

Life of Abraham

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GEZA VERMES

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PART TWO

THE REWRITTEN BIBLE

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM (1)

HAGGADIC DEVELOPMENT: A RETROGRESSIVE HISTORICAL STUDY¹

The biblical history of Abraham begins with his departure from Ur of the Chaldees. Of his earlier life very little is written. Genesis xi. 27-32 merely records his genealogy:

Now these are the descendants of Terah. Terah begot Abram, Nahor and Haran, and Haran begot Lot. Haran died before his father Terah, in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldees. Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milkah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milkah and Iskah. Sarai was barren; she had no child.

Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, the wife of his son Abram, and they set forth together from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan. They came to Haran, and they settled there. The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.

Joshua xxiv. 2 adds a few bare details concerning Abraham's religious background:

Your fathers dwelt of old beyond Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor; and they served other gods.

Isaiah xxix. 22 refers to God as the Redeemer of Abraham,² thereby implying that Abraham was saved from some unspecified danger:

Therefore, thus says the Lord to the house of Jacob, He who redeemed Abraham.

¹ By a *retrogressive* historical study, I mean a study which takes as its point of departure a comparatively late midrashic compilation with greatly developed traditions, and which determines, by means of the older material, the history and origin of all its constitutive elements.

² This is only in *MT*. *LXX* reads: "Thus speaks the Lord about the house of Jacob which He had set apart".

From this meagre material, *Sefer ha-Yashar*,¹ one of the latest examples of the rewritten Bible (*circa* the eleventh century AD), has composed a most detailed story of Abraham's life, from his birth until his arrival in Haran. Much of it is, indeed, the sort of legendary development common to all popular hagiography, but its inspiration derives from the biblical passages quoted above.²

In the course of this chapter, I propose to trace the history of the major midrashic themes in the *Yashar* story, and to enquire into the motives, exegetical or doctrinal, which originally prompted interpreters to develop, and even to supplement, the biblical narrative.

*The first fifty years of Abraham's life according to Sefer ha-Yashar.*³

1) Terah, the son of Nahor, the commander of Nimrod's army, was very great in the eyes of the king and his servants. The king and the princes loved him, and greatly exalted him. Terah took a wife whose name was Amitlai, the daughter of Karnabo. Terah's wife conceived and brought forth a son in those days. Terah was seventy years old when he begot him. He called the name of his new-born son Abram, saying that the king had raised him up in those days, and had exalted him above all the princes, his colleagues.

It came to pass on the night of the birth of Abram that all Terah's servants, and all the sages of Nimrod, and all his magicians, came to Terah's house, and ate and drank there, and rejoiced with him that night. And it came to pass that when they left the house of Terah the sages and magicians lifted up their eyes towards the heavens that night, towards the stars. They saw a great star come from the east and run through the heavens, and it swallowed forty stars from the four sides of the heavens. All the sages of the king, and all the magicians were afraid because of this vision, and the sages understood the thing, and knew that it concerned the child. They said one to another: This is nothing but the child, born this night to Terah, who shall grow and flourish and multiply, and shall inherit for himself and his sons the whole earth forever. He, and his descendants also, shall kill great kings, and they shall inherit their lands.

All the sages and magicians went and returned home that night, and the next morning they all rose up and gathered in their assembly room. They (spoke and) said one to another: Behold, the vision which we saw last night is hidden from the king, and is not known to him. Should this thing become known to him later, he will say to us, Why have you hidden it from me? He will command us all to be killed. Let

¹ Ed. L. GOLDSCHMIDT, *Sefer ha-Yashar - Das Heldenbuch*. Berlin, 1923.

² The midrashic process will be analysed in due course.

³ The translation of the entire text, with its many digressions, seems unnecessary. The omitted passages are summarized in brackets. The original is to be found in GOLDSCHMIDT's edition, pp. 24-45.

us go now and tell the king of the vision, and the interpretation of the things, and we shall be cleared.

So they did. They all departed, and went to the king, and bowed down to the ground before him and said: Long live the king! Long live the king! We heard that a son was born to Terah, the son of Nahor, the commander of your army. Therefore we went last night to his house; we ate bread, and drank and rejoiced with him. And it came to pass that when your servants had left the house of Terah to go home, to pass the night in their own houses and lodgings, we lifted up our eyes towards the heavens, and looked, and behold a great star came forth from the east. This star moved very fast, and swallowed forty great stars from the four sides of the heavens. Your servants were astonished by this vision which they saw, and were greatly confused. We considered this vision, and in our wisdom we knew its true interpretation. This thing concerns, indeed, the son born to Terah, who shall grow and increase in wealth and property. He shall kill all the kings of the earth, and inherit their lands for himself, his sons, and his descendants forever. Now, O king, our lord, we tell you truthfully what we have seen concerning this child. Should it seem good to the king to give the price of the child to his father, we will kill him before he grows and multiplies on the earth, and before his evil increases upon us in the land, and before we all, as also our sons and our descendants, are destroyed by his evil.

The king listened to these words, and they seemed good in his eyes. He sent to Terah and called him, and Terah came before the king. The king said to him: I have been told that a son was born to you yesterday, and that at his birth such and such things were seen in the heavens. Now give that child to me so that they may kill him before his evil increases upon us, and I will give you his price and fill your house with silver and gold. Terah answered the king saying: I have heard your words, O king, my lord. Whatever is the pleasure of the king, my lord, his servant shall do it.

(Here follows a parable explaining the wickedness of the king's demand).

Terah saw that the wrath of the king was kindled against him. Therefore he replied saying: Behold, all that I have is in the king's hands.

(A delay of three days was granted to Terah so that he might speak to his household. On the third day he sent to the king the son of one of his concubines, born on the same day as Abraham, and he received his price. This child was killed in the place of Abraham.)

The Lord was with Terah in this affair that Nimrod might not kill Abram. Terah took Abram, his son, secretly, and his mother, and his wet-nurse, and brought them to a cave, and every month he gave

them their provisions. The Lord was with Abram in the cave. He grew, and lived there ten years, and the king, and all his princes and servants, all the magicians and sages of the king, imagined that Abram was slain.

2, (In the meantime Haran, Abraham's brother, married. Sarai, his third child and second daughter, was ten years younger than Abraham.)

3) In those days, when the king and his servants had forgotten the affair of Abram, he, and his mother, and his nurse, departed from the cave. And when they had departed from the cave, Abram went to Noah, and to Shem, his son, and he stayed with them in their house to learn the discipline of the Lord and His ways; and no man recognized him. He spent ~~thirty~~ ^{three} years in the house of Noah. Abram knew the Lord from the age of three years, and he walked in the ways of the Lord until he died, according to the teaching which he had received from Noah and Shem his son.

4) All the children of the earth sinned greatly against the Lord in those days, and rebelled against Him. They served other gods, and forgot the Lord who had created them upon the earth. All the children of the land made for themselves their own gods in those days, gods of wood and stone which could neither hear nor speak nor save. And the sons of men served them, and they were their gods. The king and his servants, Terah and his house, were the first among the servants of wood and stone in those days.

(Terah had twelve great idols and he served one each month. He made offerings and sacrifice, and so did all the people. Apart from Noah and his household, none knew the Lord.)

Abram, the son of Terah, grew in Noah's house in those days. No man knew of it, and the Lord was with him. He gave to him an ~~affectionate~~ ^{affectionate} heart, and ~~understanding~~, and he knew that all the works of that generation were vain, and that all the gods which they served were vain and useless.

5) Abram saw the sun above the earth and said in his heart: Now the sun which shines over the whole earth is God, and I will serve it. Abram served the sun that day, and prayed to it. When evening came, and the sun disappeared as always, Abram said in his heart: Well now, this cannot be God!

Again Abram said in his heart: Who is He that made the heavens and the earth, and created all mankind upon the earth? Where is He?...

Abram saw the moon, and the stars around it.

(He thought they must be God and His servants; then the sun rose once more.)

Abram saw all the things which the Lord God had made in the world and said in his heart: These are not the Deity which made all the earth, and all mankind, but the servants of God.

(Here follows the account of the building of the town and of the tower of Babel in the days of Nimrod, the dispersion and census of the peoples, and the story of the war of Kedorlaomer.)

6) In his fiftieth year, Abram the son of Terah left the house of Noah, and returned to the house of his father.

(Terah was still the commander of the army, and a worshipper of idols. Very angry, Abraham vowed to destroy all the statues within three days.)

Abram asked his father, saying: Tell me, my father, where is the God that created the heavens and the earth, and all the children of men upon the earth, and you and me upon the earth?

Terah replied to Abram his son, saying: Behold, he who created all this is with us in the house.

Abram said to his father: Please, my lord, show them to me.

(Terah showed his gods, and worshipped them. Abraham asked his mother twice to prepare a meal for his father's gods. He brought it to the sanctuary, but they did not eat. He became angry and quoting a Psalm, declared the idols to be vain.)

He hastened, and took a mattock in his hand, and went into the room towards the gods of his father, and he broke all the idols of his father. And when he had broken them, he placed the mattock in the hand of the greatest of the gods there, and he left.

Terah, his father, came to his house, and heard the noise of the mattock in the room of the idols. He ran to this room towards the idols, and found Abram, his son, leaving. Terah entered the room, and found all the idols fallen down and broken, and the mattock in the hand of the greatest among them which was not broken, and the meal which Abram his son had made was still before them. Terah saw this, and his anger was greatly kindled, and he went out hastily from the room to Abram.

He found him still sitting in the house, and said to him: What is this thing which you have done to all my gods?

Abram answered: Nothing at all, my lord; for I only brought a meal to them. And when I placed the meal near them, they stretched out their hands to eat before the greatest among them stretched out his hand to eat. The great one saw what they did, and his wrath was much kindled against them. He went and took the mattock which is in the house, and approached them, and broke them all. And behold, the mattock is still in his hand, as you can see.

Terah's anger was kindled against his son Abram when he spoke these words, and he said to Abram his son in his wrath: What is this word which you have spoken? You lie to me. Is there spirit and soul in these gods, and power to do what you say? Are they not wood and

stone? It is I who made them. Why do you lie to me saying that the greatest god among them struck them when you yourself placed the mattock in its hand; yet you say he struck them all?

Abram answered his father, saying: Why do you make these idols, in which there is no power to do anything? Will these idols save you, in which you put your trust? Will they hear your prayer when you cry to them?

(There follows a long rebuke and an admonition to abandon idolatry. Abraham destroyed the last remaining idols in the sight of his father, and Terah hurried off to the king to complain to him of Abraham.)

The king sent three of his servants. They went, and brought Abram before the king. Nimrod, and all his princes and servants sat that day, and Terah sat before them. The king said to Abram: What have you done to your father and to all his gods?

(Abraham repeated his story about the largest idol having destroyed the others. When the king expressed his doubts as to the ability of a statue to do such a thing, he accused Nimrod of knowingly deceiving and corrupting the people, and exhorted him to alter his ways so as to escape a dishonourable death. The king sent Abraham to prison, and he remained there for ten days.)

And it came to pass at the end of these days that the king called all his princes together, and all the princes of the provinces, and the sages.

(Nimrod told them what Abraham had done, and what he had said to him, and how he cursed the king.)

They all answered the king, saying: A man who has cursed the king should be hanged upon a tree. But since he did all the things of which he spoke, and despised our gods, he should be burnt with fire; for such is the judgment concerning this case. If it should seem good in the eyes of the king to do this thing, let him send his servants, and they will light your brick kiln for three days, day and night, and then we will throw this man into it.

(The king gave this command. All the population gathered around the furnace to see Abraham. The women and children went up to the roofs of the houses and to the towers.)

7) And it came to pass that when Abram arrived, the magicians of the king and the sages saw him, and they cried to the king saying: O king, our Lord! Is not this the man whom we know to be the child whose great star swallowed forty stars at his birth, as we told the king fifty years ago?

(To the king's question, Terah confessed that he gave him the son of one of his concubines to be put to death in the place of Abraham. Nimrod promised to spare his life if he would tell him the name of his counsellor. Terah falsely denounced his son Haran. Thereupon the king decided to burn Haran with Abraham. Meanwhile, Haran hesitated whether he should follow Abraham; his final decision would depend on the issue of his brother's ordeal. But unexpectedly he was arrested, and both the brothers were bound and thrown into the furnace.)

8) The Lord was merciful to Abram. He came down and He saved him from the fire, and he was not burnt. All the ropes with which they bound him were burnt, but Abram was spared, and he walked in the midst of the fire. But Haran died after they had thrown him into the fire. He burnt, and was turned to ashes, for his heart was not perfect with the Lord. A flame sprang up also against the men who threw them into the fire, and they all burned in the fire, and about twelve men died from among them.

Abram walked in the midst of the fire for three days and three nights.

9) (This was announced to the king. At first, he did not believe it, but finally he saw it for himself, and commanded that Abraham should be taken out. But no one dared approach the furnace. Then the king threatened to kill them unless they extracted Abraham. As a result of the new attempt another eight men died. Finally, the king ordered Abraham to come out, and he left the kiln safe and sound. To the king's question, he explained that the God of heaven and earth, in whom he put his trust, had saved him from the fire.)

The king, and the princes, and all the inhabitants of the land saw that Abram had been saved from the fire, and they came and bowed down before him.

(He exhorted them to worship the everlasting God who delivers those who trust in Him. Nimrod presented Abraham with many gifts, and two servants, Oni and Eliezer, and all the princes gave him presents also. Three hundred men from among the servants of the king attached themselves to Abraham.)

10) (Three years later, Nimrod dreamt that Abraham threatened the king and his people. One of his counsellors advised him to get rid of Abraham. Informed of this by Eliezer, who was present at the council, Abraham again fled to Noah and hid there. Terah visited him, and was encouraged by his son to flee with him to the land of Canaan. Abraham also exhorted his father not to attach himself to the vanity of honour and wealth. Terah listened to Abraham's advice, and to-

gether with Lot and Sarai, they left Ur of the Chaldees, i.e. Babel, and set out for Canaan by way of Haran.)

11) The people of the land of Haran saw that Abram was good and just towards God and man, and that the Lord was with him. Men from among the inhabitants of the land of Haran came to him, and attached themselves to him, and he taught them the discipline of the Lord and His ways. These men stayed with Abram in his house and attached themselves to him. Abram lived ~~three years~~ in Haran.

The literary components of the Yashar story may be summarized as follows:

1) It opens with a reference to the parents of Abraham, and goes on to give a detailed report of the vision of the Chaldean magicians which followed Abraham's birth, and which was interpreted as ominous for the king and the inhabitants of the country. They advise the king to put the child to death, but Terah foils the king's plan by replacing his legitimate son by the son of a concubine.

2) While Abraham is in hiding, Haran, his elder brother, marries. Haran's second daughter is Sarai, Abraham's future wife.

3) Abraham spends the next thirty-nine years of his life with Noah and Shem, learning the knowledge and service of God.

4) During the same period, idolatry makes its appearance and spreads among the peoples. It is strongly propagated by the king and his nobles, including Terah.

5) In contradiction to section (3), which describes Abraham as knowing God from his childhood, it is now stated that his discovery of the true religion followed his experience of the uselessness of worshipping the heavenly bodies.

