



Type: Magazine Article

A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price: Part 9: Setting the Stage - The World of Abraham (Continued)

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Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 72, No. 11 (November 1969), pp. 116–126

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price

Setting the Stage - The World of Abraham

(Part 9 - Continued)

By Dr. Hugh Nibley

● *The Procrustes Cycle*: A number of legends fit Abraham snugly into the peculiar category of Victims of Procrustes. In the standard Procrustes-type story, of which there are many, a wandering hero and prince is entertained at the palace of a king who tries to subject him to a sacrificial death, but whose attempt fails when the hero at the last moment is miraculously freed and repays his host's inhospitality by putting either him or his priest to death. Among the most celebrated monsters of the Procrustes persuasion are Minos, Philomeleides, Amycus, Cycnus, Syleus, Antaeus, Phalarus, Cronus, Lityerses, Faunus, Cacus, Athamus, Proteus, Polyphemus, Eurytheus, Sciron, and many others, the most famous of all being Busiris of Egypt.

Among the heroes who met and bested them are Odysseus, Pollux, Menelaus, Paris, Hermes, Jason, Bellerophon, Cytisorus, etc. The reader can look them all up in Pauly-Wissowa or a good Classical dictionary, preferably Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths*, which pays special attention to such sordid goings on and shows us time and again that the terrible doings we hear about in the Abraham legends actually could have taken place.

The greatest hero of this cycle is

Heracles, who shall serve us here as an example. Heracles was a wandering, suffering, conquering benefactor of mankind who, like Abraham, wandered through the world meeting and overcoming the enemies of the race and in the process becoming the father of many nations. After ridding Crete of bears, wolves, and serpents, he went to Libya, where the tyrant King Antaeus, the son of Mother Earth and Poseidon the water-god, would force all strangers to wrestle with him, murder them in the contest, and nail their skulls to the roof of the temple of his father. (Graves, II, 134, 146-47.)

Heracles, accepting the challenge, killed Antaeus and turned his desolate kingdom into a blooming paradise. Then he moved on to Egypt where Antaeus's brother Busiris was king; every year, to combat the force of drought in his kingdom, he would sacrifice a noble stranger on the altar of Zeus.¹⁰⁴ Heracles, as we have seen, allowed himself to be led to the altar, and at the last moment burst his bonds and murdered the cruel king or, in some versions, his priest.¹⁰⁵ That labor performed, the hero went to Gaul, "where he abolished a barbaric native custom of killing strangers, and founded 'Alesia,' of 'Wandering-town.'" (Graves, II, 135.) In Italy he

accepted the challenge to duel with the wicked King Cacus, slew him on the Great Altar (the Ara Maxima), married the queen, Acca Larentia, and so became the father of the Romans. According to a later account, Cacus was an idol to whom the natives would offer up their infant children—exactly in the manner of the Phoenicians and the Chaldeans of Abraham's Ur!¹⁰⁶ While he was at it, he also killed Faunus, "whose custom was to sacrifice strangers at the altar of his father Hermes," marrying the royal widow to become the father of the Latin race. (Graves, II, 137.) He then reformed the Cronian year-rites by supplanting the throwing of human victims into the river by the use of puppet substitutes. (Graves, *loc. cit.*) At Celaenae, Lityerses, the son of Minos, would force his guests to compete with him in reaping, whip and behead them at sunset, and bind them up in a sheaf while singing a dirge for them; Heracles beat the king in the reaping game, cut off his head with his sickle, and threw him into the river. (Graves, II, 164.) The beheading, the dirge, the whipping, and the throwing into the river are all important in the Egyptian rites for Osiris, and remind us that Maneros, the son and successor of the first king of Egypt, also died in

such a harvest rite. At Itonus Heracles slew King Cycnus, who forced his guests to duel with him for a chariot and decorated his father's temple with their heads. (Graves, II, 197.) And he tore up the vineyards of the Lydian King Syleus, who used to make passing strangers toil amid the vines. (Graves, II, 164.) Here we should note that it was actually the custom in ancient Asia Minor and Syria to seize and kill strangers in the vineyards during the vintage season. (Graves, II, 164, 167.)

These few examples are enough to give one the idea. The noble Theseus got the best of Minos, the half-human monster who meant to murder his royal guest, and on his wanderings accepted King Sciron's routine challenge to wrestle—and threw him into the sea. And it was Theseus who finally settled the score with Procrustes himself; one can read all about that sort of thing in Marie Renault's *The King Must Die* and *The Bull From the Sea*. Sciron's father was Cronus, the Cretan killer, who used to eat his guests; and his neighbor was the king of the Bebryces on the Black Sea, who also murdered his guests. King Philomeleides compelled all his guests to wrestle with him until the wandering Odysseus retired him, as did the wandering water-god Pollux to King Amycus, who forced every visitor to box with him and threw them all into the sea, where he finally ended up himself. Menelaus suffered the cruel hospitality of the Old Man of the Sea, as Odysseus did of the Cyclops (another son of Poseidon), until each was able to turn the tables and force his host to help him on his way. And so on and on. Long ago G. Lefebure noticed the kinship of these stories to the tale of the Egyptian Busiris, who was Heracles's most famous host.¹⁰⁷ Because he ties in directly with the Abraham legends, Busiris deserves a little more attention.

