings deliverance (29:8),⁷⁶ which implies that he is a saviour figure.⁷⁷ Because the features that conform to Christian doctrine appear in the interpretation (he is insulted (29:12), he is a son of Abraham, he brings salvation), Hall contends

⁷⁴For example, R. Rubinkiewicz, "The Apocalypse of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1983) 1:694; G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, (London: SPCK, 1918), 78-80.

⁷⁵Robert G. Hall, "The 'Christian Interpolation' in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," *IBL* 107.1 (1988) 107.

⁷⁶Rubinkiewicz has "liberation" in 29:8, "The Apocalypse of Abraham: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1983), 1:703.

⁷⁷Robert G. Hall, "The 'Christian Interpolation' in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," *IBL* 107.1 (1988) 107.

that the vision is original (29:3-7) and the interpretation is the Christian interpolation (29:8-13).

The man spoken of serves to continue the "theme of idolatry connected with Azazel."⁷⁸ It is this man whom the Gentiles worship and who separates the Jews who worship him from those who do not. The test cuts short the age of impiety because the "test purges the seed of Abraham by separating the idolatrous from the loyal Jews and turns God's wrath away from newly righteous Israel toward the newly united Jews and Gentiles under the sway of Azazel."⁷⁹ Those who worship the man actually stumble into idolatry while those who insult him are faithful to God.

God foretells the judgment which will come upon the heathen by means of the ten plagues (*Apoc. Abr.* 29:14-16). From Abraham's seed "will be left the righteous men in their number, protected by me, who strive in the glory of my name toward the place prepared beforehand for them. . ." (29:17). Furthermore, they will live "affirmed by the sacrifices and the gifts of justice and truth in the age of justice. And they will rejoice forever in me, and they will destroy those who have destroyed them, they will rebuke those who have rebuked them through their mockery, and they will spit in their faces"(29:18-19). The new dwelling of Abraham's seed will function in the same way that the previous temple functioned: as a place of worship and sacrifice to God.⁸⁰

⁷⁸Ibid., 108.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰G. H. Box and J. I. Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*. (London: SPCK, 1918), 81 n. 6.

Abraham finds himself back on earth, although God is still speaking. God describes the ten plagues at Abraham's request (*Apoc. Abr.* 30:1-8). Finally God describes the final vindication. He will sound the trumpet; his chosen one will summon God's people who have been humiliated by the heathen. Those who mocked and ruled over God's people are condemned to Gehenna, a place of punishment. Those who kept the commandments will rejoice at the downfall of those who "followed after the idols and after their murders" (31:5). They are condemned because "they glorified an alien (god). And they joined one to whom they had not been allotted, and they abandoned the Lord who gave them strength" (31:8).

The revelation of God to Abraham began with the burnt offering described in Genesis fifteen (*Apoc. Abr.* 9, 15) and the author concludes the apocalypse with reference to the same chapter (32:1). God predicts that Abraham's descendants will go into an alien land where they will be enslaved; yet God reassures Abraham that he is also their judge. The apocalypse concludes, "'Have you heard, Abraham, what I told you, what your tribe will encounter in the last days?' Abraham, having heard, accepted the words of God in his heart" (32:5-6).

8.3. Conclusion: The Function and Significance of Abraham in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*

To a much greater degree than the *Testament of Abraham*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* was concerned with the temporal realm: God was concerned to show Abraham a panorama of the unfolding of the ages beginning with that which was prior to him (Adam and Eve) and moving to that which would happen in the future (the destruction of the Temple and the final vindication).⁸¹

Israel's foundational sin was idolatry. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the reader is shown God's perspective on the destruction of the Temple, which was a recent event. This harsh judgment was because of the idolatry of Israel. God judged the idolatry of Israel with the same severity that he judged the idolatry of Terah found in the narrative section--both houses of idolatry were burned.

Abraham provided a contrast both to the idolatry of Terah and of Israel. Unlike Terah, Abraham chose not to worship idols. Similarly, Abraham provides an example which was in opposition to that of the priests who were idolators after the example of Manasseh, who provided the paradigm of idolatry which led to catastrophic destruction.⁸² According to the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Abraham was known for abhorring idols and faith in the one,

⁸¹John J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979) 36-37.

⁸²Manasseh was known for setting up idols in the Temple which included altars in the Temple courts which were said to have been built for the worship of the stars. He was also known for sacrificing his son. Whether or not the author believed the reader would associate these deeds of Manasseh with the text is indiscernible. What is interesting is that besides being the example of the anti-idolator against the example of Manasseh as idolator, Abraham renounced astrology (counter to Manasseh's building altars for astrology) and he was willing to sacrifice his son to the one God (counter to Manasseh's sacrificing his son to pagan gods).

Creator God. In contrast to the priests, whom the author considered to be idolators, and even in contrast to those who worshipped the man from "among the heathen," because of his abhorrence of idolatry and his belief in the one God, Abraham was the example of the true person of God.

Hanson has contended that the "typical apocalyptic universe develops as a protest of the apocalyptic community against the dominant society, it is concerned . . . with the demands of the immediate crisis, especially those of defining identity within a hostile world, and of sustaining hope for deliverance."⁸³ The author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* was concerned with the crisis of the destruction of the Temple by the Romans. He wanted to show that ultimately the people of God would be vindicated over their hostile oppressors. The identity of the people of God and their hope for deliverance rested in their maintaining faithfulness to the one Creator God, after the example of their forefather Abraham.

⁸³p. D. Hanson, "Apocalypticism," *IDBSup.* G.A. Buttrick, ed., (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1964), 30.

Chapter Nine

The Interpretation of Paul's Letter to the Galatians

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 Approaching a Study of Paul in Light of Popular Traditions about Abraham

In the course of the study of the depiction of Abraham in the preceding chapters, several extra-biblical traditions about Abraham have been discerned. Based upon these traditions, a Jewish understanding of what it meant to be a child of Abraham, or the ideal Jew, was discussed. One should be reticent to attempt to portray a normative Judaism since a definitively normative Judaism did not exist at the time of Paul. However, the texts do give us clues as to how to understand what being a child of Abraham could mean and did mean for certain Jews.

It is significant that in the individual pieces of literature, each of which was written in a different circumstance, political situation, and location, the same traditions about Abraham continued to reappear. The most significant traditions were that Abraham was the first monotheist; he reasoned that one God must exist from the natural phenomena, particularly the stars; he was an anti-idolater; he was obedient to law; he was an intercessor; and he was hospitable. The traditions about Abraham found in this literature span both Palestinian and Diaspora Jewish communities over a period of close to four-hundred years.

The traditions about Abraham found in the Jewish documents studied in the previous eight chapters aid us in understanding how the Jew of the first century C.E. viewed the patriarch Abraham. Simultaneously, they have provided information about how Abraham was used in order to understand the ideal beliefs and behavior of the people of God. The questions to be asked in coming to the letters of Paul are: 1. Does an understanding of popular traditions about Abraham assist in an interpretation of Paul's argument in the text, and if so, how? 2. Does Paul also use Abraham to define the identity and behavior of the people of God, and if so, how? 3. Does an understanding of popular traditions about Abraham assist in an understanding of the changes in behavior or attitudes that Paul perceives are necessary for those in his respective audiences, and if so, how?

9.1.2 The Situation in Galatia

Contemporary New Testament scholars do not question Paul's authorship of the epistle.¹ However no consensus exists concerning who the recipients of the epistle were, that is, whether they were true ethnic Galatians or merely resided in the Roman province called Galatia. The date of the epistle is thought to be anywhere between 48 - 57 C.E.²

What is important for this chapter is to establish the situation of those who received the epistle insofar as is possible. It is evident that Gentile Christians were part of the community at Galatia (Gal 4:8) and that some

¹H. D. Betz, Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 1-5; F. F. Bruce, Commentary on Galatians, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 1, 3-18.

²H. D. Betz, Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia, Hermeneia, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 12; F. F. Bruce, Commentary on Galatians, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 43-56; D. Guthrie, Galatians, NCBC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984; reprint, London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1973), 27-37; C. B. Cousar, Galatians, Interpretation, (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 6-7.

persons had arrived among them who contradicted Paul's gospel and confused these recent converts.³ The Gentile converts were being persuaded by these opponents to obey the Mosaic law,⁴ especially the Jewish stipulation of circumcision.⁵

Who exactly these opponents were has been a matter of much debate. Howard contends "the opponents were Jewish Christian judaizers supported by the apostles at Jerusalem. . . who believed that Paul, like them, taught the necessity of circumcision and the law for salvation and were totally unaware of his non-circumcision gospel."⁶ Lightfoot maintained that the opponents were Jewish Christian judaizers, probably from Jerusalem, who were "either abusing a commission actually received from the Apostles of the Circumcision, or assuming an authority which had never been conferred upon them."⁷ Others believe that the opponents were succumbing to external pressure from the Zealots,⁸ that the opponents were actually two groups--Judaizers and libertines--that they were syncretists,¹⁰ that they were

³Gal 1:7-9; 5:8-10.

⁴Gal 3:1-2; 4:8-10.

⁵Gal 5:2-3; 6:12-13.

⁶G. Howard, Paul, Crisis in Galatia: A Study in Early Christian Theology, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 2.

⁷J. B. Lightfoot, St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1884), 29.

⁸R. Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation," NTS 17 (1971) 205.

⁹J. H. Ropes, The Singular Problem of the Epistle to the Galatians, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1929), 23.

¹⁰F. R. Crownfield, "The Singular Problem of the Dual Galatians," IBL 64 (1945) 493.

Gentile Judaizers who misunderstood Paul,¹¹ that the opponents were Jewish Christian Gnostics,¹² or that they represented a Law-observant mission among Gentiles but not in reaction to Paul's gospel.¹³

In view of the letter itself, it seems most likely that Paul's opponents were Jewish¹⁴ Christians (Paul refers to them preaching "another gospel")¹⁵ who enforced obedience to the Mosaic law, primarily circumcision,¹⁶ but also the calendrical requirements.¹⁷ The opponents may even have enforced food laws, if one assumes that Paul's inclusion of the account where he makes an example of Peter at Antioch over food laws and association with Gentiles is for the benefit of his Galatian readers.¹⁸

Many scholars have noted that Abraham is central to Paul's argument in Galatians¹⁹ and must have been central to the arguments of Paul's

¹¹J. Munck, Paul and the Salvation of Mankind, ET F. Clark, (London: 1959), 89.

¹²W. Schmithals, "Die Häretiker in Galatien," ZNW 47 (1956) 25-66.

¹³J. L. Martyn, "A Law-Observant Mission to Gentiles: The Background of Galatians," SJT 38 (1985) 314.

¹⁴Gal 4:30; A. T. Lincoln, Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1981; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book Hse., 1991), 11-18; J. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter," ISNT 31 (1987) 88; H. D. Betz, Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 7; Joseph B. Tyson, "Paul's Opponents in Galatia," Nov T 10 (1968) 252.

¹⁵Gal 1:6-9.

¹⁶Gal 5:2-4; 6:12-13.

¹⁷Gal 4:8-11.

¹⁸Gal 2:11-14.

¹⁹For example, C. T. Rhyne, Faith Establishes the Law, SBLDS 55 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 193-235; R. B. Hays, The Faith of Jesus Christ. An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11, SBLDS 56 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 56.

opponents.²⁰ J. C. Beker maintains Paul's opponents were those who thought that the Gentiles' turning to Christ was not enough. In order to be sure of God's blessing upon them and that they were true children of Abraham, they had to participate fully in the Torah. Abraham therefore played a central role in the theology of Paul's opponents.²¹

B. H. Brinsmead maintains that the opponents' argument revolved around the "apologetic" Abraham.²² What exactly Brinsmead means by the "apologetic" Abraham is not altogether clear. He refers to the Hellenistic portrayal of Abraham as the "philosopher-king, astronomer, and father of all culture"²³ and his enforced emigration from Chaldea because of his beliefs in the Creator God. Brinsmead also describes Abraham's giving sciences to the Egyptians, and the link between Abraham and natural and cosmic law.²⁴ For Brinsmead, the opponents used the "apologetic" Abraham because these traditions would have appealed to the Gentile Galatians.

John Barclay points out that an explicit connection exists in the Genesis account between "circumcision, Abraham, and the covenant. . . What is more, Abraham represented both the beginning and the foundation of Judaism, and this made him a key figure in the representation of Judaism to

²⁰For example, G. Walter Hansen, Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts, JSNTSup 29, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 172, cf. 262 n. 32.

²¹J. C. Beker, Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 42-44.

²²B. H. Brinsmead, Galatians: Dialogical Response to Opponents, SBLDS 65 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 114.

²³Ibid., 112.

²⁴Ibid.

outsiders. . . ²⁵ Our overview of what traditions about Abraham Paul's opponents may have been using will be developed below.

9.2. The Function of Abraham in Galatians 3:1-5:1

9.2.1 Galatians 3:1-14

The angry tone of Paul's epistle to the Galatians is hinted at in the beginning because it contains no thanksgiving section as usually found in Pauline epistles.²⁶ In chapter 3 he calls them "foolish" (3:1, 3) for having been "bewitched" (*βασκαίνω*, 3:1) into obeying the requirements of the law (3:2, 3, 5). He reminds them that it was before their very eyes that he had "placarded"²⁷ Christ as crucified (3:1). His scathing questions in 3:1-5 serve to pinpoint his themes in his discussion which follows.

In his barbed questions, Paul sets up an antithesis between "works of the law" (*ἔργων νόμου*) and "hearing with faith" (*ἀκοῆς πίστεως*).²⁸ Did the Galatians receive the Spirit by "works of law" or by "hearing with faith" (3:2, 5)? Did God work miracles among them by their doing "works of the law" or by "hearing with faith" (3:5)? Paul's major concern here is to alert his readers to the contrast between *ἀκοή πίστεως* and *ἔργα νόμου* and to cause them to consider the gross error into which they have fallen. Rhetorically speaking, Paul is using the Galatians as eye-witnesses to provide the information

²⁵ J. Barclay, Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 54.

²⁶ C. J. Roetzel, The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context, (London: SCM Press, 1983), 33, 40; D. E. Aune, The New Testament in Its Literary Environment, vol. 8, Library of Early Christianity, Wayne A. Meeks, ed., (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 206-208.

²⁷ J. B. Lightfoot, St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1884), 24, 133-134.

²⁸ G. Walter Hansen, Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 97-99, 109.

inductively.²⁹ Of course the overall answer to be supplied is that both the Spirit and miracles were supplied because of faith.

Paul's argument from Scripture, which is his answer to his own previous rhetorical questions, revolves around Abraham. "Καθὼς Ἀβραὰμ ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην" (3:6). Byrne points out that the use of καθὼς ("just as") implies that what follows corresponds to what has just been described.³⁰ Abraham becomes the one who believed in God, and by God's action, was reckoned righteous. This corresponds to the Spirit supplied by God because of the faith of the Galatian believers. The receipt of the Spirit by the Galatian believers is parallel to Abraham's receipt of righteousness.³¹

In using Abraham to discuss the contrast of faith versus works, Paul is using Abraham in a new way. Previously, Abraham's faith and his works have been seen together. For example, in *Jubilees*, Abraham is not only the first to separate from his family and worship the one Creator God (*Jub.* 11: 16-17; 12:16-21), but he also observes stipulations of the Mosaic law such as the Feast of Tabernacles (*Jub.* 16:20 - 31; cf. *Jub.* 22:1-2). In Philo's works, Abraham is portrayed as following the natural law. To Philo, the law of nature and the law of Moses are identical. Only law which was revealed by God, the creator of nature, can really be in accordance with natural law. Abraham not only followed the natural law, but Philo states, "For 'he [Abraham] journeyed just as the Lord spoke to him': the meaning of this is

²⁹H. D. Betz, Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 130.

³⁰Brendan Byrne, Son of God--'Seed of Abraham': A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 148; BAGD 391.

³¹J. Barclay, Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 80.

that as God speaks--and He speaks with consummate beauty and excellence--so the good man does everything, blamelessly keeping straight the path of life, so that the actions of the wise man are nothing else than the words (λόγος) of God. So in another place He says, 'Abraham did all My law'" (*Migr. Abr.* 129-130; cf. Gen. 26:5).³² By following the natural law, Abraham followed the very words of God and became an example of obedience to the law for his descendants.³³ Even in Josephus, Abraham's faith in the one Creator God³⁴ and his obedience to law are combined. For Josephus, following the law is conforming to the will of God. Much like Philo's concept of the Mosaic law being the codification of the natural law, Josephus sees the law of Moses as in keeping with the nature of the universe.³⁵ According to Josephus, Abraham lived so virtuously that he did not marry his sister or half sister, both of which were against the Mosaic law,³⁶ but he married his niece, which was well within the law.³⁷ While Abraham is not portrayed as obeying the Mosaic law or the natural law in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, those who are truly the descendants of Abraham maintain their faith in the

³²Cf. Sir 44:19-20, "Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations, and no one has been found like him in glory. He kept the law of the Most High. . . ." Gen 26:5, ". . . Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

³³ ". . . to these praises of the Sage. . . Moses adds this crowning saying, 'that this man did the divine law and the divine commands.' He did them, not taught by written words, but unwritten nature gave him the zeal to follow where wholesome and untainted impulse led him. . . such was the life of the first, the founder of the nation, one who obeyed the law, some will say, but rather, as our discourse has shown, himself a law and an unwritten statute" (*De Abr.* 275-276).

³⁴*Ant.* 1.154-156.

³⁵*Ant.* 1.24.

³⁶Lev 20:17.

³⁷Lev 18:12-14; 20:19-21.

one God and keep the commandments of God: "[those] who have chosen my desire and manifestly kept my commandments. . . will rejoice with merrymaking over the downfall of the men who . . . followed after the idols and after their murders."³⁸

Among the works studied, Philo is the only one who tells us that Genesis 15:6 was interpreted to mean that Abraham believed in the one, Creator God in contrast to other gods or philosophies. In *On the Virtues*, Philo describes Abraham by saying, ". . . he is spoken of as the first person to believe in God (πιστεῦσαι λέγεται τῷ θεῷ πρῶτος), since he first grasped a firm and unswerving conception of the truth that there is one Cause above all (ὡς ἐν αἴτιον τὸ ἀνωτάτω) and that it provides for the world and all that there is therein" (*De Virt.* 216). Abraham is the first one to be spoken of in Genesis itself as believing in God. Most often, those who spoke of the faith of Abraham spoke of it as faith in the one God (*Ant.* 1.155-156; *Apoc. Abr.* 7:10; *Bib. Ant.* 6:4, 23:5) in contrast to idolatry. The law, literally Mosaic or natural (see above), was a necessary corollary of his belief in God. Because he was believed to have embodied these characteristics, Abraham functioned as an ideal representative of the Jewish people.

In Galatians 3:7, Paul commands the Galatian believers to recognize from his proof in 3:6³⁹ that "it is the people of faith who are the sons of Abraham."⁴⁰ From the standpoint of the tradition of Abraham as the man of

³⁸*Apoc. Abr.* 31:4; cf. 22:5.

³⁹γινώσκετε ("you know" or "you recognize") plus ἄρα makes it clear to the reader that what they know or recognize is as a result of his proof from Scripture in verse six. H. D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 141.

⁴⁰"οἰοί εἶσιν" is the reading to be preferred here, based upon better external support and because it is the more difficult reading.

faith in the true God, Paul's scriptural proof (3:6-7) for the descendants of Abraham being those who have faith in the same God would ring true. But Paul is unique in that he is beginning to define this faith in contrast to works, and this is where the similarity with the Jewish traditions about Abraham ends.

Paul again uses Scripture to back up his claim that the sons of Abraham are those who have faith in God. In Galatians 3:8-9 he states, "And the Scriptures, seeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying that 'All the Gentiles will be blessed in you.'" Paul personifies the Scripture, saying that it saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham that all the Gentiles would be blessed in him (3:8; Gen 12:3).⁴¹ Paul understands the promise to Abraham that he would be a blessing to the nations (Gentiles)⁴² as the anticipatory preaching of the gospel to Abraham.⁴³ This gospel was that justification was by faith. Because the gospel was that justification was by faith, and Gentiles were then included in justification, the announcement of the blessing of Gentiles through Abraham was in anticipation of the gospel. Fung rightly suggests that the import of the promise to Abraham that the Gentiles would be blessed is "in its testimony that the doctrine of justification by faith was implicitly involved and

⁴¹William Baird, "Abraham in the New Testament: Tradition and the New Identity," *Int.* 42.4 (1988) 374.

⁴²Gen 12:3; 18:18.

⁴³A. T. Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974), 64; προεναγγελιζομαι is a hapaxlegomenon; cf. *De Mut. Nom.* 158; *De Opif.* 34 where it has the sense of a declaration in the anticipation of something.

anticipated in the promise of Abraham."⁴⁴

In the meantime, Paul picks up the other thread of his argument, the "works of the law" (Gal 3:10). In Galatians 3:10-13 Paul argues that obedience to law does not bring righteousness. Paul proves his point by citing verses from the Old Testament. Using Deuteronomy 27:26 he shows that one is cursed if one does not observe and obey everything written in the law.⁴⁵ He shows how no one is justified by law by quoting Habakkuk 2:4, "The one who is righteous will live by faith." Leviticus 18:5 is employed to show that the law does not rest upon faith, because "Whoever does them will live by them." Paul has continued his dichotomy of works of law versus faith. Both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians who live by law are under a curse (3:10). No one is justified by law before God (3:11). The law does not rest on faith and those who do the law live by it and not by faith (3:12). As Longenecker suggests,⁴⁶ it is probable that Paul is dealing with the very passages that his opponents used in their message in support of the law. Using Deuteronomy 21:23, "cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree," Paul shows that the era of faith has now come through Christ's becoming a curse and providing redemption from the curse of the law (3:13).⁴⁷

⁴⁴Ronald Y. K. Fung, The Epistle to the Galatians, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 140.

⁴⁵See Betz's survey of scholarship on Paul's use of Deut 27:26 in Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 145; cf. E. P. Sanders, Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 20, 22.

⁴⁶R. Longenecker, Galatians, WBC 41 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 116-121, 124.

⁴⁷Brendan Byrne, Son of God--'Seed of Abraham': A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background. (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 156.

Verses ten to thirteen of chapter three functioned as an important part of Paul's argument. Sanders argues that 3:10-13 is a "subsidiary argument" for Paul.⁴⁸ However, if we assume Paul is arguing about the dichotomy between faith and law begun in 3:1-5, his argument about "works of law" (3:10-13) is significant. Paul resumes his argument from Galatians 3:6-9 about those having faith being blessed in 3:14. Within this verse he makes a conclusion which draws attention to the major points he is trying to make to the Galatian Christians. He begins with a *ἵνα* clause. Christ became a curse and provided redemption from the curse of the law (3:13) in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles (3:14a). This refers back to 3:8,⁴⁹ the blessing which was promised beforehand to the Gentiles through Abraham. However this blessing is now "in Christ" (3:14a).

The second *ἵνα* clause is parallel to the first: "in order that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (3:14b). The Spirit becomes the blessing of Abraham which has come upon the Gentiles.⁵⁰ And, as Paul asserts implicitly in Galatians 3:1-5, this blessing is "by faith." In 3:14 we find that this faith refers to faith in Christ. Formerly, the promise to Abraham referred to land and descendants. But now the promise refers to the Spirit which is a foretaste of the inheritance of the world to come.⁵¹ And if the

⁴⁸E. P. Sanders, Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 22.

⁴⁹Brendan Byrne, Son of God--'Seed of Abraham': A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 155-156; see also the section on Gal 4:21-5:1, below.

⁵⁰H. D. Betz, Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 143.

⁵¹Brendan Byrne, Son of God--'Seed of Abraham': A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 156-157.

Gentiles in Galatia have the Spirit, which is the blessing promised to Abraham in Christ, they have the sign that they are the descendants of Abraham.

How has Abraham functioned in the letter so far? In Galatians 3:6-9 Paul uses Genesis 15:6 to prove that it was by faith that Abraham was reckoned righteous, and that those who have faith are his descendants. In 3:10-13 he continued, saying that the law which was a curse was removed by Christ who himself became a curse. This was so that the Gentiles might receive the blessing of Abraham, the Spirit, through faith (3:14).