6) When he returns to his father's house, Abraham immediately declares war against idolatry and destroys his father's gods. Denounced to the king, he remains faithful to his belief and rebukes the monarch. On the advice of the magicians, he is condemned to be thrown into the fire of a brick kiln.

7) The magicians identify Abraham as the child whom they had thought dead, and Terah only escapes disfavour and chastisement by laying the responsibility on his son Haran and offering him as a scapegoat.

8) Abraham is miraculously saved from the fire, but Haran dies in the furnace.

9) The king and all his people are forced to recognize that Abraham's god is the only true God.

10) Obligated once more to flee from the king to Noah, Abraham persuades his father to emigrate to Canaan so that the whole family may live in security.

11) On their way to Canaan they halt in the land of Haran, and during the three years which he spends there Abraham devotes himself to preaching faith in God.

It will facilitate the study of the history of the various exegetical sections, to group them into five major themes:

- i. The kinship of Abraham and Sarah (section 2).
- ii. Abraham's knowledge of God (sections 3, 4, 5).
- iii. Abraham's fight against idolatry (section 6).
- iv. Abraham in the fiery furnace (sections 8, 9, 10, 11).
- v. The infancy story of Abraham (sections 1, 7).

i. The kinship of Abraham and Sarah

Whereas Genesis xii. 13 introduces Sarah as the sister of Abraham, the daughter of his father (xx. 12), in Yashar she is Abraham's niece. This appears to be the traditional belief. In Ps.-JONATHAN on Genesis xi. 29, we read:

The name of Abraham's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milkah, the daughter of Haran, who was the father of Milkah, and father of Iskah, who is Sarai.¹

Ancient as it is (it appears in JOSEPHUS),² this exegesis is not the only one to be found in Jewish writings. According to the same Ps.-JONATHAN on Genesis xx. 12, Sarah is Abraham's first cousin, the daughter of his paternal uncle. Jubilees xii. 9 follows Genesis and describes her as Abraham's sister.

These variations are due to doctrinal preoccupations. The redactor of Genesis desired, above all, to show that Abraham did not lie when he introduced Sarah as his sister when he was in danger of his life in Egypt. But later commentators had to contend with a legal difficulty. Since Leviticus xviii. 9 and xx. 17 forbids marriage between brother and sister, it seemed scandalous to them that the father of the Chosen People should have disobeyed a divine law. Therefore the word "sister" was broadened to include "niece". Although the corresponding nephew-aunt relationship was forbidden in marriage,³ the uncle-niece

¹ *1 TJ*, like Yashar, identifies Sarah with Haran's younger daughter.

² *JA*, I, vi. 5, § 151. Here Sarah seems to be Haran's elder daughter.

³ Cf. *Lev.* xviii. 13. It is interesting to note that *DD*, v. 7-11 states that marriage between uncle and niece is equally forbidden. See *Discovery ...*, p. 163. Similar opposition seems to have been expressed by other Jewish groups. Cf. Ch. RABIN,

degree of kinship was not explicitly prohibited. It may be that Ps.-JONATHAN's interpretation of Genesis xx. 12, that Sarah was Abraham's cousin, was an attempt to satisfy everyone. Whether this is correct or not, the Yashar exegesis is at least as old as the first century AD.

ii. *Abraham's knowledge of God*

Sections 3, 4, and 5, describe Abraham's initiation into the monotheistic faith. According to Yashar, shortly before the time of Abraham the whole world turned to the worship of idols with the exception of Noah and his household. This apostasy from the worship of the one true God was followed by the arrogant attempt to build the city and tower of Babel.

Yashar is not alone in tracing the beginnings of idolatry to this period. JOSEPHUS, in a general statement, writes that polytheism was universal during the lifetime of the Patriarch.¹ Jubilees, on the other hand, records that the fabrication of molten and graven images started during the life of Serug, Abraham's great-grandfather, and that Abraham's grandfather was taught astrology.²

Genesis xi gives no indications of this kind. The building of the tower of Babel is presented there as a revolt against God, but no idolatry is mentioned. Nevertheless, to judge from the evidence of the Palestinian Targums, that enterprise was definitely thought to have been inspired by idolatrous worship.

Gen. xi. 4

Then they said: Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower, with its top in the heavens, and let us make a *name* for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

1TJ

They said: Come, let us build for ourselves a city and a tower, whose top will come near to the heavens, and let us make for ourselves an *idol*³ on its summit, and put a sword in its hand, that it may fight against the armies before we are scattered over the surface of the earth.

Qumran Studies, Oxford, 1957, pp. 91-93. It was also adopted by the Karaites. Cf. *Discovery...*, p. 103; S. SCHIECHTER, *Fragments of a Zadokite Work*, Cambridge, 1910, p. xviii; L. NEMOY, *Karaite Anthology*, New Haven, 1952, p. 50 (quoting Kirikani).

¹ Cf. *JA*, I, vii. 1, § 155.

² According to *LAB*, iv. 16, astrology began during the lifetime of Serug, but neither he nor his sons practised it.

³ The term employed is סִנְדֵּר, literally "idol worship", but the following sentence clearly shows that it is to be understood as "idol". 2TJ gives בֵּית סִנְדֵּר, but this is obviously wrong because of the mention of a sword in "its" hand. The tradition itself must have been founded on a reminiscence of the structure of Mesopota-

אל in the biblical text, is interpreted "idol", and this rendering is explicitly confirmed by Genesis Rabbah xxxviii. 8:

אל means nothing but an idol.¹

The antiquity of the interpretation is corroborated by Ps.-PHILO; indeed, LAB, vi. 2-4 is incomprehensible unless "nomina nostra" is taken to mean "our gods".

Et dixerunt unusquisque ad proximum suum: Accipiamus lapides et scribamus singuli quique *nomina nostra* in lapidibus et incendamus eos igne... Et acceperunt singuli quique lapides suos, extra viros duodecim, qui noluerunt accipere... Et comprehendit eos populus terre et adduxerunt eos ad principes suos, et dixerunt: Hi sunt viri qui transgressi sunt consilia nostra et nolunt ambulare in viis nostris. Et dixerunt ad eos duces: Quare noluistis mittere singuli quique lapides cum populo terre. Et illi responderunt dicentes: Non mittimus vobiscum lapides, nec coniungimur voluptati vestrae. Unum Dominum novimus, et ipsum adoramus.

As regards that particular form of apostasy from the Creator of the world represented by the worship of the stars and astrology, its practice in Mesopotamia in ancient times is unanimously attested in both Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism, as well as in classical literature. As dictionaries clearly show, astrology was called the "Chaldean science" and a "Chaldean" was an astrologer.

Again, Yashar follows an old midrashic tradition which can be traced back to the first century AD in ascribing to Nimrod the principal onus for the general abandonment of true religion.² In Ps.-PHILO too, he appears as the chief persecutor of the opponents of idolatry.³

Terah's adherence to idol worship is also a prominent feature of common tradition based on Joshua xxiv. 2. It is interesting to note that Ps.-PHILO (vi. 3) does not include his name among the twelve men who refused to abandon God.

mian temple towers, *ziggurat*, with the god's shrine and statue on the uppermost floor.

¹ Cf. also *Sanh.* 190a. In the post-biblical period, "name" was a substitution for "God". In the mind of the targumists and of the Tannaitic schools, therefore, "Let us make a *name* for ourselves" signified "Let us make a *god* for ourselves".

² This is based on a reinterpretation of *Gen.* x. 9: "He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord". In the Palestinian Targums, "hunter" is interpreted "rebel" or "sinner", and *Gen. R.*, xxxvii. 2 also understands "hunter" metaphorically: "He snared the people by their words". JOSEPHUS (*JA* I, iv. 2, §§ 113-114) represents Nimrod as the first atheist.

³ Cf. *LAB*, vi. 14. See also iv. 7.

Against this general religious background, the author of *Sefer ha-Yashar* obviously felt that the phenomenon of Abraham's monotheism needed some explanation. These he provides, but with some striking discrepancies. Nor is any attempt made to harmonize the three contradictory statements, viz., that Abraham was introduced to the knowledge of God at the age of three; that he was taught the knowledge of God and His ways in the house of Noah where he arrived when he was ten years old; and that he began by worshipping the sun and the moon, but was dissatisfied, and came to the conclusion that both were created objects.

Abram saw all the things which the Lord God had made in the world, and said in his heart: These are not the Deity which made all the earth and all mankind, but the servants of God.

These three points spring from two distinct currents of traditional belief. Abraham was either a worshipper of the true God from the beginning; or he was a convert.

As a matter of fact, the assumption that Abraham came to the knowledge of God when he was three years old appears to be the most recent interpretation. It is transmitted in the name of Simeon ben Lakish, an Amora of the second generation, in the third century AD. By means of *gematria* he understood "Because Abraham hearkened to my voice" (Gen. xxvi. 5) to mean that the Patriarch knew God for one hundred and seventy two years, since 172 is the numerical value of עקב, "because". Abraham died when he was one hundred and seventy five years old, so this does indeed imply that he arrived at his knowledge at the age of three.¹ It also implies that he received it from within the family circle.

To the same current of belief belongs the story of Abraham's religious education in the house of Noah and Shem. Notwithstanding the absence of direct parallels in Jewish writings, it appears to result from the tradition that true religion was preserved, and transmitted, by a few faithful men even during those sinful times. Ps.-PHILO, for instance, writes of the families of Serug and Joktan that they continued to serve God even after the apostasy of the masses.² He writes that when Abraham refused to associate with idol-worshippers, he was followed by eleven companions, five of whom were the sons of

¹ Cf. *Gen. R.*, xciv. 3; *Song R.*, v. 16, § 1. This exegesis may, of course, be an attempt to provide a tradition received by Simeon b. Lakish with scriptural evidence.

² Cf. *LAB*, iv. 6; vi. 6.

Joktan.¹ It is also worth mentioning here that according to R. Berekiah, an Amora of the fourth century, Abraham sent Isaac to Shem in order to study the Torah,² which would imply that the Patriarch owed his own knowledge of God to the same "school".

By contrast to this tradition crediting Abraham with belief in God from the beginning, the greater number of sources represent him as a convert. In the Book of Jubilees, his early idolatry, though taken for granted, is glossed over, and the emphasis is laid on his discovery of God.

And the child began to understand the errors of the earth, that all went astray after graven images, and after uncleanness; and his father taught him writing. And he was two weeks of years old, and he separated himself from his father that he might not worship idols with him. And he began to pray to the Creator of all things that he might save him from the errors of the children of men, and that his portion should not fall into error after uncleanness and vileness.³

JOSEPHUS attributes Abraham's conversion to his great intelligence:

He was a man of ready intelligence in all matters... 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, creator of the universe, is one.⁴

Yashar's assertion that Abraham adhered to astral worship before his discovery of God also has its parallels, but it was an idea so scandalous to pious Jews that there was a definite effort to minimise it. Nevertheless, he is known in all sections of Judaism as an astrologer.

For PHILO, Abraham's conversion from astrology to faith in the God-Creator symbolizes the passage of man's mind from the visible to the invisible order. The Patriarch's adherence to astrology, considered by this writer as being strictly opposed to monotheism, is thought by him to have resulted from Abraham's upbringing within an idolatrous environment. It is this basic assumption, not its allegorical development, which concerns the present enquiry.

The migrations as set forth by the literal text of the scriptures are made by a man of wisdom, but according to the laws of allegory by a virtue-loving soul in its search for the true God. For the Chaldeans

¹ Cf. LAB, vi. 3; xxiii. 5.

² Cf. Gen. R., lvi. 11. See also ITJ on Gen. xxii. 19, where angels are supposed to have brought Isaac to the school of Shem.

³ Jub., xi. 16-17.

⁴ JA, I, vii. 1, §§ 154-155.

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. Thus 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, and beginning to see the pure beam instead of the deep darkness, he followed the ray, and discerned what he had not beheld before, a charioteer and pilot presiding over the world and directing in safety his own work... And so to establish more firmly in his understanding the sight which had been revealed to him, the Holy Word follows it up by saying to him, "Friend ... Dismiss, then, the rangers of the heavens and the science of Chaldea, and depart for a short time from the greatest of cities, this world, to the lesser, and thus you will be better able to apprehend the overseer of the All."¹

Furthermore, PHILO thinks the ~~change of name~~ from Abram to Abraham to be "a change of great importance".²

The former signified one called astrologer and meteorologist, one who takes care of the Chaldean tenets as a father would of his children: the latter signified a sage.³

While PHILO, like Yashar, distinguishes astrology from true religion, the Palestinian Jews are, on the whole, less severe. They never encourage astrology, but neither do they consider it a denial of belief in God. They do nothing to suppress the tradition that Abraham was an expert astrologer, but merely regard his activities in this sphere as slightly doubtful. On the other hand, the Jewish Hellenists support the Patriarch wholeheartedly, and find his astrological prowess splendid and praiseworthy.

The views of the Hellenistic writers are known through ALEXANDER POLYHISTOR's book, *Περὶ Ἰουδαίων*. This was compiled in the first half of the first century BC, and important extracts from it are incorporated into the ninth book of the *Preparatio Evangelica* of EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA. The author cites EUPOLEMUS and ARTAPANUS as honouring Abraham for the invention of astrology and the teaching of this ~~science~~ to the Phoenicians and Egyptians.

¹ Cf. *De Abrahamo*, xv, §§ 68-71.

² *Ibid.*, xviii, § 81.

³ *Ibid.*, §§ 82-83.

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Eupolemus says that Abraham was born in Camarina, a city of Babylonia, called by some Ura, and by the Greeks, Chaldeopolis. He surpassed all in nobility and wisdom. He also invented astrology and the Chaldean science, and by his pursuit of piety he pleased God. After transferring his domicile to Phoenicia by Divine command, he taught the Phoenicians the movements of the sun, and the moon, and all things of this kind, so that their king was very pleased.¹ *Abn 213*

Artapanus writes that Abraham went together with his whole family, to Pharethon, king of the Egyptians, and taught him astrology.²

Finally, JOSEPHUS quotes Berosus as evidence of Abraham's fame among the Gentiles:

Berosus mentions our father Abraham without naming him, in these terms: In the tenth generation after the Flood, there lived among the Chaldeans a just man and great, and versed in celestial lore.³

A critical attitude towards astrology first appears in the Book of Jubilees. Its author, who doubtless held the same opinion as the writer of the Book of Enoch concerning the ungodly origin of the science of the stars,⁴ 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.

Abraham sat up throughout the night of the new moon of the seventh month⁵ to observe the stars from the evening to the morning, in order to see what would be the character of the year with regard to the rains; and he was alone as he sat and observed. And a word came into his heart, and he said: All the signs of the stars, and the signs of the moon, and of the sun, are all in the hand of the Lord. Why do I search them out? If He desires, He causes it to rain morning and evening; and if He desires, he withholds it, and all things are in His hand.⁶

The source of the midrashic tradition concerning Abraham's interest in the stars is Genesis xv. Verse 3 is interpreted by Genesis Rabbah xliv. 10, as follows:

¹ Cf. *Praep. Ev.*, ix. 17, 3-4. This text is ascribed not to Eupolemus but to an anonymous second century BC writer by F. JACOBY, in *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*, Dritter Teil, C, No 724, Leiden, 1958, p. 678.

² Cf. *ibid.*, ix. 18, 1. ARTAPANUS also refers to books of unknown authorship as containing the same assertion.