"Who does not know about the infamous altars of Busiris?" which were proverbial among the ancients.¹⁰⁸ A whole string of Classical writers from the fifth century B.C. to the sixth century A.D., a full thousand years, recount the lurid tale with the normal and expected variations. As Apollodorus tells it (II, 5, 11, 116-17), Busiris was desperate when his kingdom was afflicted by a severe drought and famine, for the king, as everyone knows, was directly responsible for the prosperity of the land. The seer Phrasius came from Cyprus and told the king that the death would end if a stranger were sacrificed annually, and Busiris obliged the visiting prophet by making him his first victim. Thereafter the sacrifice was repeated annually until

Heracles put an end to it in the manner described, killing, according to Apollodorus, not only the king but his son as well and the priest or "herald" Chalbes—with a good Canaanitish name. Names and details differ in various versions of the story, indicating that in the case of Apollodorus, who came along and tidied things up in the end, the name of Heracles was used as it often was as a convenient catch-all to avoid serious and laborious historical research. Ovid, a much earlier writer, says that the seer who advised the king and suffered death at his hands was a Thracian, and Hyginus reports that he was the nephew of the king of the Phoenicians.¹⁰⁹ Pherecydes, a contemporary of Lehi, reports only that after Heracles had restored fertility to the land of Libya by slaying Antaeus, he went straight to Memphis "and there sacrificed Antaeus's equally wicked brother, Busiris, on the same altar on which he was accustomed to sacrifice strangers to Zeus."¹¹⁰ What all sources agree on is the real essential, and that is that once long ago an illustrious stranger and seer visited the court of Pharaoh at his invitation and that the king tried to put him to death; in one case at least he succeeded, but in the most famous story of all the stranger, whoever it was, got the best of the affair. We can neither accept nor reject the stories as they stand, for they are plainly conditioned by the memory of definite ritual practices, which were themselves very real and sometimes very important historic events. Abraham in the Book of Abraham emphatically tells us in the first chapter that the fate planned for him by the priest of Pharaoh was one that had been suffered by others before him—he was by no means the first, nor possibly the last, such victim. The picture is a complicated one.

In ancient times the name of Busiris was a byword for cruelty and inhospitality. The Emperor Maximin was so cruel, we are told, "that people called him Cyclops, Busiris, Sciron, Falaris, and Typhon."¹¹¹ It is interesting to see the name of Typhon, the slayer of Osiris, added to this list of authentic "Procrustean" heroes. Another emperor is accused of reviving the bloody altars of Busiris "in rites more savage than sacred."¹¹² Busiris was remembered as one who sacrificed substitutes to pay for his sins: "It was he who would propitiate for his crimes by making the gods participants in the blood of innocent guests."¹¹³ While some go so far as to accuse Busiris of cannibalism, Isocrates in the fifth century B.C. caused a sensation by an oration in praise of Busiris, in which

he debunked the whole story.¹¹⁴ Diiodorus, more cautious, says that the story is probably Greek propaganda, spitefully circulated against Busiris when he closed Egyptian ports to Greek merchants in his desire to protect the cult of Osiris. He admits, however, that the tale does reflect the notorious hostility of the Egyptians to strangers unless they were scholars of world reputation, such as Orpheus, Homer, Pythagoras, and Solon.¹¹⁵ At any rate, "the cruel altar of Busiris" remained proverbial.¹¹⁶

The oldest and best-informed Greek commentators were quite aware that Busiris was a place rather than a person, though it could be both. To Eratosthenes is attributed the observation that "hostility to strangers is a common barbarian trait, which is also found among the Egyptians: stories told in the Busirite nome about Busiris are a criticism of that inhospitality."¹¹⁷ Herodotus (II, 59) reports that in his day the main temple of Isis in all the world stood in Busiris, which with Bubastis formed the nucleus of Egyptian cult-life. Indeed, since prehistoric times Osiris was known as "the Lord of Busiris," and it was from there that his rites spread to the other cult centers of Egypt, notably Abydos. I.E.S. Edwards even suggests that Osiris was probably a real king, "first the king and then the local god of the 9th Lower Egyptian nome, with its capital at Busiris";¹¹⁸ while H. Frankfort held that "Busiris was the tomb of some forgotten king."¹¹⁹ Every dead Egyptian needed to take a ritual journey to Busiris, to "appear there as the dead King Osiris," his presence in the place qualifying him as "an Osiris."¹²⁰ The place was named, according to Sethe, after its local divinity, and was even older as a cult center than Heliopolis itself.¹²¹ In the Pyramid Texts the king comes to Busiris for rites of human sacrifice,¹²² and a Nineteenth Dynasty monument has the same rites still celebrated in Busiris.¹²³ Edwards believes that the yearly passion play of Osiris was performed at Busiris as early as the First Dynasty.¹²⁴ "I am enduring in Busiris, conceived in Busiris, born in Busiris," boasts King Tutakhamon, reminding us that Busiris is preeminently the place of the lion-couch.¹²⁵ When Heliopolis took over the ancient cult of Busiris under the guidance of the great Imhoptep, it supplanted the human sacrifice by the use of substitutes, thus leaving Busiris the distinction, which it retained right down into the Middle Ages, of being the right and proper place for human sacrifices.¹²⁶

