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THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM AND MUSLIM TRADITION

Brian M. Hauglid

Latter-day Saint biblical scholars have made significant contributions to our understanding of the role of apocryphal and pseudepigraphic materials for Biblical studies. Some of these extra-canonical texts provide useful tools for exploring biblical history, language, and the development of the canonical texts. A few apocryphal texts also include elements that bear some resemblance to various LDS doctrines and practices.¹ Of course, most of the efforts employed by LDS scholars have focused on the Hebrew or Jewish pseudepigraphic materials of the Old Testament and the Christian apocryphal texts of the New Testament. Over the past few decades, however, Islamic texts related to the Bible, and indirectly related to the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price have received increasing attention from LDS scholars. Hugh Nibley is ostensibly the first LDS scholar to incorporate Islamic sources into his research and writings on the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price.² (In recent years LDS attention to Islamic materials has broadened even further. For example, the Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts has developed several projects under the general heading of the Middle Eastern Texts Initiative (METI). METI comprises the Islamic Translation Series and the Eastern Christian Texts series. Each of these series has published bilingual translations of significant Muslim or Christian-Arabic works.³) For the Book of Abraham in particular the recent publication of *Traditions about the*

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1. For a good LDS introduction to the subject see C. Wilfred Griggs, ed., *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1986).
 2. See for example, Nibley's *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988); *Abraham in Egypt*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2000).
 3. See for example from the Islamic Translation Series, al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1997); Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, trans. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1999); and from the Eastern Christian Texts Series, Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī, *The Reformation of Morals*, trans. Sidney H. Griffith (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2002).

Early Life of Abraham brings together many extrabiblical Muslim and Arabic sources (as well as Jewish and Christian sources) that clearly demonstrate a Book of Abraham connection to the ancient world.⁴ Yet with all this progress, the study of LDS scripture (and particularly the Book of Abraham) using Islamic sources is still a relatively new field of study. This is somewhat understandable as biblical scholars (LDS or not) tend to generally view Muslim sources or traditions as reworkings of Jewish and Christian apocryphal and pseudepigraphic texts that offer nothing new to the Judeo-Christian corpus. It is true that Islamic tradition displays an inherent dependence on the earlier Jewish and Christian materials. Yet it is also true that Muslim tradition developed much the same way as its earlier counterparts. Stephen Robinson outlined four purposes for which Jewish and Christian (and I believe Islamic) apocryphal materials were created: “to fill in the gaps in the scriptural account, to attack opposing theologies, to defend against the attack of others, and to bring about or to legitimize theological change.”⁵ These purposes also emerge later on as they relate specifically to the Muslim apocryphal corpus.

Therefore, in addition to using the apocryphal texts from Judaism and Christianity to study biblical history and languages, I suggest examining apocryphal texts from Islam as well as Judaism and Christianity. This could be particularly helpful in determining whether a text like the Book of Abraham contains elements of antiquity. I will focus here on how and why Muslim apocrypha developed and what Islamic tradition has to offer. To accomplish this I will use the story of the early life of Abraham to bring out a few general contributions of the Islamic apocryphal tradition.

To consider Muslim extra-Qurʾānic texts a viable literature it is important to first discuss Islamic stories within the general context of the Judeo-Christian apocryphal tradition. Various similarities and differences between these traditions can then be noted from both Muslim and non-Muslim perspectives. In terms of whether the Muslim apocryphal stories about Abraham influenced the Book of Abraham, it is well to briefly examine how much Joseph Smith may have known about Islam and how much Islamic material such as the Qurʾān or extra-Qurʾānic texts were available during his life. Looking at the account of Abraham from the perspective of Islam can reveal the fundamental assumptions that underlie the Muslim apocryphal materials. This will inevitably show a pronounced influence from the Jewish and Christian traditions, but it will also demonstrate the emergence of useful and unique apocryphal elements within the Islamic tradition.

Of course, when closely examining Muslim extra-Qurʾānic sources it will become readily apparent that specific characteristics will emerge that support the Islamic message (i.e., things related to Allāh [the one true God], Muḥammad [his anticipation], and the Qurʾān). However, several points of interest to Latter-day Saints will also surface from the Muslim perspective of Islamic accounts to show Islamic trends and patterns that emerge in the life of Abraham and lend support to the Book of Abraham.

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4. John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, comps. and eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), hereafter referred to as *Traditions*.
 5. Stephen E. Robinson, “Lying for God: The Uses of Apocrypha” in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*, 143.

Muslim Tradition as Apocryphal Material

Although Islamic traditions with biblical themes seem to function similarly to Jewish and Christian apocryphal materials (i.e., filling in the gaps of the Qurʾān, attacking opposing theologies, defending attacks from the outside, and legitimizing theological changes), some basic differences certainly exist in the Islamic presentation of the earlier Jewish and Christian apocryphal traditions. If the term *apocryphal* is defined as “hidden” or “secret,”⁶ it really does not apply well to Islamic tradition, at least from the Islamic point of view (and also from the historical viewpoint). It is, of course, difficult to determine to what degree the Muslim compilers of biblical accounts viewed the material as hidden or secret, but in general the adoption and integration of the materials in the eighth and ninth centuries was in a very different atmosphere from the climate of the Jewish or Christian compilers centuries earlier. The expansion of Islam in the two centuries after Muḥammad (seventh–eighth centuries) increased the contact between Muslims and their Jewish and Christian neighbors. In the most prolific period of creative activity (eighth–tenth centuries) Muslims produced an enormous amount of materials (including texts with biblical themes) that are still in use today.

Muslims, of course, do not view the Qurʾān as a book that contains Jewish and Christian elements; rather, to them the Qurʾān fulfills or restores truths lost from apostate Judaism and Christianity. If there are any similarities to (or differences from) the Bible it is because the Qurʾān is, for the Muslim, “the most correct (or corrective) book.” Muslims do not consider that the Qurʾān is in any way a part of the apocryphal tradition but as the word of God incarnate revealed directly to Muḥammad through Gabriel. Interestingly, however, the Qurʾān contains more of what we consider apocryphal themes than strictly biblical themes.