³ *JA*, I, vii. 2, § 158. Cf. also I, viii. 2. §§ 166-168: Abraham taught arithmetic and knowledge of the stars to the Egyptians.

⁴ Cf. *En.*, viii. 3.

⁵ I.e. the Jewish New Year.

⁶ *Jub.*, xii. 16-18.

Abraham said: My astral fate oppresses me because it declares that Abraham cannot beget a son.

Again, in Exodus Rabbah xxxviii. 6, God answers Abraham's complaint about his childlessness:

So you are afraid of the planets? As certainly as you live, it will be as impossible to count your descendants as it is to number the stars in heaven.

With regard to Genesis xv. 5, "Look now towards the heavens", the Rabbis find it necessary to specify that Abraham was commanded to do so as a prophet, and not as an astrologer, because in the language of the Midrash the phrase "to look into the heavens" implies the practice of astrology.

The Torah cannot be found among astrologers, whose work is to look into the heavens.¹

It is apparent from this historical survey that both explanations given in Sefer ha-Yashar concerning the origin of Abraham's monotheism are based on old traditions. Ps.-PHILO indicates his belief in the Patriarch's continuous adherence to God from his childhood, and Jubilees, PHILO, and JOSEPHUS, testify to his conversion. This conversion caused him to abandon either idolatry (Jubilees), or astrology (PHILO), and of the two alternatives, PHILO's exposition appears to be representative of the most ancient tradition. Indeed, even those writers to refuse to record it plainly, feel nevertheless obliged to mention the Patriarch's sympathy for astrology, not only before, but also after his conversion. The Hellenists even go so far as to honour Abraham for the invention of astrology, with the intention of convincing the Gentiles that the benefits of this much appreciated "science" were due to a Jew.² Eventually, however, doctrinal reaction against astrology led to the elimination of the story of Abraham's conversion.

This change in doctrinal attitude may, therefore, be partly responsible for the exegetical variations, but a real and adequate understanding of the discrepancies is impossible without sufficient knowledge of their origin. In fact, the question of doctrinal option for or against astrology is preceded by a purely exegetical problem; namely, whether

¹ Cf. *Deut. R.*, viii. 6.

² For the same reason, Eupolemus and Artapanus present Moses as the greatest inventor of all time. According to them, he was the inventor of the alphabetic script adopted by the Phoenicians and the Greeks (Eupolemus), and of the Egyptians hieroglyphs, philosophy, etc., (Artapanus). Cf. *Præp. Ev.*, ix. 26. 1 and 29. 4. See also my *La figure de Moïse...*, pp. 68-69.

Abraham was, or was not, a convert. As biblical scholars have already noted,¹ when, in Genesis xii, God first addresses the Patriarch, Abraham appears already to know Him. This previous knowledge of God may derive from tradition or discovery, or from a special divine revelation. The latter is never envisaged, doubtless on the assumption that such an event would have been recorded in Scripture. The remaining alternative depends on whether Joshua xxiv. 2 is, or is not, taken into account. If it is accepted, the ground is prepared for the haggadah on Abraham's conversion. If it is ignored, the theory of a traditional transmission of the true religion is adopted instead.

Such appears to be the history and prehistory of the exegetical traditions relating to Abraham's knowledge of God. So far as their prehistory is concerned, the foremost result of this analysis has been the discovery of the chief preoccupation of the Midrash. Before any other consideration, homiletical or doctrinal, the task of the interpreter was to solve problems raised by the Bible itself.

iii. *Abraham's fight against idolatry*

Yashar presents Abraham as the first and most resolute opponent of the worship of "other gods". His zeal for the Lord was manifested by the destruction of his father's statues, and by his polemics against idolatry addressed to both Terah² and Nimrod.

Terah's religious attitude is, in the eyes of the author, thoroughly incoherent. On the one hand, he seems to believe that one of his idols is the Creator of the world: "Behold he who created all this is with us in the house". On the other, he is well aware that these same statues have no power whatsoever: "Are there spirit and soul in these gods...? Are they not wood and stone? It is I who made them". The inference is that Terah's beliefs must be based either on stupidity or, which is worse, bad faith.

In this judgment of idolatry, Yashar, in fact, reflects the common Jewish attitude. From biblical times it was held that only fools could imagine God to be a wooden or stone image;³ perhaps this would explain why idolatry was rarely imputed, as in the Apocalypse of

¹ Cf. e.g., J. STARCKY, *Abraham et l'histoire*, in *Abraham, Père des croyants*, Paris, 1951, p. 24.

² According to *Jub.*, xii. 8, Abraham also admonished his two brothers, but they did not listen to him.

³ The idea that such images should be merely symbols seems never to have occurred to Jewish teachers.

Abraham,¹ to stupidity alone. Usually, other motives were added, such as self-interest, or fear.² In Terah's case, midrashic literature suggests the first motive by introducing Terah as a maker and merchant of idols.³ Though well aware that the work of his hands was not God, it was obviously of vital importance to him, as also to the priests engaged in idol worship, to defend and maintain their religion most vigorously.⁴ The author of Jubilees, conscious of the part played by fear in the apostasy of the Jews during the time of the Hellenistic crisis, imputes this emotion to Terah. Admonished by his son to abandon idolatry, which is vain and useless, he declares: "I also know it my son, but what shall I do with a people who have made me to serve before them? And if I tell them the truth, they will slay me, for their soul cleaves to them to worship them and honour them. Keep silent my son, lest they slay you".⁵

The story of the destruction of Terah's idols is borrowed by Yashar from a haggadah figuring also in Genesis Rabbah xxxviii. 19, but the tradition itself must have originated in the second century BC since it is found already in Jubilees:

And in the sixtieth year of the life of Abraham... Abraham arose by night and burned all that was in the house.⁶

Yashar's presentation of Abraham's polemics against idolatry follows the popular traditional pattern described above. A more subtle refutation by Abraham of a particular form of "idolatry", viz. philosophical pantheism, appears only in the works of PHILO and JOSEPHUS.

It should be remembered that in the Hellenistic world, and especially in Stoic circles, there was widespread belief in the divine character of the universe; no distinction was made between God and creation. It was held to be one living Being moved by a divine *Logos*, or *anima mundi*,⁷ specially present in the stars. The Stoic sage was full of admiration for its beauty and harmony, and desired above all to conform to the will of the World-God.

By means of a patent anachronism, both PHILO and JOSEPHUS depict

¹ Cf. G. H. Box, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*. London, 1918.

² For Jewish polemics against idolatry, see A. MARMORSTEIN, *Studies in Jewish Theology*, Oxford, 1950, pp. 75-93.

³ Cf. *Gen. R.*, xxxviii. 19; *Yalk.*, I, § 62.

⁴ Cf. *Acts* xix. 23 f.

⁵ *Jub.*, xii. 6-8.

⁶ *Jub.*, xii. 12.

⁷ Cf. A. J. FESTUGIÈRE, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. II, *Le Dieu Cosmique*, Paris, 1949, p. 537.

Abraham as a convert from this philosophy. PHILO describes him as the first man to have discarded astral determinism and, from a consideration of the harmony of the universe, to have reached a belief in the existence of a transcendent Organiser, a God-Creator. Discovering this, he ceased to be an astrologer.¹

JOSEPHUS, in his turn, ascribes to Abraham an argument against the divinity of the universe based on the absence of harmony in the world and the observable irregularity of the movements of the stars:

He was the first boldly to declare that God, the Creator of the universe, is one, in 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 the sun and the moon and from all the celestial phenomena; for, he argued, were these bodies endowed with power, they would have provided for their own regularity, but, since they lack 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 homage and thanksgiving.²

Finally it must be said that, whatever their other divergencies, both branches of Jewish tradition, the popular as represented by *Sefer ha-Yashar*, and the philosophical, agree in this: namely, that Abraham battled against idolatry, and that his fight was a solitary one exposing him to considerable danger.

iv. Abraham in the fiery furnace

Because of his opposition to idolatry Abraham was condemned to be cast into the fire of a brick kiln, but was miraculously delivered by God. The bulk of this *Yashar* story of Abraham's ordeal, and also of the death of Haran in the flames, is common tradition in Rabbinic literature.³ *Genesis Rabbah* records the dispute ending with Abraham's death sentence as follows:

Terah seized Abraham and delivered him to Nimrod. Nimrod said: Let us worship the fire! Abraham answered: Let us rather worship the water which extinguishes the fire! Nimrod said: Then let us worship the

¹ Cf. *De Abrahamo* xv. § 70, quoted above p. 79. See also FESTUGIÈRE, *op. cit.*, pp. 567-572.

² *J/A*, I, vii. 1, §§ 155-156.

³ Only the features connected with the *Yashar* legend of the birth of Abraham, viz., the intervention of the magicians and the denunciation of Haran, are without parallel.

omnes ad duces suos dixerunt: Fugerunt homines quos inclusisti, evadentes consilium nostrum. Et dixit Fenech et Nebroth ad Iectam: Ubi sunt viri quos inclusisti? At ille dixit: Frangentes fregerunt noctu; ego autem misi centum viros qui quererent eos, et precepi ut si invenirent eos, non tantum igni concremarent, sed corpora eorum darent volatilibus celi; et sic perdant illos. Et tunc dixerunt illi: Hunc qui inventus est solus, congregamus eum. Et acceperunt Abram, et adduxerunt eum ad duces suos. Et dixerunt ad eum: Ubi sunt qui tecum fuerunt? Et ille dixit: Ego nocte dormiens dormiebam, ubi expefactus sum non inveni eos. Et accipientes eum, construxerunt caminum et incenderunt eum igni. Et lapides concrematis igni miserunt in caminum. Et tunc Iectam dux liquefactus sensu accepit Abram, et misit eum cum lateribus in caminum ignis. Deus autem commovit terre motum grandem, et ebulliens ignis de camino exilivit in flammam et scintillas flammæ; et combussit omnes circumstantes in conspectu camini. Et fuerunt omnes qui concremati sunt in die illa LXXXIII D. Abrae autem non est quidem modica facta lesura concrematione ignis. Et surrexit Abram de camino, et concidit caminus ignis. Et salvatus est Abram, et abiit ad undecim viros qui erant absconditi in montanis, et renunciavit eis omnia que contigerant illi. Et ascenderunt cum eo de montanis gaudentes in nomine Domini, et nemo eos obvians terruit die illa. Et cognominaverunt locum illum nomine Abrae et linguae Chaldeorum Deli, quod interpretatur Deus.¹

Ps.-PHILO's account not only demonstrates the antiquity of this tradition, but points also to the origin of the haggadah.

At first sight, the whole midrash appears to be built on popular etymology. By interpreting אור as "fire", ancient commentators of Genesis xv. 7 ("I am the Lord who brought you out of אור of the Chaldees") created a legend out of a pun.² Beyond this play on words, however, there are possible links between the scriptural basis cited above and other biblical passages. From among these, R. BLOCH selects Isaiah xxix. 22 and Daniel iii (the story of the three young men in the fiery furnace).³

These observations need further attention. To begin with, the exegetical association between Genesis xv. 7 and Daniel iii is not mere hypothesis, as Genesis Rabbah xlv. 13 demonstrates:

¹ The Hebrew translation of LAB, partially preserved in manuscript in the Bodleian Library (Ms. Heb. d. 11) gives for the complicated Latin just אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם (f° 25a, last line). Thus, "God of Abraham" became the name of the Patriarch's former hiding place. According to Nicolas of Damascus, cited by JOSEPHUS in JA, I, vii. 2, § 160, "the name of Abram is still venerated in the region of Damascus, and a village is shown that is called after him Abram's abode".

² Cf. I. HEINEMANN, דרכי האגדה, Jerusalem, 1949, p. 18.

³ Cf. *Ecriture et Tradition dans le Judaïsme*, in CS, viii, 1954, p. 29, n. 62.

R. Liezer b. Jacob said: Michael descended and rescued Abraham from the fiery furnace. The Rabbis said: The Holy One, blessed be He, rescued him, as it is written: "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur (i.e. the fire) of the Chaldees". When did Michael descend? In the case of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

The haggadah of Abraham in the fiery furnace does not therefore originate from a verbal pun, but from the reinterpretation of one scriptural passage by another.

Further consideration of the scriptural context and of pre-Rabbinic sources brings to light another, even more primitive, motive for the creation of this haggadah. Since none is furnished by Genesis, some reason had to be found for Abraham's migration from Chaldea to Haran. *Ps.-PHILO* plainly states that this was due to the fact that his life was endangered because of his religious faith. *Jubilees* and *JOSEPHUS* infer this to be the reason also, although neither of them mentions the haggadah of the fiery furnace. In *Jubilees*, for instance, the story of the burning of the temple of idols by Abraham is immediately followed by an account of Terah's departure:

And in the sixtieth year of the life of Abram... Abram rose by night, and burned the house of the idols, and he burned all that was in the house, and no man knew it. And they arose in the night and sought to save their gods from the midst of the fire. And Haran hastened to save them, but the fire flamed over him and he was burnt in the fire, and he died in Ur of the Chaldees before Terah his father, and they buried him in Ur of the Chaldees. And Terah went forth from Ur of the Chaldees, he and his sons, to go into the land of Lebanon and into the land of Canaan, and he dwelt in the land of Haran.¹

JOSEPHUS writes:

It was in fact owing to these opinions (concerning God) that the *Chaldeans* and other peoples of Mesopotamia rose against him.²

Taking into account the biblical context as a whole, the legend of the fiery furnace establishes a definite link between the brick kiln used for the baking of the materials needed in the construction of the Tower of Babel, the deliverance of Abraham by God (*Gen xv* and *Is. xxix*), and his flight abroad. Yet here as elsewhere, the midrash has also a doctrinal purpose, namely, the exaltation of the saving virtue of faith

¹ *Jub.*, xii. 12-15. It should be noted that the tradition of the death of Haran by fire goes back to *Jubilees*.

² *JA*, I, vii. 1, § 157. This is an explanation for the departure of Abraham from Haran, but the Chaldeans must have been mentioned purposely. The loss of the lamented Haran is given as Terah's motive for leaving Ur. Cf. *ibid.*, I, vi. 5, § 152.

water! Abraham replied: Let us rather worship the clouds which carry the water! Nimrod said: Then let us worship the clouds! Abraham answered: Let us rather worship the wind which disperses the clouds! Nimrod said: Then let us worship the wind! Abraham said: Let us rather worship man who stands up to the wind! Nimrod said: This is but empty argument. We worship only fire, so I will cast you into it, and may the God whom you worship come and deliver you out of it.¹

The Genesis Rabbah account of the episode of the fiery furnace reads:

Haran stood there undecided. He thought: If Abraham triumphs, I will say that I am on his side; but if Nimrod triumphs, I will say that I am on his side. After Abram had descended into the fiery furnace and had been saved, Haran was asked: On whose side are you? He replied: On Abram's side. Thereupon they seized him and cast him into the fire so that his inward parts were burnt and he died before his father.²

The antiquity of this tradition has been questioned by R. H. CHARLES because of the silence of Jubilees.³ This great scholar appears to have overlooked Ps.-PHILO's version of the story. I give it here in its entirety,⁴ despite its length, because of its great importance in the matter of dating this tradition.