What is especially noteworthy in the epistle thus far is that Paul refers to two aspects of Judaism which are also related to the major traditions about Abraham found in middle Judaism: faith and law.⁵² Paul has argued forcefully against the law; the Gentiles have received the blessing of Abraham, the Spirit, solely according to their faith. Because Paul is using Abraham to argue against observance of the law, it is reasonable to assume that his opponents are using Abraham in their arguments to convince the Gentiles that they must be obedient to the Mosaic law, and that the opponents are aware of the tradition of Abraham's obedience to the law and are making use of that tradition.⁵³

⁵²Friedrich E. Wieser, Die Abrahamvorstellungen im Neuen Testament, Europäische Hochschulschriften 23/307, (Bern: Peter Lang, 1987), 41-42.

⁵³As G. Walter Hansen also says in Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts, JSNTSup 29 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 172.

9.2.2 Galatians 3:15-18

Paul begins the next section with an example from the everyday life of human beings (κατὰ ἄνθρωπον) and refers to a person's testament or will (διαθήκη) which is neither annulled or added to once it has been ratified.⁵⁴ He uses this example to discuss Abraham again. Originally, the promises were made to Abraham and to his seed (3:16). Paul proceeds to prove that the offspring to whom the promises were made were not many (σπέρμασιν) but one (σπέρμα), which actually refers to Christ (Gen 12:7; 22:17-18). Paul is referring to the collective singular (עַרְוָה/σπέρμα) in both Hebrew and Greek which, in the Old Testament context, usually means posterity.⁵⁵ Paul plays upon the corporate and individual meaning of "seed of Abraham."⁵⁶ The one descendant, Christ, not only represents the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham (Gal 3:8, 14) but also the solidarity of believers.⁵⁷

⁵⁴H. D. Betz, Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 155; For discussions of what kind of testament Paul had in mind, see esp. E. Bammel, "Gottes ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ (Gal. III.15-17) und das jüdische Rechtsdenken," NTS 6 (1959-60) 313-19; John J. Hughes, "Hebrews 9:15ff and Galatians 3:15ff: A Study in Covenant Practice and Procedure," NovT 21 (1979) 27 - 96.

⁵⁵E. E. Ellis contends, "Paul's interpretation involves no rabbinical sophistry" Paul's Use of the Old Testament, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), 73; cf. D. Daube, "The Interpretation of a Generic Singular in Galatians 3.16," IQR 35 (1944) 227-230.

⁵⁶E. E. Ellis, The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1991), 112.

⁵⁷E. DeWitt Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921), 181; Richard N. Longenecker, Galatians, WBC 41 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 132. For the view that "seed" here is a specific singular from a haggadic tradition in which Isaac was in mind, see D. Daube, "The Interpretation of a Generic Singular in Galatians 3.16," IQR 35 (1944) 227-230. For the view that an Isaac-Christ typology exists in Paul, see H. J. Schoeps, "The Sacrifice of Isaac in Paul's Theology," JBL 65 (1946) 385-392 and that 3:16 contains evidence for this typology, see F. E. Wieser, Die Abrahamvorstellungen im Neuen Testament, Europäische Hochschulschriften: Reihe 23/307, (New York, Paris: Lang, 1987), 48. For a recent refutation, see B. D. Chilton and P. R. Davies, "The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History," CBQ 40.4 (1978), 514 - 546.

This interpretation of Christ as the seed who represents the solidarity of believers refutes the exclusive Jewish concept of the seed of Abraham and prepares for the inclusion of the Gentiles in that seed "in Christ" (3:22, 29).⁵⁸ Now it is only "in Christ" that the Abrahamic blessings are available.⁵⁹ Paradoxically, the promise to Abraham and his seed, Christ, will "become a reality with an expansiveness that quite outstrips the purely Jewish perspective."⁶⁰

According to Paul in Galatians 3:17, the law actually came 430 years after the covenant that God ratified with Abraham. Not only did it come later, but it did not annul or change God's original promises to Abraham. These promises and the inheritance were given to Abraham by God himself (3:16,18).

Paul is arguing that the promise made to Abraham is fundamental. The law, he points out, came after the promise. Here, as in 3:8, Paul is arguing from a chronological standpoint. Abraham received the promise that anticipated the gospel message that justification is by faith (3:8). In 3:17, Paul makes it clear that the law came after Abraham. Additionally, in 3:19a he states that the law was "added": it was not eternal but it had a beginning in history after the promise.⁶¹ Those who are children of Abraham "in Christ"

⁵⁸E. Best, One Body in Christ. (London: SPCK, 1955); cf. J. C. Beker, Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 50.

⁵⁹J. Barclay, Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 90.

⁶⁰B. Byrne, Son of God--'Seed of Abraham': A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background. (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 160.

⁶¹David J. Lull, "'The Law was our Pedagogue': A Study in Galatians 3:19-25," IBL 105/3 (1986) 483.

benefit from the promise and inheritance he received before the coming of the law.

If, as was pointed out above, the opponents of Paul in Galatia are using the popular tradition that Abraham obeyed the law, the opponents must also have argued that Abraham was obedient to the law before it was given by Moses. They may even have argued that the law was eternal, as exemplified by the portrayal of Abraham's obedience to eternal law in *Jubilees*. Or, perhaps they argued that Abraham was obedient to the stipulations of the law based upon something equivalent to Philo's interpretation of the natural law. In that case, for the opponents and their message for the Galatian believers, Abraham functioned as an example of one who was obedient to the Mosaic law before it was actually given to Moses. If this was the example of Abraham which the opponents were giving to the believers in Galatia, Paul has to argue forcefully that the Mosaic law actually came after the promise made to Abraham. If the Mosaic law actually came centuries after the promise to Abraham, then Abraham could not have been obedient to that law. Paul has used the Genesis narrative to refute the Abraham traditions which the opponents are using. Not only did the law come centuries after the time of Abraham, but, according to Genesis 12:3, an anticipatory gospel was proclaimed to Abraham. In the first century as in previous ages, the most ancient people and events were given the most importance and credibility. This new chronology establishes the priority of Paul's gospel of justification by faith over the opponents' insistence on obedience to the law.

9.2.3 Galatians 3:19-22

Paul logically turns to the question which he perceived to have been burning in the readers' minds.⁶² If the inheritance is through God's unchangeable, eternal covenant with Abraham, why was the law necessary (3:19a)? Paul contends that the law was added to produce⁶³ transgressions until the offspring (σπέρμα) should come to whom the promises had been made, meaning Christ (19b; see v. 16).

According to the middle Jewish literature previously studied, the promises to Abraham were communicated by God both through a mediator⁶⁴ and directly by God.⁶⁵ According to Paul, God promised Abraham's inheritance directly: "For if the inheritance is based on law, it does not come from the promise; but God granted it to Abraham through the promise" (3:18). Paul states that the law, however, was "ordained through angels by means of a mediator" (3:19d). The giving of the law by angels was a common Jewish tradition.⁶⁶ Paul deviates from the tradition here in that the activity of the angels is a point *against* the law.⁶⁷ In his contrast between the direct

⁶²H. D. Betz, Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 163.

⁶³χάριν (3:19b) can mean either "because of" or "for the sake of" transgression. Most scholars believe that Paul has the idea of "producing" transgressions in mind. See F. F. Bruce, Commentary on Galatians, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 174; H. D. Betz, Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 165.

⁶⁴Jub. 12:22

⁶⁵Apoc. Abr. 20:1-7, et al.; Bib. Ant. 8:2; Ant. 1.183.

⁶⁶LXX, Deut. 33:2; Jub. 2:2; 1 Enoch 60:1; also New Testament references, Acts 7:38, 53.

⁶⁷Apparently in Rabbinic Judaism a strong reaction existed against the mediation of angels at important junctures in the history of Israel. See R. N. Longenecker, Galatians, WBC 41 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 140.

communication of the promises to Abraham and the indirect mediation of the law, Paul is drawing attention to the inferiority of the law. Not only is God's promise to Abraham prior to the law (3:16-17) and therefore of higher status, but it is also superior because it was communicated directly to Abraham without a mediator.

In 3:20, Paul makes a statement which has long puzzled interpreters of Galatians, "ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἑνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν, ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἷς ἔστιν." Should the concept of a plural mediator be understood as between a duality of parties, God on the one hand and the Jewish people on the other?⁶⁸ Does the plural mediator refer to a plurality on one of the two sides?⁶⁹ Or does the concept of a mediator itself imply a plurality which stands in contrast to the oneness of God?⁷⁰

By searching for exactly what it is to which Paul is referring by his reference to the plurality involved in the giving of the law, it appears that we are missing Paul's overall thrust. The most important item to glean from Paul's statement is that somehow the law coming through angels via the agency of a mediator implies more than one in contrast to God who gave the promise to Abraham, who is one. Against the general monotheistic tenacity of much of Judaism of the day, this kind of statement which contrasts the oneness of God who gave the promise to Abraham with the plurality through

⁶⁸J. B. Lightfoot, St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1884), 146-147; E. DeWitt Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921), 191-192; R. Longenecker, Galatians, WBC 41 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 141-142.

⁶⁹Gerhard Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965; reprint, 1982), s.v. "μεσίτης" A. Oepke.

⁷⁰Terrance Callan, "Pauline Midrash: The Exegetical Background of Gal. 3:19b," IBL 99.4 (1980) 565; H. D. Betz, Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 171-173.

which the law was given clearly demonstrates again the superiority of the promise to Abraham over the law.

At this point it is necessary to ask to what argument by the opponents Paul may be reacting. It was noted in earlier chapters that popular traditions about Abraham in middle Jewish literature were that he was the first monotheist and maintained obedience to the law before it was given. If the popular traditions about Abraham were also known by the opponents, their appeal to the example of Abraham probably had something to do with his monotheism and obedience to law. In Galatians 3:20, using the opponents' own contentions and the popular traditions which linked Abraham to monotheism and law, Paul demonstrates that the law actually is second-rate when compared to God's promises to Abraham. Consequently, if the promises are superior to the law, and if it is through the promises to Abraham that his inheritance comes to those united in Christ, the law becomes superfluous. Not only does being a descendant of Abraham no longer mean that one has to follow Jewish law, but obedience to the law which is based upon a plurality is now a contradiction of the oneness of God.

Paul reassures his readers that the law was not against the promises of God. If law could make alive, righteousness would have come through law (3:21). To "make alive" contains a soteriological aspect as the notion of "to live" did in 3:11-12. Paul is picking up on his earlier argument in 3:10-13 that the righteous live by faith. The law is not able to lead to salvation or bring righteousness (3:21d).

Paul next provides a solution to the problem of the negative place he has given the law in history. The Scripture assigning everything to sin is actually in accordance with the positive intentions of God, so that what was promised might be given to those who believe in Jesus Christ (3:22). Paul has come full

circle from the faith which Abraham had, which was reckoned as righteousness (3:6), and the eternal promises made to him by God (3:16) to the statement that those who believe are now given the same promises (3:22). The inclusion of the Gentiles in the promises is through Jesus Christ (3:8, 14) who acts as the one source of blessing (3:16) in the new age (3:19) to those who believe in Jesus Christ (3:22).

9.2.4 Galatians 3:23-29

In this section Paul uses the example of the παιδαγωγός to explain the function of the law.⁷¹ Much has been written in recent years concerning the function of the παιδαγωγός in Greco-Roman society and in the letters of Paul.⁷² The use of a paidagōgos was a prevalent custom in Paul's day; well-to-do Jews may have assimilated this custom.⁷³ The custom entailed placing one's child or children (primarily boys) in the care and oversight of a trusted slave until the child reached late adolescence.⁷⁴ The first task of a paidagōgos was "preventative and protective."⁷⁵ Some of the protection was in the area of morality, for example, protection from others such as undesirable lovers. The paidagōgos was also associated with teaching his charge moral self-

⁷¹Cf. 1 Cor 4:15.

⁷²For example, see Linda L. Belleville, "'Under Law': Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in Galatians 3:21-4:11," *ISNT* 26 (1986) 53-78; A. T. Hanson, "The Origin of Paul's Use of the ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΟΣ for the Law," *ISNT* 34 (1988) 71-76; David J. Lull, "'The Law was our Pedagogue': A Study in Galatians 3:19-25," *IBL* 105/3 (1986) 481-498; T. David Gordon, "A Note on ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΟΣ in Galatians 3:24-25," *NTS* 35 (1989) 150-154.; Richard N. Longenecker, "The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7," *IETS* 25.1 (1982) 53-61.

⁷³Norman H. Young, "PAIDAGOGOS: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor," *NovT* 29.2 (1987) 168; *De Leg. Gaium* 26-27.

⁷⁴Norman H. Young, "PAIDAGOGOS: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor," *NovT* 29.2 (1987) 156, 168-169.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 168; *De Mut. Nom.* 217.

restraint, thus preventing the child from harm to himself or others.⁷⁶ The paidagōgos commonly accompanied the child to and from school,⁷⁷ or would educate the child himself in matters such as etiquette. The paidagōgos could even administer physical punishment when necessary.

What characteristics of the paidagōgos did Paul have in mind when he compared it to the law? Rather than viewing the paidagōgos primarily in terms of severity as had previously been the case,⁷⁸ more recently scholars have concentrated upon more positive aspects of the paidagōgos. Young contends that Paul had the guardianship and temporality⁷⁹ of the paidagōgos in mind. To him, the law in Galatians seems to refer to regulations that "controlled Jewish social life and restricted association with the Gentiles."⁸⁰ Lull believes that Paul had the temporal, protective view of the paidagōgos in mind.⁸¹ Gordon sees the guardian aspect of the παιδαγωγός as that which makes the most sense in the context of the epistle.⁸²

⁷⁶David J. Lull, "'The Law was our Pedagogue': A Study in Galatians 3:19-25," *IBL* 105/3 (1986) 493.

⁷⁷Norman H. Young, "PAIDAGOGOS: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor," *NovT* 29.2 (1987) 164.

⁷⁸H. D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 177-178.

⁷⁹Norman H. Young, "PAIDAGOGOS: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor," *NovT* 29.2 (1987) 174.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 173.

⁸¹D. Lull, "'The Law was our Pedagogue': A Study in Galatians 3:19-25," *IBL* 105/3 (1986) 496-497.

⁸²T. David Gordon, "A Note on ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΟΣ in Galatians 3:24-25," *NTS* 35 (1989) 153.

Paul writes that before faith, they were guarded (φρουρέω) and imprisoned (συγκλείω)⁸³ by the law (3:23). Paul metaphorically replaces the law with the παιδαγωγός who functioned "until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith" (3:24). Once faith came, the paidagōgos was no longer necessary (3:25). In this case, Paul is stressing one aspect of the law which is like the paidagōgos: both of them are temporary.⁸⁴

One of the primary functions of the law as evidenced in middle Jewish texts is that the law served to separate and protect Israel from her Gentile neighbors. The most prominent example of this function of the law was found in *Jubilees* where it kept the Jews from succumbing to the immorality and the idolatry of her Gentile neighbors. In fact in *Jubilees* Abraham was the proclaimer of separation from all things Gentile and obedience to the law.⁸⁵

In the story of Abraham in the *Antiquities*, circumcision is a symbol of the Jews' separation from Gentiles. Circumcision was "to the intent that his posterity should be kept from mixing with others. . . ." (*Ant.* 1.192). Attridge contends that in Josephus circumcision "becomes a distinguishing feature of the offspring of Abraham, to keep them separate from their neighbors. . ." ⁸⁶

⁸³Cf. 3:22 where Scripture is said to confine (συγκλείω) all things under sin. In this sense the verb is used more negatively than in 3:23. However, because the paidagōgos was not seen in an entirely positive light, (see Young, "The Figure of the Paidagōgos in Art and Literature," *Biblical Archaeologist*, June (1990) 80-86) using συγκλείω to describe metaphorically the functions of the paidagōgos (see above) would be acceptable.

⁸⁴A. T. Hanson, "The Origin of Paul's Use of ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΟΣ for the Law," *ISNTJ* 34 (1988) 75.

⁸⁵*Jub.* 20:6-10; 21:21-24; 22:16-19.

⁸⁶H. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus*, HDR 7 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 80.

Additionally, in the account of the birth and circumcision of Isaac, Josephus makes Abraham and Sarah the model⁸⁷ for subsequent generations.

Circumcision, as a primary feature of the law, was to identify the Jewish people. As has been seen, when Philo mentions circumcision, he usually gives it an allegorical meaning, but this does not mean he perceives that the literal practice is unimportant. According to Philo in *Questions and Answers in Genesis* 3.49, the nation which was "given the command to circumcise (children) on the eighth day is called "Israel" in Chaldaean, and in [Greek] (this means) 'seeing God.'" Thus, circumcision is a sign of those who "see God", meaning the nation of Israel. For Philo, Abraham was the first to discern or "see" that God existed, and as such, he was the prototype of the nation known to "see" God.

In *Jubilees*, it is said that one who is not circumcised is annihilated because there is "no sign upon him. . . that he might belong to the Lord because (he is destined) to be destroyed and annihilated from the earth and to be uprooted from the earth because he has broken the covenant of the Lord our God" (*Jub.* 15: 26). In *Jubilees* circumcision is also seen as an identifying mark of the people of God.

In the context of Paul's epistle to the Galatians, he speaks primarily of those aspects of law which were especially known to identify the Jewish people. Circumcision, food laws, and the observance of festival days were the primary aspects of Jewish law that identified them and were known by Gentiles. More importantly, circumcision was identified with the figure of Abraham.

⁸⁷"Eight days later they promptly circumcised him; and from that time forward the Jewish practice has been to circumcise so many days after birth" (*Ant.* 1.214).

As mentioned above, one way that the law functioned as a *paidagōgos* was to guard the Jewish people from the Gentiles and their idolatry and immorality.⁸⁸ Paul says that now that faith has come, the law is no longer necessary. The law as a protective device in a community where Jew and Gentile exist side by side is obsolete because they all have faith and belong to the community "in Christ" (Gal 3:26). Because of this, the separation by means of the law is now unnecessary.

A further way in which the law, especially circumcision, functioned in Middle Judaism, as evidenced by the examples above, was that it identified the Jewish people as the people of God. Now that both Jews and Gentiles were "in Christ," these identifying symbols were no longer necessary. The identifying symbols of the law had been abolished: all the believers in Galatia were now one (εἷς) in Christ Jesus (3:28).

The traditional exclusivity of being a descendant of Abraham is undermined. Because the believers in Galatia are one in Christ, they are Abraham's descendants and heirs of the promise made to him (3:29; cf. 3:8). The Spirit is the evidence of the efficacy of that promise made to Abraham now that Gentiles also have the Spirit. The Spirit, whom the Galatian believers had already received (3:2-5), is the new identifying symbol of the people of God.

9.2.5 Galatians 4:1-11

In Galatians 4:1-2, Paul uses the imagery of an heir who, as a child, is under "guardians and trustees" until the date set by his father. Paul is probably referring to practices in Roman law in which guardians were appointed over a minor by the father either in a will or in a court of law. The

⁸⁸T. D. Gordon, "The Problem at Galatia," *Int.* 41 (1987) 38.

father could also stipulate the age at which the child would no longer be under such guardians. By using the terms ἐπίτροπος and οἰκονόμος, Paul is referring to those who had "effective control of the person, property, and finances of a minor."⁸⁹ The temporary nature of the law is again asserted. It is in effect until the date set by the father. Secondly, the heir is not in control of his own affairs. The guardians control those affairs. In this sense, the heir is no better than a slave.

In 4:3, Paul begins his comparison of the slave/heir with the situation in which the believers presently find themselves. Considering Paul's recent discussion of the law as "confining" (3:23), as a paidagōgos (3:25), and its acting as a guarding/trustee (4:1-2), it is best to understand Paul as meaning the Jews when he refers to the minor in 4:3.⁹⁰

Additionally, it is the minors who were enslaved to the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. Scholars have debated about the meaning of this phrase. A. J. Bandstra maintains that it may be derived from "stoichos" (στοῖχος) which was originally a military term meaning "row."⁹¹ Bandstra understands the stoicheia here as the "fundamental, inherent component forces of the cosmos."⁹² G. B. Caird understands the term to mean "The demonic forces of legalism. . . both Jewish and Gentile. . ." ⁹³ Reicke identifies them with the

⁸⁹Linda L. Belleville, "'Under Law': Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in Galatians 3:21-4:11," *JSNT* 26 (1986) 63.

⁹⁰See also R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC 41 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 165; T. L. Donaldson, "The 'Curse of the Law' and the Inclusion of the Gentiles: Galatians 3:14-24," *NTS* 32 (1986) 95, 108.

⁹¹A. J. Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World: An Exegetical Study in Aspects of Paul's Teaching*, (Kampen: J. H. Kok, N.V., 1964), 31.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 57.

⁹³G. B. Caird, *Principalities and Powers*, (Oxford, Oxford U. Press, 1956), 51.

angels of Galatians 3:19.⁹⁴ While the reference of the phrase στοιχῆια τοῦ κόσμου is debatable, its function is sure. The στοιχῆια τοῦ κόσμου functioned to enslave those who turned to them.

In Galatians 4:4, Paul reasserts the concept that the previous age of slavery is over. The "fullness of time" has come which is parallel to the "date set by the father" in Galatians 4:2. When the fullness of time had come, God sent his son who was "born of a woman" and "born under law." In verse five we are told that the Son was sent in order that he might redeem those under the law, presumably meaning Jews.

It seems best to assume that Paul is speaking again of the whole community of believers, both Gentiles and Jews, in Galatians 4:6-7. In 3:1-5 his proof that the Galatian Christians are the people of God is the Spirit. In 4:6-7 the Spirit again is proof of their being sons of God. Because the believers at Galatia are sons (ἐστε υἱοί), God sent them the Spirit of his Son, through which they can experience an intimate relationship with God like that of a son to a father (4:6). If they are sons, they are no longer slaves but heirs (4:7). In 4:7, Paul again refers to the example of the child heir under guardians and stewards in verses one and two. The Galatians, presumably both Jews and Gentiles, are no longer slaves but true sons. The era of being enslaved to the στοιχῆια τοῦ κόσμου which functioned as that which controlled the Jews and Gentiles in their experience before they were "in Christ" is over. The era of sonship for both Jews and Gentiles evidenced by the Spirit and under the control of the Spirit has begun.

⁹⁴B. Reicke, "The Law and this World according to Paul: Some Thoughts Concerning Gal 4:1-11," *IBL* 70 (1951) 262.

In his continued address to the Galatian believers (4:8), Paul concentrates upon the Gentiles among them. In the previous age, neither did they know God nor were they known by God. They were enslaved by things which by nature "were not gods." This phrase (μὴ οὐσιν θεοῖς) is a familiar one in Septuagint literature where it refers to idols.⁹⁵ The Gentiles were formerly idolaters. Paul is accusing them of returning to their idols "again" (πάλιν: 4:9).⁹⁶ What are the Galatian Gentile Christians actually doing which would cause Paul to make such an accusation?

From the letter itself, we find that Paul is contending with persons who are being persuaded by certain "agitators" to turn to a "different gospel" (1:1-9). This different gospel is evidenced primarily by circumcision (5:2-3; 6:12-13; 2:3-5) and may include other aspects of law, such as the calendrical observances noted in 4:10. The believing Galatian Gentiles are being persuaded to obey Jewish law. Paul compares their obedience to law to idolatry (4:8) and to enslavement under the στοιχεῖα (4:9). Both obedience to law and idolatry are forms of enslavement under the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (cf. 4:3-5a). Thus, obedience to law is not only a denial of the Galatians being true children of God, but from the perspective of being "in Christ," obedience to law is tantamount to worshipping idols.

Paul's use of Abraham is usually attributed only to Galatians 3:6-29 and 4:21-5:1. More often than not, it is also maintained that Paul's opponents used Abraham in their own argumentation. If the traditions about Abraham we have discussed were popular, it may have been that these opponents were

⁹⁵Chr 13:9b-10; Isa 37:18-19; Jer 2:11-28.

⁹⁶T. L. Donaldson, "The 'Curse of the Law' and the Inclusion of the Gentiles: Galatians 3:14-24," *NTS* 32 (1986) 96; B. Reicke, "The Law and this World According to Paul: Some Thoughts Concerning Gal 4:1-11," *JBL* 70 (1951) 259.

persuading the Gentile believers in Galatia that now that they had rejected idolatry and were believers in Christ, in order to be true children of Abraham they also had to obey the Jewish law.⁹⁷

But another of the Jewish traditions about Abraham previously discussed may come into play in Paul's discussion in Galatians 4:1-11. The tradition that Abraham was an idolater previous to his monotheistic belief has already been discussed. Most often, this idolatry was shown to have manifested itself in his former belief in astrology, that the stars and planets were in control of the events on earth and that they were gods in and of themselves.