Several other traditions also developed during the two or three centuries after the death of Muḥammad and the compilation of the Qurʾān. Notably, these traditions fall under four main categories: *taʾrikh* (history), *ḥadīth* (sayings and acts of Muḥammad), *tafsīr* (Qurʾānic commentary), and *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (stories of the prophets). Because the Qurʾān is not, for the most part, narrative prose and does not address many issues that emerged later in the Muslim communities, other traditions developed to present the Islamic message in narrative prose or to provide commentary on the Qurʾānic passages.⁷ Again, from the Muslim point of view, these traditions represent a positive outgrowth (not hidden) of Islam and therefore should not be considered as developing in the same way as apocryphal materials containing hidden or secret teachings.⁸ Nevertheless, the *taʾrikh* and *qiṣaṣ* traditions are closer to the Midrashic, Aggadic, and apocryphal traditions in Judaism and Christianity in that they present stories of the prophets in an Islamicized narrative style, yet all four of the Islamic traditions contain some Jewish and Christian biblical themes.

From a non-Muslim perspective the Islamic traditions seem to be much more in the apocryphal tradition. When we compare the themes and stories of the Muslim narratives with the

6. See *ibid.*, 2, 3, 36.

7. This can also be seen in the development of important Muslim traditions such as the Sharia, or Islamic law, which affects Muslim daily life (one of the main sources of Islamic law is the *ḥadīth*). Theology, philosophy, and mysticism are other significant traditions that emerged relatively early in Muslim history. These traditions do not generally contain biblical themes and therefore do not concern us here.

8. However, there have been some materials from the mystic and early Shiʿite traditions that are viewed as containing hidden or secret teachings.

apocryphal traditions from Judaism and Christianity, it is apparent that there are clear parallels between these materials. Still, the earlier Jewish and Christian accounts become entirely Islamic in the Muslim narratives. That is to say, whether consciously or unconsciously, Muslims have reoriented and rewritten the same biblical stories to fit an Islamic context. One can say the same thing in regard to the Jewish and Christian apocryphal accounts of biblical materials. These also have been rewritten to fit into a later Jewish or Christian context. The common denominator between all three traditions concerns the question of revelation. As one scholar has noted, apocryphal writings emerged “in a time that no longer believed in continuing revelation by authors who nevertheless wished to effect religious changes.”⁹ For Muslims, the concept of a closed canon as found in Judaism and Christianity was not the impetus for creating tradition as much as the idea that Muḥammad was the final prophet. It is nevertheless noteworthy that the apocryphal materials in Judaism and Christianity also developed in an atmosphere in which revelation was considered to have ceased.

Islamic traditional accounts of biblical materials provide an opportunity for Latter-day Saints to examine the development of a unique apocryphal literature that can shed light on what may have historically occurred in the development of apocryphal literature in Judaism and Christianity. For instance, it has been stated by some Latter-day Saint General Authorities that Muḥammad received at least “a portion of God’s light” in order that a significant amount of God’s children be raised to a higher standard of obedience.¹⁰ After the death of the Prophet Muḥammad the revelations ceased, and Muslims were left on their own to interpret the Islamic message without revelatory guidance. Hence, there emerged a desire to fill in the gaps that were created as times and circumstances changed. This is similar to both Judaism and Christianity—both began in revelatory atmospheres but later lost their inspirational impetus and produced apocryphal materials. In sum, Muslim apocryphal tradition developed very much like its predecessors excepting that time and circumstances had changed.¹¹

Another important difference between the Muslim and Jewish or Christian apocryphal traditions is the inclusion of the Islamic *isnād* (or chain of transmitters). Before a tradition is cited in the Muslim account it is very often prefaced by a list (either long or short) of individuals who purportedly transmitted the attached report. For instance, one might find something like this: Abū Zayd upon the authority of Ibn Ishāq upon the authority of Ibn Abbās upon the authority of Abū Hurraira heard the Prophet say such and such. The *isnād* in early Islam became the science *par excellence* of determining the accuracy of statements made by the Prophet Muḥammad as well as determining the validity of biblical stories passed on through Islam. Great effort was expended by Muslim scholars to ascertain the reliability of the transmitters (i.e., their trustworthiness), which produced a complex criteria (*‘ilm al-rijāl, science of men*) and process of checking and recheck-

9. See Robinson’s citing of R. H. Charles in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*, 142.

10. Note the February 1978 announcement of the First Presidency entitled “God’s Love for All Mankind.” Here several other religious figures are mentioned such as Confucius, the Reformers, Plato, and Socrates. Joseph F. Smith had earlier said, “I believe that Mohammed was an inspired man and the Lord raised him up to do the work he did” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939], 396).

11. Robert J. Matthews compares the development of RLDS tradition in a similar way. See his “Whose Apocrypha? Viewing Ancient Apocrypha from the Vantage of Events in the Present Dispensation,” in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*, 8–12.

ing the *isnāds*. If a tradition was found to contain all trustworthy transmitters, then the tradition was considered strong; if not, then it could be viewed as neutral or weak. The *isnād* is particularly important to the traditional sayings and acts of Muḥammad (*ḥadīth*), but it is also a factor in the other traditions. This is somewhat similar to the rabbinical tradition of quoting important rabbis, but Muslims go much further in validating the tradition by determining the authenticity of the transmitter.¹²

In sum, Islamic apocryphal tradition may not purport to be hidden knowledge, like Jewish and Christian apocrypha, passed on from generation to generation, but it carefully and methodically utilizes a trustworthy chain of transmitters to bring forth traditions that fill in Qurʾānic gaps, defend Islam, and legitimize the Islamic message. In addition, some of these reports contain themes, related to earlier Jewish and Christian traditions, which add support to a wide and varied apocryphal tradition. A number of Abrahamic themes, such as Terah as an idolater and the threatening of Abraham's life, lend support to the Book of Abraham. Is it possible that Joseph Smith had access to the Qurʾān or later Muslim apocryphal traditions about Abraham? Consider the following.