Refusing to abandon God,⁵ Abraham and his companions have to face their accusers:

Et comprehendit eos populus terre et adduxerunt eos ad principes suos, et dixerunt: Hi sunt viri qui transgressi sunt consilia nostra et nolunt ambulare in viis nostris. Et dixerunt ad eos duces: Quare nolulistis mittere singuli quique lapides cum populo terre? Et illi responderunt dicentes: Non mittimus vobiscum lapides, nec coniungimur voluptati vestrae. Unum Dominum novimus, et ipsum adoramus. Et si nos mittatis in ignem cum lapidibus vestris, non consencimus vobis. Et irati duces dixerunt: Sicut locuti sunt, sic eis facite. Et nisi consenserint vobiscum mittere lapides, consumetis eos igne cum lapidibus vestris. Et respondit Ictam, qui erat primus princeps ducum: Non sic sed dabitur eis spacium dierum septem, et erit si penituerint super conciliis suis pessimis, et voluerint vobiscum mittere lapides, vivant. Si quominus fiat, et secundum sententiam vestram tunc

¹ *Gen. R.*, xxxviii. 13.

² *Gen. R.*, *ibid.* Cf. *ITJ* on *Gen.* xi. 28. An abridged version of the legend may be found in *Neofiti*: Haran died during the life of Terah his father, in his homeland, in the fiery furnace (באתון נורהו) of the Chaldeans.

³ Cf. *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. ii, Oxford, 1913, p. 30.

⁴ *LAB*, vi. 4-18.

⁵ Cf. above, pp. 76.

comburantur. Ipse autem querebat quemadmodum salvaret eos de manibus populi, quoniam de tribu eorum erat, et Deo serviebat. Et his dictis, suscepit eos et inclusit in domo regia. Et ut factum est vespera, precepit dux L viros potentes in virtute vocari ad se, et dixit eis: Proficiscimini et accipite hac nocte viros istos qui inclusi sunt in domo mea et imponite stipendia eorum super decem iumenta, et ipsos viros adducite ad me, et stipendia eorum cum iumentis adducite in montana, et sustinete eos ibidem. Et scitote quia si quis scierit que dixi ad vos, igni vos concremabo. Et profecti viri, fecerunt omnia que precepit eis princeps eorum. Et adduxerunt viros a domo eius noctu, at accipientes stipendia imposuerunt iumentis, et duxerunt eos in montana sicut precepit eis. Et vocavit ad se princeps illos duodecim viros, et dixit ad eos: Confidentes estote et non timeatis, non enim moriemini. Fortis est enim Deus in quo confiditis, et ideo stabiles estote in ipso, quia liberabit et salvabit vos. Et ecce nunc precepi L viris qui vos educant, acceptis stipendiis de domo mea. Et precedite in montana et sustinete vos in valle, et alios dabo vobis L viros qui deducant vos usque illuc. Et euntes abscondite vos ibidem in valle, habentes aquam in potu defluentem de petris et continete vos usque in dies triginta, donec pauset animositas populi terre, et quousque Deus mittat iracundiam super illos et dirumpat eos. Scio enim quia non permanebit consilium iniquitatis, quod consiliati sunt facere, quoniam vana est cogitatio eorum. Et erit cum consummati fuerint septem dies, et quesierint vos, dicam eis: Exeuntes et fracto ostio carceris, in quo erant inclusi, fugerunt nocte, et misi centum viros qui eos querebant, et avocabo eos a presenti furore. Et responderunt ad eum undecim viri dicentes: Invenerunt gratiam servi tui ante oculos tuos, quia solvimur nos de manibus superbiorum horum. Abram autem solus tacuit. Et dixit dux ad eum: Quare non respondis michi Abram serve Dei? Respondit Abram et dixit: Ecce ego fugio hodie in montana, et si evasero ignem, exient de montibus fere bestie et comedent nos, aut esce nobis deficient et moriemur fame et inveniatur fugientes ante populum terre, cadentes in peccatis nostris. Et nunc vivit in quo confido, quia non movebor de loco meo in quo posuerunt me. Et si fuerit aliquod peccatum meum ut consumens consumar, fiat voluntas Dei. Et dixit ad eum dux: Sanguis tuus super caput tuum sit, si nolueris proficisci cum istis; si autem volueris liberaberis. Nam si volueris remanere, secundum quod vis remane. Et dixit Abram: Non proficiscar, sed hic ero. Et accepit dux undecim illos viros, et alios L misit cum eis, et precepit eis dicens: Expectate et vos in montanis usque in dies XV cum illis L qui premissi sunt, et post revertemini et dicetis: Non invenimus eos sicut illis prioribus dixi; et sciatis quia si quis preterierit ex his omnibus verbis que locutus sum ad vos, igne comburetur. Et profectis viris, accipiens Abram solum, reclusit eum ubi fuerat inclusus. Et transactis diebus septem congregatus est populus, et dixerunt ad ducem suum dicentes: Redde nobis viros qui noluerunt consiliari nobiscum, et comburemus eos igni. Et miserunt duces qui adducerent eos, et non invenerunt nisi solum Abram. Et congregati

(Abraham *versus* Haran). Here Daniel iii is the main source, and in this respect Yashar follows Daniel even more closely than the other versions because, like Nabuchadnezzar, Nimrod is forced to recognize for a time the God of Israel.¹

From the point of view of dating, the *terminus a quo* for the legend of the fiery furnace is the Book of Daniel, and the *terminus ad quem*, Ps.-PHILO, i.e., roughly the period between 150 BC and 50 AD.

v. *The Infancy Story of Abraham*

The Yashar legend of Abraham's birth and of his introduction to the knowledge of God in the house of Noah has no parallel either in the pseudepigrapha or in midrashic literature. Nevertheless, a thorough examination of ancient sources shows that even in his "creative" work – to be distinguished from his activities as a collector of traditions – the author either uses traditional material (Noah the teacher), or follows a traditional literary pattern (Infancy Stories).

The Noah episode demands little comment. The biblical hero of the Flood, like his Mesopotamian counterpart Utnapishtim, is known as the transmitter of antediluvian wisdom. According to Jubilees, he handed down to his sons the books of his ancestor Enoch and also his own writings.² In short, if Abraham had required a teacher,³ no better persons could have been found to initiate him into the true knowledge of God than Noah and Shem his son.⁴

Infancy stories, on the other hand, belong to a well-defined class of midrashic literature. Ancient writers were persuaded that the birth and childhood of figures prominent in the history of salvation were surrounded by miraculous signs and marvellous events such as light phenomena, dreams, etc. None of these, beyond the miraculous bird-scaring activities of his boyhood related in Jubilees,⁵ are recorded

¹ This alleged temporary conversion of Nimrod obliges the author of *Yashar* to invent a new plot against the life of Abraham in order to explain his exodus from Ur to Haran.

² Cf. *Jub.*, x. 14; xxi. 10. The relationship between Enoch and Noah is the subject of an excellent study by P. GRELOT: *La légende d'Hénoch dans les apocryphes et dans la Bible*, in *RSeR.*, 46, 1958, pp. 5-26.

³ According to Rabbi Joshua b. Perahiah (cca 100 BC), one of the great obligations of a Jew is to have a teacher. Cf. *Pirke Aboth*, i. 6.

⁴ Cf. *Jub.*, x. 14.

⁵ "A cloud of ravens came to devour the seed and Abram ran to meet them before they settled on the ground and cried to them... and said: Descend not. Return to the place whence you came. And they proceeded to turn back. And he caused the cloud of ravens to turn back that day seventy times, and of all the ravens throughout all the land where Abram was, there settled there not so much

concerning Abraham except in Sefer ha-Yashar, although such facts or events are mentioned in other documents with regard to Noah and Elijah, and especially to Moses and Jesus. The use of the Matthean infancy story is justified from the point of view of method because of its undeniable connection with the haggadah of the birth and childhood of Moses.¹

I will endeavour now to confront the principal features of the Yashar story of the birth of Abraham with parallel features in other infancy stories. These have four main themes:

- 1) a miraculous sign,
- 2) its interpretation,
- 3) the condemnation to death of the new-born child,
- 4) the deliverance of the child.

1. *A miraculous sign*

In writings prior to Yashar, miraculous phenomena are associated, as has been said, with the birth of Noah, Moses, Elijah and Jesus. Either the place of birth is said to have been filled with light, or a star is believed to have heralded the arrival into the world of the new elect.

The light which shone at the birth of Noah is mentioned in the Book of Enoch, and in a fragment from the first cave of Qumran. The former tells the following story:

as one. And all who were with him throughout all the land saw him cry out, and all the ravens turn back, and his name became great in all the land of the Chaldees." *Jub.*, xi. 19-21.

¹ For the haggadah of the birth of Moses in Jewish literature, see the present writer's *La figure de Moïse...*, pp. 89-90, and also R. BLOCH's *Quelques aspects de la figure de Moïse dans la littérature rabbinique*, in *Moïse...*, pp. 102-118. Renée BLOCH also discusses the link between this haggadah and the First Gospel (pp. 161-166), and concludes that in the first two chapters the Evangelist had the midrashic story of the birth of Moses constantly in mind with the aim of describing Jesus as the New Moses, the New Saviour of Israel, within the general expectation of a New Exodus. For P. WINTER, the emphasis in this Infancy Gospel is rather on the New Law-Giver, to replace the more primitive apocalyptic conception of Jesus as the man appointed by God to judge a corrupted age. To effect this transformation, Matthew used the legends of Moses to bring into relief the concept of the Giver of the New Law. Cf. *Jewish Folklore in the Matthean Birth Story*, in *Hibbert Journal*, liii, 1954-55, pp. 34-42, especially pp. 35, 42. D. DAUBE's hypothesis that Jewish literature contains traces of a legendary conception independent of human agency and that the child may well have been Moses, is built on a chain of conjectures (a conjectural interpretation of the obscure *Ex.* ii. 25 by means of an equally obscure midrashic explanation). Cf. *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, London, 1956, pp. 5-9.

And after some days, my son Methuselah took a wife for his son Lamech, and she became pregnant by him and bore a son (Noah). And his body was white as snow and red as the blooming of a rose... And when he opened his eyes, he lighted up the whole house like the sun, and the whole house was very bright.¹

The Dead Sea fragment reads:

He lighted the chambers of the house like the rays of the sun.²

A similar tradition is reported in Rabbinic literature of the birth of Moses:

R. Amram in the name of Rab said: Miriam prophesied, "My mother shall bear a son who shall save Israel". And when, at the birth of Moses, the house was flooded with light, her father arose and kissed her head, saying: "My daughter, your prophecy is fulfilled".³

As regards Elijah, the various recensions of *Vitae Prophetarum*⁴ recount a dream in which Sobak saw his son clothed in garments of fire and fed with flames:

Sobak, his father, saw in a vision that radiant men greeted Elijah, and enveloped him with fire, and gave him flames of fire to eat.⁵

The canonical Gospels make no mention of the new-born Jesus having lighted the place of his birth, but this Jewish theme, with only slight modifications, found its way into the second century Proto-Evangelium of James (xix. 2):

And they (Joseph and the midwife) stood in the place of the cave. And behold, a bright cloud overshadowing the cave. And the midwife said: My soul is magnified this day because my eyes have seen marvellous things; for salvation is born to Israel. And immediately the cloud

¹ *Enoch* cvi. 1-2.

² Cf. BARTHÉLEMY-MILIK, *Qumran Cave I*. Oxford, 1955, p. 85, n. 3. To judge from the preserved text of *Genesis Apocryphon*, col. ii, the lost end of the preceding column appears to have contained the same tradition.

³ *Ex. R.*, i. 22. Cf. *Sotah* 13a; *Meg.*, 14a; etc.

⁴ Cf. Th. SCHERMANN, *Propheten- und Apostellegenden*, in *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*. Leipzig, 1907, 31 Band, Heft 3. For the Jewish sources of this Christian work, see *ibid.*, § 40: *Verhältnis der vitae prophetarum zur jüdischen Literatur*, pp. 118-126. The Elijah account reveals its Jewish background by ascribing to the prophet a priestly character. Thus, *1TJ* on *Num.* xxv. 12, *PRE*, xlvi, etc., identify Elijah with the grandson of Aaron, Phinehas. Cf. L. GINZBERG, art. *Elijah*, in *Jew. Enc.*, vol. v, p. 122. The same tradition is known to *LAB*, xlvi. 1. Cf. A. SPIRO, *The Ascension of Phinehas*, in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, vol. xxii, 1953, pp. 91-114. "At the end of his earthly career... he (Phinehas) was transformed into the immortal Elijah" (p. 114).

⁵ Cf. SCHERMANN, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

withdrew itself out of the cave, and a great light appeared in the cave, so that our eyes could not endure it. And little by little that light withdrew itself until the young child appeared.¹

Another kind of heavenly sign, the appearance of a new star announcing to astrologers the birth of a great man, is common to Yashar and to the First Gospel. Secondary divergencies in these parallel accounts do not obscure the more essential characteristics which they exhibit in common.²

2. *The interpretations of the miraculous signs*

The miraculous signs which, in the infancy stories, accompany the birth of great men, are deciphered for the benefit of the reigning king by wise men, and usually by professional sages, i.e., astrologers, dream-interpreters, or appointed commentators of sacred writings.³

This particular theme may be traced to the haggadah of the birth of Moses. The legend results from an attempt to explain Pharaoh's decree that every boy born in Israel should be killed. The reason given is that he wished to put to death the one destined to deliver the nation, and of whose imminent birth he had foreknowledge. This midrashic tradition is preserved in two versions, the Palestinian haggadah (Targum and Midrash) and JOSEPHUS.

Ps.-JONATHAN on Exodus i. 15 probably gives the oldest version:

Pharaoh said that while he slept he saw a dream; and behold, the whole land of Egypt was in one scale of a balance and a lamb (טליא), the little one of a ewe, was in the other scale, and the scale holding the lamb weighed down. Immediately he sent to call all the magicians of Egypt, and repeated to them his dream. Immediately Yanis and Yimbres, the chief magicians,⁴ opened their mouths and said to Pharaoh: A son (בר)⁵ is about to be born in the congregation of Israel, by whose hand the whole land of Egypt will be ruined.

¹ Cf. M. R. JAMES, *The Apocryphal New Testament*. Oxford, 1924, p. 46.

² Thus, the star of the Magi heralds the forthcoming birth of Jesus; the star of Abraham shines in the night after he was born.

³ Sometimes the parents are told of their son's destiny. Noah's future is revealed by Enoch; Elijah's, by the priests and prophets of Jerusalem; Moses's by the prophecy of Miriam (*LAB*, ix. 10, *Mekb.*, ii, p. 81), or by a dream of Amram (*JA*, II, ix. 3, §§ 212-216). Jesus's destiny is foretold to Joseph by an angel in a dream (*Mt.* i. 20), and to Mary by Gabriel (*Lk.* i. 26-35).

⁴ The most comprehensive list of the numerous sources, Jewish and Christian, in which these two characters appear, is to be found in R. BLOCH, *art. cit.*, in *Moïse*, p. 105, n. 21.

⁵ In Palestinian Aramaic, the word טליא is used for both "son" and "lamb". Cf. the similar employment of "kid" in English. This explains why Pharaoh's vision

With slight variations, the same midrashic theme appears in both Yashar (astrologers) and Matthew (Magi).¹

3. *The condemnation to death*

The royal decree by which the future saviour is sentenced to death is the next common feature of the infancy stories. The principal differences lies in the fact that whereas in the Yashar legend of Abraham Nimrod knew that the child to be killed was the son of Terah, the identity of Moses and Jesus was unknown to Pharaoh and Herod.