Abraham's connection to astrology is found in *Jubilees* 12:16-20,⁹⁸ *Antiquities* 1.154-165,⁹⁹ *On Abraham* 70, 81-84 and *On Virtue* 212-213,¹⁰⁰ and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 7:9.¹⁰¹

R. Longenecker points out that the term στοιχία τοῦ κόσμου could have several meanings: the basic elements of which the cosmos is composed, especially the four elements of earth, water, air, and fire; the fundamental principles or rudimentary teachings of subjects; the stars and other heavenly bodies; the stellar spirits, gods, demons, and angels.¹⁰²

In Paul's discussion about the law and idolatry functioning like the στοιχία τοῦ κόσμου in that they to enslaved those who turned to them, we

⁹⁷See the traditions about Abraham and the Jewish law discussed earlier in the chapter.

⁹⁸See 48-49, above.

⁹⁹See 138-142, above.

¹⁰⁰See 189-194, above.

¹⁰¹See 262-269, above.

¹⁰²*Galatians* WBC 41 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 165.

can rule out the first option. The last three options--fundamental principles or rudimentary teachings; the heavenly bodies; and the spirits, gods, demons, and angels--would have been thought capable of controlling human beings at the time Paul was writing.

Longenecker rules out the last two options, on the basis of their appearance after the time of Paul. He takes the view that the first option, principles or teachings, is what Paul has in mind. In Galatians 4:3, the term refers to the Jews' "basic principles" of religion. He further takes κόσμος in an ethical sense meaning "worldly" as opposed to "spiritual."¹⁰³ The term τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα in Galatians 4:9 refers to the basic principles of religion found in paganism, such as its cultic rituals and nature worship. While Paul may mean the basic principles in both passages, the exact meaning varies in each in terms of specific context.¹⁰⁴ If Paul means only the basic principles of the law and the basic principles of paganism, one has to wonder why he did not say so more simply. Fundamentally, the Jews and the Gentiles are turning back to different things: for the Jews, the rudimentary teachings are of the Mosaic law; for the Gentiles, the rudimentary teachings are of paganism. Is there a way to understand more fully how they can both be equal to enslavement?

Caird believed that the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου referred to the demonic forces of legalism, both Jewish and Gentile, which are made weak and beggarly in comparison with the glory of Christ.¹⁰⁵ But even he admits that τὰ στοιχεῖα refers to the heavenly bodies and that

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 165-166.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹⁰⁵ Principalities and Powers, (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1956) 51, 86.

under the influence of their regular motions the whole of human life was controlled by bonds of inexorable necessity. . . With the advent of astrology the anthropomorphic gods had begun to give place to the 'army of unalterable law.' The iron rule of an impersonal fate robbed life both of meaning and of hope, and no small part of the appeal of Paul's preaching must have been that it offered release from servitude to the elemental spirits.¹⁰⁶

Even though Reicke identifies the στοιχεῖα with angels, he also notes that the talk of days and months in Galatians 4:10 in the context of slaves and sonship "makes us think of the astrological fatalism of antiquity."¹⁰⁷

The sense of the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου as stars began to develop in the second century C.E.¹⁰⁸ However, the term had referred to the basic four elements (air, water, earth, fire) of the universe for centuries.¹⁰⁹ Generally speaking, because the heavenly phenomena were composed of these elements, they could be included in a description of the elements of the universe (στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου):

all the elements of the universe will be bereft, when God who dwells in the sky rolls up the heaven as a scroll is rolled, and the whole variegated vault of heaven falls on the wondrous earth and ocean. . . raging fire will flow, and burn earth, burn sea, and melt the heavenly

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 50-51.

¹⁰⁷"The Law and this World According to Paul: Some Thoughts Concerning Gal 4:1-11," *IBL* 70 (1951) 264. He even notes Philo's depiction of Abraham emigrating from the star worship of the Chaldeans, n. 25. Reicke's assertion that the elements are the angels seems to fail especially when one considers that the stoicheia functioned to enslave those who once lived under them (4:3). While the angels are said to be part of the giving of the law (3:19) their function as those who once enslaved the Galatians is not in the text.

¹⁰⁸G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965; reprint, 1982), s.v. "στοιχεῖον" by G. Dellling, 684; See *Diog. L.* 6.102 where he speaks of "τὰ δώδεκα στοιχεῖα" referring to the zodiac.

¹⁰⁹G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965; reprint, 1982), s.v. "στοιχεῖον" by G. Dellling, 673; cf. *J.W.* 1.377; 4.47; *Ant.* 3.183.

vault and days and creation itself into one and separate them into clear air.¹¹⁰

Paul does seem to be referring basically to the Jewish observance of the Mosaic law and the Gentile observance of pagan idols and ritual in Galatians 4:1-10. These are the literal things by which the Galatians formerly were enslaved, but Paul links them to the stoicheia which have astrological and, in the Abraham traditions, idolatrous associations.

As has been noted above, the tradition of Abraham leaving behind the idolatry of Chaldea to follow the one God was widespread. Abraham was known to be a Chaldean, and Chaldeans were known for the practice of astrology. The practice of astrology was equated with idolatry in Middle Jewish literature. It also controlled the lives of those who held to it, enslaving them to the fatalistic workings of the stars and planets just as the lives of Jewish and Gentile believers were once enslaved to their former practices. Just as Abraham left behind the practice of astrology for faith in the one God, now that the believers in Galatia are in Christ, they are to leave behind their former practices. Interpreting the phrase to mean an observance of astrology makes sense of Paul's next concern, that they observe days, seasons, months, and years (4:10) because these segments of time are based upon the movement of the heavenly phenomena.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰*Sibylline Oracles* 3:80, c. 30 B.C.E. from J. J. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles: A New Translation and Introduction," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 2:373-472. Στοιχεῖα refers to "heavenly bodies" in *Test. Sol.* 8:2, dated from 1st-3rd century C.E. and reckoned to reflect 1st century Palestinian Judaism. D. C. Duling, "Testament of Solomon," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:940-43, 969, n. 8a.

¹¹¹See further 2 Pet 3:10 and W. Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning and Development of the Pauline Phrase 'hai archai kai hai exousiai'*, SNTSMS 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1981) 74-75. Although Carr argues that in Paul τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου does not refer to stars and planets, he points out that in 2 Pet 3:10 τὰ στοιχεῖα does probably refer to the sun and moon.

In the epistle, Paul has consistently argued against the Galatians being obedient to the law. The law is a curse (3:13), it produces transgressions and was mediated by angels rather than the one God (3:19). The law is unable to impart salvation (3:21), it functioned like a temporary *paidagōgos* (3:23) and it is a form of enslavement (4:3-5) to the *στοιχῆα τοῦ κόσμου*. Finally, Paul equates the law with idolatry (4:3, 8-10) which also was a form of enslavement under the *στοιχῆα τοῦ κόσμου*. Both Jews and Gentiles are now true sons of Abraham (3:29; 4:6-7) which means they are no longer slaves, but true sons and heirs. They are no longer to be under the control of the *στοιχῆα τοῦ κόσμου*, which formerly, for Gentiles, functioned as paganism, but now functions as law which is how it also functioned formerly for the Jews. In equating observance of law with idolatry, Paul makes the law the ultimate taboo for a child of Abraham. The outlined Jewish traditions about Abraham the anti-idolater and monotheist illuminate Galatians 4:1-11 because according to them, the true children of Abraham are to avoid idolatry. However, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul has used the Abraham traditions for his own ends. Now that these children of Abraham have a new identity "in Christ", the idolatry to be avoided is obedience to the law.

9.2.6 Galatians 4:14

In his description of his visit to Galatia, Paul says that they welcomed him "as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus" (4:14). This is the only place in his epistles where Paul compares himself to an angel. What is the significance of this use of *ἄγγελος*? As Longenecker points out, Paul uses *ἀπόστολος* "to mean "messenger," so that is probably not the meaning to be attributed to the

word here.¹¹² His meaning is a superhuman being.¹¹³ Paul is not saying that he believed himself to be either an angel or Jesus Christ, but he is praising the Galatians for their earlier response to Paul and his evangelistic ministry.¹¹⁴ That the Galatians are to be praised for welcoming Paul as if he were Jesus Christ is understandable. But why does his statement that he was welcomed as if he were an angel commend the Galatians?

We have already shown how Paul may well be aware of the traditions of Abraham in his implicit allusions to the traditions in the epistle. Another tradition of Abraham may illumine Galatians 4:14. It was shown in earlier chapters how Abraham was known for his hospitality. In fact, in both recensions of the *Testament of Abraham*, for the angel to do what God requires, to persuade Abraham to prepare to die, the angel must be able to count on the hospitality of Abraham to a stranger. In recension B, God's agent Michael, who introduced himself as a stranger, has heard of Abraham, how he "offered hospitality to angels" in his house (*T. Abr.* 1:10). Through the words of the angel Michael, the author of the *Testament of Abraham* is obviously referring to Genesis 18, where Abraham entertains three visiting strangers who were angels.¹¹⁵

¹¹²*Galatians* WBC 41 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 192.

¹¹³Cf. Gal 1:8; 3:19; 1 Cor 4:9; 13:1.

¹¹⁴R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC 41 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 192.

¹¹⁵Cf. the earlier discussion of Abraham's hospitality in the *Testament of Abraham*, 244-246.

The tradition was also found in Josephus' *Antiquities* and Philo, *De Abr.* 107.¹¹⁶ It may well be that Paul is implying again that the believers in Galatia are true sons of Abraham not only by their faith and their reception of the Spirit, but by the way they show hospitality to others, particularly Paul, as if they were angels.¹¹⁷

9.2.7 Galatians 4:21-5:1

Paul's final discourse on Abrahamic sonship is found in his allegory of Sarah and Hagar. Paul has just admitted his perplexity concerning the Galatians (4:20) and now he provides them with a pointed example upon which they must act. His strange and arbitrary exegesis through which he finally reaches the point he wants to make indicates that this is not Paul's choice of text. "Rather he felt it necessary to address it because it was being used by his opponents to their own advantage."¹¹⁸

Paul constructs the allegory around the literal sons of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael. It is interesting that he does not compare Abraham and Moses, which one might expect in a discussion of the superiority of the promise over law.¹¹⁹ Instead, Hagar now represents the law. By using only Abraham, Paul

¹¹⁶Cf. the earlier discussion of the tradition in Josephus, 168-169 and in Philo, 220-222. See also *Quaest. et Sol. Gen.* 4.8 where Philo comments on Abraham's hospitality in reference to *Gen.* 18:6-7; cf. *Heb* 13:2.

¹¹⁷On Abraham and hospitality in the early church see H. Chadwick, "Justification by Faith and Hospitality," *Studia Patristica* 4 (1961) 281-285.

¹¹⁸A. T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1981; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book Hse., 1991), 12; J. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians*. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 91; C. K. Barrett, "The Allegory of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in the Argument of Galatians," *Rechtfertigung: Festschrift für E. Käsemann zum 70 Geburtstag*, eds. J. Friedrich, W. Pöhlman, P. Stuhlmacher, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 10, 15.

¹¹⁹J. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians*. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 92.

is not only proving to the Galatians once again that they are true sons of Abraham through promise (4:23, 28) and of the true covenant of freedom (3:24-26), but he is concurrently proving to the opponents that they are not actually true sons. Anyone (even those at Jerusalem, 4:25b) who is in bondage to the law (4:24b) is actually enslaved and will not inherit with the true sons. The children of promise, who are born of Isaac (4:28), are members of the heavenly Jerusalem (4:26). Additionally, the children of promise are more numerous than those in bondage (4:27b).

Paul provides his conclusion to the allegory in 4:28-5:1. He identifies the Galatians as being like Isaac, the children of promise (4:28). At the present time, the persecution which they are experiencing is like that which Isaac experienced at the hand of Ishmael (Gen 21:9; Gal 4:29).¹²⁰ He further uses Genesis 21:10 as instruction for the present time: the Galatians who are being persecuted for not being obedient to the law are to "cast out" those who are persecuting them (4:30).¹²¹ They are children of the free woman; Christ has set them free from the law. They are commanded not to submit again to the law, the "yoke of slavery" (5:1; see also 4:3, 9).

Paul has reinterpreted the Abrahamic tradition for his own ends. Not only is Abraham not associated with the law, but to obey the law is not to be a true son of Abraham: it is to be enslaved. Paul reasserts a point he made earlier in the text. The true sons of Abraham are children of the promise (3:8,

¹²⁰Although the tradition of Ishmael "persecuting" Isaac is not actually found in the Hebrew Bible, it is found in the "Jewish haggadah, where Gen. 21:9 רָחַץ ("he jested, played, teased") was interpreted in a hostile way." Betz, Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 249-250.

¹²¹A. T. Lincoln, Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1981; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book Hse., 1991), 27-29.

16-18, 26-29; 4:26-28) which has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ (3:16, 29: 5:1). His allegory "mirrors Paul's tactic evidenced throughout this epistle, where he attempts to show that the Galatians' attraction to circumcision and the law will achieve the very opposite of their intentions."¹²²

To Paul, those who are "of the law" must have considered themselves to be the true sons of Abraham and were using this against the Galatian Gentile believers (4:29). Paul asserts, in contradiction to historical fact¹²³ and most likely to their angered surprise, that they are actually "enslaved" (4:25) sons of Ishmael who will not "inherit" (4:30) with the very believers they are persecuting. These opponents may even have been using the slogan "Jerusalem is our mother" to support their agenda.¹²⁴ If this is the case, Paul's reinterpretation is even more pointedly radical. The present Jerusalem is earthly in contrast to the Jerusalem which is "above" (4:26). The Jerusalem "above" is future in comparison to the Jerusalem which is said to be "present" (4:25).¹²⁵ It is the present, earthly Jerusalem which is actually "enslaved," and those who are her children are enslaved with her (4:26). The

¹²²J. Barclay, Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 91.

¹²³F. F. Bruce, "'Abraham Had Two Sons:' A Study in Pauline Hermeneutics," New Testament Studies, ed. H. Drumwright, (Waco: Markham, 1975), 84.

¹²⁴J. Barclay, Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 59; A. T. Lincoln, Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1981; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book Hse., 1991), 17; R. Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation," NTS 17 (1971) 200-201.

¹²⁵A. T. Lincoln, Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology, (Cambridge: Cambridge U., 1981; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book Hse., 1991), 21; J. C. de Young, Jerusalem in the New Testament, (Kampen, 1960), 118.

future, heavenly Jerusalem is above, and this heavenly Jerusalem is the mother of the children of promise (4:22, 26-28).

A similarity again exists between Paul's discussion in Galatians 4:21-5:1 and the tradition of Abraham discussed in earlier chapters. Those who are children of Abraham can expect future eschatological blessing in the heavenly Jerusalem just as those children of Abraham mentioned in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 31 can expect heavenly vindication.¹²⁶ But the difference between the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and Paul's rendition is that for the believer "in Christ," the "heavenly city represents an order which is now being realized and the benefits of which can now be experienced by the believer."¹²⁷ The eschatological blessings are already realized in the lives of the believers, the true children of Abraham, through the work of the Spirit--although the fullness of this eschatological blessing is yet to come.

¹²⁶See also the heavenly Jerusalem mentioned in Heb 12:22; Rev 3:12; 21:2, 9-10.

¹²⁷A. T. Lincoln, Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology. (Cambridge: Cambridge U., 1981; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book Hse., 1991), 22.

9.3 Conclusion: The Interpretation of Galatians in Light of Middle Jewish Traditions About Abraham

The previous discussions of the traditions of Abraham in middle Jewish literature informed the interpretation of Galatians. The popular tradition in which Abraham was obedient to the Mosaic law and its use by the opponents explained why Paul argued so forcefully that the law was a curse (3:10), did not bring righteousness (3:11), and did not rest on faith (3:12). The law was a temporary guardian (3:23-26) until the coming of faith. Paul showed how chronologically, the promise to Abraham came prior to the coming of the law: the law was *added* to the promise to Abraham 430 years *after* the promise was given (3:17, 19). Those who have the Spirit of God by virtue of their having been justified by faith possess membership "in Christ" and are now identified as the children of Abraham (3:6-9, 14, 22, 29).

The tradition of Abraham the first anti-idolater and monotheist further informed the interpretation of the text. The promise was superior to the law because the promise was given by the one God, while the law was given by more than one (3:18-20). Obedience to the law was consequently a denial of the oneness of God. Ultimately, obedience to this law was tantamount to idolatry (4:1-11). Through his allusion to the elements of the world which included the heavenly phenomena which describe the former lives of the Jews and Gentiles, Paul shows that once they were enslaved by their former beliefs in the same way that astrology enslaves. All those who were true children of Abraham should shun the law, just as Abraham was known to have shunned idolatry, particularly in the form of astrology.

The Galatians had welcomed Paul just as Abraham did, as an angel of God (4:14). And, in the context of the allegory of Sarah and Hagar, Paul again turns the traditions about Abraham on their head (4:21-5:1). Instead of the

law-abiding opponents being the children of Sarah, they become the children of Hagar. These enslaved children of Hagar are to be cast out (4:30). Those who are free of the law, who are the promised children of Sarah by virtue of their faith in Christ (3:26), are true children of Abraham (4:28).

What changes in behavior does Paul expect from the believers in Galatia? First, and most importantly, they are to give up obedience to the Mosaic law. The law which once identified the people of God, especially the practice of circumcision, is no longer valid. It served its purpose of protection and identification, but now it has become obsolete (3:24-26). Secondly, the believers in Galatia are to get rid of the opponents who have so confused them by preaching another gospel (4:30). Thirdly, the people of God are no longer to be identified by the Mosaic law, but by the Spirit and the fruits which come from this Spirit (5:22-23). They are the new creation of God and his people (6:15-16).

Paul has radically revised what it meant to be a descendant of Abraham. Rather than Abraham exemplifying the ideal Jew who believed in the one God and obeyed all aspects of the law which served to identify the Jews, the descendant of Abraham who is now "in Christ" is justified by his faith in Christ and identified by the Spirit and the fruits thereof. Obedience to the law is now actually a form of idolatry.¹²⁸ This new twist to the tradition of Abraham provides a depiction of who the ideal child of Abraham should be, and it includes the Gentiles by virtue of their faith in Christ alone.

¹²⁸See also N. L. Calvert, "Abraham and Idolatry: Paul's Comparison of Obedience to the Law to Idolatry in Galatians 4:1-10," *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, eds. J. Sanders and C. Evans, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, forthcoming).

Chapter Ten

The Interpretation of Paul's Letter to the Romans

10.1 Introduction

Paul wrote Romans during the Middle to late 50's C.E.¹ probably from Corinth.² He identifies himself in the greeting of the letter as an apostle (1:1) who is called to preach the gospel among the Gentiles (1:5, 13). The recipients of the epistle were a Christian community comprising both Jews and Gentiles, designated by Paul as "God's beloved in Rome" (1:7).³

The debate has long continued over Paul's purpose in writing Romans, especially in light of his own statements of purpose in chapters one and fifteen. The debate occurs between three primary camps: those who believe that Romans is written by Paul as a theological treatise based upon his past

¹R. E. Brown, J. P. Meier, "The Roman Church Near the End of the First Christian Generation," Antioch and Rome, (London: Chapman, 1983) 105; J. D. G. Dunn, Romans, WBC 38A/B, (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 1: xliii-xliv; C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975; reprint, 1985), 12; J. Finegan, Archaeology of the New Testament: Mediterranean World of the Early Christian Apostles, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981), 14.

²R. E. Brown, J. P. Meier, "The Roman Church Near the End of the First Christian Generation," Antioch and Rome, (London: Chapman, 1983), 105; J. D. G. Dunn, Romans, WBC 38A/B, (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 1: xlv; C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975; reprint, 1985), 1:12.

³While some manuscripts omit indications that the recipients are in Rome at 1:7 and 1:15, the most dependable manuscripts include this mention of the recipients as being in Rome. Further, see F. F. Bruce, "The Romans Debate--Continued," BIBL 64 (1982) 341-342; T. W. Manson, "St. Paul's Letter to the Romans--and Others," The Romans Debate, Karl P. Donfried, ed., (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse, 1977; rev. ed., 1991), 5-7; H. Gamble, The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans, SD 42, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 29-33.

work,⁴ those who believe that Paul is writing Romans primarily in preparation for his future travels⁵ and those who believe that Paul wrote Romans in order to address problems in Rome.⁶ However, these viewpoints need not be mutually exclusive.⁷ If one assigns an early date to Galatians, Paul is writing to the Romans already having developed his theology to some degree. Secondly, as he states (15:25-33), he does have in mind the collection which he will present to believers in Jerusalem. Thirdly, as will be developed below, Paul may be addressing specific problems which exist amidst the believing community in Rome. In order to understand the function of Abraham in Paul's epistle to the Romans, it seems best at this point to consider the historical and cultural background of the believing community in Rome.

⁴G. Bornkamm, "The Letter to the Romans as Paul's Last Will and Testament," The Romans Debate, Karl P. Donfried, ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse, 1977; rev. ed., 1991), 16-28; T. W. Manson, "St. Paul's Letter to the Romans--and Others," The Romans Debate, Karl P. Donfried, ed., (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse, 1977; rev. ed., 1991), 15; contra Manson, see M. J. Suggs, "The Word is Near You: Rom. X:6-10 within the Purposes of the Letter," Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox, W. F. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule and R. H. Niebuhr, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1967), 295.

⁵Jacob Jervell, "The Letter to Jerusalem," The Romans Debate, Karl P. Donfried, ed., (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse, 1977; rev. ed., 1991), 64.

⁶W. S. Campbell, "Why Did Paul Write Romans?" ExpT 85 (1974) 268; J. C. Beker, Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1940), 69-76. For a clear discussion of the issues involved, see E. P. Sanders, Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 31, 58 n. 70.

⁷F. F. Bruce, "The Romans Debate--Continued," BIRL 64 (1982) 334-359; see also J. C. Beker, "The Faithfulness of God and the Priority of Israel in Paul's Letter to the Romans," HTR 79 (1986) 12.

10.1.1 The Church in Rome: External Evidence

An understanding of the church in Rome begins with an understanding of the diaspora Jews who had settled in Rome.⁸ Recently, J. D. G. Dunn has argued that the Christian community in Rome "probably emerged first within the Jewish community there."⁹ It is reasonable to assume that it was a dispute about Christ in the synagogues in Rome which led to the expulsion of the Jews under Caesar Claudius in 49 C.E.¹⁰ It has often been conjectured that the Jews'"continual riots" which Suetonius reports were those based upon the *introduction* of Christian preaching.¹¹ However, according to

⁸W. Wiefel, "The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity," The Romans Debate, Karl P. Donfried, ed., (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse, 1977; rev. ed., 1991), 85-101. The first mention of the Jews in Rome (139 B.C.E.) is when the Jews were expelled by the praetor Cornelius Hispanus along with the Chaldei, the asiatic astrologers. This is an indication of those outside of Judaism making the connection between the Jews and the asiatic astrologers. See Wiefel, 102; M. Whittaker, Jews and Christians: Greco-Roman Views, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish & Christian World 200 BC to AD 200, P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1984), 85-86; R. E. Brown, J. P. Meier, "The Roman Church Near the End of the First Christian Generation," Antioch and Rome, (London: Chapman, 1983), 92.

⁹J. D. G. Dunn, Romans, WBC 38A/B, (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 1. xlvii, see also xlvii; F. F. Bruce, The Letter of Paul to the Romans, TNTC 6, (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2nd ed., 1985; reprint, 1987), 15-17; P. Lampe, Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2nd ed., 1989), 3, 108; J. Ziesler, Paul's Letter to the Romans, (London: SCM Press, Int., 1989), 6, 12; W. Wiefel, "The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity," The Romans Debate, Karl P. Donfried, ed., (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse, 1977; rev. ed., 1991), 105-108.