Joseph Smith and Islam

It is difficult to determine exactly how much the Prophet Joseph Smith knew about Islam, but it was probably not very much. Any evidence in support of the Book of Abraham as an ancient document from Muslim sources was very likely not even available to the Prophet. This is true for two main reasons: the general anti-Islamic atmosphere of the nineteenth century and the paucity of English translations of important Muslim sources. In the nineteenth century generally, “the Muslim East was still an enemy, but an enemy doomed to defeat.”¹³ Prejudices against Muḥammad were especially prevalent. As the noted scholar of Islam, W. Montgomery Watt has said, “Muḥammad's claim to be a prophet and messenger and to receive messages from God to be conveyed to his fellow Arabs has been criticized and attacked almost from the day it was first put forward.”¹⁴ Later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars attempted to lessen the vitriol against Muḥammad that had been particularly keen in medieval Europe. In doing this they tried to “save Muḥammad's sincerity, but sometimes at the expense of his sanity.”¹⁵ For instance, Gustav Weil argued that Muḥammad suffered from epilepsy and Aloys Sprenger said that in addition he was plagued by hysteria. Another scholar thought Muḥammad had succumbed to the “wiles of Satan,” and yet another accused Muḥammad of deliberately mystifying the people, thereby becoming an example of how easily one with unusual powers can fall into dishonesty.¹⁶ Recent scholarship has taken a much more favorable approach of characterizing

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12. For the importance of the Muslim *isnād* see James Robson, “The *Isnād* in Muslim Tradition,” *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society* 15 (1953–1954): 15–26.
 13. Maxime Rodinson, “The Western Image and Western Studies of Islam,” in *The Legacy of Islam*, ed. Joseph Schacht and C. E. Bosworth, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 48.
 14. W. Montgomery Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qurʾān* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 17.
 15. *Ibid.*
 16. *Ibid.*, 17–18.

Muḥammad “as a man who sincerely and in good faith proclaimed messages which he believed came to him from God.”¹⁷

During Joseph Smith’s lifetime in particular, the prevailing views of Islam and Muḥammad were also less than complimentary. An example of this can be found in an incident that occurred in October 1838. According to the Prophet, “Thomas B. Marsh, formerly president of the Twelve, having apostatized, repaired to Richmond and made affidavit before Henry Jacobs, justice of the peace, to all the vilest slanders, aspersions, lies and calumnies towards myself and the Church, that his wicked heart could invent.”¹⁸ In this affidavit Marsh states, “I have heard the Prophet say that he would yet tread down his enemies, and walk over their dead bodies; and if he was not let alone, he would be a second Mohammed to this generation, and that he would make it one gore of blood from the Rocky mountains to the Atlantic ocean; that like Mohammed, whose motto in treating for peace was, ‘the Alcoran or the Sword.’ So should it be eventually with us, ‘Joseph Smith or the sword.’”¹⁹ Marsh’s statement directed at Joseph Smith serves as an indirect polemic against Islam. Recent scholarship has of course modified these earlier views as more information evidences a diplomatic Prophet rather than a Muslim Genghis Khan.²⁰

In such an environment as Joseph Smith’s, however, it is not likely that much information about Islam existed at all in America. In fact, most of the materials that would later support the Book of Abraham were not translated into English until almost a century after Joseph Smith died. One exception is the Qurʾān, which had been in several English translations since 1649.²¹ However, as far as I know, no historical evidence has been found that indicates whether the Prophet ever looked at the Qurʾān, since his scholarly interests seemed to have been directed toward Hebrew studies. In addition, Muslim scholarship in the West was limited to German and French European scholars in the early nineteenth century, which required modern scholars to move from translating their secondary sources to later translating primary Muslim sources.²²

Biblical Traditions from Muslim Authors

Many Muslim primary sources have been discovered in the last one hundred years. Some have been translated into western languages such as German and French as well as English. Others remain in the Arabic but are accessible to scholars.²³ Many major Muslim authors could be listed, but a few within the previously mentioned four categories should suffice.

1. *Taʾrikh* (history). The greatest and most influential Muslim writer of narrative history up to the tenth century is al-Ṭabarī (839–923). His multivolume history is unsurpassed and lays the

17. Ibid., 18.

18. *History of the Church*, 3:166–67.

19. Ibid., 167.

20. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1:192.

21. The 1649 edition was made by the Scotsman Alexander Ross. Others followed: George Sale (1734) and Gustav Flügel (1834). It would be interesting to check the libraries available to the Prophet in Manchester, New York, and Kirtland, Ohio, to see if they had any of these editions of the Qurʾān on hand.

22. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 40.

23. For a history of the Muslim written record see Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 2:1–83.

groundwork for further study in all four of the Muslim traditions.²⁴ Other important Muslims in this tradition include al-Mas‘ūdī and Ibn al-Athīr.

2. *Ḥadīth* (sayings and acts of Muḥammad). Because Muslims highly revere Muḥammad as a model Muslim, some Islamic scholars made a major effort during the eighth to tenth centuries to compile as many accounts as possible of what Muḥammad said and did during his life. The mark of authenticity for these reports was a well trusted *isnād*, or chain of transmitters. Al-Bukhārī (d. 870) is said to have collected over three hundred thousand reports from which he produced a book containing over seven thousand traditions. Bukhārī’s collection (*Ṣaḥīḥ*) is by far the largest and most used by Muslims. Al-Muslim is another compiler who collected similar reports and produced his own well-known book. Ḥadīth literature contain materials related to many aspects of Muslim life—civil matters, religious laws, and so on—that answer questions not addressed in the Qur’ān. Ḥadīth are also referred to and hold a high place when formulating Islamic law.

3. *Tafsīr* (Qur’ānic commentary). There are literally thousands of authors in this tradition. Some of the most influential include al-Ṭabarī (again), al-Qurṭubī, Zamakhsharī, al-Baiḍāwī, Nasafī, and Ibn Kathīr. These commentators, and many others, painstakingly analyze each verse of the Qur’ān, often giving information and traditions that support the message of Islam, but also drawing upon many Jewish and Christian traditions that are much more ancient in origin.