4. *The deliverance*

Finally, the condemned child is saved, either by the intervention of Providence (Moses and Jesus), or by the rather immoral stratagem devised by Terah.

It is worth noting that the subsequent discovery of Abraham's identity by the magicians during the episode of the fiery furnace is also not wholly unparalleled. In the Gospel of Nicodemus, or Acts of Pilate, Jesus is denounced to the governor as the person to whom the Magi brought gifts and Herod sought to kill.

of a "lamb" is interpreted as "son". This text from *1TJ* has not been considered, so far as I am aware, by those scholars who have conjectured that an Aramaic phrase underlies the Greek $\delta \lambda\alpha\mu\beta\acute{o}\varsigma \tau\omicron\upsilon \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ in *Jn. i. 29*. According to one of the latest exponent of this hypothesis, J. JEREMIAS, "Lamb of God" derives from **טליא דאלהא** which, in its turn, is the equivalent of "Servant of God". This interpretation in two phases is rendered necessary by a "factual difficulty", viz. that the image of a lamb symbolizing a Saviour, is unknown in Judaism. Cf. W. ZIMMERLI-J. JEREMIAS, *The Servant of God*, London, 1957, pp. 82f. – It is not my intention to discuss here this question, or the validity of the above mentioned hypothesis. I wish only to point out that, should this explanation be fundamentally acceptable, *1TJ* on *Ex. i. 15* eliminates the "factual difficulty", since there Moses is referred to, in his quality of Saviour, as a "Lamb". It should also be noted that this parallel to *Jn. i. 29* may even dispense with the figure of the Servant in interpreting "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world". If $\lambda\alpha\mu\beta\acute{o}\varsigma$ stands for **טליא**, and $\delta \alpha\lambda\acute{\omega}\nu \tau\eta\varsigma \alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ for **שרי ושביק לחובין** (he who looses and forgives sins, cf. *TJ* on *Ex. xxxiv. 7*), the meaning of the words of John the Baptist should be: Behold the Son of God who forgives the sin of the world.

¹ Another form of the haggadah of Moses is given by JOSEPHUS and has its parallel in the New Testament. The king (Pharaoh-Herod) is informed of the birth of a Deliverer by the interpreters of Holy Scripture: "One of the sacred scribes – persons with considerable skill in accurately predicting the future – announced to the king that there would be born to the Israelites at that time one who would abase the sovereignty of the Egyptians and exalt the Israelites, were he reared to manhood, and would surpass all men in virtue and win everlasting renown." *JA*, II, ix. 2, § 205. – Whereas in the haggadah of Moses the two themes – magicians, and sacred scribe – are preserved separately, in *Mt. ii. 1-8* they are combined; the Magi inform Herod of the time, and the interpreters of Scripture of the place of the Messiah's birth.

And he (Pilate) rose from the judgment seat and sought to go forth. And the Jews cried out, saying: We know our king, even Caesar and not Jesus. For indeed the wise men brought gifts from the east unto him as unto a king, and when Herod heard from the wise men that a king was born, he sought to slay him...¹

The structure of *Sefer ha-Yashar* manifests a direct continuity with the corresponding tradition of the time of the Second Temple, but reflects also the influence of the haggadah of the Tannaim and Amoraim. Moreover, even when its author creates a new story (Abraham's infancy), he works with traditional material which he freely manipulates. The result is an excellent illustration of the organic growth of midrashic exegesis.

The present enquiry clearly shows how unwise and unscholarly it is to neglect, in the study of early Jewish exegesis, the testimony of a midrashic collection merely on the grounds of its late appearance. *Sefer ha-Yashar* can hardly have been written before the eleventh century AD, yet it preserves a valuable amount of pre-Tannaitic exegetical traditions.

Another important observation is that almost all the haggadic stories included in *Yashar* are intended as an answer to real exegetical questions. Doubtless the nature of the solutions they offer differ from that of modern critical exegesis, but the actual problems are very often identical.

Finally, this examination of the *Yashar* story fully illustrates what is meant by the term "rewritten Bible". In order to anticipate questions, and to solve problems in advance, the midrashist inserts haggadic development into the biblical narrative – an exegetical process which is probably as ancient as scriptural interpretation itself. The Palestinian Targum and Jewish Antiquities, Ps.-PHILO and Jubilees, and the recently discovered "Genesis Apocryphon" (the subject of the following chapter), each in their own way show how the Bible was rewritten about a millenium before the redaction of *Sefer ha-Yashar*.

¹ *Acts of Pilate*, ix. 3. Cf. M. R. JAMES, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM (2)

HAGGADIC DEVELOPMENT: A PROGRESSIVE HISTORICAL STUDY

The relatively well preserved columns xix-xxii of the Aramaic Genesis Apocryphon¹, discovered in Qumran Cave I, serve as a useful basis for the historical survey of midrashic interpretations of Genesis xii.8 - xv. 4. This document is recommended for such a purpose both by its antiquity² and by its strictly midrashic literary *genre*.

The study is divided into the following three sections:

- I. an English translation of the Abraham story,³
- II. a comparison of its exegesis with parallel sources,
- III. an assessment of the results of the enquiry with regard to haggadic development in general.

I

The text of Genesis Apocryphon

The first part of the account, relating to Genesis xii and xiii, is given in the first person: Abraham tells his own story. This section is rich in haggadic amplifications, and despite its numerous contacts with the Book of Jubilees it is distinguished by a more popular and lively tone. The remainder of the narrative is told in the third person and, with some notable exceptions, follows the biblical text more closely.

¹ Edited by N. AVIGAD and Y. YADIN, *A Genesis Apocryphon. A Scroll from the Wilderness of Judaea*, Jerusalem, 1956.

² The script is dated by the editors, on palaeographical grounds, as having been written between the end of the first century BC and the middle of the first century AD (*op. cit.*, p. 38). Cf. also N. AVIGAD, *The Palaeography of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, in *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Scripta Hierosolymitana*, vol. iv, Jerusalem, 1958, p. 72 (between cca. 50 BC and 70 AD). E. Y. KUTSCHER reaches a similar conclusion on philological grounds, viz. the first century BC – first century AD. Cf. *The language of the "Genesis Apocryphon": a preliminary survey*, *ibid.*, p. 22. Both the editors and Mr. KUTSCHER recognize that an even earlier date is not entirely to be excluded. P. KAHLE, although he criticizes KUTSCHER's linguistic approach, agrees with his dating of the scroll, but definitely thinks the original composition to be earlier. Cf. *Das palästinische Pentateuchtargum und das zur Zeit Jesu gesprochene Aramäisch*, in *ZNW*, 49, 1958, pp. 107–108. I myself would also prefer an earlier second century date for this work, mainly because of the freshness and simplicity of its haggadah, and because of its freedom from any sectarian bias.

³ Other English translations may be found in AVIGAD-YADIN, *op. cit.*, pp. 41–48; Th. GASTER, *The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect*, London, 1957, pp. 330–

The Genesis text and its interpretation are given in parallel columns. Other relevant biblical, pseudepigraphic and Rabbinic passages are listed in the notes.

Gen. xii. 8

From there he journeyed towards the mountain which lies to the east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. He built there an altar for the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

GA, col. xix

[. . . and I called on the name of God] and I said: Thou art [the Most High God . . .] Until now you have not reached¹ the Holy Mountain.²

xii. 9

And Abram continued his journey towards the Negeb.

I went away . . . and I travelled towards the south . . . until I came to Hebron (at the time) of the building of Hebron. And I dwelt [there two] years.³

xii. 10

There was a famine in the land. Abram descended to Egypt to sojourn there for the famine was severe in the land.

There was a famine in all this land and hearing [there was] prosperity in Egypt I went . . . to the land of Egypt. . .

xii. 11-13

When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife: Now I know that you are a beautiful woman. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, "This is his wife",

I [came] to the river Karmona⁴ which is one of the branches of the River . . . now we . . . our land. [I cro]ssed the seven branches of the river which . . . Now we travelled

343 (to be read with caution); M. BURROWS, *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, New York, 1958, pp. 387-393.

¹ All the interpreters appear to have understood דבקה לטורא as though the verb were in the first person with an anticipatory suffix. Cf. E. Y. KUTSCHER, *art. cit.*, p. 30. Since the anticipatory suffix is used nowhere else in the document – see especially the parallel passages in xxi. 16-18 – the verb in the second person would seem the better reading. In that case, the words are to be attributed to God. The same reading has been adopted by A. DUPONT-SOMMER, *Les écrits esséniens découverts près de la mer Morte*, Paris, 1959, p. 298.

² This may be an anti-Samaritan remark. For the Samaritans, Gerizim, the mountain opposite Shechem (cf. *Gen.* xii. 6), was the holy place chosen by God. Cf. GASTER, *op. cit.*, p. 340, n. 12. EUPOLEMUS (*Praep. Ev.*, ix. 17) mentions the "city of *Argarizin* which is interpreted the *Mountain of the Most High*", as the place where Abraham and Melchizedek met. But for the author of *GA* the "holy mountain" lies further south, doubtless in Jerusalem.

³ Cf. *Num.* xiii. 22; *Jub.*, xiii. 10.

⁴ Cf. *Parab.* viii. 10; *Baba Batra* 74b.

and they will kill me; but they will let you live. Please say that you are my sister so that I may be treated well for your sake and my soul may live because of you.

across our land and entered into the land of the sons of Ham, into the land of Egypt.

During the night of our entry into Egypt I, Abram, dreamt a dream. And behold, I saw in my dream a cedar and a palm tree¹ . . . men came and sought to cut down the cedar, and to pull up its roots, and to leave the palm tree (standing) alone. The palm tree cried out saying: Do not cut down this cedar tree, for cursed be the man [who shall pull up its roots.] And the cedar was spared because of the palm tree, and was not [cut down.] I woke from my dream during the night and said to Sarai my wife. I have dreamt a dream . . . [I am] afraid [because of] this dream. She said to me: Tell me your dream and I shall know. So I began to tell her this dream . . . that they will seek to kill me and will spare you. On that day all prosperity . . . in all things . . . Say to them concerning me, "He is my brother", and I shall live because of you, and my soul shall be saved because of you . . . of me and to kill me. Sarai wept that night because of my words.

[Then we journeyed onward, I and] Sarai, towards Zoan². . . in her soul that no man would see her . . .

xii. 14

When Abram arrived in Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful.

After these five years³ . . . three men, princes of Egypt⁴ . . . Pharaoh of Zoan concerning [me]

¹ Cf. *Gen. R.*, xli. 1; *Tanh. Lekh*, 5.

² Cf. *Jub.*, xiii. 12.

³ Cf. *Jub.*, xiii. 11.

⁴ Despite the lacunae, it is possible to follow the main events. Three Egyptian princes are sent by the king of Zoan to enquire about Abraham whom they probably suspect of being a spy (cf. *Gen.* xlii). He tells them that famine is the only cause of his journey to Egypt. The officials must have seen Sarai in spite of her

and concerning my wife, and they gave . . . goodness, wisdom, and truth. And I cried out before them . . . my words . . . in the famine which . . . not . . . and they came to the place as far as . . . to her . . . my words . . . much food and drink . . . wine.

xii. 15

The princes of Pharaoh saw her and they praised her to Pharaoh and the woman was brought into the house of Pharaoh.

Col., xx.

. . . how . . . and beautiful is her face! How . . . fine are the hairs of her head! How lovely are her eyes! How desirable her nose and all the brilliance of her countenance . . . How fair are her breasts and how beautiful all her whiteness! How pleasing are her arms and how perfect her hands, and how desirable all the appearance of her hands! How long and slender are their fingers! How comely are her feet, how perfect are her thighs! Neither the virgin, nor the bride led into the marriage chamber, is more beautiful than she. She is fairer than all other women. Truly, her beauty is greater than theirs.¹ Yet with all this grace she possesses also abundant wisdom² so that whatever is in her hands³ is perfect.

When the king heard the words of Harkenosh⁴ and of his two companions, for all three spoke as with

intention to remain hidden. The mention of food and drink probably refers to a feast given by the hospitable Abraham to the Egyptians.

¹ Cf. *Gen. R.*, xl. 5.

² Cf. PHILLO, *De Abrahamo*, xix. § 93.

³ The editors translate וְדָל יְדֵיהָ as "the tip of her hands" and DUPONT-SOMMER (*op. cit.*, p. 299) as "la gracilité de ses mains". No dictionary contains the noun דָּל. GASTER and BURROWS avoid translating it altogether. In the manuscript there appears to be no separation between דָּל and יְדֵיהָ, so I suggest that וְדָל be read as a relative pronoun. Cf. KUTSCHER, *art. cit.*, p. 6.

⁴ The vocalisation of הֶרְקָנוֹשׁ is uncertain. The editors, and GASTER, transcribe the consonants only. DUPONT-SOMMER suggests 'Horkanosh' whereas BURROWS reads Hyrcanus. The latter interpretation is only acceptable on condition that the rules for transcribing Greek into Hebrew or Aramaic were either unknown to the scribe of Genesis Apocryphon, or were not yet established as in the Mishnah and the Talmud, where Hyrcanus is written הֶרְקָנוֹס.

one mouth, he desired her greatly, and he sent out at once¹ that she be taken. Seeing her, he was amazed by all her beauty, and he took her to be his wife and sought to kill me.

xii. 16

Abram was treated well because of her, and he had flocks and cattle and asses, slaves and maidservants, she-asses and camels.

Sarai said to the king, "He is my brother", that I might be spared because of her. And I, Abram, was spared because of her and I was not slain.

And I, Abram, wept aloud that night, I and my nephew Lot, because Sarai had been taken from me by force. I prayed that night.² I begged and implored and I said in my sorrow, while my tears ran down: Blessed art Thou, O God Most High, Master of all the worlds. Thou art Lord and King of all things and Thou rulest over all the kings of the earth and Thou judgest them all. I cry now before Thee my Lord, against Pharaoh of Zoan the king of Egypt, because of my wife who is taken from me by force. Judge him for me, and I shall see Thy mighty hand lifted against him and against all his household, that he may not defile my wife this night (separating her) from me. And they shall know Thee, my Lord, that Thou art the Lord of all the kings of the earth.

xii. 17

The Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues on account of Sarai, the wife of Abraham.

I wept and was sorrowful. And on that night the Most High God sent a spirit of affliction,³ an evil

¹ Cf. P. GRELOT, *On the Root עבך/עבך in Ancient Aramaic and in Ugaritic*, in *JSS*, I, 1956, p. 202-205. Cf. *ibid.*, II, 1957, p. 195.

² Cf. *Tanp. Lekh*, 5; *Yashar*, p. 51.

³ The expression *רוח מכחש למכחש*, "a pestilential spirit to strike him", is understood differently by the editors, who translate *רוח* as "wind" – "a pestilential wind to afflict him". The present interpretation is based firstly on the statement that this *רוח* was an evil *רוח* (line 17), and secondly that the magicians affected

spirit, to afflict both him and his house. He was afflicted and all his household, and he could not approach her and he knew her not.