¹⁰The "Chrestus" mentioned in Suetonius' biography on Caesar Claudius may actually have been referring to "Christ": "Iudaeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantis Roma expulsi" which is translated as "Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome." The Deified Claudius 25.4; A. Momigliano, Claudius: The Emperor and his Achievement, (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1934, reprint 1961), 33; R. E. Brown, J. P. Meier, Antioch and Rome, (London: Chapman, 1983), 100-102; W. Wiefel, "The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity," The Romans Debate, Karl P. Donfried, ed., (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse, 1977; rev. ed., 1991), 110.

¹¹For example, E. M. Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 212.

Wedderburn, the preaching in Rome which engendered a riot on the part of the Jews contained a message that "seemed to undermine the distinctions between them and the surrounding pagan world in the name of this new Christ, and to subvert their national and communal identity . . ." ¹² If Wedderburn is correct, one wonders if any other information can assist us in establishing that Paul was writing to groups of Christians who had been divided by disagreement over aspects of Judaism from which Jews derived their national identity.

Many scholars cite the evidence of Ambrosiaster who lived in Rome and wrote in 375 C.E. In his commentary on Romans he states,¹³

It is established that there were Jews living in Rome in the time of the apostles and that those Jews who had believed [in Christ] passed on to the Romans the tradition that they ought to profess Christ but keep the law. . . One ought not to condemn the Romans, but to praise their faith; because without seeing any signs or miracles and without seeing any of the apostles, they nevertheless accepted faith in Christ, although according to Jewish rite.

Cranfield questions the historical validity of Ambrosiaster's statement in his commentary on Romans; his suspicions are based to a large degree upon the possible influence of Marcion's preconceptions upon Ambrosiaster.¹⁴ Marcion's prologue to the Romans states, "Romans are in the parts of Italy. These were reached beforehand by false Apostles, and under the name of

¹²A. J. M. Wedderburn, The Reasons for Romans. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 56.

¹³ET by K. P. Donfried, "A Short Note on Romans 16," The Romans Debate. Karl P. Donfried, ed., (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse, 1977; rev. ed., 1991), 47; Ambrosiaster's latin text is found in Commentaria in epistolam ad Romanos, CSEL 81.1, H. J. Vogels, ed., (1966).

¹⁴C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975; reprint, 1985), 1:20.

our Lord Jesus Christ had been brought in to the Law and the Prophets. These the Apostle recalls to the true Evangelical faith, writing to them from Corinth."¹⁵

However, other scholars point to the possible validity of Ambrosiaster's statement. After deliberation, Watson states, "it is. . . at least possible that Ambrosiaster gives us authentic information about the origins of Christianity."¹⁶ Knox regards Ambrosiaster's statement as "probable" and "roughly correct" because it contends that no apostle had been to Rome before Paul's visit and it asserts that Roman Christianity had an original Jewish cast.¹⁷ If the Jewish community at Rome was shaped by that at Jerusalem, as Brown, Meier, and others contend,¹⁸ then it is also possible that the "dominant Christianity at Rome had been shaped by the Jerusalem Christianity associated with James and Peter, and hence was a Christianity appreciative of Judaism and loyal to its customs."¹⁹

In previous chapters, I not only investigated the function of Abraham in Middle Jewish literature, but also used Abraham as a kind of "cipher" in order to understand who was the ideal Jew. It was shown that Abraham

¹⁵ET by Burkitt, from J. Knox, Marcion and the New Testament, (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1942), 171.

¹⁶F. Watson, Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1986) 94.

¹⁷John Knox, "Romans," The Interpreter's Bible, vol. 9 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), 362-363.

¹⁸R. E. Brown, J. P. Meier, Antioch and Rome, (London: Chapman, 1983), 95-97; H. J. Leon, The Jews of Ancient Rome, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Pub. Soc. of America, 1960), 240, cf. Acts 2:10; S. Safrai, "Relations Between the Diaspora and the Land of Israel," CRINT 1.1, Jewish People in the first Century, (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974), 184-215; E. Mary Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 129-130.

¹⁹R. E. Brown, J. P. Meier, Antioch and Rome, (London: Chapman, 1983), 110; R. Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation," NTS 17 (1971) 204-205.

was believed to have been not only the premier anti-idolater and first monotheist, but also that he was obedient to the law before it was given in written form.²⁰ He was portrayed not only as a purveyor of important aspects of hellenistic culture,²¹ but also as the figurehead for those members of the nation of Israel who were faithful to their God over against the surrounding nations.²² It is noteworthy that the literature which contains the most exclusive view of the Jews and the most disparaging view of the Gentiles is Palestinian.²³ If the Jews in Rome were influenced to a large degree by the Jews in Palestine it may be that they saw themselves not only as those who believed in the one true God, but also as those who, primarily because of the law of their God, were moral in contrast to the surrounding Gentile nations who were idolaters and therefore, immoral. Jewish Christians (and perhaps also former Gentile proselytes to Judaism who had converted to Christianity), then, would have a difficult time accepting as members of the people of God those Gentile believers in Christ who did not fully practice the law.

²⁰In *Jubilees*, Abraham obeys stipulations of the Mosaic law such as the Feast of Tabernacles (*Jub.* 16:20 - 31; cf. *Jub.* 22:1-2). In Philo's works, Abraham is portrayed as following the natural law. "For 'he [Abraham] journeyed just as the Lord spoke to him': the meaning of this is that as God speaks--and He speaks with consummate beauty and excellence--so the good man does everything, blamelessly keeping straight the path of life, so that the actions of the wise man are nothing else than the words (λόγος) of God. So in another place He says, 'Abraham did all My law'" (*Migr. Abr.* 129-130; cf. Gen 26:5); see further in chapters one and six, "Abraham in *Jubilees* " and "Abraham in the works of Philo." See also Sir 44:19-20; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 57.

²¹For example, see *Ant.* 1.166-168, *De Abr.* 107-114; see also chapters five and six, "Abraham in Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* " and "Abraham in the Works of Philo."

²²See 1*QapGen* 20:13-16 and the discussion in chapter two, "Abraham in the *Genesis Apocryphon*. "

²³For example, see *Jub.* 22; *Bib. Ant.* 6; *Apoc. Abr.* 31.

The expelled Jews did not make a substantial return to Rome until the reign of Nero (54-68 C.E.). W. Wiefel maintains that Claudius' decree in which the Jews no longer had the right to assemble occurred after their expulsion from Rome in 49 C.E. rather than in 41 C.E. as reported by Cassius Dio.²⁴ He bases his conclusion on Claudius' reported favorable attitude toward the Jews early during his reign (c. 41 C.E.)²⁵ and upon the fact that Cassius Dio does not report the expulsion of the Jews from Rome, but does include Claudius' decree that they could not assemble. He concludes that we "come to a more fruitful conclusion if we see the denial of free assembly as a first step in moderating the eviction edict."²⁶ Thus, synagogal assemblies were prohibited for those Jews who remained in or returned early to Rome, and "Christians could only assemble in Rome if they, as a group, had broken ties with the synagogue."²⁷ When the Jews finally returned to Rome under Nero, they were concerned to reestablish their disbanded synagogues, and those who were Jewish Christians who had been members of the synagogues found Christians who had developed a form of organization independent of the synagogal form.²⁸

²⁴Cassius Dio, *Hist.* 60.6.6; E. M. Smallwood, in contrast, finds Dio reliable and supports his date of 41 A.D., *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 214.

²⁵*Ant.* 19.278-291 and *J.W.* 2.214-217 report Claudius' friendly letter to the Alexandrian Jews and good relations with Agrippa I, to whom he gave the rule over all of Palestine. Wiefel also mentions Cassius Dio's *Hist.* 60.8 which also reports the meeting with Agrippa I.

²⁶W. Wiefel, "The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity," *The Romans Debate*, Karl P. Donfried, ed., (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse, 1977; rev. ed., 1991), 94.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*

But before jumping onto Wiefel's bandwagon, a few items must be considered. It is noteworthy that Dio's *Historia Romana* 60.6 actually states that since the Jews in Rome by that time (41 C.E.) again "had become so numerous that they could not all be expelled without causing a great commotion, Claudius instead deprived them of their right of assembly."²⁹ It seems better to assume that, instead of this report being Dio's version of what happened just after 49 C.E. in contrast to Suetonius' report of the expulsion of the Jews, Dio is explaining why Claudius does not repeat the earlier action of Tiberius (19 C.E.), when Tiberius did expel the Jews.³⁰

Secondly, we must consider Wiefel's contention that in 41 C.E., Claudius' relation with the Jews was too good (primarily in the person of Agrippa) for him to have curtailed their assembly. His curtailment of Jewish privilege was limited to those Jews in Rome. Thus, "there was no fundamental contradiction between Claudius' confirmation of the Jews' right of religious liberty in general and his almost simultaneous removal of one right from the community in one particular locality because its abuse had in some way constituted a threat to public security."³¹ In addition, Roman emperors are hardly known to have been consistent in their proclamations, and the primary concern of Rome was maintaining

²⁹Smallwood's translation, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 210.

³⁰F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1986), 92. For accounts of the expulsion of the Jews by Tiberius, see Cassius Dio *Hist.* 57.18.5; Josephus *Ant.* 18.81-84.

³¹E. M. Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 215; cf. E. M. Smallwood, "Some Notes on the Jews under Tiberius," *Latomus* 15 (1956) 314 - 329.

authority and public order.³² Thus, the evidence seems to show that the Jews were expelled in 49 C.E., but that the right of assembly was not taken away. Those Jews who remained could freely gather in their synagogues and, upon their return, the exiles would have been free to join or to reestablish communities in their synagogues.

Brown and Meier³³ and Smallwood³⁴ note that recorders of history contemporary with the expulsion in 49 C.E. are silent in regard to the expulsion of the Jews. Smallwood notes the silence of both Tacitus and Josephus. In regard to the silence of Tacitus, she states that it must have been a "comparatively small number of troublemakers" who were expelled, and in regard to Josephus that it was "mainly Christian missionaries and converts who were expelled. . . [Josephus] had little interest in the fortunes of a heretical sect."³⁵ Those who returned to Rome when Nero became emperor (c. 54 C.E.) may have been the same people who had been expelled several years earlier. Whether these Jews were actually Jews or Jews who had embraced Christianity (like Priscilla and Aquila)³⁶ remains uncertain.

³²John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, The New Testament in Its Social Environment, Library of Early Christianity, vol. 2, Wayne A. Meeks, gen. ed., (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 33; Jerry L. Daniel, "Anti-Semitism in the Hellenistic Roman Period," IBL 98/1 (1979) 48.

³³R. E. Brown, J. P. Meier, Antioch and Rome, (London: Chapman, 1983), 102.

³⁴E. M. Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 216.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶See Acts 18:2. This verse which states that Priscilla and Aquila are already in Corinth "because Claudius had commanded the Jews to leave Rome" corroborates the expulsion date of 49 C.E. Gallio is known to have become proconsul in May, 51 C.E. when Paul had been in Corinth for eighteen months (Acts 18:11-12). This indicates that Paul arrived in Corinth during his second missionary journey in late 49 or early 50 C.E.

In those early days Christianity will have been in Roman eyes, as it still was in Jewish, a heretical Jewish sect, and moreover a particularly dangerous one, since it not only caused dissension and unrest in the synagogues but also indulged in the undesirable activity of proselytism with much greater energy and enthusiasm than did traditional Judaism. On the latter count it incurred grave suspicion; on the former it came under the law.³⁷

However, from Romans 16 we will discover that the Roman Christians to whom Paul is writing are meeting in house churches. For example, Priscilla and Aquila have returned to Rome and are hosts to a house church (16:5). Wedderburn suggests, "if they [Priscilla and Aquila] were associated with Paul in his Corinthian ministry, then it is more likely that they at least were, like Paul, also representatives of a form of Christianity which held that non-Jews could become part of God's people without submitting to the Jewish Law."³⁸ Given the Judaistic beginnings of the Christian community in Rome and that to some degree the community might still be influenced by Jews and Jewish Christians from the synagogue, at least one of the issues to which Paul is presently responding in his letter to the Romans may indeed be whether the law was necessary for the members of the emerging people of God.

Excursus: Jewish Proselytes in Rome

If those to whom Paul is concerned to write have a large Gentile constituent (see further below), how do we reconcile this with the described Jewish beginnings of the church and its continuing Judaistic practices?³⁹ A

³⁷E. M. Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 212.

³⁸A. J. M. Wedderburn, The Reasons for Romans, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 56.

³⁹See Rom 14:1-15:6 and the discussion below.

part of the answer may be found in the success of Jewish proselytization in Rome before the advent of Christianity.

The Jews had a considerable presence in Rome before the first century C.E.⁴⁰ While Jewish proselytization may not have been as enthusiastic as that of later Christians, from literary evidence of the time, it seems that the Jewish community in Rome put concentrated efforts into proselytizing Gentiles. For example, Horace, who lived in Rome during the late first century B.C.E., derided the Jews "whose tenacious efforts to proselytize are difficult to avoid."⁴¹ The expulsion of the Jews from Rome under Tiberius in 19 C.E. was most likely because "the Jews were converting many of the native Romans to Judaism"⁴² and these converts were numerous enough "to be conspicuous."⁴³ Tacitus speaks from Rome of proselytes of the late first century C.E. with derision. They not only renounce their "ancestral traditions" but adopt circumcision and are taught "to despise the gods, to disown their country, and to regard their parents, children, and brothers of little account."⁴⁴ The successful proselytizing by the Jews, who were known

⁴⁰Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 66-67, "you know how large a group they [the Jews] are, how unanimously they stick together, how influential they are in politics." See also R. E. Brown and J. P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome*. (London: Chapman, 1983), 94.

⁴¹Hor., *Sat.* 1.14.129.

⁴²E. M. Smallwood, "Some Notes on the Jews under Tiberius," *Latomus* 15 (1956) 319. The first expulsion of the Jews from Rome in 139 B.C.E. also may have been as a result of Jewish proselytism, see Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976) 128-130; see Cassius Dio, *Hist.* lvii.18.5a; *Ant.* 18.81-85; Suetonius *Tib.* 36.

⁴³E. M. Smallwood, "Some Notes on the Jews under Tiberius," *Latomus* 15 (1956) 320.

⁴⁴Tac., *Hist.* 5.5.

by the Gentiles for their exclusivity and supposed hatred of humanity,⁴⁵ meant from the Roman viewpoint that their religion, country, and even families were threatened.⁴⁶

Many Gentiles in Rome were either sympathetic towards Judaism⁴⁷ or became full proselytes of Judaism. The boundary which the Jews set up between themselves--the purer, chosen nation⁴⁸--and the Gentiles "was always crossable and not always clearly marked. A Gentile might associate with Jews and observe Jewish practices, or might 'convert' to Judaism and become a proselyte."⁴⁹ The major reasons why Gentiles turned to Judaism were basically the same reasons that they also ridiculed the Jews: their belief in the one Creator God,⁵⁰ and their law which provided a code of moral

⁴⁵See Juv., *Sat.* 14.102-104; Tac., *Hist.* 5.5; Jerry L. Daniel, "Anti - Semitism in the Hellenistic - Roman Period," *IBL* 98/1 (1979) 61.

⁴⁶Jerry L. Daniel, "Anti - Semitism in the Hellenistic - Roman Period," *IBL* 98/1 (1979) 63; cf. J. Gager, *The Origins of Anti - Semitism*, (N.Y.; Oxford: Oxford U., 1983), 41.

⁴⁷Examples of those sympathetic to Judaism were Varro who applauded the Jews' imageless worship, saying, "the only ones who have discovered what God really is are those who have adopted the view that he is the soul which covers the world by a movement which accords with reason." August., *De Civ.* 4.31.2. See also Strabo, *Geography*, 16.2.37; J. Gager, *The Origins of Anti - Semitism*, (N.Y.; Oxford: Oxford U., 1983), 68-82; see also M. Stern, "The Jews in Greek and Latin Literature," *The Jewish People in the First Century*, CRINT 1.2, 1101-1159.

⁴⁸Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew," *HTR* 82.1 (1989) 13; Jerry L. Daniel, "Anti - Semitism in the Hellenistic - Roman Period," *IBL* 98/1 (1979) 59.

⁴⁹Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew" *HTR* 82.1 (1989) 13. For an outline of the several categories of Gentiles who associated with Jews, see 14-15; see further, L. H. Feldman, "Jewish 'Sympathizers' in Classical Literature and Inscriptions," *TAPA* 81 (1950) 200-208.

⁵⁰Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 205; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, eds., (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint ed., 1987), 3:154.

conduct.⁵¹ A further reason that the Gentiles turned to Judaism was the antiquity of their religion.⁵² Each Jewish community did not understand the requirements for becoming a full proselyte as being exactly the same.⁵³ Members of the Jewish community in Rome needed to maintain devotion to God, practice the Sabbath and festivals, adhere scrupulously to dietary laws and circumcision, and maintain devotion to the family and Jewish community.⁵⁴ These requirements were presumably also demanded of proselytes.⁵⁵

According to Smallwood, the number of proselytes--those who accepted circumcision, or in the case of women a ritual bath, or the full rigours of the law--were relatively few. Most Gentile proselytes were women.⁵⁶ The majority of Gentiles adhered to Judaism loosely, "clinging to the fringes by the adoption of monotheism, Sabbath-observance, dietary laws, and the

⁵¹Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 205; E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, eds., (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, rev. ed., 1973; reprint ed., 1987), 3:154; Jerry L. Daniel, "Anti - Semitism in the Hellenistic - Roman Period," IBL 98/1 (1979) 64.

⁵² John Gager, The Origins of Anti - Semitism, (N.Y.; Oxford: Oxford U., 1983), 66.

⁵³Ross S. Kraemer, "On the Meaning of the Term 'Jew' in Greco - Roman Inscriptions," HTR 82:1 (1989) 35; H. J. Leon, "Jews of Rome in the First Centuries," The Teacher's Yoke: Studies in Memory of Henry Trantham, E. J. Vardanam, J. L. Garrett, Jr., eds., (Waco, TX: Baylor U. Press, 1964), 161.

⁵⁴H. J. Leon, "Jews of Rome in the First Centuries," The Teacher's Yoke: Studies in Memory of Henry Trantham, E. J. Vardanam, J. L. Garrett, Jr., eds., (Waco, TX: Baylor U. Press, 1964), 161.

⁵⁵H. J. Leon, The Jews of Ancient Rome, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Pub. Soc. of America, 1960), 256.

⁵⁶E. M. Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, (Leiden: E.J., Brill, 1976), 541; H. J. Leon, The Jews of Ancient Rome, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Pub. Soc. of America, 1960), 253-256. One of the proselytes was renamed Sarah, according to an epitaph found on a sarcophagus in Rome (c. 2nd cent. C.E.) (Leon, 254). This would be especially appropriate in light of the tradition in which Abraham is considered to be the first proselyte.

major requirements of the moral code, but shrinking from the decisive commitment of stamping themselves as Jews."⁵⁷

Socially, the conversion of Gentiles to Judaism was a major step. Philo noted the social aspects of Gentiles who converted to Judaism when he said proselytes should be accorded every favor and consideration and equal rank with the native born because "they have left their country, their kinsfolk and their friends for the sake of virtue and religion. Let them not be denied another citizenship or other ties of family and friendship. . . "⁵⁸ Because Abraham was the first to leave his home and family in order to search for the true God, Abraham became the example for proselytes.⁵⁹ Although the separation of Gentiles from their backgrounds was due to circumcision, Sabbath observance, and food laws, it was ultimately due to monotheism.⁶⁰

Jewish monotheism might win the respect of the philosophically sophisticated, but proselytes who abandoned the worship of pagan gods would thereby be cut off from many civic and social activities. . . Even Jews who minimized their observance of strange customs would still be set apart socially if they refused to worship the pagan gods. . . Practical monotheism, with its social consequences, was a more significant dividing line between Jew and Gentile than an individual ritual such as circumcision. Conversion to Judaism involved joining a new community and being accepted as a member of a synagogue.

⁵⁷The Jews Under Roman Rule, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 206. See also John J. Collins, "A Symbol of Otherness," To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, and Others in Late Antiquity, J. Neusner, E. S. Frerichs, eds., (Chico, Calif: Scholars Press, 1985), 183-184; H. J. Leon, The Jews of Ancient Rome, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Pub. Soc. of America, 1960), 250.

⁵⁸*De Spec. Leg.* 1.52. Cf. John J. Collins, "A Symbol of Otherness," To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, and Others in Late Antiquity, J. Neusner, E. S. Frerichs, eds., (Chico, Calif: Scholars Press, 1985), 175.

⁵⁹*De Virt.* 214.

⁶⁰John J. Collins, "A Symbol of Otherness," To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, and Others in Late Antiquity, J. Neusner, E. S. Frerichs, eds., (Chico, Calif: Scholars Press, 1985), 175-176.

As is noted by both Leon and Collins,⁶¹ the affiliation with a synagogue is one of the most common items on Jewish epitaphs. Gentiles who left behind their family, nation, and friends joined with the Jewish people on the basis of belief in the one God and then of required observances. How the implications of this information on Gentile proselytes assist in an interpretation of Paul's letter to the Romans will be discussed in the sections below.

10.1.2 The Church in Rome: Internal Evidence

Romans 16

The internal evidence we have is that at the time of Paul's writing his letter to the Romans,⁶² the Roman believers to whom he perceived he was writing were meeting in a number of diverse, individual house churches,⁶³ the most notable of which in the eyes of Paul met in the home of Prisca and Aquila (16:5). Lampe contends that at least four other "pockets" of Roman Christians can be identified in Romans 16 which were all worshipping house-churches.⁶⁴ It is also notable that Paul calls "three Roman persons in Romans 16:3-6 his 'kins(wo)men: Andronicus, Junia, and Herodion"

⁶¹Ibid., 176 n. 47.

⁶²In accordance with most recent discussion and Gamble's work, I am assuming that Romans 1-16 is a literary unity. For an in-depth discussion, see H. Gamble, Jr., The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans, SD 42, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), esp. 127.

⁶³P. S. Minear, The Obedience of Faith: The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, SBT 2.19, (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1974), 7; Wayne A. Meeks, The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul, (New Haven: Yale U., 1983), 75; Peter Lampe, "The Roman Christians of Romans 16," The Romans Debate, Karl P. Donfried, ed., (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse, 1977; rev. ed., 1991), 229.

⁶⁴"The Roman Christians of Romans 16," The Romans Debate, Karl P. Donfried, ed., (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse, 1977; rev. ed., 1991), 229-230; see Rom 16:10, 11, 14, 15.

meaning that they are all fellow Jews.⁶⁵ Even if we assume that Prisca and Aquila (Acts 18:2), Mary, Rufus, and his mother are also Jews, the list is still "predominantly Gentile."⁶⁶ If we also take into consideration Paul's frequent mention of the Gentiles in Romans,⁶⁷ it is reasonable to conclude that a sizeable faction of believers whom Paul intends to address at Rome are Gentiles.⁶⁸

It may be that Paul actually knew nine of the persons he greets in chapter 16, as Watson contends.⁶⁹ He certainly knew Prisca and Aquila (Acts 18:2-3; Romans 16:3) who most probably agreed with and preached his law-free gospel. In this case, it does seem likely that at the time Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, "Gentile [law-free] Christianity at Rome is. . . Pauline Christianity."⁷⁰

Romans 14:1-15:6

The text itself provides us with additional clues concerning the problems in Rome. In chapters 14:1-15:6 Paul discusses two groups of people which he calls the "weak" in faith and the "strong" in faith. The "weak" are those who

⁶⁵Ibid., 224.

⁶⁶J. D. G. Dunn, Romans, WBC 38A/B, (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 2:896, 900.

⁶⁷Rom 1:5-6, 1-15; 11: 13, 17-18, 24, 28, 30-31; 15: 15-16, 18.

⁶⁸J. D. G. Dunn, Romans, WBC 38A/B, (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 1:lv; P. Lampe, "The Roman Christians of Romans 16," The Romans Debate, Karl P. Donfried, ed., (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse, 1977; rev. ed., 1991), 225.

⁶⁹Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1986), 99.