Our Hospitality: When Abraham

went forth into a starving world, he found the people understandably touchy and dangerous: ". . . and they persecuted Abraham our father when he was a stranger, and they vexed his flocks" as well as his servants, "and thus they did to all strangers, taking away their wives by force, and they banished them. But the wrath of the Lord came upon them. . . ." This is the Testament of Levi (6:9) speaking of Abraham in Shechem. But he found the same hostility elsewhere, that worldwide cruelty and inhospitality which is best represented by the notorious Procrustes and especially by Abraham's own stomping grounds, Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Bible tells us that the Jordan depression was a veritable paradise when Abraham first visited it, "before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah." (Gen. 13:10.) It is not surprising that "the men of Sodom were wealthy and prosperous people, on account of the good and fruitful land whereon they dwelt. For it supplied them with every earthly need of man."¹²⁷ Nor is it very surprising that "they did not trust in the shadow of their Creator, but in the multitude of their wealth they trusted, for wealth thrusts aside its owners from the fear of heaven."¹²⁷ Here Rabbi Eliezer seems to be quoting the same sources as Samuel the Lamanite was, both men being diligent students of the old Jewish writings; and he seems to be using the same source as King Benjamin as he continues: "They had no consideration for the honor of the real owner of their wealth by distributing food to the wayfarer . . . but they even fenced all the trees on top above the fruit, so that no one else could have any—not even the birds of heaven."¹²⁷ This was in the authentic Babylonian tradition, eye-witness accounts telling how the people of Babylon "oppressed the weak, and gave him into the power of the strong. Inside the city was tyranny, and receiving of bribes; every day without fail they plundered each other's goods; the son cursed his father in the street, the slave his master. . . . they put an end to offerings and entered into conspiracies. . . ."¹²⁸ The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were not condemned for their ignorance of the God of Abraham but rather for their meanness, their immorality, and their greed;¹²⁹ they were destroyed "because they did not strengthen the hand of the poor and heeded not the needy."¹³⁰ For them everything existed for the sole purpose of being turned into cash: they put a toll on all their bridges, with a *double* toll for wading; they charged visitors for everything and

had the most ingenious tricks for getting money out of them.¹³¹

When Abraham's servant tried to help a poor man who had been robbed and was being beaten up by a gang in Sodom, he was attacked by the mob, arrested, and dragged into court, where he was fined the price of blood-letting as a perfectly legitimate physician's fee.¹³² For like the Nephites under the Gadianton administration, these people were careful to keep everything legal: thus they would pay a merchant good prices for his goods but refuse to sell him any food, and when he starved to death would piously confiscate all of his wares and his wealth.¹³³ Of course, "the richer a man was the more favored he was before the law," for it was wicked to encourage idleness by helping the poor:¹³⁴ "Anyone helping the poor in Sodom got thrown into the river."¹³⁵ There are lurid tales of tenderhearted virgins, including Lot's daughter Pilatith, who suffered terrible punishment when they were caught secretly helping the poor.¹³⁶ It was one of these episodes, according to the Midrash, that finally decided God to destroy the city.¹³⁷ Just south of Sodom was the great plain (Olishem?) where the licentious yearly rites were held; in these all strangers were required by law to participate, and during the four-day celebration they were efficiently relieved of everything they owned¹³⁸—the great pilgrimage centers of the Old World were understandably the worst places in the world for fleecing strangers, that being through the centuries the principal commercial activity of the natives.

It is not surprising that travelers and birds alike learned to avoid the rich cities of the Plain, while all the poor emigrated to other parts.¹³⁹ Interestingly enough, the records of Ugarit, which some hold to be contemporary with Abraham, show that "the practice of killing merchants was widespread" in that part of the world, even as the Amarna letters show us a world in which it is every man for himself.¹⁴⁰ Having no love for the stranger, the people of Abraham's homeland had even less to waste on each other, and finally there was so much crime and murder among them that everything came to a complete standstill.¹⁴¹ Being grossly materialistic, they rated the hardware high above the software: "If a man was killed working on the Tower he was ignored, but if a brick fell they sat down and wept. Abraham seeing this cursed them in the name of his God."¹⁴² One cannot help thinking of the church builders in Mormon 8:37 and 39, who adorn themselves "with that which hath no life" while

calmly ignoring the needs of the living. "They were dwelling in security without care and at ease, without fear of war . . . sated with all the produce of the earth, but they did not strengthen the hand . . . of the needy or the poor, and it is said, 'Behold, *this* was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom."¹⁴³

That this emphasis on wealth and status was the real wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah is attested by both the Bible and the Pearl of Great Price, the latter holding up as a lesson in contrast the world in which the Patriarchs lived—"there were wars and bloodshed among them"—and the Zion which they sought: "And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them." (Moses 7:16, 18.) In the Old Testament, the one time in his life when Abraham refuses to deal with one who makes him an offer is when he coldly turns down the King of Sodom: It was after his victory over the marauding chiefs of the East that Abraham willingly accepted whatever the grateful King of Salem offered him as a reward, freely exchanging gifts and compliments with "the King of Righteousness"; but he absolutely refused to take anything whatever from the fawning King of Sodom, whose goods he had also rescued: "I have raised my hand to Jehovah El-Elyon," that he would not take so much as a shoestring from that king, "so that he can never say, 'I enriched Abraham.'" (See Gen. 14:22f; Josephus, *Ant.* I, 179.) He knew his Sodom and saw just what kind of a deal the king wanted to make for himself; and God applauded his wisdom and reassured him: "Fear not, Abraham: I am thy shield. . . ." (Gen. 15:1.) When Abraham and Lot started getting rich, their retainers took to quarreling, whereupon Abraham, determined to avoid involvement in that sort of thing, told Lot that he was welcome to Sodom while he, Abraham, withdrew to a less prosperous region: "Let there be no strife, . . . for we be brethren." (Gen. 13:6-8.) The rich cities of the Plain, where "they failed to serve the Lord by reason of the abundance of all things," were no place for Abraham.¹⁴⁴