4. *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’* (Stories of the Prophets). This tradition gives a coherent narrative that is particularly focused on the lives of the biblical prophets (such as Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, and Solomon) preceding Muḥammad. Though the prophets retain their biblical status, the authors present each prophet as anticipating the Prophet Muḥammad and the final rise of Islam. Some of the most important Muslim authors include Ibn Ishāq,²⁵ al-Tha‘labī,²⁶ al-Kisā’ī, and the Turkish accounts of al-Rabghūzī. These stories of the prophets vary in degree of scholarship, entertainment, and didactic value among Muslims but contain some of the most interesting materials for the Latter-day Saints.

Abraham from the Perspective of Muslim Tradition

Before proceeding to identify and characterize elements of Muslim tradition that support the Book of Abraham as an ancient text, it is important to look carefully at what the Abraham account says to a Muslim. This approach should serve two purposes for the Latter-day Saint: first to indicate that this material was crafted to bolster Muḥammad and the message of Islam; second to demonstrate that any information in the Muslim account of Abraham that supports the restored version is purely unintentional. Thus, when supportive evidence is encountered in Muslim tradition, it gives that much more force to the uniquely ancient character of the Book of Abraham.

24. His famous history has been translated into English by numerous scholars and published by the State University of New York Press.

25. Ibn Ishāq’s (d. 767) *al-Mubtada’* has been reconstructed and translated into English by Gordon Newby in *The Making of the Last Prophet* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989). (An excerpt related to Abraham has been reprinted in *Traditions*, 303–9.)

26. Used extensively by Hugh Nibley.

According to Islamic tradition, the time period prior to Abraham's birth is in anticipation of a coming prophet (Abraham) and parallels the period of anticipation (of Muḥammad) prior to Muḥammad's birth. Ibn Ishāq notes that Muḥammad's father was proposed to by another woman prior to marrying Amīna, the mother of the Prophet. He asked this woman why she had not insisted on marriage, and she replied that her brother, Waraqa b. Naufal, who was a Christian and had studied the scriptures, prophesied that a prophet would be born among the people.²⁷ In addition, a star appeared indicating the birth of Muḥammad.²⁸

Although Muslim accounts place Abraham's birth in an entirely different time period than Muḥammad's, and therefore many details differ, the general motifs of anticipation and the appearance of the star are common to both stories. In short, what seems to have happened is Muslims have adopted themes of the Jewish story of Abraham and reoriented them to Islam. For instance, regarding the star motif, one medieval Muslim mentions that Nimrod saw in a dream a star that outshone the sun and the moon. This is certainly a retelling of a Jewish story concerning the astrologers of Nimrod who, "when they left the house, they lifted up their eyes toward heaven to look at the stars" and "one great star came from the east and ran athwart the heavens and swallowed up the four stars at the four corners."²⁹ Christians, of course, also accept the appearance of a star at the birth of Christ.³⁰ Other Muslim commentators have also incorporated the motif of a star appearing to Nimrod in a dream prior to the birth of Abraham.³¹ This suggests the likelihood that

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27. Ibn Hishām (d. 834), *The Life of Muḥammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishāq's Sirat Rasūl Allāh*, trans. A. Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 68–69. For the Arabic see Ibn Hishām, *Sirat al-Nabī* (Beirut: Dār Rakyānī, 1965), 61.
28. *Ibid.*, 70. For the Arabic see Ibn Hishām, *Sirat al-Nabī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriya, 1971), 1:166.
29. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968), 1:207. *The Book of Jasher* (Salt Lake City: J. H. Parry & Company, 1973), 8:10, 17 (See also, *Traditions*, 135–36). Patai and Graves similarly note that at Abraham's birth "an enormous comet coursed around the horizon from the east, and swallowed four stars each fixed in a different quarter of Heaven" (Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963], 134). See also D. Sidersky, *Les Origines des legendes Musulmanes* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1933), 31, and Heinrich Schutzing, who also identifies Jewish legends of a star. See *Ursprung und Entwicklung der arabischen Abraham-Nimrod Legende* (Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1961), 142. It should again be noted that it is not possible to determine the precise direction of influence. One scholar has observed that the material in the *qisas* tradition "is in part borrowed from Jewish sources. . . . In some cases the Islamic legend of Abraham has even influenced the later Jewish tradition" (EI2 "Ibrāhīm" by Rudi Paret). Hence, there may be some Islamic influence on later Jewish tradition. However, an attempt to show direction of influence would be laborious and ultimately speculative at best, and therefore the assumption taken in this study is that, for the most part, the Jewish traditions precede the Islamic traditions.
30. See Matthew 2:2, 9.
31. According to al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), *The History of al-Ṭabarī: Prophets and Patriarchs*, trans. William M. Brinner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), "A star arose over Nimrod so bright that it blotted out the light of the sun and the moon," 53 (*Traditions*, 337). Kisā'ī's (tenth or eleventh century) version in W. M. Thackston Jr., *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisā'i* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), 137 (*Traditions*, 385); al-Baiḍāwī (d. 1286 or 1293) also notes that Nimrod sees a star in his sleep. See *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl*, 6 vols. (n.p., 1899), 2:432 (*Traditions*, 427). See also Ṭabarsī (d. 1169–1170), *Majma' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Iran: n.p., 1983), 7:325.

the star motif was a widespread part of the belief structures of both the Jews and the Christians before and during the early period of Islam. The Islamic adoption of the star motif anticipating Abraham's birth and connecting it with the same motif prior to Muḥammad's birth reinforces the Muslim view of Islam as a restored religion within the otherwise polluted environment of the Jews and the Christians. In essence, the star of Abraham can be viewed as a prototype of the star of Muḥammad.

