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ABEL

Latter-day scripture reveals much about Abel beyond what is contained in the Bible. He and CAIN had older brothers and sisters (Moses 5:2), and Abel “was a keeper of sheep” (Gen. 4:2; Moses 5:17). To his parents, the Lord had given “commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord” (Moses 5:5). ADAM and EVE were obedient to the Lord’s commands (Moses 5:6), and Abel also “hearkened unto the voice of the Lord. . . . And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering” (Moses 5:17, 20). On the other hand, Cain specifically at Satan’s behest brought an unacceptable offering (Moses 5:18–19, 21; cf. *TPJS*, pp. 58–60).

The book of Moses clarifies the Lord’s differing responses to Abel and Cain, and indicates that Adam and Eve had taught their children about the things of God: “And Adam and Eve . . . made all things [of God] known unto their sons and their daughters” (Moses 5:12). Subsequently, Abel “walked in holiness before the Lord” (Moses 5:26), but Cain “loved Satan more than God” (Moses 5:18). When his offering was not accepted, Cain “rejected the greater counsel which was had from God” and “listened not any more to the voice of the Lord, neither to Abel, his brother” (Moses 5:25–26). When Satan promised Cain that “I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands,” Cain exulted “that I may murder and get gain” (Moses 5:29–31; cf. Hel. 6:27). As a result, Cain “rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him” (Gen. 4:8; Moses 5:32), and said, “I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands” (Moses 5:33). The unconscionable nature of Cain’s murder of Abel is underscored by the fact that thereafter “Cain was shut out from the presence of the Lord” (Moses 5:41).

The New Testament affirms Abel’s faithfulness and obedience to God: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh” (Heb. 11:4). Joseph SMITH taught that “God spoke to [Abel]: indeed it is said that God talked with him; and if He did, would He not, seeing that Abel was righteous, deliver to him the whole plan of the Gospel? . . . How could Abel offer a sacrifice and look forward with faith on the Son of God, for a remission of his sins, and not

understand the Gospel?” (*TPJS*, p. 59; cf. Moses 5:6–12). Latter-day scripture also states that the priesthood among the ancients had been passed down through Abel, who was ordained by Adam (D&C 84:6–17).

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STEVEN D. BENNION

ABINADI

Abinadi was a courageous prophet (150 B.C.), and the best known martyr in the Book of Mormon. His ministry and execution recounted at the heart of the Book of Mosiah sharpen the contrast between righteous King BENJAMIN and wicked King Noah. ALMA₁, a converted eyewitness, recorded Abinadi’s main words shortly after they were spoken (Mosiah 17:4).

Abinadi belonged to a small group of reactionary NEPHITES who had returned from Zarahemla a generation earlier to repossess from the LAMANITES the city of Nephi, the traditional Nephite capital, and its temple. When the excesses of the apostate Nephite king and priests grew intolerable, Abinadi was commanded of the Lord to denounce publicly their abominations; he prophesied their coming captivity and affliction. Abinadi was condemned to death by Noah for this, but escaped.

Where he lived in exile is unknown. Similarities between his and Benjamin’s words (cf. Mosiah 16:1; 3:20; 16:5; 2:38; 16:10–11; 3:24–25) could mean that he spent some time in Zarahemla with king Benjamin and his people (W of M 1:16–17), or received similar revelation during this period.

After two years, having been commanded again by the Lord to prophesy, Abinadi reentered the city of Nephi in disguise. Before a crowd, he pronounced a curse in the name of the Lord upon the unrepentant people, their land, and their grain, with forthright predictions of destruction and humiliating bondage, reminiscent of Israel’s suffering in Egypt. In a potent curse, like those used in the ancient Near East to condemn covenant breakers, he testified that Noah’s life would “be valued even as a garment in a hot furnace” (Mosiah 12:3).

Abinadi was apprehended by the people, bound, delivered to Noah, and accused of lying about the king and prophesying falsely. Both accusations were violations under their law, the LAW OF MOSES (Mosiah 13:23; Ex. 20:16; Deut. 18:20–22). The dual nature of the charges appears to have complicated the ensuing trial, the king typically having jurisdiction over political charges, and the priests over religious matters.