He was with her for two years, and at the end of those two years the plagues and afflictions became greater and more grievous upon him and all his household. Therefore he sent for all the sages of Egypt, all the magicians, and all the healers of Egypt,¹ that they might cure him and all his household of this plague. But not one single healer nor magician nor sage could come to cure him, for the afflicting spirit had afflicted them also, and they fled.

Then came Harkenosh to me, beseeching me to go to pray for the king and to lay my hands upon him that he might live, for [the king had dreamt] a dream. Lot said to him: Abram my uncle cannot pray for the king while Sarai his wife is with him. Go therefore, and tell the king to send back to her husband the woman who is his wife. Then he will pray for him and he will live.

When Harkenosh heard the words of Lot, he went to the king and said: All these plagues and afflictions with which my lord the king is smitten and afflicted are because of Sarai the wife of Abram. Let Sarai be restored to Abram her husband, and this scourge and the spirit of festering shall depart from you.²

xii. 18

Pharao called Abram and said: He called me and said to me:

by this רוח were put to flight and were not able to present themselves to the king (lines 20-21). But the principal argument is drawn from a comparison with the Targums on *Deut.* xxxii. 24: כְּתִישׁ רֹחַ בְּיָשָׁן, "struck by evil spirits". The same interpretation figures also in A. DUPONT-SOMMER, *Les écrits esséniens...*, p. 300, n. 2.

¹ Cf. EUPOLEMUS, in *Praep. Ev.*, ix. 17; *JA*, I, viii. 1, § 164.

² Cf. P. GRELOT, *Sur l'Apocryphe de la Genèse* (col. XX, ligne 26), in *Revue de Qumran*, I, 1958, pp. 273-276.

What have you done to me? Why did you not tell me that she is your wife?

What have you done to me with regard to Sarai?

xii. 19

Why did you say "She is my sister", so that I took her as a wife for myself. Now here is your wife. Take her and depart!

You told me "She is my sister", whereas she is your wife. And I took her to be my wife. Behold your wife who is with me. Depart, and go hence from all the land of Egypt.

And now pray for me¹ and my household that this evil spirit may depart from me.

I prayed for him, and I laid my hand upon his head, and the plague went from him, and the evil spirit departed from him, and he lived.

The king rose up to tell me . . . and the king swore to me an oath² that. . . and the king gave to her³ much [silver and gold], and much raiment of fine linen and purple . . . before her, and Hagar also⁴ . . . and he appointed men to lead me out of [all the land of Egypt.]

xiii. 1-2

Abram went up from Egypt to the Negeb, he and his wife and all his property, and Lot with him. Abram was very rich in cattle and in silver and gold.

And I, Abram, went away with great flocks and with silver and gold, and I went out of Egypt together with my nephew Lot. Lot also had great flocks, and he took a wife to himself from [among the daughters of Egypt.

xiii. 3

He went to his camping places from the Negeb to Bethel, to the place where his tent was pitched formerly, between Bethel and Ai,

Col. xxi

I camped] at every place where I had camped (before) until I came to Bethel,

xiii. 4

to the place where he had first made the place where I had built an altar.

¹ Cf. *Gen.* xx. 17.

² Cf. *Gen.* xx. 15.

³ Cf. *JA*, I, viii. 1, § 165; *PRE*, 26; *Yashar*, p. 52.

⁴ Cf. *Gen. R.*, xlv. 1 on *Gen.* xvi. 1.

an altar. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

I built a second altar and I placed upon it a sacrifice and an offering to the Most High God, and there I called upon the name of the Lord of worlds, and I praised the name of God, and I blessed Him, and there I gave thanks to Him for all the riches and favours which He had granted to me. For He had dealt kindly towards me and had led me back in peace into this land.

xiii. 5-12

Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and cattle and tents, so that the land could not support them together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. There was trouble between the herdsmen of Abram and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and the Perizzites dwelt then in the land. Abram said to Lot: Please let there be no quarrel between me and you, between my herdsmen and yours, for we are kinsmen. Is not the whole land before you? Depart from me. If you go left, I will go right. If you go right, I will go left. Lot lifted up his eyes and he saw that the whole region of Jordan in the direction of Zoar was well watered. It was like a garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot chose for himself the whole region of Jordan and he travelled eastward and they parted from each other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan and Lot dwelt in the cities of the (Jordan) region, and camped as far as Sodom.

After that day, Lot departed from me because of the deeds of our shepherds. He went away and established himself in the valley of the Jordan together with all his flocks. And I myself added more to them. He kept his sheep and journeyed as far as Sodom. At Sodom he built himself a house¹ and dwelt in it. But I remained upon the mountain of Bethel and was grieved because my nephew Lot had gone from me.

xiii. 14-17

The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him: Lift up your

God appeared before me in a vision at night, and said: Go to

¹ Cf. *Gen. xix. 2f.*

eyes and look from the place where you are, to the north and the south and the east and the west. For all the land which you see I will give to you and to your descendants for ever. I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth. If the dust of the earth can be counted, so also can your descendants be counted. Rise, walk through the land, through its length and breadth, for I will give it to you.

Ramat Hazor¹ which is north of Bethel, the place where you dwell, and lift up your eyes towards the east and towards the west, towards the north and towards the south. And behold, all this land I give to you and to your seed for ever.

The next morning I went up to Ramat Hazor and I beheld the land from that high place; from the River of Egypt to Lebanon and Senir, from the Great Sea to Hauran, all the land of Gebal as far as Kadesh, and all the Great Desert to the east of Hauran and Senir as far as Euphrates. And God said to me: I will give all this land to your seed, and they shall possess it for ever. I will multiply your seed as the dust of the earth that no man may number. Neither shall any man number your seed. Rise, and go forth. Behold the length and the breadth (of the land) for it is yours, and after you I will give it to your seed for ever.

And I, Abram, set out to see the land. I began my journey at the river Gihon² and travelled along the coast of the Sea until I came to the Mountain of the Bull.³ I departed from the coast of the Great Salt Sea and I journeyed towards the east by the Mountain of the Bull across the breadth of the land until I came to the river Euphrates. I journeyed along Euphrates until I came to the

¹ Ramat Hazor, the biblical Baal Hazor (2 *Sam.* xiii. 23), is probably Gebel el 'Azur, north-east of Bethel.

² The editors (cf. *op. cit.*, p. 32) have not convincingly established that Gihon is the Nile. It is certain that this river forms the south-western frontier of the land of Israel.

³ The Mountain of the Bull (טור תורא) is Amanus, part of the Taurus range running from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean (AVIGAD-YADIN, p. 30). According to Jewish tradition, it forms the northern frontier of the land of Israel. To the references given by the editors (*Sheb.*, vi. 1; *J. Hallab*, iv. 60a: Taurus-Amanus; *Ex. R.*, xxiii. 5), must be added *T. Terum.*, ii. 12, *T. Hallab*, ii. 11, *Gif.*, 8a, and *Song R.*, iv. 5, § 2.

Red Sea¹ in the east. I travelled by the shore of the Red Sea until I came to the tongue of the Sea of Reeds² which goes out from the Red Sea. I pursued my way in the south until I came to the river Gihon. And then I returned and came to my house in peace. I found all things prosperous there.

xiii. 18

Abram moved his tent and he came to dwell at the Oaks of Mamre which are at Hebron, and he built there an altar to the Lord.

I went and stayed at the Oaks of Mamre, which is at Hebron, north-east of Hebron. And there I built an altar and I placed upon it a sacrifice and an oblation to the Most High God. There I ate and drank, I and all the men of my household. And I sent for Mamre, Ornam,³ and Eshkol, the three Amorite brothers, my friends, and they ate together with me and drank with me.

xiv. 1

In the days of Amrafel king of Shinar, Ariok king of Ellasar, Kedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goim,

Before these days, Kedorlaomer king of Elam set out together with Amrafel king of Babylon,⁴ Ariok king of Kaptok,⁵ and Tidal king of the nations which lie between the rivers;

xiv. 2

they waged war against Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela which is Zoar.

and they waged war against Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemiabad king of Zeboim, and against the king of Bela.

xiv. 3

All these joined each other in the

All these gathered to do battle in

¹ I.e. the Indian Ocean.

² I.e. Arabia, with the Sinai Peninsula and the Red Sea of the modern atlas.

³ Aneer in *Gen.* xiv. 13; *Auvav* in *LXX*.

⁴ For Shinar identified with Babylon, see *TO* and *Neofiti* 1.

⁵ The editor's identification of Kaptok as Cappadocia follows a suggestion made by B. MAZAR.

valley of Siddim, which is the Salt Sea.

the valley of Siddim,¹ and the king of Elam and the other kings who were with him prevailed over the king of Sodom and his companions, and imposed a tribute upon them.

xiv. 4

They served Kedorlaomer for twelve years, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

During twelve years they paid their tribute to the king of Elam, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled against him.

xiv. 5

In the fourteenth year, Kedorlaomer and the other kings with him came and slew the Refaim in Ashteroth-Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim,

In the fourteenth year, the king of Elam placed himself at the head of all his allies, and went up by the Way of the Wilderness. They smote and pillaged from the river Euphrates onward. They smote the Refaim who were at Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zumzamim who were at Ammon, the Emim who were at Shaveh ha-Keriyoth,

xiv. 6

and the Horites in their Mount Seir as far as El Paran, which is near the desert.

the Horites who were in the mountains of Gebal, until they came to El Paran which is in the Wilderness.

xiv. 7

Then they returned and came to En Mishpat, which is Kadesh, and they smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon Tamar.

And they returned at Hazezon Tamar.

xiv. 8

The king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar, went out and waged war against them in the valley of Siddim

The king of Sodom went out to meet them, together with the king [of Gomorrah,] the king of Admah, the king of the Zeboim and the king of Bela. [And they fought] a battle in the valley [of Siddim]

¹ The glosses in *Gen.* identifying Bela with Zoar, and Siddim with the Dead Sea, are omitted.

xiv. 9

against Kedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goim, Amrafel king of Shinar, Ariok king of Ellasar, four kings against five.

against Kedorlaomer king of Elam, and the kings who were with him.

xiv. 10

In the valley of Siddim there are many bitumen pits. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled and fell there, and the rest fled to the mountains.

The king of Sodom was vanquished and fled, and the king of Gomorrah fell into the pits¹

xiv. 11

They took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their food, and departed.

The king of Elam [bore away] all the riches of Sodom and [Gomorrah]

xiv. 12

They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who dwelt in Sodom, and they took his possessions and departed.

Col. xxii

and they took Lot the nephew of Abram, who dwelt with them in Sodom, and all his possessions.

xiv. 13

One who had escaped came to tell Abram the Hebrew who was living at the Oaks of Mamre the Amorite, the brother of Eshkol and Aner, the allies of Abram.

And one of the shepherds of the flocks which Abram had given to Lot, having escaped from among the captives, came to Abram. At that time Abram dwelt in Hebron. He told him that Lot his nephew and all his possessions had been taken, that he had not been slain, and that the kings had gone by the road of the Great Valley towards their land, taking captives, plundering, smiting and slaying, and that they were journeying towards the land of Damascus.

xiv. 14

Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, and he

And Abram wept because of Lot his nephew.

¹ Cf. *Jub.*, xiii. 22; *Gen. R.*, xlii. 7.

mustered his trained men, born in his house, and he pursued them as far as Dan.

He strengthened himself. He rose, and chose from among his servants three hundred and eighteen fighting men trained for war.¹ Ornam, Eshkol, and Mamre went with him also. He pursued them until he came to Dan, and he came upon them while they were camped in the valley of Dan.

xiv. 15

He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants. And they slew them and pursued them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus.

He fell upon them from four sides and he slew them that night. He crushed them and put them to fight. They all fled before him till they came to Helbon, which is north of Damascus.

xiv. 16

He brought back all the booty and also Lot his kinsman, and his possessions, and also the women and the people.

He rescued from them of all their captives which they had taken, all their booty and all their goods. He delivered also his nephew Lot and all his possessions, and he led back all the captives which they had taken.

xiv. 17

After his return from the slaughter of Kedorlaomer and of the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh, which is the valley of the King.

When the king of Sodom learned that Abram had led back all the captives and all the booty, he came out to meet him and went to Salem, which is Jerusalem.² Abram camped in the valley of Shaveh, which is the valley of the King, the valley of Beth ha-Kerem.

xiv. 18

Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was the priest of the Most High God.

Melchizedek king of Salem brought out food and drink to Abram and to all the men who were with him. He was the priest of the Most High God.

xiv. 19

He blessed him and said: Blessed

He blessed Abram and said:

¹ Cf. *1TJ*.

² Cf. Targums.

be Abram by the Most High God,
the Maker of heaven and earth;

Blessed be Abram by the Most High
God, Lord of heaven and earth;

xiv. 20

and blessed be the Most High God
who has delivered your oppressors
into your hand. Abram gave him
the tithe of everything.

and blessed be the Most High God
who has delivered your enemies
into your hand.

Abram gave him the tithe of all
the possessions of the king of Elam
and of his companions.¹

xiv. 21

The king of Sodom said to
Abram: Give me the men and take
the goods for yourself.

Then the king of Sodom ap-
proached and said to Abram: My
lord Abram, give me the souls
which are mine, which are your cap-
tives delivered from the king of
Elam, and you may have all the
goods which remain.

xiv. 22

Abram said to the king of Sodom:
I lift up my hand to the Lord, the
Most High God, the Creator of
heaven and earth,

Then Abram said to the king of
Sodom: I lift up my hand this day
to the Most High God, Lord of
heaven and earth,

xiv. 23

that I will take nothing which is
yours, not even a thread or a strap
of a sandal, lest you should say, "I
have made Abram rich".

that I will take nothing which
belongs to you, not even a lace or
strap of a shoe, lest you should say,
"Abram's riches come from my pos-
sessions".

xiv. 24

I will take nothing except what
the young men have eaten and the
portion of the men who came with
me. Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre shall
take their share.

(I will take nothing) except what
the young men who are with me
have already eaten, and the portion
of the three men who have come
with me. They shall decide whether
they will give you their portion.

Abram returned all the flocks and
all the captives and gave them to the
king of Sodom. He set free all the
captives from that land who were
with him, and sent them all back.

¹ Cf. *Yashar*, p. 54.

xv. 1

After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying: Fear not Abram, I am your shield. Your reward shall be very great.

After these things, God appeared to Abram in a vision and said to him: Behold, ten years have passed since you came away from Haran. You dwelt here for two years and you passed seven years in Egypt; and one year has gone by since your return from Egypt. Now examine, and count all you have, and see how it has grown and multiplied twice over compared to what you brought out of Haran.

And now fear not; I am with you. I will be your help and your strength. I am a shield above you, and a mighty safeguard roundabout you. Your wealth and possessions shall multiply greatly.¹

xv. 2-3

Abram said: O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me? For I am childless and Eliezer of Damascus is the heir of my house. Abram said: Behold, Thou hast given me no descendant and a servant born in my house shall inherit from me.

Abram said: My Lord God, I have great wealth and possessions: what good will they do me? Naked shall I die and childless go hence. A child from my household shall inherit from me. Eliezer son... shall inherit from me.

xv. 4

And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying: 'This one shall not inherit from you, but your issue shall be your heir.

He said to him: He shall not be your heir, but he who shall spring from your body shall be your heir.