Some Muslim accounts also place Abraham in a cave for fifteen days after his birth. During this period his mother was not able to breast-feed him because she could not risk being seen going to the cave and arousing suspicion. One day she sees Abraham sucking his fingers and she notices that from one finger he is sucking milk, from another he is sucking water, from another honey, and from another he is sucking butter. In the fifteen days that Abraham stays in the cave he grows in one day as if it were a month and in one month as if it were a year. Abraham is said to have been the equivalent of fifteen years old when he left the cave.³² Jewish tradition also places Abraham in a cave at birth. In one tradition God opens two windows in the cave: one puts forth oil and the other a fine flour.³³ In another "Abram, lying alone in the cave without food, began to weep; but God sent the archangel Gabriel to give him milk, which flowed from the little finger of his right hand—and so the child was suckled."³⁴ The motifs of the cave and miracle feedings can also be found in the Christian tradition in which angels bring sustenance to saints in need.³⁵ Although this tradition is not in the Qurʾān, other Muslim commentators have transmitted this tradition.³⁶ The tradition of Abraham miraculously growing in a cave can also be found in Jewish legends as

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32. Abū Ishāq Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Thaʿlabī (d. 1036), *Kitāb ʿArāʾis al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (Egypt: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī), 52 (*Traditions*, 360).
33. Schutzing, *Ursprung und Entwicklung*, 143.
34. Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis*, 136. Ginzberg notes that Abraham sucked milk from the little finger of his right hand until ten days old. See *Legends of the Jews*, 1:189. See also 5:210 n. 14 in which two spouts spring up in the cave, "one flowing with honey, the other with milk." See also Adolph Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1967), 1:26 (English translation in *Traditions*, 165).
35. Note the Book of James, or Protevangelium 8:1, "And Mary was in the temple of the Lord as a dove that is nurtured: and she received food from the hand of an angel." In *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 42. Perhaps the Book of James provided some of the material about the childhood of Mary in Sura 3:37. See also Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 5: 212 n. 29. Christian tradition has also placed the birth of Jesus in a cave. See *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 46, Book of James 18:1; 19:2. See also Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 323–25.
36. Ishāq ibn Bishr (*Traditions*, 314). Ṭabarī, of course, relates a similar account. However, instead of Abraham sucking several fingers, he sucks sustenance only out of his thumb (*History*, 2:51; *Traditions*, 336). Al Kisāʾī records that Abraham's mother's breasts flowed with milk and honey in addition to Abraham having honey in his thumb, wine in his index finger, milk in his middle finger, cream in his ring finger, and water in his little finger (Thackston, *Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisaʾi*, 138; *Traditions*, 386). Ibn Ishāq notes that Abraham was "suckled by wild beasts," in Gordon. D. Newby's *The Making of the Last Prophet*, 68 (*Traditions*, 304). See also al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Badʾ wa-al-taʾriḫ* (Paris: n.p., 1899), 3:54 (*Traditions*, 355); Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233), *Al-Kāmil fī al-taʾriḫ* (Beirut: n.p., 1965), 1:94 (*Traditions*, 422), 3:54; Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl*, 2:433; H. E. Boeschoten, and M. Vandamme, trans. *Al-Rabghūzī* (fourteenth century): *The Stories of the Prophets: Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ: An Eastern Turkish Version* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 1:94, (*Traditions*, 437); (hereafter referred to as al-Rabghūzī, *Stories of the Prophets*).

well as in Muslim traditions.³⁷ No story of miraculous growth can be found in the traditions surrounding Muḥammad's birth, but there is a tradition of a miraculous feeding. As the story goes, Halima, a wet nurse, goes to Mecca to look for foster children, but because of the rough ride and sleeplessness, she cannot produce any milk, nor can the camel produce milk. Upon arriving, only the orphaned Muḥammad was available because no one wanted an orphan. Halima takes him, and miraculously her breasts fill with milk. Likewise, the camel is able to give milk again. Thus, all are able to drink to their satisfaction.³⁸ Again, to the Muslim reader the miraculous feeding of Abraham foreshadows or anticipates the miraculous feeding of Muḥammad.

According to the narrative of al-Thaʿlabī, and other Muslim commentators, when Abraham leaves the cave he asks his mother who his Lord is. She replies, "I am." He asks, "Who is your Lord?" She says, "Your Father." He asks, "Who is my father's Lord?" She answers, "Nimrod!" Abraham asks who is Nimrod's Lord and is told to be silent. Later Abraham approaches his father Āzar (Terah) and asks him the same questions and angers his father.³⁹ Thaʿlabī inserts this tradition just before Abraham has the experience described in Qurʾān 6:76–79:

When the night descended upon Abraham, he saw a star and exclaimed "This is my Lord!" When the star had set down Abraham said, "I love not those that set." But when he saw the moon rising in splendor he exclaimed, "This is my Lord!" But when it set he said, "Unless my Lord guide me, I shall be as those who have gone astray." When he saw the sun rising in splendor, he exclaimed, "This is my Lord! This is the greatest of them!" But when it set he said, "O people I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to God. I turn my face to the One who created the heavens and the earth. And never shall I give partners to God."⁴⁰

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37. For the Jewish traditions see Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 1:190–91; Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis*, 136–37; Ginzberg also argues there are Christian traditions of this motif. See *Legends of the Jews*, 5:210 n. 15. According to the *Book of Jasher* 8:36, "And the Lord was with Abram in the cave and he grew up, and Abram was in the cave ten years" (p. 19, cf. also *Traditions*, 139). Note that Schutzinger refers to a tradition that has Abraham in a cave for three years. See *Ursprung und Entwicklung*, 143. Later Muslims likely learned of this tradition from Ṭabarī, *History*, 2:51: "One day of growing up was like a month, and a month was like a year" (*Traditions*, 336). For example see Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, 1:95 (*Traditions*, 422–23); Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl*, 2:433 (*Traditions*, 429). For a variation on this tradition see Kisāʿī in Thackston, *Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisāʿi*, 138, in which it is implied that Abraham lived in the cave for four years (*Traditions*, 386).
38. Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 70–71. *Sīra* (1965), 64–65.
39. Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ*, 52 (*Traditions*, 360). *The Book of Jasher* has Abraham and Terah hold an extended conversation about the worship of idols. See 11:16–22, 25 (*Traditions*, 140).
40. There is much discussion of these verses in the Muslim histories and commentaries. See Ṭabarī, *History*, 2:51 (*Traditions*, 339); *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl al-Qurʾān* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1968), 7:247–52 (hereafter referred to as *Jāmiʿ*); Ibn Ishāq in Newby's *The Making of the Last Prophet* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 68; Kisāʿī in Thackston, *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisāʿi*, 138 (*Traditions*, 386–87); al-Rabghūzī, *Stories of the Prophets*, 1:94–96 (*Traditions*, 437–38); Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, 1:95 (*Traditions*, 422–23); al-Maqdisī, *al-Badʿ wa-al-taʾrikh* (Paris: n.p., 1899), 3:49–50. Baiḍāwī also records Abraham questioning his mother concerning his Lord before his call. *Anwār al-tanzīl*, 2:433 (*Traditions*, 429). See also Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-aḥkām al-Qurʾān* (Egypt: Dār al-Kitāb al-Misriyya, 1966), 7:25–28; Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAthīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Naḥās, 1966), 3:52–57; Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200), *Zād al-masīr fī ʿilm al-tafsīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1994), 3:55–59 (*Traditions*, 418–19); Nasafī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Jalīl* (Al-Qāhira: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Amiriyya Bi-Būlāq, 1936), 1:482; Zamakhsharī (d. 1144),