The trial first focused on the charge of false prophecy. The priests challenged Abinadi to interpret Isaiah 52:7–10. They presumably thought this text showed that God had spoken “comfort” to their own people, who had seen the land “redeemed.” They contended that whereas Isaiah extolled those who brought “good tidings,” Abinadi spoke ill. Under such interpretation, Abinadi’s curses conflicted with Isaiah and were held by the priests to be false and unlawful.

Abinadi rebutted the priests in several ways. He accused them of misunderstanding and disobeying the law. He extracted from them an admission that salvation requires obedience to the law and then rehearsed to them the TEN COMMANDMENTS, the basic law of the covenant that they had not kept. He miraculously withstood the king’s attempt to silence him, “and his face shone with exceeding luster, even as Moses’ did while in the mount of Sinai” (Mosiah 13:5). He then quoted Isaiah 53 and explained its relation to the coming MESSIAH.

Abinadi’s prophetic words are among the most powerful in the Book of Mormon. He explained the “form” and coming of God mentioned in Isaiah 52:14 and 53:2 (Mosiah 13:34; 14:2) as the coming of a son in the flesh, thus “being the Father and the Son” (Mosiah 15:1–5). He also taught that God would suffer as the “sheep before her shearers” (Isa. 53:7; Mosiah 14:7). Abinadi was then in a position to answer the priests’ question about Isaiah 52:7–10. He proclaimed that those “who shall declare his generation” (cf. Mosiah 15:10) and “publish peace” (Mosiah 15:14) are God’s prophets and that they and all who hearken unto their words are his “seed” (Mosiah 15:11, 13). They are the ones who truly bring “good tidings” of salvation, redemption, comfort through Christ, and the reign of God at the Judgment Day.

Using Isaiah’s text, Abinadi showed that God could not redeem Noah’s people who had willfully rebelled against deity, and that true redemption comes only through repentance and acceptance of

Christ. He also showed that his prophecies did not contradict the Isaiah text quoted by the priests.

Noah desired that Abinadi should be put to death, evidently on the charge of bearing false witness against him as the king. A young priest named Alma valiantly attested to the truthfulness of Abinadi’s testimony, whereupon he was expelled and the trial recessed for three days while Abinadi was held in prison.

When the trial reconvened, Abinadi was presumably accused of blasphemy (Mosiah 17:8), another capital offense under the law of Moses (Lev. 24:10–16). Noah gave him the opportunity to recant, but Abinadi refused to change God’s message, even on threats of death.

Noah was intimidated and desired to release Abinadi. The priests, however, accused Abinadi of a fourth crime, that of reviling against the king (Mosiah 17:12; Ex. 22:28). On this ground Noah condemned Abinadi, and his priestly accusers scourged and burned him. It was normal under Mosaic law for the accusers to inflict the punishment, but burning was an extraordinary form of execution. It mirrored Abinadi’s alleged crime: he was burned just as he had said Noah’s life would be valued as a garment in a furnace. As Abinadi died, he prophesied that the same fate would befall his accusers. This prophecy was soon fulfilled (Mosiah 17:15–18; 19:20; Alma 25:7–12).

Abinadi was remembered by the Nephites in at least three roles:

1. To Alma, his main convert, Abinadi was a prophet of Christ. Alma taught Abinadi’s words concerning the death and resurrection of Christ, the RESURRECTION of the dead, the redemption of God’s people (Mosiah 18:1–2), and the mighty change of heart through their conversion (Alma 5:12). Through Alma’s descendants, Abinadi influenced the Nephites for centuries.
2. To Ammon, who beheld the martyrdom of 1,005 of his own converts (Alma 24:22), Abinadi was recalled as the prime martyr “because of his belief in God” (Alma 25:11; cf. Mosiah 17:20; see also Mosiah 7:26–28). This was recognized as the real reason for Abinadi’s death, since the priests’ charge of reviling proved to be a false pretext.
3. To MORMON, who witnessed the decadence and destruction of the Nephites 500 years later, Abinadi was remembered for prophesying that because of wickedness evil would come upon the

land and that the wicked would be utterly destroyed (Morm. 1:19; cf. Mosiah 12:7–8).