Bed or Altar? The most famous thing about Procrustes, as everyone knows, was his bed, and it is this notorious item that ties his story very closely to the Abraham cycle. The story goes that when Abraham's servant Eliezer, being the exact image of his master and serving as his proxy in the most important negotiations, once visited Lot and Sodom on business for

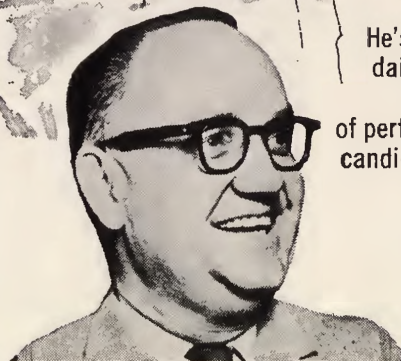
Abraham, he was entertained by an innkeeper whose unauthorized hospitality (which would, of course, encourage vagrancy!) got him banished from the town, while Eliezer himself was seized and taken to the marketplace to be thrown down on a very special kind of bed. All the cities of the Plain, we are told, had such beds: the judges of the other cities, Sharqar of Gomorrah, Zabnak of Admah, and Manon of Zeboim, had all taken counsel together and advised their people "to set up beds on their commons. When a stranger arrived, three men seized him by his head, and three by his feet, and they forced him upon one of those beds. There they stretched or contracted him violently to make him fit the exact length of the bed, saying as they did so, 'Thus will be done to any man that comes to our land.'"¹⁴⁵ Beer, commenting on this, notes that Procrustes's epithet Damastes means "the Forcer," or "the Violater," that being, according to him, also the root meaning of the word Sodom!¹⁴⁶

So here is an authentic "Procrustes" story in which the victim on the bed is none other than Abraham's double. There is another "Procrustes" story of how the same Eliezer, again looking exactly like Abraham, came to the house of King Bethuel of Haran, where "they tried to kill him with cunning," the king arranging for poison dishes to be served Eliezer at a banquet in his honor; but "it was ordained by God that the dish intended for him should come to a stand in front of Bethuel, who ate it and died," the victim of his own treachery.¹⁴⁷ What is behind these many stories of the strangely inhospitable kings? The bed is an important clue. Professor Lefebure noticed when he was studying the Busiris tradition that the inhospitable kings specialized in strange and ingenious contraptions for putting their noble guests to death, such as bronze bulls or giant braziers.¹⁴⁸ The altar of Busiris was held to be a fiendish invention of that ingenious monarch, and no ordinary altar.¹⁴⁹ R. Graves notes that the bed of Procrustes itself must really have been a special kind of altar, and he compares it to the bed to which Sampson was tied (another sun-hero like Heracles) by his unhospitable Philistines.¹⁵⁰ In view of such things, somebody should someday give serious consideration to Abraham's strange insistence in the Book of Abraham that the altar on which he was sacrificed required a special note and a special illustration, being "made after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans . . . and that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will



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refer you to the representation. . . ." (Abr. 1:13, 12.) For the interesting fact is that all the Jewish legends of the attempted sacrifice of Abraham make special mention of the peculiar altar employed, each one describing and explaining it in a different way.

Some of the oldest accounts mention the unusual altar while not attempting to describe it beyond saying that it was a *binyan* (Heb.) or *bunyan* (Ar.), i.e., a "structure" or "contraption."¹⁵¹ But why not an ordinary altar? All kinds of explanations are given. For one thing, nothing less than a super-holocaust will do for Abraham; so the king sends a thousand camels for wood, and when "he had dug a pit on a hill (?), and trees thrown upon it, and spread everything that the camels carried, and set it on fire," the rites were underway.¹⁵² Others explain that it was not the altar itself that was the "structure," but a wooden tower that the king had erected near his palace so that he could watch Abraham in the fire.¹⁵³ This might easily be a contamination of one of the well-known tower-building stories about Nimrod, such as the one in which he challenges Abraham to a duel as he comes out of the fire and builds a tower to give him an advantage against the God of heaven.¹⁵⁴ In the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, too, the piling up of the wood is an important detail; though the wood is never ignited and the instrument of sacrifice is really a knife, still the wood-pile-altar grows in the legends until it becomes a huge tower, "built straight up towards the heavenly throne of divine majesty."¹⁵⁵ It was after the attempted sacrifice had failed, we recall, that Abraham in the rites in the Plain of Safeh near Sodom was invited to sit atop a high cedar tower or altar (*benrah*) and be hailed as king.¹⁵⁶