⁷⁰Ibid., 100.

eat only vegetables (14:2, 6, 21),⁷¹ observe holy days (14:5) and drink no wine (14:21). The "strong" in faith are those who do not have to observe these rules because "nothing is unclean in itself" (14:14). But the strong are not to "injure" their fellow Christians by what they eat or drink, since by doing so they are "no longer walking in love" (14:15). It seems that the "weak" in faith could be either ethnic, law-abiding Jewish Christians or Gentiles who had become Christians who had "accepted the yoke of the law,"⁷² or those Gentile Christians who had once been sympathetic with or were proselytes of Judaism but now were Christians. The "strong" in faith would be those who adhered to a law-free gospel, Gentiles and even Jews, perhaps after the example of Prisca and Aquila (see above; cf. 16:5)⁷³ and after the example of Paul who includes himself among the "strong" (15:1). According to Dunn, the "section evidences Paul's knowledge of circumstances in Rome itself, at least in broad terms, with tensions between those who saw themselves as part of an essentially Jewish movement and therefore obligated to observe the characteristic and distinctive Jewish customs, and those who shared Paul's understanding of a gospel which transcended Jewish particularity."⁷⁴

While Jews were known for their lifestyle which, besides circumcision, was distinctive in their diet and observance of holy days, they would eat meat as long as it had been slaughtered correctly. Similarly, wine was not

⁷¹In Rom 14:6, "μὴ ἐσθίω" refers to the discussion in context, the abstaining from meat, rather than fasting. Elsewhere, Paul uses a form of νηστεύω to refer to fasting, see 1 Cor 7:5; 2 Cor 6:5.

⁷²P. S. Minear, The Obedience of Faith: The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, SBT 2.19, (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1974), 9.

⁷³F. Watson, Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1986), 95.

⁷⁴J. D. G. Dunn, Romans, WBC 38A/B, (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 2:795.

forbidden for them. Why, then, are vegetarianism and avoidance of wine being practiced by the weak?

Wedderburn provides the examples of Daniel, who ate only vegetables and abstained from wine (Dan 1:12,16) and the Therapeutae, a group of pietistic Jews who lived near Alexandria who also seem to have avoided meat and wine.⁷⁵ Watson similarly provides examples of Jewish heroes who, while in a Gentile environment, and "cut off from their community in which ceremonially pure meat and wine might be obtained" abstained from the food and wine offered by their hosts or captors.⁷⁶ Lampe further cites an example from Josephus of Jewish priests who went on a trip to Rome in the time of Nero who ate only figs and nuts "um nicht mit Götzenopferfleisch in Berührung zu kommen."⁷⁷ Lampe includes both Jewish Christians and God-fearers within the realm of the "weak" who avoided wine for reasons similar to those for avoiding meat, "Nie konnte der »Schwache« sicher sein, nicht doch von einem Weinhändler zu kaufen, der aus seinen Amphoren auch greulichen Libationswein schöpfte."⁷⁸

⁷⁵Philo, *De Vita Cont.* 73-74; A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 33-34.

⁷⁶See Jdt 12:1-4; F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1986), 95.

⁷⁷"... so as not to come into contact with meat offered to idols." P. Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte*. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2nd ed., 1989), 57; Philo, *Vita* 13-14.

⁷⁸"The weak could never be sure whether or not he was buying from a wine-merchant, who also ladled abominable libation wine from his amphorae." P. Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte*. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2nd ed., 1989), 57.

One further aspect of 14:1-15:13 which points to the "weak" being Judaistic is Paul's mention that certain food is "κοινός" or "kultisch unrein"⁷⁹ (14:14). In Acts, this word refers to food which is "unclean" according to Jewish law (Acts 10:14, 28; 11:8).⁸⁰ All of the occurrences of κοινός in Acts are in the story of Peter who is given the vision of food which is considered by Jews to be unclean, however, God tells him that it is not unclean.

Judaistic Christians who observed the law in whole or in part may have held condemnatory attitudes towards the law-free Christians who did not believe it necessary to adhere to the law. In turn, the law-free Christians would probably resent the judgments by their Judaistic brothers and sisters, while even judging them for their maintenance of the Jewish law if they had been influenced by the law-free gospel of Paul. Perhaps this is why Paul repeats his command that the Judaistic and law-free Christians welcome one another (14:1; 15:7) and that they not "pass judgment on one another" (14:3-4, 10, 13).

The observance or non-observance of days (Rom 14:5-6) probably refers to the Jewish practice of observing the sabbath and feast days. As was stated above, the Jews were known for their sabbath practice. The sabbath was central to Jewish identity,⁸¹ it was believed to have been established when God created the world.⁸² "Acceptance of the sabbath was to be a mark of

⁷⁹"cultically impure." P. Lampe, Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2nd ed., 1989), 57.

⁸⁰See also Mark 7: 2, 5; 1 Macc 1:47; *Ant.* 3.181.

⁸¹*Jub.* 2:17-20; cf. Gal. 4:10.

⁸²Gen 2:2-3; Exod 20:8-11.

proselytes and their participation in the covenant."⁸³ The observance of feast days was also an important aspect of Judaism.⁸⁴ Concerning the observance of days in Romans 14:5-6, Lampe concludes, "Die »Tage« die die »Schwachen« einhalten, mögen Sabbat oder sonstige jüdische Fasten- und Feiertage sein: nähere Eingrenzung ist unmöglich."⁸⁵

In Romans 15:7-13 Paul still has in view the "weak" and the "strong" and describes them as Jew and Gentile respectively. While it may be that he primarily considers them according to the two categories Jew and Gentile, he also considers himself, a Jew, to be one of the "strong" (15:1). Therefore, at least some of those who are members of the "strong" are Jews; presumably some of those who are members of the "weak" are Gentiles. If Jewish proselytism was so successful in Rome, it is indeed feasible that some of those who are still obedient to aspects of Jewish law are believers who were once Gentile proselytes to Judaism. In this case, those who are "weak" and "Jews" are described as such because they maintain that the observance of law is still necessary for the people of God. If the synagogues in Rome had not had the right to assemble curtailed, and if a relatively small number of Jews and Jewish believers left Rome in 49 C.E., it may be that the synagogue community still maintained some hold on Jewish, former proselyte believers, and those Gentiles who formerly had only associated with Judaism through obedience to such stipulations as the sabbath observance. In contrast, those

⁸³J. D. G. Dunn, Romans, WBC 38A/B, (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 2.805; see Isa 56:6.

⁸⁴Sir 33:7-9.

⁸⁵"The days which the weak observe might be the Sabbath or some other Jewish fast days or holidays: a closer definition is not possible." P. Lampe, Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2nd ed., 1989), 57.

who are "strong" and "Gentiles" are those who do not hold that obedience to law is necessary for the emerging people of God.

This also explains how it is that in a letter which appears to address a majority of Gentiles believers, Paul spends so much time arguing against Judaism. Rather than argue that Paul's letter to the Romans is written primarily with its focus to move Gentile Christians to an attitude of consideration for their Jewish brothers, as does Elliott,⁸⁶ if we understand that the believing community in Rome still has links with the synagogue to some degree and that it is feasible that some of those Gentiles who are now believers were at one point associated with or fully converted to Judaism, it is perfectly understandable that although Paul's primary audience is composed of Gentiles, his argument is with Judaism. The Gentile believers in this group may have been from among the large group of Gentiles who had been sympathetic with synagogal Judaism without taking on the entire law. How Abraham traditions from Middle Judaism assist in an understanding of Paul's message to these two camps of believers will be developed below.

10.2 The Text of Paul's Letter to the Romans

10.2.1 Paul's Purposes for Writing to the Romans

Paul records his main purposes for writing to the Romans in chapters one and fifteen. These purposes will be considered here briefly because of their consequent effect on an understanding of the text of Romans. Paul's purposes in visiting Rome mentioned in chapter one are, first, that he wants at last to succeed in visiting the believers at Rome (1:10). He wants to see them so that he might impart to them "some spiritual gift" which will

⁸⁶Neil Elliott, The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism. JSNTSup 45 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990) 96, 290-292.

strengthen them, and that they might be mutually encouraged by each other's faith (1:11-12).

Paul's conviction that he is indeed to bring the gospel to the Gentiles is first mentioned in 1:5 where he states that through the "grace and apostleship" received through Jesus Christ, he and others⁸⁷ are to bring about "the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the Gentiles" (ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). Near the end of his thanksgiving section (1:8-15) Paul repeats concerns similar to those contained in his elaborated greeting (1:1-7). He desires to preach the gospel and win converts at Rome as well as among the Gentiles, his special concern (1:13).

In chapter fifteen we find that Paul "wants to establish a partnership with Greek Christians to begin to carry the gospel to barbarians--specifically he wants Roman moral and financial backing for his forthcoming mission to Spain (15:22-29)."⁸⁸ He also asks the Roman Christians to pray for him as he goes to Jerusalem, that he might be kept safe from unbelievers there and that his collection would be acceptable to those at Jerusalem. Paul is attempting to unify the Jewish and Gentile factions which presently exist in his area of missionary endeavor. His delivering a financial gift to the strongly Jewish Christians from the Gentile believers is symbolic of this desire. Those at Rome who were also Gentiles would certainly be sympathetic with Paul's desires to bring the factions together. Perhaps this is the reason that Paul can request that the Roman believers pray for him.⁸⁹

⁸⁷Verse 5 has "ἐλάβομεν."

⁸⁸L. Gaston, "For All the Believers: The Inclusion of Gentiles as the Ultimate Goal of Torah in Romans," Paul and Torah, (Vancouver, B.C.: U of B.C. Press, 1987), 116.

⁸⁹F. F. Bruce, "The Romans Debate--Continued," BIRL 64 (1982) 358; A. J. M. Wedderburn, "The Purpose and Occasion of Romans Again," The Romans Debate, Karl P.

10.2.2 The Broader Context: Romans 1:16-3:26

Abraham's function in Romans four is best understood in the context of the first three chapters. Paul's thesis statement for the gospel which he desires to preach in Rome is found in 1:16-17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto all who believe, Jew first and also Gentile. For the righteousness of God is revealed through faith unto faith, as it is written, 'the righteous will live by faith.'"

Paul uses the text of Habbakuk 2:4 to make the final point of his thesis statement, "ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται." The MT reads, "כְּאִמּוֹנָתוֹ יְהִי דִקְיָהוּ" while the LXX reads "ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως μου ζήσεται." Dunn states, "The MT clearly has in view the *ṣadiq*, the righteous man. At the time of Paul this would be understood to be the man who is a faithful member of the covenant, who fulfills the obligations laid down upon him by the law of the covenant as a loyal Jew; namely, faithful observance of and devotion to the law as the ideal of Jewish piety."⁹⁰ In contrast, the LXX version capitalizes on the faithfulness of God (ἐκ πίστεως μου).

In the next several verses (1:18-32) Paul describes the "vivid sins"⁹¹ of the Gentiles, the fundamental sin being idolatry which was the "defining Gentile sin and was closely linked in late Jewish writings with immorality."⁹²

Donfried, ed., (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse, 1977; rev. ed., 1991), 195-202; U. Wilckens, Der Brief an die Römer. EKK (Köln: Benziger Verlag; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 1:42.

⁹⁰J. D. G. Dunn, Romans. WBC 38A/B, (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 1:45.

⁹¹Jouette Bassler, Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom. (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), 121.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 122; cf. *Jubilees* 22:11-23.

According to Romans 1:18, it is against this ungodliness (ἀσέβεια) and wickedness (ἀδικία) being practiced that God reveals his wrath.

What is the reason for this wrath? It is because those who practice wickedness suppress the truth by their wickedness (1:18). Paul argues his case from the standpoint of God's revelation of himself through the natural elements. The knowledge of God is evident to them because God has made it evident to them (1:19). According to Bornkamm, in his description of what can be known about God in 1:19-20, Paul ". . . shows himself to be influenced in such a striking way by Stoic terminology and apologetic trains of thought, such as are characteristic of Hellenistic Judaism. . . ."93 That God is known from his works of creation is also found in hellenistic Jewish sources, such as the *Wisdom of Solomon*⁹⁴ and the *Letter of Aristeas*.⁹⁵

Philo includes similar concepts in his work;⁹⁶ what is noteworthy for our purposes is that it is Abraham that recognizes God from his creation. In *De Abrahamo*, Haran is symbolic for the senses which are of no use unless the invisible mind (νοῦς ἀόρατος; cf. Rom 1:20) is there to govern them. From this observation Abraham comes to apprehend what it is he wanted to know: that just as he has an invisible mind to rule his own senses, so the world is governed by an invisible king (ἀόρατος ὁ βασιλεύς). Philo continues by saying,

⁹³Günther Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, ET Paul L. Hammer, (London: SCM Press, 1969), 50, see also 32. See also Claus Bussman, *Themen der paulinischen Missionspredigt auf dem Hintergrund der Spätjüdisch - hellenistischen Missionsliteratur*, (Bern/Frankfurt: Lang, 1975), 111-113; Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.28; cf. *ND* 3.25.

⁹⁴For a table of parallels between Romans 1:1-31 and Wisdom see W. Sanday, A.C. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 51.

⁹⁵*Ep. Arist.* 132.

⁹⁶See further, H. Chadwick, "St. Paul and Philo of Alexandria," *BIRL* 48 (1966) 292-295, 299-300; W. L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1961).

"Anyone who reflects on these things . . . will know for certain that the world is not the primal God (ὁ πρῶτος θεός) but a work of the primal God (ἀλλ' ἔργον τοῦ πρώτου θεοῦ) and Father of all. . ." (*De Abr.* 74-75). The idolatrous Chaldeans whom Abraham left behind are said to have

glorified the visible (ὄρατός) existence, leaving out of consideration the invisible (ἀόρατος) and intelligible (νοητός). But while exploring numerical order as applied to the revolution of the sun, moon, and other planets and fixed stars, and the changes of the yearly seasons and the interdependence of phenomena in heaven and on earth, they concluded that the world itself was God, thus profanely likening the created (τὸ γεινόμενον) to the Creator (*De Abr.* 68-69).

In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Abraham similarly reasoned from the existence of fire, water, earth, and the heavenly phenomena that a God existed,⁹⁷ while in Josephus' *Antiquities* he was said to have reasoned to the existence of God from the irregular movements of the stars and planets.⁹⁸

As we have seen, Paul's reasoning is similar to the hellenistic Judaism of his day in that his letter contains the presupposition that God can be known from his creation. He asserts repeatedly that those he is accusing are idolaters who have not acknowledged this truth. He claims that instead of worshipping the immortal God, they worship images resembling mortal human beings, birds, four-footed animals or reptiles (1:23). They worship what has been created rather than the Creator (1:25); they do not see fit to acknowledge God (1:28). They suppress the truth about God which is manifest in creation by their worship of idols (1:18, 25).

In this passage, Paul refers explicitly to Gentile characteristics, but implicitly he refers to the Jews. Richard Hays points out that in Romans 1:23

⁹⁷*Apoc. Abr.* 7; see chapter eight, "Abraham in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*."

⁹⁸*Ant.* 1.155-157; see chapter five, "Abraham in Josephus' *Antiquities*."

(ἠλλάξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνης φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ . . . τετραπόδων) Paul "echoes" Psalm 106 (105): 19-20, "They made a calf in Horeb and worshipped a cast image. They exchanged the glory (ἠλλάξαντο τὴν δόξαν) of God for the image (ἐν ὁμοιώματι) of an ox that eats grass."⁹⁹ Both Jews as well as Gentiles "stand under God's just sentence of universal condemnation; there is no distinction. Because there is no distinction, the golden calf story becomes a parable of the human condition apart from the gospel, a condition of self-destructive idolatry."¹⁰⁰

It is combined Jewish and Gentile failure to recognize God which Paul is chastising: even though the Jew judges Gentile immorality, he is said to do the same things. It is upon both Gentile and Jew that God's wrath will fall (2:5, 9). God's judgment upon human beings is impartial, "Jew-Gentile distinctions do not count in the divine judgment."¹⁰¹

Paul continues his argument by showing that not only does humanity stand condemned before God based upon its refusal to acknowledge the true God, but it stands condemned based upon its lack of obedience to God's law. In 2:1-11, Paul makes it clear that the impartiality of God extends to the actions of those under judgment. Those who do good, that is those who follow the law, both Gentile and Jew, receive eternal life (2:7, 10, 13). Those who do evil, that is those who do not obey the law, both Jew and Gentile, will receive the wrath of God (2:8-9, 12).

⁹⁹Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul. (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1989), 93; See also M. D. Hooker, "A Further Note on Romans 1," NTS 13 (1966-67) 183 where she concludes that Romans 1 is influenced by Psalm 106 as well as by the account of Adam's fall.

¹⁰⁰Richard Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul, (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1989) 94; see also M. D. Hooker, "Adam in Romans 1," NTS 6 (1959-60) 299.

¹⁰¹Jouette Bassler, Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom. (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), 136.

Paul's repetition of the phrase Ἰουδαίου τε πρώτον καὶ Ἕλληνας at the end of verses 9 and 10 "underscores both the universality and equality of God's judgment. The denial that there is προσωποληψία before God reiterates the central concept of this section, namely that God is impartial and judges all persons without regard to such natural circumstances as national and ethnic origins."¹⁰² In this case, Paul's suggestion that both Jews and Gentiles are judged by the same standards of good or evil (2:9-10) sounds more like the revelation to Abraham in the *Testament of Abraham* where all souls are judged according to a common standard of morality.¹⁰³

But Paul's further description of the law in this section bears a striking resemblance to those concepts of the law as found in the works of Philo.¹⁰⁴ Philo contended that the Mosaic law was a codification of the natural law. This is because Philo "united the revealed [Mosaic] and natural law by stressing the implications that the One God is both the giver of the law and the Creator of nature."¹⁰⁵ Philo wrote that Abraham actually obeyed the Mosaic law by following natural law. Abraham "' . . . did the divine law and the divine commands' [Gen 26:5]. He did them, not taught by written words, but unwritten nature (φύσις) gave him the zeal to follow where wholesome and untainted impulse led him."¹⁰⁶ Abraham's example of obedience to the

¹⁰²A. J. Guerra, "Romans 3:29 - 30 and the Apologetic Tradition," (Ann Arbor: Univ. Microfilms, 1986), 64.

¹⁰³See *T. Abr.* 11-12 and chapter seven, "Abraham in the *Testament of Abraham*," above.

¹⁰⁴See chapter six, "Abraham in Philo."

¹⁰⁵A. J. Guerra, "Romans 3:29 - 30 and the Apologetic Tradition," (Ann Arbor: Univ. Microfilms, 1986), 65.

¹⁰⁶*De Abr.* 275.

natural law previous to the giving of the Mosaic law meant that he was "himself a law (νόμος αὐτός) and an unwritten statute."¹⁰⁷

Concerning the law which the Gentiles obey, Paul states, "When Gentiles who do not have the law do naturally what the law requires (φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν), these, though not having the law, are a law unto themselves (ἐαυτοὶς εἰσὶν νόμος)" (2:14). These Gentiles also "show that what the law requires is written on their hearts" (2:15). Paul is demonstrating that even Gentiles who do not have the written Mosaic law obey what the Mosaic law requires.¹⁰⁸ However, in contrast to Philo's apologetic on behalf of the Jewish law, Paul uses the argument of the Gentile obedience to law to prove that the "possession of the law provides no special privilege advantaging Jew over Gentile."¹⁰⁹

Paul discusses one of the central identifying symbols of the Jewish people, circumcision, in 2:25-29. Circumcision identified members of the Jewish community. Those who were not circumcised, according to the most conservative of traditions, were condemned.¹¹⁰ Josephus viewed circumcision as that which kept the descendants of Abraham separate from the other nations of the world.¹¹¹ Paul contends that circumcision is only of value to those who obey the law (2:25), so much so that disobedience to law

¹⁰⁷*De Abr.* 276.

¹⁰⁸Cf. *Jer* 31:33.

¹⁰⁹J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, WBC 38A/B, (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 1.101; See also the discussion of the natural law in Romans in A. F. Johnson, "Is There a Biblical Warrant for Natural-Law Theories?" *IETS* 25.2 (1982) 194-196.

¹¹⁰For example, see *Jub.* 15:25-34.

¹¹¹"... to the intent that his [Abraham's] posterity should be kept from mixing with others, God charged him to have them circumcised and to perform the rite on the eighth day after birth" (*Ant.* 1.192).

means that one may as well not be circumcised. The uncircumcised who obey the law should be regarded as circumcised (2:26). The underlying assumption for these statements is that, to Paul, circumcision is fundamentally an inward, spiritual matter. ". . . real circumcision is a matter of the heart" (2:29). In this way Paul again is in sympathy with hellenistic Judaism. Although Philo believed that literal circumcision was important, its ethical/spiritual dimensions were most important.¹¹² "Philo and Paul agree that the circumcision of the heart is basic. . ." ¹¹³

A surprising aspect of what Paul says in 2:27 is that the naturally uncircumcised (Gentiles) who keep the law (*νόμος*) will actually condemn the circumcised who have the written code (Mosaic law) but break the law (*νόμος*). Again, Paul may be implying an understanding of law which was similar to that held by Philo. Because both the natural law and the Mosaic law were created by the same Creator God, obedience to the natural law is tantamount to fulfilling the Mosaic law. Concerning the concept of natural law as found in Philo and Paul, Sandmel states,¹¹⁴

Paul provides more than one overtone of the notion that conformity with nature was a means of fulfilling a law antecedent to the written law. Gentiles, who do not have the Torah, do by nature what the Torah requires. There is an uncircumcision which by nature fulfills the Torah. . . the well-developed notion of nature which appears in Philo, and in his forebears among the Greek philosophers, appears in Paul, too, though in considerably less direct and less developed form.

¹¹²See *Quaest. et Sol. Gen.* 3.46, 49; *Quaest. et Sol. Ex.* 2.2; *Mig. Abr.* 92; A. J. Guerra, "Romans 3:29 - 30 and the Apologetic Tradition," (Ann Arbor: Univ. Microfilms, 1986), 70-71.

¹¹³P. Borgen, *Philo, John and Paul: New Perspectives on Judaism and Early Christianity*, BJS 131, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 221.

¹¹⁴Sandmel, Samuel, "Abraham in Normative and Hellenistic Jewish Traditions," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss, Yale U., 1949), 340-341.

By setting up the Gentile who fulfills the law as the standard of judgment against the circumcised who transgress the law,¹¹⁵ Paul has attempted to destroy the idea that circumcision and the codified law make the Jews superior to or more privileged than the Gentiles.

In 3:9-20, Paul reaches his conclusion: all human beings, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin and are deserving of the wrath of God. Paul shows how it is that God has continued to be righteous, but now apart from law (3:21-26; cf. 1:17). Paul has shown in 1:18-3:20 how it is that all human beings, both Jew and Gentile, are unrighteous and are recipients of the wrath of God. The righteousness of God is now to be found through faith in Jesus Christ for both Jew and Gentile (3:22; "there is no distinction").

10.2.3 Romans 3:27-4:25: The Figure of Abraham

10.2.3.1 Romans 3:27-31

Romans 3:27-31 functions both as a clarification of what Paul has already discussed and as an introduction to the example of faith provided by Abraham in chapter 4.¹¹⁶ Paul begins by asking, "What, then, becomes of boasting (καύχησις)?" This question reflects Paul's earlier assertions about the boasting of the Jew, who boasted in his relation to God (2:17) and in the law (2:23). Paul has already shown how both Jews and Gentiles are unrighteous before God (3:9-20). Thus, in what can the Jew boast? The boasting of the Jew is excluded by the law of faith (νόμου πίστεως; 3:27). Paul continues, "For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (3:28). In

¹¹⁵A. J. Guerra, "Romans 3:29 - 30 and the Apologetic Tradition," (Ann Arbor: Univ. Microfilms, 1986), 70-71.

¹¹⁶See N. A. Dahl, "The One God of Jews and Gentiles," Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse., 1977), 79; J. D. G. Dunn, Romans, WBC 38A/38B, (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 1:196; J. Ziesler, Paul's Letter to the Romans, (London: SCM Press, Int., 1989), 120.

keeping with his contention that all (both Jew and Gentile) are justified, Paul uses non-specific language ("person"; ἄνθρωπος) instead of a term which would signify Jew or Gentile. Both Jews and Gentiles are now justified by faith apart from works of the law.