While Muslim commentators certainly underscore Abraham's call by referring to this sura (i.e., chapter), it is interesting that this sura parallels a very similar, and likely older, account in Jewish literature. According to this tradition:

When the sun sank, and the stars came forth, he said, "These are the gods!" But the dawn came, and the stars could be seen no longer, and then he said, "I will not pay worship to these, for they are no gods." Thereupon the sun came forth, and he spoke, "This is my God, him will I extol." But again the sun set, and he said, "He is no god," and beholding the moon, he called her his god to whom he would pay Divine homage. Then the moon was obscured, and he cried out: "This, too, is no God! There is one who sets them all in motion."⁴¹

Abraham's heavenly call seems to anticipate a similar call that would come to Muḥammad through Gabriel. According to tradition, just after Gabriel visits Muḥammad for the first time Muḥammad prepares to climb a mountain and throw himself down to his death. When he is mid-way up the mountain Gabriel appears and says, "O Muḥammad! thou art the apostle of God and I am Gabriel." Muḥammad raises his head toward heaven and sees Gabriel, but when he turns his head the other way he can still see him in the heavens. Any direction he turns his head, Gabriel is there.⁴² Muḥammad's vision of Gabriel in the heavens is a good counterpart to Abraham's vision of the heavens. Both events operate as defining calls to monotheism and both deal with heavenly objects (sun, stars, and moon for Abraham and Gabriel for Muḥammad). Abraham's rejection of the heavenly objects is counterbalanced by Muḥammad's acceptance of the heavenly Gabriel, but both receive reinforcement of their respective divine calls.

Some Muslims record that Āzar/Terah,⁴³ Abraham's idolatrous father, was a manufacturer and seller of idols who also employed Abraham in his business. This is another Jewish theme⁴⁴ that

Kashshāf ḥaqā'iq al-tanzīl wa-ʿayūn al-taʿwīl (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1966), 2:30–31; Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ*, 7:322–25.

41. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 1:189. According to Ginzberg, in another tradition Gabriel comes to Abraham after this episode and teaches him. See 5:210 n. 16. See also *The Book of Jasher*, 9:13–19, 20 (*Traditions*, 139). Patai and Graves, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis*, 136; *Apocalypse of Abraham* 19:1–9 in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:698–99 (*Traditions*, 57); D. Sidersky, *Les Origines*, 35–36, for variations of this event. According to Haim Schwarzbaum, this episode "belongs to the cumulative pattern of folktales. . . . This Quranic story is also derived from Jewish sources" (*Biblical and Extra-Biblical Legends in Islamic Folk Literature* [Waldorf-Hessen: Verlag für Orientkunde Dr. H. Vorndran, 1982], 11).
42. Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 106. See also *Sira*, 102.
43. For discussion of the name Āzar/Terah among Muslims see Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ*, 7:242–44, who examines most aspects of both names. See also Nasafī, *Tafsīr*, 1:481, who argues that Āzar is a surname. Ibn Kathīr says Āzar means "the idol" (*Tafsīr*, 3:53). Zamakhsharī proposes that Āzar was the name of an idol (*Kashshāf*, 2:29–30). See also Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl*, 2:430; Qurtubī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, 2:22–23; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, 3:54–55.
44. See Schützinger, *Ursprung und Entwicklung*, 141. Muslim sources suggest that on the Day of Resurrection, Azar will unsuccessfully seek forgiveness from God. See al-Kinānī, *Kitāb al-Ḥaydah* (Damascus: n.p., 1964), 176–79. Bukhārī notes the Prophet said, "On the Day of Resurrection Abraham will meet his father Azar whose face will be dark and covered with dust. (The Prophet) Abraham will say (to him): 'Didn't I tell you not to disobey me?' His father will reply: 'Today I will not disobey you.' Abraham will say: 'O Lord! You promised me not to disgrace me on the Day of Resurrection; and what will be more disgraceful to me than cursing and dishonouring my father?' Then Allah will say (to him): 'I have forbidden Paradise for the disbelievers.' Then he will be addressed, 'O Abraham! Look! What is beneath your feet?' He will look and there he will see . . . (an animal), blood stained,

provides a degree of anticipation for Muḥammad. Just as Abraham received resistance and persecution from someone within his family, so also did Muḥammad receive persecution in the form of the Quraysh (Muḥammad's tribe). Two other themes that typify Muḥammad also present themselves during this period of Abraham's life: idolatry and Nimrod. While in his father's employ Abraham would often ask the people why they would buy a god that cannot hear, see, or move, and thus arouse the suspicions of the people. One day as the people left to go to a feast, Abraham feigns a sickness in order to stay back. He goes to the "Hall of the gods," and with an ax destroys all of the idol gods except the largest one. Abraham places the ax in the hands of the largest god. When the people return and see the gods destroyed they become concerned and question Abraham. Abraham says, "The biggest one did it," and almost convinces the people of the error of worshipping these man-made idols. However, Nimrod, who plays the chief adversary of Abraham, has the people build a large fire, erect a catapult, and throw Abraham into the fire. Abraham is not harmed by the fire but remains in it for seven days and is kept company by the angel Gabriel.⁴⁵ (As will be seen, the motifs of idolatry and Abraham's life in danger are prominent in the Book of Abraham.) Both the idolatry and Nimrod themes are well-founded in Jewish literature⁴⁶ and commented upon by many Muslims.⁴⁷ However, as Abraham Geiger observed, the Jewish legend has the dialogue and destruction of the idols occur only between Abraham and his father, whereas the Muslim account takes place between Abraham and Nimrod and his people. According to Geiger this can be "explained by the fact that Abraham is intended to be a type of Muḥammad, and so it is necessary that he should be represented as a public

which will be caught by the legs and thrown in (Hell) fire." Āzar here is turned into an animal and thrown into hell (*Ṣaḥīḥ* [New Delhi: Kitāb Bhavan, 1987], 4:365; *Traditions*, 327–28).