The super-bonfire, "30 ells high and 30 ells broad," raised bothersome questions: How, for example, could you put Abraham into it without getting burned up yourself? Since the victim had to have his blood shed by the knife before his remains could be committed to the flames, it would not do simply to light the wood and run; it was only when the sacrificial blade proved totally ineffectual that Satan appeared and suggested a solution to the problem, which was to throw the victim from the altar to the fire from a safe distance.¹⁵⁷ This explanation converted the altar into a sort of catapult or ballista.¹⁵⁸ Schuetzinger says that the first mention of the catapult is in Tha'labi,¹⁵⁹ but the account of that learned Persian has Jewish predecessors at least a thousand years older than

his time, for in IV Maccabees (9:26 and 11:9f), we read of the heroic widow's sons being put to death by a Nimrod-type tyrant, two of them being tied to catapults while a third (11:20) is cast into a red-hot brazier. Another much older source than Tha'labi has the king plan to hurl Abraham into an immense brazier.¹⁶⁰ This suggests certain Egyptian practices,¹⁶¹ as well as the addressing of the royal victim in Coffin Text, No. 135 (de Buck, II, 160) as "Thou who art raised upon the scaffold!"

According to the 'Antar legend, Nimrod had an iron oven for his victims.¹⁶² Just after Facsimile No. 1 was published, Joseph Smith wrote: "But if we believe in present revelation, as published in the 'Times and Seasons' last spring, Abraham, the prophet of the Lord, was laid upon the iron bedstead for slaughter."¹⁶³ Turning to that issue (March 15, 1842) of the *Times and Seasons*, however, one finds no mention whatever of any iron bedstead, and so one naturally assumes that the word "bedstead" suggested to the Prophet the image of a standard iron bedstead. Still, it is interesting that by far the fullest parallel to the story of Abraham on the altar is a very early account preserved in the East-Syrian Christian Church in the very place where the event was supposed to have taken place, in which the hero, by a familiar transposition, is changed into St. Elias, who is bound on a bed of iron that is heated for three hours.¹⁶⁴

ABRAHAM THE FRIEND OF MAN

Abraham the Hospitable: The history of Abraham is a story of contrasts and extremes. If meanness and inhospitality reach an all-time high in Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham holds the record for charity and compassion. The contrast is an intentional one and a mark of authentic Abrahamic literature.¹⁶⁵ The supreme example of such "coincidence of opposites" is found in the Pearl of Great Price, where, in Moses 7:36, over against the City of Enoch, the height of human perfection in this world, is set the most depraved society in all the universe: ". . . and among all the workmanship of mine hands there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren." In Abraham's day the world was in a desperate state, ripe for destruction.¹⁶⁶ And Abraham's own society was the wickedest: "If a man was very cruel," says the Midrash Rabbah (41), "he was called an Amorite." For the Patriarchs, as Theodore Boehl notes, the future was grim—and none had better cause to know it than Abraham.¹⁶⁷ By very definition "Abraham the Hebrew"

was "a refugee, a displaced person."¹⁶⁸ The famous formula "Lekh lekha" (Gen. 12:1) is a double imperative, according to the Rabbis, telling Abraham to get going and keep moving, from one land to another (Midr. Rab. 39:8). His whole career, as Martin Buber puts it, was "an ever-new separation from the world and from his own people; this entire history is a consequence of choices and partings. . . ."¹⁶⁹

If constant travel was one of the ten trials of Abraham, jeopardizing his family, fortune, and reputation (Midr. Rab. 39:11), travel in dangerous and hostile regions was a horror: such was the curse placed upon the Wandering Jew for his meanness and want of hospitable feeling.¹⁷⁰ The Zohar has an interesting psychological note on the state of Abraham's world: It is when things are going badly that Satan loves to spread his accusations abroad, "for this is the way of Satan to bring accusations against him on high . . . reserving his indictment for the hour of danger, or for a time when the world is in distress"—then hysteria adds fuel to the fires of destruction. In such times even the righteous have no guarantee of security, for while "the Holy One does not punish the guilty until the measure of their guilt is full" (Zohar, I, Vayera 113a), when that time comes, look out! "When punishment overtakes the world a man should not let himself be found abroad, since the executioner does not distinguish between the innocent and the guilty."¹⁷¹

In the most inhospitable of worlds, Abraham was the most hospitable of men. It was said that Charity was asleep in the world, and Abraham awakened it.¹⁷² Even before he went to Canaan, he held continual open house near Haran, to try to counteract the evil practices of the time.¹⁷³ Then when he was forced to move, he dug wells and planted trees along his way, leaving blessings for those he would never see.¹⁷⁴ Arriving and settling in Hebron, he built a garden and grove and put gates on each of the four sides of it as a welcome to strangers from all directions, "so that if a traveller came to Abraham he entered any gate which was in his road, and remained there and ate and drank . . . for the house of Abraham was always open to the sons of men that passed and re-passed, who came daily to eat and drink in the house of Abraham."¹⁷⁵ He also operated a school at the place, that none might want for spiritual food: "Abraham's house was a lodging-place for the hungry and thirsty and also a place of instruction where knowledge of God and his Law were taught."¹⁷⁶ When his guests thanked

him, he said, in the words of King Benjamin (an ardent student of early Jewish traditions), "Do not thank me; rather return thanks to your host, He who alone provides food and drink for all creatures."¹⁷⁷