Paul goes on to prove his contention. God is not the God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles (3:29). Paul uses the principle of Jewish monotheism against a common contention of Jewish particularism: "No Jew or Jewish Christian would deny that God, being one, is not only the God of the Jews but also the God of the Gentiles."¹¹⁷ Because (εἵπερ) God is one, he makes both Jews (περιτομή) and Gentiles (ἀκροβυστία) righteous based upon the same criteria--faith (3:30). Just as no distinction existed with respect to sin, no distinction exists with respect to salvation;¹¹⁸ both Jews and Gentiles are justified, and this justification is apart from the law. Sanders rightly states, "Here we see clearly the thrust that there must be one ground of salvation in order that Jews and Gentiles may equally have access to salvation. This is, in effect, an argument against the law as being in any way necessary for salvation."¹¹⁹

Guerra not only sees the concept of εἷς θεός as a unifying theme, but also as the theme to which Paul has been building from the beginning of the epistle. Guerra points out that 3:28, which gives the reason for boasting being excluded, "simply repeats the reason that boasting is excluded already

¹¹⁷N. A. Dahl, "The One God of Jews and Gentiles," Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. Hse., 1977), 189.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹E. P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977; reprint ed., 1983), 489.

provided in 3:21 and 3:26b."¹²⁰ In fact, one could say that Paul has already given enough evidence that both Jews and Gentiles are justified by faith without using the phrase εἰς θεός.

Stanley Stowers focused on the dialogical style of a Cynic-Stoic Diatribe in his dissertation on Romans. He identified the style in several passages in Romans, the most important for our purposes being Romans 3:27-4:25. Stowers argues that 3:27-4:2 is a dialogical exchange in the mode of indictment, with 4:3-25 as the exemplum which provides a positive model for life.¹²¹ In this case, the rhetorical questions which Paul includes may be those which he expects from the community of believers in Rome. In 3:31 Paul answers the question of his imaginary interlocutor, "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith?" (3:31a). His interpretation of justification by faith for both Jew and Gentile does not overthrow the law (3:31b). On the contrary, his contention is that "faith actually establishes the law" (3:31c).¹²² Through the example of Abraham, he will show how it is the case that his interpretation actually affirms the cornerstone of Judaism, the law.

10.2.3.2 Romans 4:1-12

Käsemann rightly contends that Romans 4 holds a "key place in the epistle" because in this chapter "the scriptural evidence is marshalled for the

¹²⁰A. J. Guerra, Romans 3:29 - 30 and the Apologetic Tradition. (Ann Arbor: Univ. Microfilms, 1986), 97.

¹²¹S. K. Stowers, The Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans, SBLDS 57, (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), 155; see also the work upon which Stowers' work is based, R. Bultmann, Der Stil der paulinischen Predigt und die kynisch-stoische Diatribe. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910; reprint, 1984).

¹²²On this assertion, see C. Thomas Rhyne, Faith Establishes the Law, SBLDS 55 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), 75; Richard Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul. (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1989), 53.

theme of the righteousness of faith which has been expounded in 3:21-31."¹²³ In 4:1 Paul states, "Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν εὐρηκέναι Ἀβραάμ τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν κατὰ σάρκα;"¹²⁴ My translation is, "What shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?" This is in contrast to the translation by Richard Hays who contends that the verse should be read, "What then shall we say? Have we found Abraham (to be) our forefather according to the flesh?"¹²⁵ While Hays' reading of the verse may make good sense of the verses which speak of Abraham as the father of both Jew and Gentile (4:9 - 12),¹²⁶ it does not make sense of the immediate context (4:2-8) in which Paul uses the example of Abraham to show how it is that faith, not law, is the basis for justification. It is upon this argument that Paul then shows how Abraham is the father of both Jew and Gentile. But first he needs to show that based upon the example of Abraham, faith takes priority over law in regard to the acquisition of righteousness.

In the context of Romans 4:1-8, what is it that Paul writes Abraham has found? Paul writes of Abraham being the forefather "κατὰ σάρκα"(4:1).

¹²³E. Käsemann, Perspectives on Paul, (London: SCM, 1971), 79.

¹²⁴My construction of the greek is in agreement with the text found in Nestle-Aland, 26th ed., which seems to be based upon the strongest evidence, Alexandrinus and the original scribe's work from Sinaiticus (in contrast to Vaticanus which omits εὐρηκέναι). Additionally, this construction includes προπάτορα rather than πατέρα (as is the case with some manuscripts) which is probably the best of the options based upon the principle of *lectio difficilior probabilior*.

¹²⁵Richard Hays, "'Have We Found Abraham to be Our Forefather According to the Flesh?' A Reconsideration of Rom. 4:1," NovT 27.1 (1985) 81; see also Neil Elliott, The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism, JSNTSup 45 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990) who adopts Hays' translation, 158-159.

¹²⁶Richard Hays, "'Have We Found Abraham to be Our Forefather According to the Flesh?' A Reconsideration of Rom. 4:1," NovT 27.1 (1985) 89 - 93.

Abraham was known to the Jewish people as their physical forefather.¹²⁷

Although Paul does use *σάρξ* at times to signify the outward observance of the law,¹²⁸ it seems most likely here that Paul is using *κατὰ σάρκα* in a way similar to his usage in Romans 1:3 and 9:3, with the sense of "natural physical generation"¹²⁹ which is also narrowly restrictive.

According to Stowers, in Romans 4:1-2a, Paul is framing a question and statement based upon what he believes his perceived interlocutor would ask and state.¹³⁰ By controlling the 'objections' that an imaginary interlocutor raises, the speaker can "manipulate the range of possibilities perceived by the audience, and thus set the bounds for the ensuing argument."¹³¹

Paul has already asked what Abraham, the forefather of the Jews, has found. In 4:2 Paul states, "εἰ γὰρ Ἀβραὰμ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη, ἔχει καύχημα. . . " which he then interrupts by stating, ". . . ἀλλ' οὐ πρὸς θεόν." The term for "boasting" has already been used to denote the boasting on the part of the Jews in reference to their perceived privileged status.¹³²

Paul goes on to prove why it is that Abraham cannot boast in his works before God by citing Genesis 15:6, "ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη

¹²⁷Josephus likewise speaks of Abraham as *προπάτωρ* in *J. W.* 5.380.

¹²⁸For example, Rom 2:28.

¹²⁹C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975; reprint, 1985), 1.227 n. 3.

¹³⁰S. K. Stowers, *The Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans*, SBLDS 57 (Chico: Scholar's Press, 1981), 164-165.

¹³¹Neil Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism*, JSNTSup 45 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 125.

¹³²See Romans 2:17, 23; 3:27.

αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην" (4:3). Abraham could not have been made righteous by works because he was made righteous by faith. "This sets Abraham up as a paradigmatic type which shows how God [makes human beings righteous]: it is by faith; it has always been by faith; that is how God works."¹³³

Paul then proceeds to describe what he means by λογίζομαι. Paul explains via example in 4:4-5 that to one who works, his wages are not reckoned (λογίζομαι) as a gift (κατὰ χάριν: literally, grace) but as his due. But, to the one who does not work but believes (πιστεύω) in him who justifies the ungodly his faith is reckoned (λογίζομαι) as righteousness (cf. 4:17, 25). Thus, in Paul's interpretation of Genesis 15:6, λογίζομαι carries the connotation of something granted which is not as a result of the grantee deserving it, but as a result of the grace of the grantor. As a result, according to Paul, Abraham was not reckoned as righteous by virtue of works, which would have led to boasting, but solely by virtue of his faith in God.

By using the terms "εὕρισκω" and "χάρις" in his argument in reference to Abraham, Paul may have intended to evoke a familiar phrase which occurred frequently in the LXX, "εὕρισκειν χάριν."¹³⁴ Abraham even speaks of himself as finding favor (εὔρον χάριν) in God's sight in Genesis 18:3 which may indeed provide the background of Paul's thesis that what Abraham actually found was grace.

As was seen in the Jewish literature analyzed in earlier chapters, Abraham functioned to portray the ideal Jew. It would not be surprising that

¹³³E. P. Sanders, Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 33.

¹³⁴For further uses of εὕρισκειν χάριν in Genesis (LXX), see 6:8; 30:27; 32:5; 33:8, 10, 15; 34:11; 39:4; 47:25, 29; 50:4.

Paul would select Abraham to make his point that the characteristics which Abraham manifested are to be followed by the people of God.

E. E. Ellis has stated that the early chapters of Romans are built upon "an elaborate midrashic pattern."¹³⁵ A distinction between "expositional" and "compositional" interpretation which is helpful here is made by D.

Dimant:¹³⁶

In compositional use biblical elements are interwoven into the work without external formal markers; in expositional use they are presented explicitly as such, with a clear external marker. These two distinctive functions have different aims. In the exposition the divine word is introduced in order to interpret it as such, while the composition is employed when the biblical element is subservient to the independent aim and structure of its new context.

Romans 4:3 clearly contains an external marker, "For what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God. . ." While Paul expounds Genesis 15:6 (cf. Rom. 4:3 - 8), albeit using fewer linguistic correspondences than that found in the more compact midrash,¹³⁷ he does so with the aim of a *compositional* use of Scripture. His intention is not to expound the text for the sake of the interpretation of the text alone, but so that he can use the text within the structure of his argument. Too narrow a concentration upon Romans 4 as midrash causes the focus to be primarily upon Paul's

¹³⁵Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity, WUNT 18 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1978; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1978), 217.

¹³⁶D. Dimant, "Use and Interpretation of Mikra in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," Mikra, vol. 2.1, CRINT, M. J. Mulder, ed., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 382.

¹³⁷E. E. Ellis, Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity, WUNT 18 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1978; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1978), 217.

interpretation of the Genesis 15:6 text and not upon his explanation of the example of Abraham.

If the community of believers in Rome retained some links with the synagogue, and if those in the synagogue were aware of the traditions of Abraham as exemplified in the Jewish literature studied in previous chapters, it may be that the tradition of Abraham as the law-abiding patriarch was being misused. Perhaps Gentile believers were being told that in order to be a descendant of Abraham one had to be obedient to the law. Paul is pointing out for his own purposes that it is not through the law that righteousness before God is gained, but according to grace. In response to the Abraham tradition in which he is obedient to the law, Paul points out that in the biblical account of Abraham he was not made righteous before God through obedience to the law but by virtue of his faith in God -- faith in the God who could reckon even the ungodly righteous. Romans 4:4 functions to show why it is that righteousness is by faith, not by law: because righteousness by faith is according to the grace of God, not according to what one is owed. Paul may not be arguing so much against those who see law as bringing righteousness as he is arguing against those who want to see Gentiles obey the law in order to be members of the community. Paul's own argument is fashioned in order to show how faith is the way that Abraham found righteousness before God and so in turn the way those in Rome find righteousness before God.

The most popular tradition about Abraham was that he had faith in the one God. This tradition of Abraham also fits what Paul is saying: he had faith in God (4:5). Paul, however, adds a qualifier in order that he may make his point that righteousness was reckoned on the basis of faith. Abraham had faith in the God who reckoned the ungodly as righteous (4:5). Capitalizing

upon Abraham's faith in this way will allow Paul later to develop the theme that it is not by works of the law but by faith that one is reckoned righteous. And in this way, both the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians to whom he is writing may consider themselves descendants of Abraham and as righteous by faith just as Abraham was righteous by faith. It is often pointed out that by means of a rabbinic device called *gezerah shawah*¹³⁸ in Romans 4:7-8, Paul links what he has already said concerning λογίζομαι to Psalm 31:1-2a, "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the one against whom the Lord will not reckon (λογίζομαι) sin" (4:7-8).

Neil Elliott contends that the thrust of Romans 1-4 is not so much to defend the theological legitimacy of the Law-free mission to the Gentiles as it is an argument for the righteousness and integrity of God.¹³⁹ He bases his conclusion in part upon what he calls a fictitious representation of the Jewish understanding of Abraham by such scholars such as Barrett,¹⁴⁰ Cranfield,¹⁴¹

¹³⁸W. D. Davies, The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine, (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 172; H. Boers, Theology Out of the Ghetto: A New Testament Exegetical Study Concerning Religious Exclusiveness, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 88; J. D. G. Dunn, Romans, WBC 38A/B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 1:207.

¹³⁹Neil Elliott, The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism, JSNTSup 45 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 221-222.

¹⁴⁰C. K. Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, BNTC (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1957; reprint, 1984), 87-88; Neil Elliott, The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism, JSNTSup 45 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 217 n. 1.

¹⁴¹C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975; reprint, 1985), 1.227; Neil Elliott, The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism, JSNTSup 45 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 217 n. 1.

and Käsemann¹⁴² dependent primarily upon Strack-Billerbeck ¹⁴³ in which the depiction of Abraham is one in which Abraham is declared righteous exclusively upon the basis of his works and in which his faith is considered to be a merit ^{erious} work just as some other fulfillment of the law.¹⁴⁴ Elliott states,

In order to read an 'attack on Judaism' out of this midrashic argument, some interpreters have had first to construct a 'Jewish' appropriation of Abraham contrary to Paul's argument here. When Paul has been seen to oppose Jewish works-righteousness, this required assimilating Abraham into that supposed Jewish perspective.¹⁴⁵

According to the conclusions drawn in the preceding chapters concerning the traditions of Abraham found in Jewish literature, it would seem that Elliott is right in his observation about misconstrued evidence about Abraham drawn from primarily rabbinic literature. While the literature studied did suggest that Abraham was sometimes considered righteous because of his obedience, this obedience was of a general type, and implicitly included law as well as other commands of God.¹⁴⁶ Abraham was even considered righteous based upon a kind of universal morality in the

¹⁴²E. Käsemann, Commentary on Romans, ET Geoffrey Bromiley, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1973; London: SCM Press, 1980), 107. Neil Elliott, The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism, JSNTSup 45 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 217 n. 1.

¹⁴³H. L. Strack, P. Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch. (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Oskar Beck, 1926), 3.186, 201; Neil Elliott, The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism. JSNTSup 45 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 216-219.

¹⁴⁴H. L. Strack, P. Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch. (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Oskar Beck, 1926), 3.186.

¹⁴⁵Neil Elliott, The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism, JSNTSup 45 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 216.

¹⁴⁶For example, see *Jub.* 22:10 and chapter two, "Abraham in Jubilees."

Testament of Abraham.¹⁴⁷ Overall, the depiction of Abraham was not primarily of one who was made righteous by his obedience so much as it was a depiction of Abraham the first to believe in the one, true God from which his obedience to the law and other commands of God followed. As such, he functioned as the example of the ideal Jew.

Thus, Elliott is correct in his assertion that the tradition of Abraham being made righteous through his obedience to the law has been misconstrued to form an argument against which Paul then must argue. But Elliot's further contention that Paul is not arguing against Jewish principles in the light of his law-free gospel is found to be lacking. At the time Paul was writing, Abraham functioned as the ideal Jew to be emulated by the people of God. And, in his use of Abraham, Paul is responding in part to the characteristics of the ideal Jew which Abraham had been believed to have.

Paul's stress upon how one is reckoned righteous would then be his own. Paul is emphasizing that it is not by the Mosaic law that one is reckoned righteous, but by faith. Even Abraham who functioned to represent the ideal monotheistic and law-abiding Jew was not reckoned righteous through his obedience to the law according to Paul. As Paul points out, Abraham was reckoned righteous by virtue of his faith alone through the grace of God. To those Gentile Christians in Rome who perhaps still struggled with influence from the synagogues, these would be welcome words. It was because of that faith and the grace of God that both Gentiles and Jews were reckoned righteous.

¹⁴⁷See *T. Abr.* 1:1,2, 4-7; 17:7 and chapter seven, "Abraham in the *Testament of Abraham*."

Paul shows how Abraham is the father of both the Jews (περιτομή) and the Gentiles (ἀκροβυστία) in Romans 4:9-12. J. Christiaan Beker has stated, "Abraham is the figure who unifies the peoples of Jew and Gentile and whose seed is a plurality of peoples (cf. also Rom 9:4). . . "148 The figure of Abraham was connected with circumcision in the Jewish world because Abraham was the first to participate in the covenant of circumcision.¹⁴⁹ Referring back to the blessed (μακάριοι) whose sins are forgiven (4:7-8) taken from Psalm 32:1-2, Paul asks, is this blessedness (μακαρισμὸς) pronounced upon the circumcised (περιτομή) alone, or also upon the uncircumcised (ἀκροβυστία)? In order to provide an answer to his question for his perceived interlocutor, Paul paraphrases Genesis 15:6, "We say, faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness." Paul reminds them that Abraham's faith was what led to God's forgiveness because Abraham was reckoned righteous.

In Romans 4:10 - 12 Paul provides further rhetorical questions which he will answer to the advantage of his argument. How was he [Abraham] reckoned [as righteous] (4:10a)? Was it while he was circumcised or while he was uncircumcised (4:10b)? Of course, because the story of the circumcision of Abraham and the male members of his household (Gen 17) follows the story of Abraham being reckoned as righteous (Gen 15), Paul can answer his own questions by stating that Abraham was not reckoned righteous while he was circumcised (περιτομή) but when he was uncircumcised (ἀκροβυστία) (4:10c). For Paul, circumcision was a seal of the righteousness Abraham had by faith while he was yet uncircumcised (4:11). Abraham's reception of circumcision

¹⁴⁸J. C. Beker, Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 96.

¹⁴⁹See Gen 17.

as a sign of the righteousness he had by faith before he was circumcised was for the purpose of making him the father of all those who believe who are not circumcised and who are reckoned righteous (4:11). But this means he is also the father of the circumcised who are not only circumcised, but also follow in the example of the faith of Abraham while he was still uncircumcised (4:12). Circumcision formerly marked one as a descendant of Abraham, but by virtue of their common faith, now both Gentiles and Jews have Abraham as their father.

In 4:10-12 Paul construes Abraham as worthy of emulation by both Gentiles and Jews (see especially 4:12, "τοῖς στοιχοῦσιν τοῖς ἔχνεσιν"). Because he was reckoned righteous by faith while he was uncircumcised he became an example for the Gentile Christian. Additionally, he is to be emulated by the Jewish Christian insofar as his faith is concerned. This interpretation of Abraham as one who is to be emulated by both Jew and Gentile is also found in the ancient world in the popular conception of Abraham as the first proselyte to Judaism.¹⁵⁰ Abraham was held up as the example for Gentile converts to Judaism because he left his idolatry behind for the worship of the one God and subsequent obedience to the law. Of course, for the Jew, he was the example of the ideal Jew who maintained faith in the one God and obedience to his commands. Whether or not Paul was aware of the tradition of Abraham the first proselyte to Judaism is not discernible from the text. But that Paul was not the first to use the traditions of Abraham in such a way that he could be emulated by both Gentile and Jew is apparent.

¹⁵⁰See further, A. T. Hanson, "Abraham the Justified Sinner," Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology. (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1974), 52-66.

Additionally, Paul was not the first to make a point about the faith of Abraham based upon Genesis 15:6. Philo reasoned that Abraham was the first proselyte based upon Genesis 15:6. In *On the Virtues*, Philo describes Abraham by saying, ". . . he is spoken of as the first person to believe in God (πιστεῦσαι λέγεται τῷ θεῷ πρῶτος), since he first grasped a firm and unswerving conception of the truth that there is one Cause above all (ὡς ἐν αἴτιον τὸ ἀνωτάτω) and that it provides for the world and all that there is therein."¹⁵¹ Abraham was the prototype of the proselyte. This is because he is said to be the first who believed in God (Gen. 15:6), meaning monotheistic belief, and the first to leave behind idolatry. Abraham became "the standard of nobility for all proselytes (ἔπηλυσ), who, abandoning the ignobility of strange laws and monstrous customs which assigned divine honours to wood and stones and soulless things in general, have come to settle in a better land, in a commonwealth full of true life and vitality, with truth as its director and president."¹⁵²

While both Paul and Philo used Genesis 15:6 to show how Abraham could be emulated by both Jews and Gentiles on the basis of his faith, each of them had a different focus in their interpretation of the text. For Philo, the focus was the monotheistic faith of Abraham which was exemplary. For Paul, the focus of Genesis 15:6 was that because of his faith Abraham was reckoned righteous by virtue of the grace of God. Additionally, although Philo is fond of using allegory in his interpretation of Old Testament texts, even in regard to circumcision, ¹⁵³ he does not ultimately believe that literal circumcision is

¹⁵¹*De Virt.* 216.

¹⁵²*De Virt.* 219.

¹⁵³*Quaest. et Sol. Gen.* 3.46.

unnecessary for proselytes.¹⁵⁴ Paul, on the other hand, "shows Abraham to be the father of the uncircumcised *in their uncircumcision* so long as they share his faith."¹⁵⁵ Nothing in the way of obedience to the Mosaic law is necessary.

10.2.3.3 Romans 4:13-25

In Romans 4:13-17, Paul speaks for the first time about the promise to Abraham and his seed. He states that the promise did not come through the law (διὰ νόμου). What Abraham was to inherit was the world (κόσμος). This understanding of the promise of land to Abraham which was then broadened to include the whole world was popular in Jewish writing near the time of Paul.¹⁵⁶ The necessity of the law for the Jewish people was a major part of their identity. Paul is refuting the idea that in order to be an heir of the promise of Abraham, one has to be Jewish in terms of obedience to the Mosaic law.

In Romans 4:9-12 it was shown how circumcision as the identifying mark of the descendants of Abraham was no longer necessary; Abraham is the father of all who believe whether or not they are circumcised. In 4:13 the promise of the inheritance of Abraham is not through the law but through the righteousness of faith (διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως). Cranfield denies that Paul had chronology in mind here: he contends that *δία* can be explained "as

¹⁵⁴*Migr. Abr.* 92; *Quaest. et Sol. Gen.* 3.52; see further, P. Borgen, Philo, John, and Paul: New Perspectives on Judaism and Early Christianity, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 238-239; John Nolland, "Uncircumcised Proselytes?" *JSJ* 12.2 (1981) 173-194.

¹⁵⁵J. D. G. Dunn, Romans, 38 A/B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 1:210.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 1:213. Cf. *Sir* 44:21; *Jub.* 17:3; 22:14; 32:19; Philo, *De Som.* 1.175.

signifying instrumentality or attendant circumstances."¹⁵⁷ He chooses "instrumentality" because he believes that the passage means that the "promise was not given on the condition of its being merited by fulfilment of the law but simply on the basis of the righteousness of faith."¹⁵⁸ However, if, as has been shown, the connection between Abraham and the Mosaic law was not so much that Abraham was righteous by virtue of his obedience to law, but that he functioned to portray the ideal Jew, Paul probably does not have in mind the idea that for Abraham, as for his descendants, righteousness could be acquired by the fulfilment of the law. In that case, it is likely that Paul has a chronological point in mind; the reason that the promise was not given to Abraham through the law was because the Mosaic law had not yet been given to the Jewish people. A further point in favor of a chronological perspective in 4:13 is that Paul has just argued that both the circumcised and the uncircumcised are righteous by employing chronology-- Abraham was made righteous by faith before he was circumcised.¹⁵⁹

Paul continues by explaining himself in 4:14, "For if those of the law (οἱ ἐκ νόμου) are the heirs, then faith is empty and the promise is nullified."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975; reprint, 1985), 1:238.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 1.238; cf. Hans Hübner, Law in Paul's Thought, ET James C. G. Greig, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984), 121-122.

¹⁵⁹See also C.F.D. Moule who lists *δια* plus the genitive in both 4:11 and 4:13 as referring to environment or attendant circumstances in contrast to instrumentality. He compares the example "τῶν πιστευόντων δι' ἀκροβυστίας" (those who in a state of uncircumcision are yet believers: 4:11) with "Οὐ γὰρ διὰ νόμου ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῷ Ἀβραάμ. . ." (Which would then be translated, the promise to Abraham was not amidst the circumstances of law: 4:13). An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1953; reprint, 1984), 57; cf. Gal 3:17.

¹⁶⁰C. K. Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, BNTC (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1957; reprint, 1984), 94-95.