II

Biblical exegesis in Genesis Apocryphon

The haggadic developments of Genesis Apocryphon are now to be compared, firstly with the biblical text itself, and secondly with the corresponding interpretations in ancient Jewish literature,² in order to determine the three following points:

¹ Cf. *TJ* and *Gen. R.*, xlv. 4.

² A similar attempt to collect parallel midrashic material may be found in

- a) passages requiring special attention,
- b) the solutions of problems arising from the Abraham story, the
- c) relationship between these solutions and those found in the rest of the exegetical literature of Israel.

1. *And Abram continued his journey towards the Negeb* (xii.9)

GA records that Abraham went to live in Hebron the year the city was founded, and that he stayed there for two years.

Jubilees xiii. 10 confirms this:

He came to Hebron, and Hebron was built at that time, and he dwelt there two years.

2. *When he was about to enter Egypt* (xii. 11)

I.e. when he reached the seven-branched river dividing Canaan from Egypt. The first branch is called here Karmona, which is probably the equivalent of Keramyon.

As the editors of Genesis Apocryphon remark,¹ the same stream is mentioned in the Mishnah:²

The waters of Keramyon and the waters of Pugah are unfit because they are marsh waters.

It appears also in the Babylonian Talmud:³

Four rivers surround the land of Israel: Jordan, Jarmuk, Keramyon and Pugah.

M. R. LEHMANN's 1 Q *Genesis Apocryphon in the Light of the Targumim and Midrashim*, in *Revue de Qumran*, 1, 1958, pp. 249-263. I agree with his conclusion that "1 Q *Genesis Apocryphon* offers important evidence of the existence of early targumic versions of *Genesis*" (*ibid.*, p. 263), but I wonder whether, because of a lack of historical perspective, his use of midrashic sources would convince those who hold a different opinion. I also doubt whether he is correct in thinking that parallels between *Zohar* and GA are of any value in research into the age of *Zohar* (*ibid.*, p. 259). The only legitimate inference to be drawn from such parallels is that Moses ben Shemtob de Leon used earlier midrashic material in writing the *Zohar* at the end of the thirteenth century AD. On the origins of the *Zohar*, see G. G. SCHOLEM, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, London, 1955, pp. 156-204. - Numerous parallels from *Jubilees* figure in Eva OSSWALD's *Beobachtungen zur Erzählung von Abrahams Aufenthalt in Ägypten im "Genesis Apocryphon"*, in *ZAW*, 72, 1960, pp. 7-25.

¹ Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 25.

² *Parab.*, viii. 10.

³ *Baba Batra*, 74b.

3. *Now I know that you are a beautiful woman* (xii. 11)

Would Abraham not have noticed the beauty of his wife before? This question, which does not appear to have troubled the author of GA, is asked in Midrash Rabbah:

She lived with him all those years, and *now* he says to her: Behold, now I know that you are a fair woman to look upon!¹

Ps.-JONATHAN provides an answer. It was only when crossing the river boundary between Canaan and Egypt that Abraham saw his wife naked in daylight for the first time, and the sight of her beauty made him foresee trouble:

They came to the river and they uncovered their bodies for the crossing. Then Abram said to Sarai his wife: Until now I have never looked on your body, but now I know... etc.²

4. *And when the Egyptians see you... they will kill me* (xii. 12)

Genesis Apocryphon, having so far not mentioned Sarah's beauty introduces at this point a premonitory dream which Abraham is able to interpret: his life is in danger on account of his wife and he must take precautions to conceal their relationship. Sarah resolves to hide herself (GA, xix. 23).

In midrashic literature, Abraham conceals Sarah in a coffer before crossing the frontier so that the guards will not see her. His stratagem fails and Sarah is immediately taken:

He put her into a coffer and locked her in. When he came to the customs house, they (the officers) said to him: Pay the duty. Abram answered: I will pay. They said: You carry vessels. Abram replied: I will pay the duty on them... They said: You must open the coffer so that we can see what is inside. When he opened it, all the land of Egypt was brightened by her beauty.³

In GA, however, Sarah avoids the notice of the Egyptians for five years.

The cedar and the palm tree in Abraham's dream are inspired by Psalm xcii. 13, where the just man is compared to them. This verse, in conjunction with Genesis xii. 17, is applied to Abraham and Sarah in the Midrash.⁴

¹ *Gen. R.*, xl. 4.

² See also *Tanh. Lekh.* 5.

³ *Gen. R.*, xl. 5. Cf. *Tanh. Lekh.* 5; *Yashar*, p. 50.

⁴ *Gen. R.*, xli. 1; *Tanh. Lekh.* 5.

5. *When Abram arrived in Egypt* (xii. 14)

Abraham settled in Egypt in the region of Zoan (Tanis). Nothing troublesome occurred for five years.

➤ Jubilees contains the same tradition:

And Abram went into Egypt... and dwelt in Egypt five years before his wife was torn away from him. Now Tanis in Egypt was built at that time, seven years after Hebron.¹

6. *And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her* (xii. 15).

Genesis Apocryphon specifies that they were three in number, and even names one of them.

7. *The princes of Pharaoh... praised her* (xii. 15)

GA develops this short phrase into a panegyric by Harkenosh on Sarah's beauty.

In the Midrash also, Sarah possesses the beauty of Eve and even surpasses it:

The Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful: this means that she was even more beautiful than Eve's image.²

The Egyptian prince in GA praises Sarah's wisdom as well as her beauty. PHILO does the same:

He had a wife distinguished greatly for her goodness of soul and beauty of body, in which she surpassed all the women of her time.³

8. *And the woman was brought into the house of Pharaoh* (xii. 15)

In his distress Abraham began to weep and pray.

The same tradition appears in Tanhuma Lekh, 5, where emphasis is laid on Abraham's confidence in God while the object of his prayer, which is in any case obvious, goes unmentioned.

In Yashar (p. 51) the Patriarch begs God to save his wife:

Abram became very angry because of what had happened to his wife and he prayed the Lord to save her from the hands of Pharaoh.

¹ *Jub.*, xiii. 11-12. Cf. *Num.* xiii. 22.

² *Gen. R.*, xl. 5. For parallel texts see THEODOR-ALBECK's edition, p. 383, n. 3.

³ *De Abrahamo*, xix, § 93.

9. *Abram was treated well because of her* (xii. 16)

This embarrassing verse is reinterpreted. According to Genesis Apocryphon, Abraham is indebted to Sarah for his life but not for his prosperity, whose origin is explained in column xx. 30 f.

Jubilees xiii. 14 shows the same apologetic trend; it also suppresses the connection between Abraham's wealth and Sarah's abduction by Pharaoh.

JOSEPHUS and PHILO are silent on this subject.

10. *But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues* (xii. 17)

Genesis Apocryphon infers that Pharaoh's chastisement was due to Abraham's prayer, and in common with other representatives of Jewish tradition, it sets out to dispel any doubts raised by the surprisingly laconic biblical text. Sarah was protected (Gen. xx). Although she lived in his palace for two years, the king was never able to approach her because of the evil spirit which plagued him and his household, afflicting them with sores and sickness. The description corresponds to an image of a spirit armed with a stick, whose business it was to keep every man away from Sarah. It even put to flight the approaching magicians.

Rabbinic tradition gives an analogous interpretation of this verse:

R. Berekiah said: Because he dared approach the lady's shoe. R. Levi said: An angel stood there all night long with a whip in his hand. When Sarah said to him "Strike", he struck. When she said "Cease", he ceased.¹

FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, although drawing his inspiration from haggadic tradition, tries, as he often does, to minimise the miraculous. In Jewish Antiquities, God prevents Pharaoh from indulging his passion by visiting him with the plague and by fomenting political troubles:

But God thwarted his criminal passion by an outbreak of disease and political disturbance, and when he had sacrifices offered to discover a remedy, the priests declared that his calamity was due to the wrath of God, because he had wished to outrage the stranger's wife.²

The Bible says nothing of the GA invitation to the Egyptian magicians and healers, and this idea must derive from an association with Pharaoh's magicians in Exodus.

¹ This haggadah, quoted from *Gen. R.*, xli. 2, (xl in the THEODOR-ALBECK edition), is repeated in lvi. 13; *Tanh. Lekh*, 5 (ed. BUBER, I, pp. 66-67); *Yasbar*, p. 51; etc.

² *JA*, I, viii. 1, § 164.

Hellenistic tradition also reports the intervention of diviners or Egyptian priests, but they are called not to cure Pharaoh, but to discover the cause of the calamities. They reveal the true identity of Sarah to the king, and thus provide a solution to the problem of how he found out that she was the wife of Abraham.

The soothsayers, having been called by him, told him that the woman was not a widow. Thus the king of the Egyptians learned that she was Abraham's wife.¹

Genesis Rabbah xli. 2 offers another explanation: Sarah herself told Pharaoh that she was a married woman.

Genesis Apocryphon faces this classic difficulty in its own way. The king learns in a dream that Abraham can cure him. His messenger is received by Lot who then tells him the truth about Sarah. The emissary hastens to propose the remedy to Pharaoh, namely, the return of Sarah to her husband. Pharaoh's dream, and the efficacious intervention of Abraham, derive from Genesis xx. Both Genesis xii and xx are intimately linked in GA.

11. *Now here is your wife. Take her, and depart!* (xii. 19)

Whereas, without explicitly saying so, the Bible allows it to be understood that Pharaoh was cured, Genesis Apocryphon makes the return of Sarah to her husband a necessary preliminary to this. It imputes the king's healing to Abraham's prayer when he laid his hands on Pharaoh's head.² The king's oath (of friendship?), and the mention of presents offered by him to Sarah, and through her to Abraham, are again borrowed from Genesis xx. In this way, the gap created in

¹ EUPOLEMUS in *Praep. Ev.*, ix 17.

² The healing of the sick by expelling, with the laying on of hands, the evil spirits responsible for the disease is unknown in the Old Testament but a familiar rite in the Gospels. Though it makes no mention of evil spirits, the nearest Old Testament parallel appears in 2 Kings, v. 11. When, instead of being received by Elisha, Naaman is told by the prophet's messenger to go and bathe in the river Jordan, the Syrian official declares: "I have said to myself that he will come out, stand, and invoke the name of the Lord, his God, lift up his hand towards the place (of the disease) and the leprosy will disappear." Now the phrase, "he will lift up his hand" (*weheniph yado*) is translated in the Septuagint, *ἐπιθήσει τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ*, i.e. "he will lay on his hand". For a detailed study of the GA passage, see A. DUPONT-SOMMER, *Exorcismes et guérisons dans les écrits de Qumrân*, in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, vol. VII (Congress Volume, Oxford, 1959), pp. 246-261. On the Essenes as healers, see the present writer's *The Etymology of Essenes*, in *Revue de Qumran*, no. 7, tome 2, fasc. 3, June 1960, pp. 427-443, and *Essenes - Therapeutai - Qumran*, in *The Durham University Journal*, N.S., Vol. xxi, no. 3, June 1960, pp. 97-115.

the story by the omission of Genesis xii (the gifts given to Abraham at the time of Sarah's abduction) is filled. The Patriarch obtained his riches, not because he had handed over his wife, but for curing the king.¹

According to a well known tradition whose antiquity is now attested by Genesis Apocryphon, Hagar was included in the gifts offered to Sarah. Because of a lacuna in the text it is not possible to discover whether GA considers her to be one of the king's daughters, as does Genesis Rabbah, xlv. 1:

HER ATTITUDE -

R. Simeon b. Yohai said: Hagar was Pharaoh's daughter. When Pharaoh saw what happened on Sarah's behalf in his own house, he took his daughter and gave her to Sarah.²

Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer (*loc. cit.*) recounts that Pharaoh gave Sarah the land of Goshen, so when the sons of Jacob settled there, they occupied a land of their own.

12. *To the place where he had first made an altar* (xiii. 4)

In Genesis Apocryphon, Abraham builds a new altar.

13. *Abram called on the name of the Lord* (xiii. 4)

GA describes Abraham's prayer as one of praise, blessing and thanksgiving.

Jubilees xiii. 16 quotes only a brief formula:

O God Most High, Thou art my God for ever and ever.

14. *The departure of Lot* (xiii. 5-9)

Whereas in the Bible Abraham and Lot separate by mutual consent in order to avoid any future discord among their herdsmen, GA infers that the decision was made by Lot alone. Abraham was strongly affected by it, but his generosity towards his nephew remained unaltered.

Rabbinic tradition almost always presents Lot, who owed his wealth to the merits of his uncle (1TJ), in an unfavourable light.

15. *Lot camped as far as Sodom* (xiii. 12)

In contrast to Rabbinic literature, Genesis Apocryphon passes no judgment on Sodom. This was probably reserved for its commentary

¹ Cf. also JA, I, viii. 1, § 165; PRE, ch. xxvi; Yashar, p. 52.

² Cf. Yashar, p. 52; PRE, ch. xxvi.

on Genesis xix. The account of the building of a house at Sodom is nevertheless borrowed from Genesis xix 2 f.

16. *Look from the place where you are* (xiii. 14)

The land which God promises to Abraham is so vast that he has to climb Ramath Hazor, the highest peak in the region, in order to see it.

17. *To the north and the south and the east and the west* (xiii. 14)

The frontiers indicated in GA are assembled from various biblical passages. The river of Egypt and the Euphrates are mentioned in Genesis xv. 18. Deuteronomy i. 7 adds the Sea and Lebanon. Gebal (Gobolitis) appears in Ps.-JONATHAN on the same verse, and Hauran and Kadesh are found in the eschatological description of the land of Israel in Ezekiel xlvii. 15-20.

18. *Arise, walk through the land, through its length and breadth* (xiii. 17)

Genesis does not tell whether Abraham obeyed this injunction, but Genesis Apocryphon describes at length the journey which led Abraham from the Mediterranean to Amanus, the Euphrates, and the Persian Gulf, before he eventually reached Hebron.

To "travel through" a land means to take symbolic possession of it. It is in this sense, in any case, that certain representatives of tradition understand Abraham's journey:

Arise, and go into the land, and take possession of it.¹

According to an opinion attributed to R. Liezer, one method of acquiring a field was to walk through it. His halakhah is based on Genesis xiii. 17:

// If a man walks in a field, whether along its length or its breadth, he acquires it as far as he walks.²

19. *At Hebron ... he built there an altar to the Lord* (xiii. 18)

GA records that Mamre lay to the north-east of Hebron, and also that Abraham built an altar of sacrifice. In Genesis xiv. 13 the three

¹ 1TJ.

² Gen. R., xli. 10. See also note 3, p. 397 in the THEODOR-ALBECK edition of Gen. R.

Amorite brothers are simply referred to as allies of Abraham, but in GA events are recounted chronologically: Abraham settled by the Oaks of Mamre, and a feast of friendship (or alliance) was celebrated at that time.

20. *In the days of Amrafel* (xiv. 1)

The biblical recital gives an inverse chronology to events. It tells of a punitive expedition of the eastern kings against the king of Sodom and his allies who, after paying tribute for twelve years, revolted against their conquerors in the thirteenth years.

Genesis Apocryphon and JOSEPHUS, (JA, I, ix. 1, §§ 171 f) follow the chronological sequence. The head of the coalition, the king of Elam, whom the Bible relegates to third place, is mentioned first. Geographic indications are adjusted or defined (Shinar, for example, becomes Babylon – as in Targum Onkelos and Neofiti 1. Ellasar is identified with Kaptok, doubtless – and as the editors believe – Cappadocia.¹ The king of the Goim is the king of the nations which lie between the rivers.