Inspired by the noble example and teaching of his uncle, Lot tried to operate the same kind of inn when he settled near Sodom, but he was soon reported to the authorities and had to operate secretly at night,¹⁷⁸ while his daughters practiced their charities with great stealth and suffered severe penalties when they were caught. Abraham's continued hospitality nearby was resented by the people of the Plain as a standing rebuke to their own sensible practices.¹⁷⁹

Not content to admit the weary wanderer at all hours to his pleasant grove and board, Abraham in those dangerous times used to undertake search-and-rescue missions in the desert. It was at noon of a phenomenally hot day when "the entire earth was being consumed with unbearable solar heat" (Beer), as if "God had pierced a hole in the midst of Gehinnom, and . . . made the day hot, like the day of the wicked,"¹⁸⁰ or as if he had caused the sun to emerge from its protecting sheath, depriving the earth of its normal defense against deadly rays,¹⁸¹ that Abraham, suffering terribly from illness, had his faithful Eliezer go out and search the byways for any lost wanderers. Eliezer couldn't find a soul, which was no wonder on such a day; but Abraham still felt uneasy—it was just possible that somebody might be out there needing his help. So the old man went forth all alone to search in that dusty inferno. For that supreme act of involvement he received his supreme reward—the son he had always prayed for. For as he was returning from his mission of mercy, still alone, he was met by three men, whom he at first, according to a very ancient tradition, took to be Arabs.¹⁸² Joyfully he led them to his tent, where he soon discovered who they were: "Lord of the Universe!" he cried, as he served them with food. "Is it the order of the cosmos that I should sit while you stand?"¹⁸³ Then it was that Abraham received the desire of his heart (Gen. 18:9-14), and the commendation of his good works: "Thou hast done well to leave thy doors open for the wanderer and the home-journeyer and the stranger," nay, were it not for men like Abraham, "I would not have bothered to create the heaven, earth, sun, and moon."¹⁸³

There is a story of how Abraham, to see what kind of a wife Ishmael, his son, had got, visited his camp in the

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desert as a simple wandering old man; Isaac was away at the time, and his wife turned the old tramp away. Abraham left a message with her, however, by the cryptic wording of which Isaac knew who had been there—and advised him to get another wife. Three years later Abraham visited the camp under the same circumstances and was shown kindness by the second wife, with whom he left another message for Isaac, commending her worth.¹⁸⁴ A more famous story tells how when God sent Michael to fetch Abraham back to his presence at the end of his life, the Patriarch was still his old hospitable self, kindly inviting the dread stranger—representing death itself—to be his guest.¹⁸⁵ Ever since then, when the world is in an evil way, the angels say to God: “The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth, he hath broken the covenant. Where is the reward of Abraham, he who took the wayfarers into his house?”¹⁸⁶

Let It Begin With Me: Students of Abraham’s life are impressed by the way in which he seems to start from scratch: with all the world going in one direction, he steadily pursues his course in the opposite direction. Granted that the tradition of the fathers, of which the Book of Abraham speaks so eloquently, was still known, yet his own father and grandfather had lost faith in it and departed from it. “Ten generations from Noah to Abraham . . . and there was not one of them that walked in the ways of the Holy One until Abraham our father,” says Rabbi Nathan, who asks where, then, did Abraham get the idea of starting things moving?¹⁸⁷ The common explanation that Abraham was self-taught—“God appointed the two reins of Abraham to act as two teachers”—still does not make him a privileged character, for all men have the same promptings of the Spirit if they will only listen to them: “. . . for charity also was asleep, and he roused it.”¹⁸⁸ The power was there, but it lay dormant from neglect: “When all the inhabitants of the earth had been led astray in their own pride and self-sufficiency, Abraham still believed on me . . . and so I made a covenant with him.”¹⁸⁹ Abraham received his covenant only after he had made the first move. Speaking of him, the Zohar says, “the prophetic spirit rests upon man only when he has first bestirred himself to receive it.” (Lech Lecha 77b.) Again, “the stirring below is accompanied by a stirring above, for there is no stirring above till there is a stirring below.” (*Ibid.*, 88a.) But who was to start the stirring? It was Abraham’s unique merit, “that he loved righteousness in a hard-hearted and

wicked generation,” without waiting for others to show him the way. (*Ibid.*, 76b.) A wonderful illustration of this principle is set forth in the newly found 1831/2 account of Joseph Smith’s first vision, in which he recounts how for three years he sought diligently for something that apparently interested nobody else, and finally “I cried unto the Lord for mercy, for there was none else to whom I could go . . . and the Lord heard my cry in the wilderness.”¹⁹⁰ This was exactly the case with the young Abraham, who at an early age angered his father by questioning all the values and beliefs of his society.¹⁹¹

For generations the world had moved ever farther and farther from God, until by Abraham’s time it had become what the Pearl of Great Price describes as the worst of all worlds.¹⁹² Then Abraham single-handedly reversed the trend: “The Shechinah [Spirit of God] came to earth at the Creation, but through human sin removed itself farther and farther from the earth. Then Abraham . . . brought it down again.”¹⁹³ He was, says the Midrash, like a man who saw a building all on fire and no one willing to put out a hand to save it: “He said, ‘Is it possible that the world can be without a guide?’” (Midr. Rab. Gen. 39:1.) So he did the only thing he could do and, exactly like Joseph Smith, appealed directly to God at an early age—it was he who made the first move, according to Abraham 2:12: “Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee.”