Barrett interpreted οἱ ἐκ νόμου as referring to those who rely on the law; Cranfield sees οἱ ἐκ νόμου as those who "have a claim to the inheritance on the basis of their fulfilment of the law. . ."¹⁶¹ Dunn points out that the phrase should be taken to mean those who saw their participation in the inheritance promised to Abraham as identical with their membership in the covenant people. They are ἐκ νόμου "because their continuing existence as Jews arises out of the law; the law determines what is characteristic and distinctive in all they are and do as God's people."¹⁶² Specifically, what Paul seems to have in mind in 4:14 is "the" faith (ἡ πίστις): the faith of Abraham (cf. 4:13).¹⁶³ If Abraham's faith was not the basis for inheritance of the promise, then Abraham's faith was empty. If those who identify themselves by their obedience to the law are heirs, then faith is empty because it is not the basis for the inheritance. Additionally, the promise (ἡ ἐπαγγελία: Gen 15:5; Rom 4:17) to Abraham is void because it implied that Abraham would inherit the world (4:13). If the promise is by law which functioned not only to identify but also to separate the Jewish people from other nations, Abraham cannot inherit the world because the promise cannot include those outside of the law.

Next Paul adds to his argument against the promise to Abraham being according to the law the claim that the law brings wrath and where there is no law there is no transgression (4:15). Most Jews would have seen the function of the law positively as that which both identified them and separated them

¹⁶¹C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975; reprint, 1985), 1:240.

¹⁶²J. D. G. Dunn, Romans, 38 A/B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988) 1:213-214.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*, 1:214.

from other nations. Here Paul points out a negative function of the law: it revealed the sin of humanity to which God's response was wrath.¹⁶⁴

The consequence of what Paul has just stated is that the promise, which is the implied subject in 4:16, is through faith. Paul's "for this reason" (Διὰ τοῦτο) refers to what he has already said. His further reasons that the promise must be according to faith are that it is in order that the promise may be according to grace (κατὰ χάριν) so that the promise might be certain to all the descendants of Abraham (παντὶ τῷ σπέρματι), not only the one who is of the law (οὐ τῷ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου μόνον) but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham (ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ) who, Paul concludes, "is the father of us all" (ὅς ἐστιν πατὴρ πάντων ἡμῶν) (4:16d).

The phrase "οὐ τῷ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου μόνον" can mean "not only to the one of the law" meaning Jewish Christians who not only have the law but also the faith of Abraham¹⁶⁵ or "not to the one of the law alone" meaning the one who obeys the law but is not of the faith of Abraham, an ethnic Jew.¹⁶⁶ It seems best to understand "οὐ τῷ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου μόνον" in this context as referring to those who are Jewish Christians who understood the promise to Abraham as being to those who obeyed the law as the typical Jew would conclude. Although Paul states later in the letter than the traditional Jews eventually will be saved (11:25-26), in the context of chapter four Paul is

¹⁶⁴See also 2:12-3:20.

¹⁶⁵C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975; reprint, 1985), 1:242; E. Käsemann, Commentary on Romans, ET Geoffrey Bromiley, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1973; London: SCM Press, 1980), 121.

¹⁶⁶J. D. G. Dunn, Romans, WBC 38A/B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 1:216, Dunn adds in the next few sentences that Paul may also have Jewish Christians in mind. Cf. E. P. Sanders, Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 34.

talking about those whose faith is in Jesus Christ (3:21-26; 4:24-25). Thus, in 4:16 Paul makes a delineation between those Christians who maintain the law as an identity symbol of those who are the descendants of Abraham ("not only the one of the law") and those who do not ("but also the one who is of the faith of Abraham." cf. 4:9-12). Paul says that the promise was by faith for the very reason that it might be realized not only by those whose identity as God's people was defined by the law, but further by those who have the faith of Abraham. Paul's statement that Abraham is the father of all of them refers back to his statements in 4:9-12 where he showed that by virtue of his faith, Abraham was the father of both the circumcised (Jewish Christians who identified themselves by the law) and the uncircumcised (Gentile Christians who did not obey the law).

There is an apparent contradiction between what Paul says in Romans 4:14, that if those who are of the law are heirs (οἱ ἐκ νόμου κληρονόμοι), then faith is empty and the promise is nullified, and his statement in Romans 4:16, that all of Abraham's descendants are heirs of the promise, not only those of law (τῶ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου μόνον) but also those of faith. But this is not a real contradiction if we consider "those of the law" to be those Jewish Christians who identify themselves as the descendants of Abraham by virtue of their obedience to the law. In 4:14 Paul is stipulating the way one is an heir of the promise; if it is that those "of the law" are heirs, and presumably only "those of the law," then faith is not the only stipulation for inheritance and is thereby empty. In 4:16, Paul's stress is that not only those Jewish Christians who see themselves as "of the law" are heirs, but all who believe as Abraham did are heirs, including those who do not consider themselves to be "of the law," presumably Gentiles, who by virtue of having faith like Abraham are also his descendants and are heirs of the promise. Paul does not deny that

Jewish Christians who maintain obedience to the law are heirs of the promise of Abraham; what he does deny is that the law is the basis for that inheritance. If law is the basis, the Gentile Christians are not included in the inheritance and faith as the stipulation for that inheritance has been invalidated.

Paul further qualifies his statement about Abraham "who is the father of us all" with a citation of Genesis 17:5, "I have made you the father of *many* nations", before the God in whom he believed who gives life to the dead and calls into being the things that do not exist (4:17). His statements in this verse serve to introduce the remainder of the argument in Romans 4:18-25.

Abraham is said to believe "hoping against hope" (4:18) that God would make him the father of many nations (ἐθνῶν) because he had promised him, "so will your descendants be." Here Paul recalls the scenario in Genesis 15:5 as Abraham is told to look to the stars which God then compares with Abraham's coming offspring.¹⁶⁷ Of course, it is the faith that Abraham has in this promise that leads to his being reckoned righteous in Genesis 15:6.

The language Paul uses to describe the belief of Abraham in God's ability to create something from nothing (4:17) is used elsewhere in Jewish literature to describe God's act of creating the world. A traditional Jewish concept of the creation of the world was that God created it *ex nihilo*. For instance, 2 Baruch 21:4, "O hear me, you who created the earth. . . the one who in the beginning of the world called that which did not yet exist and they obeyed you."¹⁶⁸ Philo uses strikingly similar words to describe creation, "τὰ γὰρ μὴ ὄντα

¹⁶⁷A few manuscripts even add "as the stars of the heaven and the sand of the sea."

¹⁶⁸O. Hofius, "Eine Altjüdische Parallele zu Röm IV 17b," *NTS* 18 (1971-72) 93 n. 4; see also 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 48:8 and U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, EKK (Köln: Benziger Verlag; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 1:274.

ἐκάλεσεν εἰς τὸ εἶναι"¹⁶⁹ and puts similar words into the mouth of Abraham when he addresses God "ὁ τὰ μὴ ὄντα φέρων καὶ τὰ πάντα γεννῶν."¹⁷⁰ Similar language is used in 2 Macc 7:28, "ὅτι οὐκ ἐξ ὄντων ἐποίησεν αὐτὰ ὁ θεός." That God "called" Creation into being is mentioned in Romans 4:17 is also significant. In the Old Testament God it is by his word that God creates; God called creation into being.¹⁷¹

The foundational tenet of monotheism was that the one, true God was the Creator of the world. In line with the literature surveyed in the preceding chapters, Paul too portrays Abraham as having monotheistic faith. The faith of Abraham, then, in Romans is in contrast to those who did not believe in the God who manifested himself in Creation (1:20-25, 28). The tradition of Abraham as the one who did believe in the God who manifested himself in Creation may be behind Paul's use of Abraham. But Paul redefines Abraham's faith. And, in contrast to those whose idolatry God punishes by handing them over to immorality, it is Abraham's faith in God that leads God to reckon him as righteous.

The second way that Paul describes the God in whom Abraham had faith is that he is the God "who gives life to the dead" (ζωοποιούντος τοὺς νεκρούς; 4:17c; cf. 11:15). This second description of God is related to the first description of God as Creator because "God's power to give life to the dead was part of his work as creator and sustainer of the world and of his

¹⁶⁹*De Spec. Leg.* 4.187; see also U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, EKK (Köln: Benziger Verlag; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 1:274 n. 887.

¹⁷⁰*Quis her.* 36, "Who gives being to what does not exist and generates all things."

¹⁷¹Ps 33:6; 148:5; Gen 1.

people."¹⁷² This description of God was popular in Judaism, as is attested by its use in the Shemoneh Esreh.¹⁷³ Paul explains this statement about the God who gave life to the dead in Romans 4:18-22. Abraham believed in the promise of God that he would become the "father of many nations" (4:18; Gen 17:5) and his faith did not weaken¹⁷⁴ when he considered his own body which was already "as good as dead" or impotent¹⁷⁵ (νεκρόω: 4:19). He also did not doubt God's promise when he considered the barrenness, or literally "deadness" of Sarah's womb (νέκρωσιν τῆς μήτρας Σάρρας). Abraham did not waver in disbelief (ἀπιστία) in the promise of God that he would have descendants, but he was strengthened in his faith (τῇ πίστει) as he gave glory to God (4:20)¹⁷⁶ because he was fully convinced that God was able to do what was promised. Considering the apparent inability of Abraham to father children at this point and the inability of Sarah to bear children, Abraham's faith is interpreted by Paul as faith in the ability of God to give life to the dead and leads to his being "reckoned as righteous" (4:21).

He writes that Abraham's being reckoned as righteous was not written for the sake of Abraham alone, but for the sake of Paul and his reader^s as well (4:23-24). Righteousness will be reckoned to those who believe in him who raised Jesus Christ from the dead (νεκρός), who was handed over to death for

¹⁷²Halvor Moxnes, Theology in Conflict: Studies in Paul's Understanding of God in Romans, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 233.

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴In Rom 4:18, Abraham is said not to have hesitated in disbelief (ἀπιστία) which may be in deliberate contrast to those Jews mentioned in 3:3 who having been entrusted with the oracles of God did become faithless (ἀπιστία).

¹⁷⁵BAGD, 535.

¹⁷⁶In contrast to those idolators who did not glorify God see Rom 1:21.

their trespasses and raised for their justification (δικαίωσις: 4:25; cf. 10:9). Just as Abraham had faith in the promise of the God who could bring life to the "dead" bodies of himself and Sarah, believers have faith in the God who brought life to Jesus who was handed over to death. And, just as Abraham was reckoned righteous for his faith, so believers are reckoned righteous for their faith. Paul has shown how it is that the true God is the God of both Jews and Gentiles (3:29) and that both Jews and Gentiles are justified in the same way, through faith (3:30).

It has been shown in previous chapters and mentioned above, that there were strong traditions that Abraham was the first monotheist and that he was obedient to the law. Most simply, he functioned as the ideal Jew. In the Jewish literature, as in the Genesis narrative, Abraham was especially associated with circumcision. Paul has redefined what it is to have faith like that of Abraham: it is no longer solely faith in God, but faith in the God who raised Jesus from the dead (4:25; cf. 1:4). H. Boers states it well,¹⁷⁷

The decisive factor for the relation between Abraham's faith and the faith of the believer, according to this chapter, is the fact that it is the same God who is the object of the faith of Abraham (4:17, cf. 5) and of that of the Christian believer (verse 24). The connection between them is established explicitly in verse 23 with the statement that the justification that was announced to Abraham was not announced on his behalf only, "but also on our behalf," i.e. on behalf of Christian believers. God, thus, is not only the identical "object" of the faith of Abraham and of that of the Christian believer, but also the identical "subject" of the justification of Abraham and the Christian believer through faith (4:22 - 24; cf. 4:1-8; also 3:30).

While it is the same God in whom both Abraham and believers are said to have faith, the definition of that faith has been transformed.

¹⁷⁷H. Boers, Theology Out of the Ghetto: A New Testament Exegetical Study Concerning Religious Exclusiveness, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 84.

Moxnes rightly states, "the transfer from death to life which was implied in 4:17 is interpreted in the light of faith in Jesus who died and was raised by God. From now on God is known as the God of Jesus, the God who raised Jesus from the dead."¹⁷⁸

To be considered a descendant of Abraham, circumcision is no longer necessary: Abraham is the father of both the circumcised and the uncircumcised (4:9-10). In chapters 1-3 the law had been shown to be ineffectual insofar as the acquisition of righteousness is concerned on the part of both Jew and Gentile. It is only by having faith in Christ that righteousness can now be acquired by all.

10.2.4 Abraham in Romans 9--11.

The thesis statement of Romans 9 -- 11 is found in Romans 9:6a,¹⁷⁹ "It is not as though the word of God had failed." The problem in Rom 9-11 is "that God's word of call and promise to Abraham has evidently not been fulfilled (as Paul counts fulfillment) in his own people the Jews."¹⁸⁰

The foundational patriarch Paul uses in his discussion is Abraham (9:3-9; 11:1), who is one of the patriarchs to whom Paul has just alluded (πατήρ; 9:5). His first point in his argument that the word of God has not failed (9:6) is that "not all of Abraham's children are his descendants (σπέρμα)," after which he cites Genesis 21:12 as proof, "through Isaac descendants (σπέρμα) will be named for you" (9:7). Paul explains that this means that it is not the children of the

¹⁷⁸H. Moxnes, Theology in Conflict: Studies in Paul's Understanding of God in Romans, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 253.

¹⁷⁹J. D. G. Dunn, Romans, WBC 38A/B, (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 2:518.

¹⁸⁰Ibid. See also R. Scroggs, "Paul as Rhetorician: Two Homilies in Romans 1-11," Jews, Greeks, and Christians, Festschrift for W. D. Davies, ed. R. Hamerton-Kelly, et al., (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976) 270-298 who bases his division of the letter into homilies in part upon the Jewish theocentricity and discussion of Abraham in Rom 1-4 and 9-11.

flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as descendants (σπέρμα: 9:8).

By using portions of the Genesis narrative of Abraham, Paul is making the point that the Jewish Christians among them already know: ethnic descent from Abraham is not the same as being his true descendant. It was through Isaac that Abraham's true descendants were named (cf. 9:10, 13). Neither Ishmael¹⁸¹ nor the sons of Keturah (Gen 25:1-4) were counted as the true descendants of Abraham. According to Paul's proof, this is because Isaac was the descendant of the promise of God. In order to support his argument further, Paul includes the promise from the angel to Abraham, "About this time I will return and Sarah will have a son" (Rom 9:9: Gen 18:10). The mention of Sarah is important here; it is through her that the promise will see fulfillment. Neither Hagar nor Keturah are the women through whom the promise is actualized. Only Sarah, whose childbearing years were long over (Rom 4:19), was the woman through whom God's promise to Abraham of a descendant would be fulfilled.

We already know from Romans 4 that Abraham is the father of both Jews and Gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised (4:9-12), who believe like Abraham did. Paul also adapted the Genesis narrative in order to prove that the promise of inheritance was to those who had the faith of Abraham (4:16), who not only believed in the God who was the Creator, but also in the God who brought the dead to life (4:17), in the same way that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead for his readers' trespasses and in order that they could be made righteous (4:25). In this case, in 9:7-9 Paul again redefines what it is to

¹⁸¹James W. Aageson, "Scripture and Structure in the Development of the Argument in Romans 9-11," *CBQ* 48 (1986) 269.

be a descendant of Abraham. In chapter four, the descendants of Abraham were shown to include more than those Christians who maintained obedience to the law. Not only is it the case at present that Abraham's true descendants are those according to promise (9:7-9), but in Paul's argument this is the only way one was ever a true descendant of Abraham. God has always made choices between the one upon whom he would have mercy and the one whose heart he would harden, even within ethnic Israel (9:10-18).

In the argument which follows, Paul shows how it is that Gentiles are righteous by faith (9:30), while Jews who tried to attain righteousness by virtue of obedience to the law (9:31) did not succeed because their attempt was not based upon faith (9:32). Jewish identity was based upon their belief in God and their obedience to law -- Abraham personified this for them. In chapter four, it was shown how Paul capitalized on the faith of Abraham, and transformed Jewish monotheism. Here he returns to what identified the Jews, but with the intention to show that by virtue of obedience to the law alone they were not made righteous (cf. 2:12; 3:19-20). And now that Christ has come, the issue is not "solely a matter of 'belief' or 'unbelief' but of the way belief in Christ was alleged to have affected a person's stance before the law and before God (cf. Rom. 10.4)."¹⁸²

In Romans 10 Paul struggles over the fate of ethnic Israel who have not submitted to the righteousness of God in Christ (10:3-4). Christ has become the end of the law which once defined the people of God so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes, (10:4) both Jew and Gentile (10:12-13). Paul further argues that although Israel has heard (10:18) it is the Gentile

¹⁸²James W. Aageson, "Typology, Correspondence, and the Application of Scripture in Romans 9-11," *ISNTJ* 31 (1987) 62.

nations who have responded to the revelation from God (10:20). It is ethnic Israel whom Paul depicts with the words of Isaiah 65:1-2, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people" (10:21).

Paul's final use of Abraham in Romans occurs in 11:1 where he calls himself "an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham (ἐκ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ), a member of the tribe of Benjamin." In view of Paul's previous discussion about the definition of a true descendant of Abraham (4:13-18; 9:7-8), it is reasonable to assume that here Paul is referring to his ethnic Jewish heritage. Paul discusses a Jewish understanding of God's relationship with Israel and points out that "God has not rejected his people" (cf. 9:6). The stumbling of Israel brought salvation to the Gentiles (11:11-13) who have been grafted into the people of God because of their faith (11:20). A hardening has come upon part of Israel (11:25) and, in Paul's argument, in their present unbelief (11:29) the ethnic Jews have been broken off (11:20). However, the Jews can be grafted back into the olive tree (11:24) and their hardening is only in effect until the full number of the Gentiles has come in (11:26). This leads Paul to state that in respect to the gospel, ethnic Jews are enemies, but in reference to their eventual election they are beloved "for the sake of their fathers."¹⁸³ Just as the Gentiles were once disobedient to God but have now received his mercy because of Jewish disobedience, so now the ethnic Jews have been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to the Gentiles the Jews might receive mercy (11:30-31). God has not failed in reference to his word to the ethnic Jews (9:6). They will eventually be among the true descendants of Abraham once again, not by virtue of their identity in the law but by virtue of their faith in God and in Jesus Christ whom he raised from the dead (10:9).

¹⁸³Paul here evidences a belief similar to that of the tradition of Abraham in which Abraham's descendants receive special consideration (cf. *Bib. Ant.* 30:7; 35:3).

The righteousness of God, which has to do with the realization of God's faithfulness to Israel now brought to pass in Christ, has been maintained (cf. 1:17). The faith which is now necessary for membership in the people of God is faith like Abraham's (4:17-25), which has been transformed in this epistle from simple monotheism to faith in the God of Jesus Christ.

10.2.5 Abraham and Idolatry in Romans

As has been seen, it was the faith of Abraham which provided the example by which both Jews and Gentiles could be made righteous before God. In 4:17 Paul states that Abraham believed in the God "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist." While the statement functions to describe both the monotheistic faith of Abraham and his faith in God who gives life to the dead which in the case of the Romans refers to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in Romans 9-11 Paul provides a few other clues as to what it means to have faith like that of Abraham and what idolatry might be in the context of his epistle to the Romans.

In 11:15, the acceptance of the gospel on the part of the Jews is said to be "life from the dead." It is the ethnic Jews who though once dead may be brought to life through faith in Jesus Christ (cf. 11:23). Paul may be further developing his definition of Abraham's faith in the God who brings life to the dead and who creates out of nothing (4:17).¹⁸⁴ If this is so, do any statements exist which would lead us to the conclusion that the conversion of Gentiles in Christ is tantamount to *creatio ex nihilo* ?

¹⁸⁴ See also N. T. Wright, The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991; reprint, Fortress Press, 1992), 248; U. Wilckens, Der Brief an die Römer, EKK (Köln: Benziger Verlag; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 2:245

An indication that the conversion of Gentiles in Christ is linked to *creatio ex nihilo* is found in Romans 9:24-26. In his discussion of those who are called by God he includes the Gentiles (9:24; cf. 9:7-9 and above). He uses Hosea in his description of the call of the Gentiles, "I will call (καλέω) those who are not my people, my people, and her who was not my beloved, my beloved. And it will be in the place where it was said of them, 'You are not my people' there they will be called (καλέω) sons of the living God" (cf. καλέω in 9:7, above). This description of that which is "not" is similar to the creation motif found in Romans 4:17 where it was said that Abraham believed in the God who called into existence that which was not. God has spoken to the Gentiles through his creative call.¹⁸⁵ The creation of the community of believing Gentiles who are the children of the living God who were once not the people or the beloved of God is tantamount to the creation from nothing; membership in the children of God is no longer the sole privilege of the Jews.¹⁸⁶

What it means to have faith after the example of Abraham in 4:17 has been elaborated. In 3:29-30, Paul stated that God was the God of both Jews and Gentiles and because God is one, he justifies both Jew and Gentile in the same way. To believe otherwise, to believe in the national privileges of the Jews or to believe in the superiority of the Gentile as regards justification is to deny the oneness of God. Ultimately for Paul, to deny the oneness of God by denying that he justifies both Jews and Gentiles by faith is idolatry because one has to assume that another standard--and thus another God--exists for

¹⁸⁵U. Wilckens, Der Brief an die Römer, EKK (Köln: Benziger Verlag; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 2:206.

¹⁸⁶James W. Aageson, "Typology, Correspondence, and the Application of Scripture in Romans 9-11," JSNT 31 (1987) 63.

the justification for the Gentiles. Having faith after the example of Abraham, that is faith which is a transformation of monotheism, is to believe in the God who justifies both Jew and Gentile by faith -- faith in the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead for the sake of their transgressions (4:25).

10.3 Conclusion: The Interpretation of Romans in Light of Middle Jewish Traditions about Abraham

In Paul's treatment of Abraham in the letter to the Romans, some of the traditions already found in Middle Jewish literature resurface. In Middle Jewish literature Abraham was portrayed as an anti-idolator and monotheist who was also obedient to God, which often included obedience to the law. In Romans, in contrast to those idolatrous Gentiles (and Jews) who worship the creation rather than the Creator (1:23, 25) and are given over to immorality (1:24, 26), Abraham is shown to believe in God, and he is reckoned by God as righteous (4:3).

Paul seems also to play upon the tradition which connected Abraham with the Mosaic law, and thus provided an example of the ideal Jew. Paul has said that neither Gentile nor Jew is viewed as righteous before God by virtue of obedience to the law. Not even Abraham could be made righteous before God by the law (4:3). The exemplar of the one who is righteous by faith in Romans (cf. 1:16, 17) is Abraham (4:3). Although Abraham would certainly have met the requirements of a *ṣādiq*, in Paul's radical reshaping of the tradition of Abraham, Abraham is no longer the traditional *ṣādiq* who is righteous by means of his obedience to God which included observing the law, but he is righteous by faith alone (4:2-5).

As in the Genesis account and Middle Jewish literature, Abraham is connected with circumcision. As has been discussed in previous chapters, some Jews believed that circumcision was necessary, lest one face

annihilation (*Jubilees*), while in most cases it was depicted as that which identified and separated the Jew from Gentiles, as was the case in the works of Philo and Josephus. But in the case of Paul, the tradition about Abraham and the significance of circumcision is radically reshaped. Circumcision no longer identifies the children of Abraham--the people of God. It no longer functions to separate them from the Gentiles. In fact, both Gentiles (the uncircumcised) and Jews (the circumcised) have Abraham as their father if they follow the example of the faith of Abraham (4:9-12). Abraham functions as an example of faith just as he did in Middle Jewish literature. In Jewish literature, Abraham the proselyte was to be emulated by both Gentiles and Jews. But the faith of Abraham which is to be emulated will be redefined (4:17; 23-25)

Paul defines the faith of Abraham as faith in the God who gave life to the dead and who called into being the things that do not exist. The subject of monotheism was already introduced in Romans (3:29-30) where it was the basis for justification by faith for both Jew and Gentile. One of the foundational components of monotheism was that the true God was also the Creator. This aspect of monotheism is seen in Abraham's faith in the God who creates things from what does not exist--*creatio ex nihilo*.

The other aspect of Abraham's faith is in the God who gives life to the dead. But in his rendition of the Genesis narrative, Paul shows how Abraham believed in the God who gave life to the dead when he continued to believe that God would bring life in the form of offspring from the reproductively dead bodies of himself and Sarah. Paul then goes on to explain that the faith of Abraham in the God who gave life to the dead is the same faith in the God who resurrected Jesus Christ from the dead for the forgiveness of sin. Thus, Paul has reshaped the monotheistic belief of

Abraham into faith in the God of Christ and maintained the tradition that Abraham was the example of faith for the people of God.