JOSEPHUS describes the invaders as Assyrians with an army commanded by four generals instead of four kings.

21. *Kedorlaomer ... came and slew* (xiv. 5)

GA states that the allies took to the desert, and began plundering from the Euphrates onwards.

JOSEPHUS also (*loc. cit.*) writes that their first attacks were made in Syria.

22. *Mount Seir* (xiv. 6)

As in the Palestinian Targums, including Neofiti 1, Seir is identified with Gebal (Gobolitis).

23. *The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah ... fell* (into the bitumen pits) (xiv. 10).

The king of Gomorrah is mentioned no more in the Bible, but the king of Sodom reappears in verse 17.

¹ In *Neof.*, Pontus is substituted for Ellasar.

Genesis Apocryphon explicitly states that he escaped, and Jubilees xiii. 22 comes to the same conclusion. Furthermore, neither of these two documents refers to his having fallen into the pits.

Genesis Rabbah, xlii. 7 resolves the difficulty instead of suppressing it by finding that the king did indeed fall into the pits, but that he was subsequently rescued and was able to escape.

R. Azariah and R. Jonathan ben Haggai in R. Isaac's name: That Abraham descended into the fiery furnace and was rescued, was believed by some people and disbelieved by others. But even these believed it after the king of Sodom was also rescued from the slime pit into which he had fallen.

24. *Then one who had escaped came to tell Abram* (xiv. 13)

Genesis Apocryphon describes this man as one of the herdsmen whom Abraham had formerly given to Lot.

25. *Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive* (xiv. 14)

He also heard, according to GA, the direction which the kings had taken. When Lot left him, Abraham was sad; when he heard of his captivity, he wept.

26. *He mustered his trained men, born in his house* (xiv. 14)

Ps.-JONATHAN records that all Abraham's servants were tried warriors, as does GA.

27. *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was the priest of the Most High God* (xiv. 18)

In common with the Targums, and Jewish tradition in general, Genesis Apocryphon identifies Salem with Jerusalem. Bread and wine are understood in the wider sense of solid food and drink. The Most High God, whose priest Melchizedek is, is the same God who revealed Himself to Abraham.

28. *He gave him the title of everything* (xiv. 20)

If Abraham deducted a tithe of all the booty which he had acquired, how was he subsequently able to restore to the king of Sodom *all* that

belonged to him (v. 24)? The only objects which he would not, or could not, return were the food which his men had eaten and the portions belonging to his Amorite allies. No consideration is taken at all of the tithe given to Melchizedek.

To reconcile the apparent contradiction, Genesis Apocryphon and Yashar¹ explain that the tithe offered to Melchizedek was subtracted from the former property of the king of Elam and his allies. By this the author of GA probably meant the booty taken in the looting which preceded the attack against the cities of the Plain.

29. *Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre will take their share* (xiv. 24)

According to the biblical text, Abraham decided on his own authority not to return the portions due to his three friends. Genesis Apocryphon allows them to decide for themselves. There is no definition of the precise role played by the Amorites in the expedition, but Ps.-JONATHAN and Genesis Rabbah xliii. 9 relegate to them the care of the baggage.

The Bible is silent concerning the fate of the other captives, but GA states that all the natives of Palestine were released by Abraham, thereby proving his benevolence towards the other nations inhabiting his land.

This should be compared with Jewish Antiquities I, x. 1, § 176.

Abraham, hearing of their disaster, was moved alike with fear for his kinsman Lot and with compassion for his friends and neighbours the Sodomites.

30. *Fear not Abram, I am your shield* (xv. 1)

In Genesis Apocryphon, God reminds Abraham of all the favours which He has granted him since his departure from Haran, and then promises him His protection in the future. The divine oracle was intended to reassure him.

A similar tradition is found elsewhere in ancient Jewish literature. The Fragmentary Targum on Genesis xv. 1 reads:

After these events, after all the kings of the earth and all the governors of the provinces had gathered together and had waged war against Abram the Just, after they had fallen and after he had killed

¹ P. 54: "And he gave him the tithe of all that he brought back from the booty of his enemies".

four kings from among them and had led back (the remainder of) nine armies (the four armies of the invaders and the five armies of Sodom and its allies), behold, Abram thought in his heart and said: Woe is me now! It may be that I have already received in this world the reward of the commandments, and shall have no portion in the world to come. Or perhaps the relatives and kinsmen of the slain will leave and draw after them many legions, and will come against me. Perhaps I observed, earlier, commandments of little importance, so that (my enemies) fell. Perhaps there was found in me, earlier, some merit so that they fell before me. But later none will be found in me, and the Name of heaven will be profaned because of me.¹

It must have disturbed the Rabbis to find God addressing words of encouragement to Abraham after his triumph, and ancient tradition clearly finds it necessary to interpret this biblical verse at length. In Genesis Apocryphon the oracle itself is developed, but the Targums emphasize the doubts tormenting Abraham and present God's words as an answer to them. In both writings, the phrase "Fear not" are set into a reasonable context.

31. *Your reward shall be very great* (xv. 1).

Genesis Apocryphon describes Abraham's reward as an earthly one; he will become even more prosperous. This is quite in accordance with the logic of the biblical story since in the following verse Abraham declares sadly that his property will be of no use to him:

{ For naked shall I die and childless go hence. }

In the Palestinian Targums, both the words of Abraham and God's reply refer to a future life:

As I have delivered up your enemies to you in this world, so also is the reward for your good works laid up for you, before Me, in the world to come (2TJ).

GA appears not to be very preoccupied with the after-life.

III

Genesis Apocryphon and Haggadah

Comparison of the haggadic developments of Genesis Apocryphon with other works of Jewish tradition permits certain facts to be established:

¹ Cf. *Neof.*; *1TJ*; *Gen. R.*, xlv. 4.

- i) an absence of parallel texts draws attention to interpretations proper to GA;
- ii) disagreement in exegesis indicates biblical passages requiring interpretation for which no true exegetical *tradition*, at any rate on the level of GA, was available;
- iii) partial agreement in exegesis denotes traditions not yet, and perhaps never, wholly established;
- iv) exegesis identical with that found in other Jewish writings points, on the whole, to commonly accepted traditions.

i) *Interpretations proper to Genesis Apocryphon*

On the few occasions when GA offers an interpretation of biblical passages unmentioned in other exegetical works, the matter is mostly of secondary importance. It includes details such as the number of the Egyptian princes, the mention of the second altar built by Abraham, the identification of the place from which he viewed the land.¹ The GA frontiers of the ideal Palestine² are not found in any other commentary on Genesis xiii. 14, but their elements are disseminated in various writings representative of Jewish tradition. Genesis Apocryphon is certainly an original work, but its originality lies not so much in its matter, as in its manner of interpreting the Bible.

ii) *Disagreement in exegesis*

This is also rare. It is mainly found in the passages describing how Abraham was warned of the danger to which his wife's beauty exposed him, the precautionary measures taken to avoid it, how Pharaoh learned that Sarah was married, and the reward which God promised to Abraham.³ The texts collected for comparison with Genesis Apocryphon appear to reflect established traditions of a more recent date. They are chiefly gathered from the Palestinian Targums, Genesis Rabbah, Midrash Tanhuma, and Sefer ha-Yashar. It is impossible to determine whether the GA exegesis is the creation of its author, or whether it springs from ancient traditions eventually discarded by biblical commentators. The cedar and the palm tree in Abraham's dream may be regarded as a traditional element since the same metaphor is subsequently used in relation to Abraham and Sarah.

¹ Cf. nos. 6, 12, 16, 24, 25.

² Cf. no. 17.

³ Cf. nos. 3, 4, 10, 31.

iii) *Partial agreement in exegesis*

Exegetical interpretations which, without being identical to those in Genesis Apocryphon, bear a close resemblance to them, form the majority of those studied. From EUPOLEMUS and the Book of Jubilees (second century BC) to Sefer ha-Yashar (eleventh century AD), they figure at every stage of historical development, and were evidently transmitted, with slight variations, right through to the Middle Ages. Among them may be mentioned the haggadoth of the *pestilential* spirit, later replaced by an angel (Gen. R., Tanh., Yashar), the intervention of the magicians (EUPOLEMUS, JOSEPHUS), the cause of Abraham's prosperity (JOSEPHUS, Pirke de-R. Eliezer, Yashar), Lot's prosperity (1TJ, Yashar) Abraham's journey through the land of Israel (Gen. R., 1TJ, etc.), the beginning of the account of the war of the kings and the fate of the Palestinian prisoners (JOSEPHUS), and the promise of divine protection from a powerful enemy (TJ, Gen. R.).

All this clearly demonstrates that Genesis Apocryphon is securely established within the current of tradition whose origins, inherited eventually by targumic and midrashic literature, must derive from an earlier age. It is interesting to draw attention also to the points of encounter between GA and hellenistic Judaism.

iv) *Identical exegesis*

This is frequent and characteristic, and is represented at all levels. Abraham lived in Hebron for two years (Jub.). In Egypt, he settled in Zoan, i.e. Tanis (Jub.). Sarah was wise (PHILO). Abraham wept and prayed after the abduction of his wife (Tanh., Yashar). Royal presents were given to Abraham after the return of Sarah (Jub., JOSEPHUS). Hagar was a gift of Pharaoh (Gen. R., Pirke de-R. Eliezer, Yashar). Seir is Gebal (TJ). The king of Sodom was rescued (Jub., Gen. R.). All Abraham's servants were warriors (1TJ). Salem is Jerusalem (Tg. etc.). No tithe was taken from the possessions of the king of Sodom (Yashar). 43

The great measure of agreement between Genesis Apocryphon and Sefer ha-Yashar confirms one of the conclusions of the previous chapter, namely, that mediaeval compilers collected together every known tradition, ancient and recent alike.

Conformity between Genesis Apocryphon and Hellenistic literature raises a question of considerable importance. Was GA influenced by Hellenistic Judaism, or did Jewish writers of the Greek Diaspora adopt and partly-modify Palestinian tradition?

Judging from the work as a whole, and above all from its geographic details, it may legitimately be concluded that Genesis Apocryphon is of Palestinian origin. A Hellenistic influence must, of course, not be precluded *a priori*, but in view of the numerous indications collected throughout these pages, it is most probable that the literature of Hellenistic Judaism was built upon Palestinian foundations.¹

The relationship between Genesis Apocryphon and the Book of Jubilees presents a particular problem which cannot be solved satisfactorily until all the fragments of GA have been published.² At the present time however, from the material already accessible it would appear – as the editors themselves believe (p. 38) – that the corresponding portions of the Book of Jubilees may be no more than an abridgement of Genesis Apocryphon. But even if this is so, Jubilees still retains two peculiarities with regard to its "source"; it records the revelations made to Moses about the Patriarchs and not their own memoirs, and it shows evidence of doctrinal bias unknown to GA (e.g. the calculation of jubilees, and of the calendar in general). All things considered, the Book of Jubilees should, perhaps, be regarded as a shortened, though doctrinally enriched, Essene recension of the original work.

From the observations made in these pages, it will be seen that Genesis Apocryphon occupies a privileged position in midrashic literature in that it is the most ancient midrash of all. With its discovery the lost link between the biblical and the Rabbinic midrash has been found. Its freshness, its popular character, and its contribution to the understanding of the midrashic literary genre in its purest form, are unique. The pseudepigrapha related to it, or eventually dependent upon it (Jub., Enoch), as also most of the later midrashim, are too much concerned to graft upon the biblical story doctrines sometimes

¹ Cf. P. WENDLAND, *Die hellenistisch-römische Kultur in ihrer Beziehungen zu Judentum und Christentum*, 2nd and 3rd ed., Tübingen, 1912, pp. 200 f. Cf. also my remarks in *Moïse, l'Homme de l'Alliance*, pp. 73 f.

² The yet unpublished Hebrew fragments of *Jubilees* from Qumran Cave IV appear to have no bearing on the present issue because none of them relates to chapter xiii giving the story of Abraham's journey to Egypt and his war against the kings. In general, the remainder of the five manuscripts representing the Hebrew original attest the faithfulness of both the Ethiopic and the Latin translations. Cf. *Le travail d'édition des fragments manuscrits de Qumrân* (Communication de J. T. MILIK) in *RB*, 1956, p. 60. The publication of the fragments of an analogous work preserved in two manuscripts from Cave IV, is however, awaited with interest. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 65 (Communication de J. STRUGNELL).

foreign to them. Beside Genesis Apocryphon they appear artificial and laboured, even though the relative weakness of their literary quality is often compensated by a greater theological richness.

The author of GA does indeed try, by every means at his disposal, to make the biblical story more attractive, more real, more edifying, and above all more intelligible. Geographic data are inserted to complete biblical lacunae¹ or to identify altered place names,² and various descriptive touches are added to give the story substance. There were, for example, three Egyptian princes, and the name of one of them was Harkenosh. They praised Sarah as though with one mouth.³ Abraham was frightened by his dream and Sarah wept because of it. The Patriarch prayed for the deliverance of his wife and his tears flowed. He was sad when his kinsman went away from him.⁴ The summary statements of Genesis are often expanded to explain how the Egyptian princes praised Sarah's beauty, how God afflicted Pharaoh, how Abraham obeyed the divine command to travel through the land, how he was informed of Lot's misfortune, and so on.⁵

To this work of expansion and development Genesis Apocryphon adds another, namely, the reconciliation of unexplained or apparently conflicting statements in the biblical text in order to allay doubt and worry. Abraham knew that Sarah would be taken from him because of his dream. Sarah's identity was revealed to Pharaoh by Lot.⁶ There is no contradiction between the restitution of all his property to the king of Sodom and the tithe given by Abraham to Melchizedek.⁷ It even happens that a biblical statement is suppressed in order to avoid difficulty; for example, the fall of the king of Sodom into the bitumen pits is overlooked entirely.⁸

The deliberate omission of Genesis xii. 16 (the gifts received by Abraham from Pharaoh "because of Sarah") merits special attention. The omission is due to an apologetic preoccupation and a desire to avoid scandal; retention of the passage as it stands would offend pious ears. But although this leaves the enrichment of Abraham unexplained,

¹ Cf. nos. 1, 2, 5, 16, 17, 19, 21, 25.

² Cf. nos. 20, 22.

³ Cf. nos. 6, 11, 12, 15, 24.

⁴ Cf. nos. 8, 14, 25.

⁵ Cf. nos. 7, 10, 13, 18, 24, 29-31, etc.

⁶ Cf. nos. 4, 10.

⁷ Cf. no. 28.

⁸ Cf. no. 23.

it is made good later on in such a way as to preserve, rearranged, all the details of the story.

The haggadic developments of Genesis Apocryphon are therefore organically bound to their biblical text. The author never attempts to introduce unrelated or extraneous matter. His technique is simple and he exercises no scholarly learning, no exegetical virtuosity, no play on words. His intention is to explain the biblical text, and this he does either by bringing together various passages of Genesis, or by illustrating a verse with the help of an appropriate story. The resulting work is certainly one of the jewels of midrashic exegesis, and the best illustration yet available of the primitive haggadah and of the unbiased re-writing of the Bible.