This independence of mind got both prophets into trouble from the beginning. “The man Abram is singled out, and sent out. He is brought out of the world of peoples and must go his own way. . . .”¹⁹⁴ The trials of both men begin immediately. What drives Abraham is set forth at the beginning of his story with great clarity and power: first of all, he is frankly seeking “greater happiness and peace and rest for me”; he wants to be more righteous, to possess greater knowledge than he has, to be a father of nations, a prince of peace, receiving and following divine instruction, to become “a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers.” (Abr. 1:2.) In short, he wants happiness, peace, rest, righteousness, knowledge, and light, and he wants to be able to hand them on to others—to his own progeny and to all the world. The world is not interested in such things, but Abraham was willing to pay any price for them. The Midrash compares him to a son being soundly beaten by his loving father again and again, but never saying to his father,

“I have had enough!” but only “Thine is the power.”¹⁹⁵ “Abraham,” says First Maccabees 2:52, “was accounted righteous only after he had been found true and faithful by passing through many testings.” He was chosen, says the Midrash, only after God saw that he would follow him through the greatest tribulations. (Midr. Rab. Ps. 18:25.) If Joseph Smith had based the Book of Abraham on his own experiences, one might account in part for the astonishing parallels between the situation in which the two prophets found themselves and their uncompromising and epoch-making behavior in that situation. But our parallels do not come from Joseph Smith’s account; they come from the studies and commentaries of Jewish scholars: it is *their* Abraham who seems to be almost a carbon copy of Joseph Smith.

Doing the Right Thing: The wonderful thing about Abraham is that he always does the right thing, whether anybody else does or not. He had to get along with all sorts of people, most of them rascals, and he treats them all with equal courtesy—he never judges any man. After Pharaoh had tried to put him to death, and after he had taken his wife away from him, Abraham could still not refuse his old enemy in his need, and laid his hand upon his head and healed him. He performed the same healing office for the King of the Philistines, who would also steal Sarah, and God recognized his great-heartedness and approved it: “On the day that Abraham assured the increase of the house of Abimelech, the angels asked God that Abraham’s own house might increase.”¹⁹⁶ He was “the Friend of God” because he was the friend of man. “When Abraham went to God with a petition for mercy,” says the Midrash (Ps. 18:22), “God met him with mercy. . . . When Abraham went to the Holy One in singleness of heart, God met him with singleness of heart . . . with subtlety, God met him with subtlety; when Abraham asked to be guided in his doings, God guided him in his doings.” Never, says Maimonides, did Abraham ever say to any man “God sent me to you and commanded me to do [or not do] so and so!”¹⁹⁷ for he knew that the priesthood operates “only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness . . .” (D&C 121:41); it may command the elements and the spirits, “but never force the human mind.” “Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee,” he says to Lot; “. . . if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or . . . the right hand, then I will go to the left.” (Gen. 13:8-9.) So Lot helped himself to the best land and as a re-

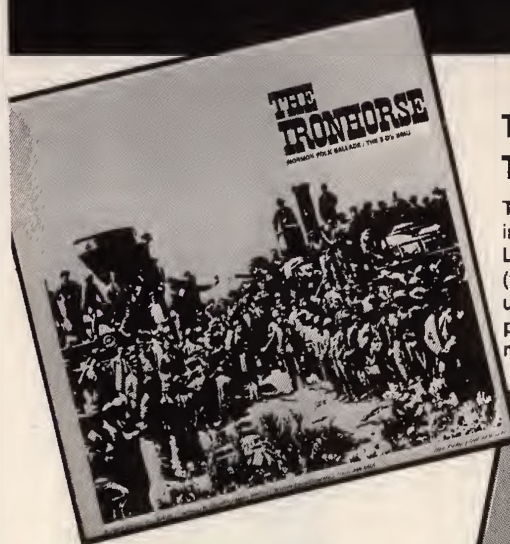
sult soon got all of his property carried away by raiders. Instead of saying "I told you so," Abraham got it back for him. He could have made a very good thing of this for himself when the King of Sodom, whose goods he had also rescued, came fawning to him ("wagging his tail," as the Midrash Rab. Gen. 43:5, puts it) and trying to win him with flattery, but without denouncing the wicked king, he simply turned down his offer.¹⁹⁸ (Gen. 14:20ff.)

"If Abraham does not play fair, who will?" says the proverb. (Midr. Rab. Gen. 41:9.) His passion for fair play breaks all the records in his pleading for the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, to whom he owed nothing but trouble. He knew all about their awful wickedness, but still, Josephus observes, "he felt sorry for them, because they were his friends and neighbors."¹⁹⁹ He appealed directly to the Lord's sense of fairness: "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (Gen. 18:23.) The impressive thing is the way in which Abraham is willing to abase himself to get the best possible terms for the wicked cities, risking sorely offending the Deity by questioning his justice: "... far [be it] from thee ... to slay the righteous with the wicked: ... Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? (Gen. 18:25.) ... Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes (18:27). ... Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak (18:30). ... now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord (18:31). ... Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once (18:31)." It was not an easy thing to do—especially for the most degenerate society on earth. It can be matched only by Mormon's great love for a people whom he describes as utterly and hopelessly corrupt, or by the charity of Enoch, Abraham's great predecessor: "Enoch ... looked upon their wickedness, and their misery, and wept and stretched forth his arms, and his heart swelled wide as eternity . . .," and declared "I will refuse to be comforted" until God promised to have compassion on the earth. (Moses 7:41, 44, 49f.)