In chapters nine through eleven, Paul shows how God has remained faithful to his chosen people. However, now the chosen people includes both Jews and Gentiles. While Paul seemed to be defending Gentiles from charges that they were not descendants of Abraham or members of the people of God in Romans 1-4, in Romans 9-11 he defends the Jews from charges of Gentile superiority. And, he further provides clues as to the kind of faith both Jews and Gentiles need to have in order for both groups to be members of the people of God. In 11:15, he says that the acceptance of the gospel on the part of the Jews is "life from the dead." As mentioned above, this was one part of the description of the faith of Abraham. It is also reasonable to assume that the conversion of the Gentiles can be considered a type of *creatio ex nihilo* because the people of God exist where previously they did not (cf. 9:4; 24-26).

Abraham's monotheistic faith proves crucial for the development of Paul's argument. In 3:29-30, Paul stated that God was the God of both Jews and Gentiles and because God is one, he justifies both Jew and Gentile in the same way. To believe otherwise, to believe in the national privileges of the Jews or to believe in the superiority of the Gentile as regards justification is to deny the oneness of God. Ultimately, to deny the oneness of God by denying that he justifies both Jews and Gentiles by faith is idolatry. Having faith after the example of Abraham, is for Paul, to believe in the one God who justifies both Jew and Gentile by faith by raising Jesus Christ from the dead for their transgressions (4:25).

What does this mean for an understanding of the community of believers in Rome? First, if one assumes that the community is still influenced by the synagogue to some degree, the new people of God would

also include those Gentiles who had formerly only loosely associated with the synagogue and obeyed aspects of the law such as the sabbath observance or food laws, but who did not take on the entire Mosaic law. Even Gentile believers who do not obey the law at all are shown to be valid members of the people of God because the idea that one must be obedient to the law in order to be a member of the people of God has been abolished. And those Jewish believers who no longer obey the Mosaic law, such as Paul, Prisca, and Aquila are not apostates but members of God's community by virtue of their faith.

Secondly, in reference to the "weak" (those who are law-observant) and the "strong" (those who are law-free) in Rome, Paul has shown that observance or non-observance of the law is not that upon which one's relationship to God depends. Both groups are free to continue their observance or non-observance of law. But to deny that those believers with whom they disagree over observance of law are the people of God is now tantamount to idolatry. Again, the functions of the Mosaic law as that which identified the Jewish people and separated them as a national entity have been abolished. What is striking is that by capitalizing upon the faith of Abraham and transforming the Jewish definition of monotheism, that Paul has attempted to show that the law is no longer a necessary part of the identity of the people of God. His claim is that one's relationship to God depends upon whether or not one has faith like that of the exemplar, Abraham, who was known to have forsaken idolatry for belief in the one Creator God, which has now been transformed to mean faith in the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead for the forgiveness of sin.

Abraham Traditions in Middle Jewish Literature:
Implications for the Interpretation of Galatians and Romans

Chapter Eleven

Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

In the first three sections of the thesis, it was shown how the figure of Abraham functioned in different types of Middle Jewish works. In light of Abraham traditions discerned from Middle Jewish texts, the function of Abraham in Galatians and Romans was analyzed. In both epistles it was shown that an analysis against the background of the Abraham traditions assisted in an interpretation of the text and in an understanding of the belief and behavior changes necessary on the part of the recipients.

11.2 Previous Treatments of Paul which Interact with Abraham Traditions:
A Comparison.

In contrast to the approach espoused above, F. E. Wieser looked at the function of Abraham in Galatians and Romans in connection with traditions of Abraham found in the gospels. He assumes that the gospel traditions reflect an oral transmission stage older than the material found in the letters of Paul.¹ As mentioned in the Introduction, Wieser included an appendix of Abraham in Jewish literature to which he refers from time to time.

¹Friedrich E. Wieser, Die Abrahamvorstellungen im Neuen Testament, Europäische Hochschulschriften 23/307, (Bern: Peter Lang, 1987), 36.

In his discussion of Genesis 15:6, Wieser rightly notes "'Abraham als Glaubender' ist ein grosses Thema der jüdischen Tradition."² He further states that in Jewish tradition, Abraham's belief was evidenced by his obedience to law. Thus, by stating that righteousness is now imputed by the grace of God alone, Paul is breaking with an ancient Jewish tradition of interpretation.³

Although the same Abraham traditions are cited in the chapters above, the results based upon the methodology employed in this thesis are different from Wieser's results. Wieser states that in Paul's argument in Galatians 3, he is utilizing Sirach 44:19-22.⁴ The important thrust of these verses from Sirach is that "Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations. . . He kept the law of the Most High, and entered into a covenant with him; he certified the covenant in his flesh, and when he was tested he proved faithful" (Sir 44: 19-20). Wieser states that Paul's definition of the faith of Abraham was revolutionary in light of the Sirach citation, because previously Abraham's reception of the promise was based upon his following certain guidelines (the law).

Wieser then refers to Sir. 44:21, "Therefore the Lord assured him with an oath. . .that the nations would be blessed through his offspring; that he would make him as numerous as the dust of the earth, and exalt his offspring like the stars, and give them an inheritance from sea to sea. . . " The motive for the continued blessing upon Israel was based upon their ancestor, Abraham. He combines his interpretation with the Jewish

²"'Abraham as believer is a great topic of Jewish tradition." Ibid., 42.

³Ibid., 43.

⁴Ibid., 44.

understanding of Abrahamic descent found in Matt. 3:9 (par. Luke 3:8), where Jesus is portrayed as reprimanding the Pharisees and Sadducees for presuming that their descent from Abraham assures them of escape from the wrath of God which is to come. Jesus exclaims, "God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham." Thus, Wieser understands Paul as breaking out of the tradition of the exclusivity of Abrahamic descent because the Gentiles will become "kurzgeschlossen"⁵ to Abraham. However, this too is in accord with the citation from Sirach, because the blessing of God did not end with Israel (Sir 44:21, above), but was extended to Gentile nations.⁶

The inclusion of the Gentiles in the children of Abraham is obviously an important theme in Galatians 3 (e. g. 3:6-9). Paul seems to be aware of the themes of the exclusion and inclusion of Gentiles in reference to Abrahamic descent which Wieser extracts from Sirach and the gospels (e. g. Gal 3:14). But this thesis adds to Wieser's interpretation of the text because it assumes that Paul's opponents are using the tradition of Abraham's obedience to law in their arguments to convince the Gentiles that they must also be obedient to the law.⁷ Paul's stringent arguments against the law using the figure of Abraham become clearer. This is especially true in Gal. 3:17, where Paul asserts that the law actually came to Abraham 430 years after the promise. Thus, Abraham could not have been obedient to the Mosaic law. This new chronology establishes the priority of Paul's gospel of justification by faith over the opponents' insistence on obedience to the law.⁸

⁵"short-circuited." Ibid., 44.

⁶Ibid.

⁷See above, 301-304.

⁸See the full argument above, 308-310.

In his discussion of the "elements of the world" (στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου; Gal. 4:3, 9), Wieser points out that these "elements of the world" may have been combined with the preaching by opponent missionaries, especially in regard to circumcision as a "Schutzfunktion vor kosmischen Mächten" which would have been understood by the Gentiles as the same thing as the "elements of the world."⁹ While it is true that circumcision was said to provide such protection in *Jubilees*, as Wieser cites,¹⁰ it is more fruitful to consider the "elements of the world" in light of another Abraham tradition. One of the prevalent traditions about Abraham contemporary with Paul, was that Abraham was known for leaving astrology and its principles behind for faith in the one God. As was argued above, the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου did function to enslave those who turned to them. For the Jews, it meant returning to the rudimentary teachings of the Mosaic law; for the Gentiles, it meant returning to the principles of paganism.¹¹ Because the στοιχεῖα were said to signify heavenly bodies, it was also suggested in chapter nine that Paul is playing upon this tradition of Abraham. Those who are true children of Abraham will leave idolatry behind, especially idolatry in the form of astrology.¹² Therefore by not connecting Paul's use of "elements of the world" with a specific tradition of Abraham, Wieser misses out on Paul's scathing condemnation of his opponents in Galatia. Those who turn to

⁹"protective function before cosmic powers." Friedrich E. Wieser, Die Abrahamvorstellungen im Neuen Testament, Europäische Hochschulschriften 23/307, (Bern: Peter Lang, 1987) 41.

¹⁰*Jub.* 15:26, 28, 31-32, *Ibid.*

¹¹See above, 318-322.

¹²See above, 322-326.

obedience to the law are enslaved under the elements of the world just as idolators are enslaved under the same elements. To return to the law is to return to the very idolatry which Paul's opponents despise, and the idolatry which Abraham denounced.

When Wieser turns to Romans 4, he finds a tradition which is reminiscent of the tradition about Abraham in Hebrews 11:11-12, "By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old--and Sarah herself was barren--because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born." What Paul describes is Abraham's reaction to the promise of a son (Gen 15:4), which is depicted as faith in the God "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom 4:17b).¹³ Later in the chapter Paul makes it clear that the belief of Christians is to be like that of Abraham, but this time it is in the God "who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. . . ." (Rom 4:24).

Wieser's next step is to combine the theme of promise and fulfillment from Galatians 3 and the typology of the promised son from Galatians 4:21-31 with Romans 4. According to Wieser, Paul then provides a "modifizierten Abrahamtradition, die vom Werden des Verheissungssohnes als Glaubensakt Abrahams spricht."¹⁴ When these concepts are added to the description of Abraham's faith in Romans 4:17b (see above; cf. Heb. 11:19), it means that the Christian is like the promised son of Abraham who, through

¹³Friedrich E. Wieser, Die Abrahamvorstellungen im Neuen Testament. Europäische Hochschulschriften 23/307, (Bern: Peter Lang, 1987), 63.

¹⁴"modified Abraham tradition, which speaks of the emergence of the promised son as the faith-act of Abraham." Ibid., 66.

the word of God, was brought from that which was not created and that the Christian also realizes the power of God in the resurrection from the dead in that this resurrection was in Christ, and was not yet their own resurrection from the dead.¹⁵

However, as seen in chapter 10 of the thesis, one does not need to combine chapters 3 and 4 from Galatians with Romans 4 in order to understand the implications of the phrases, "God. . .who gives life to the dead" and "calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom 4:17b). If one sees Abraham against the popular tradition of Abraham the monotheist and the context of Romans 3:30, (" . . . since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through the same faith") and the concluding statement that Abraham believed in him who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 4:24, see above), then it is probable that Paul writes with an awareness of the tradition of Abraham as the man of faith in the one God. The clues for understanding the descriptive phrases in Romans 4:17 are found first in Romans 9:25-26, where the Gentiles who are now called as the elect of God are described as having formerly been "not my people." The creation of the community of believing Gentiles who are the children of the living God who were once not the people of God is tantamount to the creation from nothing. Secondly, in Romans 11:15, the acceptance of the gospel on the part of the Jews is said to bring "life from the dead." It is the ethnic Jews who, though they were once dead, will be brought to life through faith in Jesus Christ (cf. 11:23). God will justify both the Gentiles and the Jews on the same ground (Rom 3:30)--the ground of

¹⁵Ibid.

faith in the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead (Rom 4:24-25).¹⁶ To believe otherwise, to believe in the national privileges of the Jews or to believe in the superiority of the Gentiles as regards justification is to deny the oneness of God. To deny the oneness of God by denying that he justifies both Jews and Gentiles by faith is idolatry because one has to assume that another standard--and thus another god--exists for the justification of the Gentiles. Having faith after the example of Abraham, that is faith which is a transformation of monotheism, is to believe in the God who justifies both Jews and Gentiles in the same way.

One further observation needs to be made concerning Wieser's methodology. If Paul had Galatians 3 and 4 in mind when he wrote Romans 4, how could those in Rome have understood the implications of his message? By interpreting Romans 4 against the background of contemporary traditions of Abraham, one is enabled to understand the implications of Romans 4:17b from the remainder of the letter itself. In this way, Paul speaks to the law-free and Judaistic factions *which constitute the believing community in Rome*.¹⁷ Neither faction is to claim superiority over the other. All are members of the people of God by virtue of their faith in the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead for forgiveness of sin.

Ik Soo Park dealt with the interpretation of Paul against the background of the Abraham tradition in his Drew University Ph.D. dissertation entitled "Paul and the Abraham Tradition: A Challenge for the Church Today." Park used Diezfelbinger's methodology by which he looked at both Galatians

¹⁶See the full argument, 390-392, above.

¹⁷See the description of the community of believers in Rome, 336-354.

and Romans via the themes "promise, faith, and seed."¹⁸ Under the heading "Promise and Law", Park makes the following observation concerning Paul's argument against the law in Galatians 3, "Whereas in Gal. 3:10-14, the law and faith are on a collision course because they are in principle incompatible, in Gal. 3:15-29 the law and the promise are successive, independent and inversely related entities."¹⁹ Park further shows how Paul argues that the law is inferior to the promise. Two of the examples from the text which he uses are: 1. its temporary nature, 430 years after the promise (Gal 3:17-18); 2. its inferior origin because it was ordained through angels (Gal 3:19-20).²⁰ Concerning the "temporary nature" of the law, Park states that Paul's opponents were appealing to the promise in Genesis 12:2-3²¹ and to the requirements of circumcision in Gen 17:9-14. Paul then uses Gen 15:6 as the basis of his proof, because it preceded the requirement of circumcision found in Gen 17. In reference to the law being ordained through angels, Park explains that "mediation is inferior to dealing immediately. For Paul the law then is at a double remov[al] from God. . . Compared with the promise, which was given absolutely directly by God,

¹⁸See the comments on Park's work above, 22.

¹⁹ Ik Soo Park, "Paul and the Abraham Tradition: A Challenge for the Church Today," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss., Drew U., 1985) 144; see also J. C. Beker, Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 54.

²⁰Ibid., 145.

²¹"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."

(vv. 16, 18) the law is a second-hand thing which came through intermediaries."²²

Considering that elsewhere Park speaks of the Jewish traditions in which Abraham is said to be obedient to law²³ and a tenacious monotheist,²⁴ it is surprising that he does not pick up on these traditions of Abraham in his interpretation of the Galatians text. Paul's argument in Galatians 3 is more clearly understood against the background of the Abraham traditions that Abraham was a tenacious monotheist and was obedient to the Mosaic law. If one understands that in Galatians 3:10-14 and 3:15-29 Paul is responding to these traditions, then the discrepancy which Park notes is explained. Paul speaks of the law in 3:10-14 as a curse and as that which does not rest upon faith because he may be refuting the very passages that his opponents used in their support of the law which also included the example of Abraham's obedience to the law.²⁵ In 3:15-18 Paul argues tenaciously that the promise is superior to the law because, chronologically, the law was given to Abraham 430 years after the promise. Paul's argument is made more understandable if one assumes that his opponents were making use of the tradition that Abraham was obedient to the law. His chronology establishes the priority of his gospel of justification by faith over his opponents' insistence on obedience to the law.²⁶ The tradition of Abraham the monotheist and the

²²Ik Soo Park, "Paul and the Abraham Tradition: A Challenge for the Church Today," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss., Drew U., 1985), 148.

²³ Ibid., 77, 93, 102-103.

²⁴ Ibid., 77, 105, 107, 307.

²⁵See 301-307, above.

²⁶See 308-310, above.

general monotheistic tenacity of much of Judaism of the day clarifies Paul's argument that the law is inferior because of the involvement of a mediator (3:19-20). The importance of the presence of a mediator in the giving of the law is not so much that it is a step removed from those receiving the law, as Park argues, but that it is not "one." The God who gave the promise to Abraham was "one" (3:20). Thus, the law, given by more than one, is actually second-rate when compared to the promises given to Abraham by the "one" God. Therefore, not only does being a descendant of Abraham no longer mean that one has to follow Jewish law, but obedience to the law which is based upon a plurality is now a contradiction of the oneness of God.²⁷

Finally, when Abraham is depicted as obeying the law of Moses, it often functions to separate him (and, consequently his readers) from the Gentiles. In 3:23-29 Paul continues his argument against the opponents' placarding the example of Abraham and the law when he likens the law to a *paidagōgos* which brings out the nature of the law as that which is temporary, and functions to guard and protect them from their Gentile neighbors. The law as a protective device in a community where Jew and Gentile exist side by side is obsolete because they all have faith and belong to the community "in Christ" (3:26). Separation by means of the law is now unnecessary.²⁸

Similarly to Wieser,²⁹ Park never ties together the "elements of the world" (*στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου*; Gal 4:3, 9) with the tradition of Abraham the

²⁷See 311-314, above,

²⁸See 314-318, above.

²⁹See 399, above.

monotheist and anti-astrologer.³⁰ From Galatians 4:1-7, Park understands Paul to mean that the Gentile Christians formerly served, and may still serve in some way, those things which "were not gods" (4:8). Park goes so far as to suggest that "the Galatian Gentile converts were familiar with the cult of the Great Cybele of the Phrygians. . . the Gentile Christian congregation may yet cling partly to their old beliefs held prior to their faith in Christ."³¹

However, as argued in chapter 9 of this dissertation, Paul's reference to enslavement by the "elements of the world" signifies both Jews (4:3) and Gentiles (4:9).³² The Jews were enslaved to the "elements" by virtue of obedience to the law, which were the very elements which served to enslave the Gentile believers in Galatia. By virtue of their taking on the law, they were "turning back" to these idolatrous "elements" (4:9; cf. 5:2-6).³³ Paul equates the former idolatry of the Gentiles with obedience to the law. Consequently, Park misses Paul's chastisement of the opponents' obedience to the law which is now tantamount to idolatry--the very idolatry the opponents despise and from which Abraham was known to have fled.³⁴

In his discussion of Romans 3:27-4:25, Park picks up the tradition of Abraham as obedient to the Mosaic law, and that Paul is arguing against this

³⁰Ik Soo Park, "Paul and the Abraham Tradition: A Challenge for the Church Today," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss., Drew U., 1985) 181-183; see also a fuller explanation in 318-322, above.

³¹Ibid., 182, n. 2.

³²See 318-321, above.

³³See 321-322, above.

³⁴See 322-326, above.

popular conception.³⁵ Concerning Romans 3:30, Park states, "[Paul] presses the claim on the Jewish Christians that their monotheistic faith is a reason for unity between Jew and Gentile. Because 'God is one' (v. 30), there cannot be two tracks for justification."³⁶ What is interesting in Park's discussion is that while he speaks of the faith of Abraham, he never explicitly ties together the faith of Abraham in Romans 4 with the popular Jewish tradition which portrayed Abraham as the first monotheist. He even goes so far as to state that Paul wants to show the Jewish Christians in Rome that "God justifies the ungodly--Gentile and Jew--on the basis of faith through God's grace. . . Abraham. . . [is] the prototype of faith and initiator of justification by faith." ³⁷

What Park neglects to show is that by speaking of the faith of Abraham as faith in the God who "calls into existence the things that do not exist" (4:17b) he is speaking of a foundational tenet of Jewish monotheism, that God was the Creator of the world, and he created it out of nothing.³⁸ The second way that Paul describes the God in whom Abraham had faith is that he is the God "who gives life to the dead" (Rom 4:17c). This description is related to the first description of God as Creator because God's power to give life to the dead was part of his work as creator and sustainer of the world and of his people.³⁹ Abraham's faith in God's ability to bring life from the

³⁵Ik Soo Park, "Paul and the Abraham Tradition: A Challenge for the Church Today," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss., Drew U., 1985) 227, 251.

³⁶Ibid., 225.

³⁷Ibid., 230.

³⁸See 382-383, above.

³⁹See 383-384, above.

"dead" bodies of himself and Sarah (Rom 4:9) is reinterpreted to refer to God's bringing Jesus from the dead for forgiveness of sin (4:24-25).⁴⁰ While it is the same God in whom both Abraham and believers are said to have faith, the definition of that monotheistic faith has been transformed.

Having faith after the example of Abraham is now to believe in the God who justifies both Jew and Gentile by faith (Rom 3:30) and who raised Jesus Christ from the dead for the sake of their transgressions (Rom 4:24-25).

In his article in the Theologische Realenzyklopädie,⁴¹ Berger provides an overview of the traditions of Abraham in his treatment of Abraham as a paradigm in Early Judaism and the New Testament. He briefly notes many of the traditions mentioned in the early sections of this thesis: Abraham as one who has learned astronomy and mathematics; Abraham's discernment of God via the heavenly bodies; Abraham as the first proselyte; Abraham as faithful in the midst of trial; and Abraham as obedient to the Mosaic law.⁴² Concerning Abraham in Galatians and Romans, Berger notes that because Abraham and the law (written or unwritten) had been linked closely together in Jewish tradition, Paul separated Abraham from the law in order to show how Abraham was justified apart from the law.⁴³ Berger later states that in Romans 4, the basis of the similarity of the faith of Abraham and of both circumcised and uncircumcised believers in Rome results in Abraham

⁴⁰See 384-385, above.

⁴¹ Klaus Berger, "Abraham II: Im Frühjudentum und Neuen Testament," Theologische Realenzyklopädie, Band I, (Berlin, NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), 372 - 82.

⁴²Ibid., 372-376.

⁴³Ibid., 378; see also his "Abraham in den paulinischen Hauptbriefen," MTZ 17 (1966) 87-88.

becoming father of them all. Thus, the promise that Abraham would "inherit the world" (Rom 4:13; Gen 17:4; 22:17-18) has been fulfilled.⁴⁴

It is significant that this third author has tied the tradition of Abraham and the law together with his interpretation of Galatians and Romans, but has not interacted with the tradition of Abraham as the first monotheist and anti-idolator. The reason for the absence of the tradition of Abraham as monotheist in the interpretation of Paul's epistles appears to be based upon the methodology employed in the investigation of Abraham traditions in Middle Jewish literature. Wieser,⁴⁵ and Berger⁴⁶ included Rabbinic sources within their investigation of the Abraham traditions. As Arthur Green has noted, the tradition of Abraham and the law became more pronounced in the Rabbinic traditions.⁴⁷

Other figures are made into proto-Rabbis in the course of exegesis or for some specified homiletical reason; only of Abraham do the Rabbis state flatly that "he fulfilled the entire Torah." While the tradition reflected as early as Jubilees was surely formative here, this sort of absolute assertion is not made before Tannaitic times, when the Christian use of Abraham was already well known. The image of a torah-observant Abraham did not originate in response to Christianity--indeed, we have seen traces of it in pre-Christian sources--but the need arose for its bold assertion in the wake of Christian claims.

⁴⁴Klaus Berger, "Abraham II: Im Frühjudentum und Neuen Testament," Theologische Realenzyklopädie, Band I, (Berlin, NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), 378-379.

⁴⁵Friedrich E. Wieser, Die Abrahamvorstellungen im Neuen Testament, Europäische Hochschulschriften 23/307, (Bern: Peter Lang, 1987), 165-171.

⁴⁶Klaus Berger, "Abraham II: Im Frühjudentum und Neuen Testament," Theologische Realenzyklopädie, Band I, (Berlin, NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), 375-376.

⁴⁷Arthur Green, Devotion and Commandment: The Faith of Abraham in the Hasidic Imagination, (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1989), 30.

While Park did not include Rabbinic sources in his treatment of the Abraham traditions, his imposed outline throughout his dissertation of "promise, faith, and seed" from the letters of Paul did not allow him in turn to interpret Paul's letters through the lens of Middle Jewish traditions.⁴⁸

Therefore, the methodology of this thesis has proven valuable. By restricting our sources of information on the traditions of Abraham to those proven to be roughly contemporary with Paul it has been shown that the tradition of Abraham and the law was an important tradition, as were others, but that in Paul's world the idea of Abraham the first monotheist and anti-idolator was just as important, if not more important. Additionally, by allowing the traditions of Abraham found to be important in Jewish literature to provide a framework for the interpretation of Paul's epistles rather than the other way around, the interpretation of Paul's argumentation in Galatians and Romans has become clearer, especially in regard to the connection of Abraham with monotheism and anti-idolatry. This methodology has provided further insight into Paul's instructions to the believing communities in Galatia and Rome in regard to necessary changes in their behavior and faith--faith which is to be like that of their exemplar, Abraham.

⁴⁸Ik Soo Park, "Paul and the Abraham Tradition: A Challenge for the Church Today," (Unpub. Ph.D. diss., Drew U., 1985), see esp. 12-13.

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