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LEW W. CRAMER

ABORTION

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints considers the elective termination of pregnancy “one of the most . . . sinful practices of this day” (*General Handbook of Instructions*, 11-4), although not necessarily murder. The Lord has said, “Thou shalt not . . . kill, nor do *anything* like unto it” (D&C 59:6; emphasis added in Packer, p. 85).

Members of the Church must not “submit to, be a party to, or perform an abortion” (*General Handbook*, 11-4). The only exceptions are where “incest or rape was involved, or where competent medical authorities certify that the life of the mother is in jeopardy, or that a severely defective fetus cannot survive birth” (Packer, p. 85). Even these exceptions do not justify abortion automatically. Church members are counseled that they should consider abortion in such cases only after consulting with their BISHOP and receiving divine confirmation through prayer.

“Church members who encourage, perform, or submit to an abortion are subject to Church discipline as appropriate” to help them repent (*General Handbook*, 11-4). As far as has been revealed, the sin of abortion is one for which a person may repent and gain forgiveness (*General Handbook*, 11-4; Packer, p. 86).

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MARY K. BEARD

ABRAHAM

Few biblical characters figure so prominently in LDS faith as does Abraham. Belief that he was a real person is shared by others, but the LDS ap-

proach is unique: Revelations received by the Prophet Joseph SMITH confirm the basic historicity of Genesis and add information echoed in ancient sources, many of which have emerged since his day.

The BOOK OF ABRAHAM as restored by Joseph SMITH autobiographically recounts Abraham’s early life, explaining why he was singled out as the pivotal recipient of divine promises for the blessing of mankind. Not only had he been foreordained in PREMORTAL LIFE (Abr. 3:23; cf. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 22:1–5), but as a young man in Ur he opposed idolatry and human sacrifice, ironically turning him into an intended victim (Abr. 1:5–20; cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 38:13). The irony increases when God’s last-minute rescue of Abraham foreshadowed what would transpire at Abraham’s offering of Isaac.

After marrying SARAH and learning of his lineal right to the PATRIARCHAL ORDER OF THE PRIESTHOOD as disclosed in the “records of the fathers” (Abr. 1:2–4, 26, 31; 2:2; *Jubilees* 12:27; cf. D&C 107:40–57), Abraham traveled to Haran, where he apparently received his ORDINATION (Abr. 2:9–11; *WJS*, pp. 245, 303). He also saw the Lord, who gave him remarkable promises: Abraham would be blessed above measure; his posterity would carry the gospel to all nations; and all who received it would bear his name, be accounted his posterity, and bless him as their father (Abr. 2:6–11; cf. Gen. 12:1–3).

Accompanied by their converts, Abraham and Sarah proceeded to Canaan (Abr. 2:15; *Genesis Rabbah* 39:14). Famine soon forced them to Egypt, but not before God commanded Abraham to ask Sarah to pose as his sister (Abr. 2:22–25; *Genesis Apocryphon* 19:14–21), and then showed him a vision of the cosmos and creation so that he could teach these things to the Egyptians (Abr. 3–5; cf. *Sefer Yetsirah*).

The book of Abraham narrative ends here, but the book’s last facsimile (no. 3) depicts Pharaoh—who traditionally claimed exclusive possession of priesthood and kingship (Abr. 1:25–27)—honoring Abraham’s priesthood by allowing him to occupy the throne and instruct the court in astronomy (cf. *Pseudo-Eupolemus*; Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.viii.2). Pharaoh’s recognition of Abraham’s priesthood was unknown in any other ancient source until the 1947 discovery of the *Genesis Apocryphon*, purporting, like the book of Abraham, to contain an autobiographical account of Abraham but continu-