45. Tha'labī, *Qīṣaṣ*, 52–54 (*Traditions*, 360–67).
46. For the idolatry and Nimrod motifs in Judaism see Sidersky, *Les Origines*, 36–38; Schutzinger, *Ursprung und Entwicklung*, 145–50, 152–54; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:197–203, 5:212 n. 33, 5:215 n. 40; Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis*, 140–42; *The Book of Jasher*, Chapters 11–12, pages 24–33 (*Traditions*, 140–49); *Apocalypse of Abraham* 1–3, Charlesworth, 1:689–90 (*Traditions*, 52–54). According to Schwarzbaum, concerning Abraham's breaking of his father's idols, "the satirical vein exhibited in the story is derived from Talmudic-Midrashic sources, where it is also emphasized that Abraham placed in the hand of the biggest idol a hatchet" (*Biblical and Extra-Biblical Legends*, 11).
47. The idolatry motif in the story of Abraham is discussed extensively among Muslims. See al-Rabghūzī, *Stories of the Prophets*, 1:96–99 (*Traditions*, 438–40); Kisā'ī, in Thackston, *Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisā'i*, 140–41 (*Traditions*, 392), 146–47; Ibn Ishāq, Newby, *Making of the Last Prophet*, 68–69 (*Traditions*, 305–8); and Ishāq ibn Bishr (*Traditions*, 318–20). See also Ṭabarī, *History*, 2:52–57 (*Traditions*, 338–42), *Jāmi'*, 7:242–44; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 3:53; Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl*, 2:430 (*Traditions*, 430–31); Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 2:29–30 (*Traditions*, 412–13); Ṭabarsī, *Majma'*, 7:321–22; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, 3:54; Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, 7:22–23; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, 1:96. Nimrod and the fire of Abraham is also a theme commonly treated by Muslims. See Ibn Ishāq in Newby's *The Making of the Last Prophet*, 70–71 (*Traditions*, 307–8); Ishāq ibn Bishr in *Traditions*, 321–24; Newby, 70–71; Ṭabarī, *History*, 2:58–61, *Jāmi'*, 15:43–45; al-Rabghūzī, *Stories of the Prophets*, Kisā'ī, Thackston, *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisā'i*, 140–41 (*Traditions*, 393); 100–105; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, 1:99–100; Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl*, 4:258–59 (*Traditions*, 431–32); Zamakhsharī *Kashshāf*, 2:578 (*Traditions*, 412–13); 2:578; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 4:572–73; Nasafī, *Tafsīr*, 2:409; Ṭabarsī, *Majma'*, 17:54; Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, 11:304; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, 5:270 (*Traditions*, 419–20); al-Rabghūzī, *Stories of the Prophets*, 100–105 (*Traditions*, 440–44).

preacher.”⁴⁸ Muḥammad also dealt with both the idolatry and Nimrod motifs. Ibn Ishāq, in *The Life of Muḥammad*, notes that idolatry was also pervasive prior to and during the time of the Prophet.⁴⁹ In addition, he also develops a Nimrod-type archrival to Muḥammad in the person of Abu Jahl, who constantly attempts to thwart Muḥammad at every turn.⁵⁰

Following Abraham’s return from Egypt, Islamic texts record that Abraham was given, from Sarah, Hagar, who bore Ishmael. Abraham and Ishmael go to Mecca and together build the Ka‘ba.⁵¹ According to Reuven Firestone, the pilgrimage that Abraham learns and institutes “represents the quintessential Hajj, and his very actions provide reason and inform the meaning of the various rituals of the Islamic pilgrimage.”⁵² Abraham’s working with Ishmael to build the Ka‘ba and the subsequent establishment of the Pilgrimage anticipates Muḥammad’s triumphal entry into Mecca, his restoration of the true worship of Allāh, and his making the Pilgrimage. Concerning the Ka‘ba and the Pilgrimage, there seems to be fewer Jewish or Christian parallel materials than other aspects of the Abraham story. Hence, this theme is uniquely Islamic.

Muslim Support for the Book of Abraham

Muslim tradition portrays the Abraham narrative as a unique typology aimed at bolstering the prophethood of Muḥammad and the message of Islam. However, Islamic traditions also include details that lend credence to the story as found in the Book of Abraham. Of course, many of the parallels to the Book of Abraham from Muslim tradition can also be found in Jewish tradition. For instance, as noted above, the Muslim traditions (and the Jewish) have Abraham receiving instruction concerning deity through the instrumentation of heavenly objects. This is shared with the Book of Abraham. In addition, Nimrod in the Muslim tradition (as well as Jewish) serves as the archrival of Abraham, much like the priest who places Abraham on an altar of human sacrifice. Though Islam has preserved many aspects of the restored Abraham story because of its contact with Judaism, Muslim tradition also provides a few unique contributions of its own. Two examples should suffice. First, Kisā’ī and Rabghūzī mention a famine in Chaldea, as does Abraham 1:29–30 and 2:1, 5, while the Jewish and

48. Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, 99.

49. Note pages 35–39 in Guillaume’s translation for a good review of idol worship among the Arabs.

50. Note for example pages 119–20, 160–62, 177–79, 283–84, in Guillaume’s translation.

51. Tha‘labī, *Qīṣaṣ*, 61–62. For the building of the Ka‘ba in Muslim sources see Ṭabarī, *History*, 2:69–72; *Jāmi‘*, 1:532–41f. According to al-Rabghūzī (*Stories of the Prophets*, 130), “Gabriel quarried the stones and the angels cut them and carved them. After he had cut the stone, Gabriel, at God’s command, placed Ishmael on it. The stones walked off like an ambling horse and went to Abraham. Any stone which was flawed and useless became like marble once it came into Abraham’s hands.” See also Kisā’ī, in Thackston, *Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisā’i*, 154; Ibn Ishāq, in Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet*, 74–75; al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Bad‘*, 3:53. See also Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1:294–300f; Nasafī, *Tafsīr*, 1:86–87f; Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl*, 1:192–96f; Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1:309–310f. Abraham Katsh has found some Jewish traditions that seem to correspond to the “Station of Abraham” (*maqām al-Ibrāhīm*). See *Judaism and the Koran*, 101–3. See also Sidersky, *Les Origines*, 53–54. Note Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:378–79, in which Abraham and Ishmael build the Ka‘ba on a “hillock higher than the land surrounding it” (see also note 35); Joshua Finkel, “Jewish, Christian, and Samaritan Influences on Arabia,” *The Macdonald Presentation Volume* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1933), 158.

52. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in the Holy Land* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 100. Firestone also notes that “Abraham’s directions for the Pilgrimage were given by Gabriel or God. This detail sets up the Pilgrimage traditions as prototypes for the proper Pilgrimage ritual” (p. 101).

Christian sources are silent on the subject. Second, Kisāʿī and Rabghūzī also describe scenes in which Abraham is allowed to sit on Pharaoh's throne (see Abraham, Facsimile 3, figure 1), another subject the other two traditions do not mention. Hence, there are some unique contributions one can glean from Muslim tradition. Note the following comparison between Genesis 11:29–30 and 12:1–5 and Abraham 2. Italicized portions of the verses show additional information that is found in the restored account. In the furthest right column are supporting traditions found in Muslim tradition (but likely also supported by Jewish and sometimes Christian accounts).

Abraham Comparisons: Ancient and Restored Scripture

(unique elements in italic)

| Genesis 11:28–29, 12:1, 11:31 | Abraham 2:1–5 | Muslim Tradition |
|--|---|--|
| 11:28. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. | 2:1. NOW the <i>Lord God caused the famine</i> to wax sore in the land of Ur, <i>insomuch that Haran, my brother, died;</i> but Terah, my father, yet lived in the land of Ur, of the Chaldees. | Kisāʿī Rabghūzī |
| 11:29. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. | 2:2. And it came to pass that I, Abraham, took Sarai to wife, and Nahor, my brother, took Milcah to wife, who was the daughter of Haran. | |
| 12:1. NOW the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: | 2:3 Now the Lord had said unto me: Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. | |
| 11:31. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. | 2:4. Therefore <i>I left</i> the land of Ur, of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and <i>I took</i> Lot, my brother's son, and his wife, and Sarai my wife; <i>and also my father followed after me,</i> unto the land which we denominated Haran. | |
| | 2:5. And the famine abated; and my father tarried in Haran and dwelt there, as there were many flocks in Haran; <i>and my father turned again unto his idolatry,</i> therefore he continued in Haran. | 60:4 Kisāʿī Thaʿlabī Tayyib Abulfeda |

Genesis 12:2–3

12:2. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing;

12:3. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Cf. D&C 132:29–33).

Abraham 2:8–13

2:8. *My name is Jehovah*, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee.

2:9. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee *above measure*, and make thy name great *among all nations*, and thou shalt be a blessing *unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations*;

2:10. And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be *accounted thy seed*, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

2:11. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (*that is, in thy Priesthood*) and in thy seed (*that is, thy Priesthood*), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (*that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body*) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, *even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal*.

2:12. Now, after the Lord had withdrawn from speaking to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has *sought thee earnestly*; now I have found thee;

2:13. Thou didst send thine *angel* to deliver me from the gods of Elkenah, and I will do well to hearken unto thy voice, therefore let thy servant rise up and depart in peace.

Muslim Tradition

14:36

Ṭabarī
Kisāʿī
Thaʿlabī
Masʿūdī
Rabghūzī

Kaʿb al-Aḥbār
Ibn Ishāq
Kisāʿī
Thaʿlabī
Rabghūzī

| Genesis 12:4–5 | Abraham 2:14–17 | Muslim Tradition |
|---|--|---|
| 12:4. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram <i>was seventy and five years old</i> when he departed out of Haran. | 2:14. So I, Abraham, departed as the Lord had said unto me, and Lot with me; and I, Abraham, was <i>sixty and two years old</i> when I departed out of Haran. | Mas‘ūdī Eutyclus |
| 12:5. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the <i>souls that they had gotten</i> in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. | 2:15. And I took Sarai, whom I took to wife when I was in Ur, in Chaldea, and Lot, my brother’s son, and all our substance that we had gathered, and the <i>souls that we had won</i> in Haran, and came forth in the way to the land of Canaan, and dwelt in tents as we came on our way; | 14:36 Ṭabarī Kisāʿī Tha‘labī Mas‘ūdī Ibn Ishāq Rabghūzī |
| | 2:16. Therefore, eternity was our covering and our rock and our salvation, as we journeyed from Haran by the way of Jershon, to come to the land of Canaan. | |
| | 2:17. Now I, Abraham, built an altar in the land of Jershon, and made an offering unto the Lord, <i>and prayed</i> that the famine might be turned away from my father’s house, that they might not perish. | Kisāʿī Rabghūzī |

The above comparative example demonstrates that Muslim tradition supports some of the unique elements in the restored account of Abraham but is silent about many others. For example, on the one hand, like Jewish tradition, Muslim traditions are replete with details related to Abraham’s father practicing idolatry, child sacrifice, the sacrifice of Abraham, the rescue of Abraham by an angel (usually Gabriel), destruction of idols, and Abraham and astronomy. On the other hand, Muslim traditions say nothing about gods of wood and stone, Abraham as heir to priesthood, Abraham as holding the priesthood, or that Abraham was a high priest.⁵³

Further study is needed to identify and analyze more specific contributions of Islamic tradition to the Book of Abraham. However, I think one can see that although Muslim tradition views and supports the account of Abraham from an Islamic perspective, it also demonstrates that the Muslim textual tradition can be another useful source of material to augment the rich Jewish and Christian apocryphal tradition. I also believe Islamic tradition lends additional credibility to the Book of Abraham as an ancient text.

53. Note the thematic index in the back of *Traditions*, 537–47.