Abraham learned compassion both by being an outcast himself and by special instruction, regarding which there are some interesting stories. When Melchizedek was instructing him in the mysteries of the priesthood, he told him that Noah and his people were permitted to survive in the ark "because they practiced charity." On whom? Abraham asked, since they were alone in the ark. On the animals, was the answer, since they were constantly concerned with their comfort

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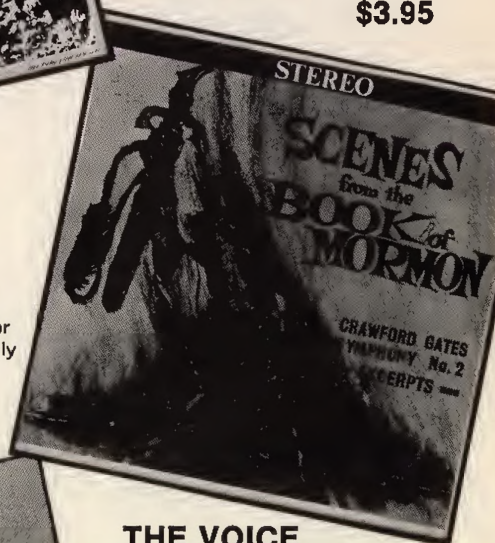
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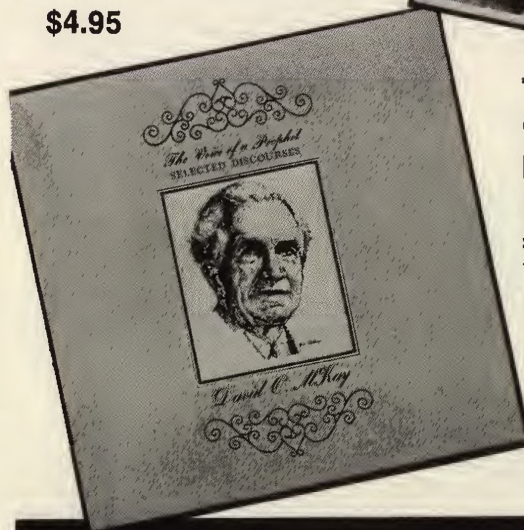
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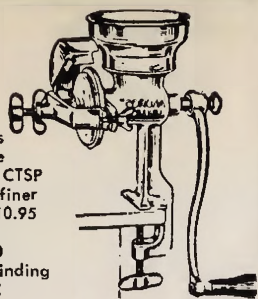
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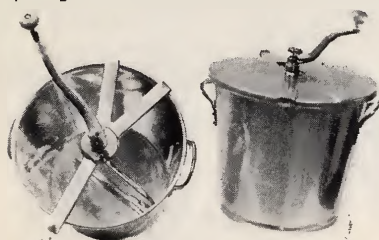
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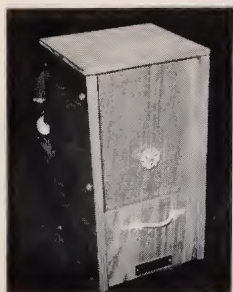
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and welfare.²⁰⁰ Again, Abraham once beheld a great vision (described also in the Book of Abraham) of all the doings of the human race to come; what he saw appalled him—he had never dreamed that men could be so bad, and in a passionate outburst he asked God why he did not destroy the wicked at once. The answer humbled him: "I defer the death of the sinner, who might possibly repent and live!"²⁰¹ When Abraham saw with prophetic insight the crimes that Ishmael would commit against him and his house, he was about to turn the youth out into the desert, but the voice of God rebuked him: "Thou canst not punish Ishmael or any man for a crime he has not yet committed!"²⁰² He learned by precept and experience that men are judged by God not as groups but as individuals.²⁰³

But Abraham's most famous lesson in tolerance was a favorite story of Benjamin Franklin, which has been traced back as far as a thirteenth century Arabic writer and may be much older.²⁰⁴ The prologue to the story is the visit of three angels to Abraham, who asked him what he charged for meals; the price was only that the visitor "invoke the name of God before beginning and praise it when you are finished."²⁰⁵ But one day the Patriarch entertained an old man who would pray neither before eating nor after, explaining to Abraham that he was a fire worshiper. His indignant host thereupon denied him further hospitality, and the old man went his way. But very soon the voice of the Lord came to Abraham, saying: "I have suffered him these hundred years, although he dishonored me; and thou couldst not endure him one night, when he gave thee no trouble?" Overwhelmed with remorse, Abraham rushed out after his guest and brought him back in honor: "Go thou and do likewise," ends the story, "and thy charity will be rewarded by the God of Abraham."²⁰⁶ In the oldest version of the story the Lord says, "Abraham! For one-hundred years the divine bounty has flowed out to this man. . . . Is it for thee to withhold thy hand from him because his worship is not thine?"²⁰⁷ One is strongly reminded of the Nephite law, which declared it "strictly contrary to the commands of God" to penalize one's neighbor if he does not choose to believe in God. (Al. 30:7.)

Once Abraham broke the ice, others began to follow. Pharaoh returned his generosity by escorting him on his way.²⁰⁸ Abimelech loaded him with gifts. The Hittites matched his fair dealings with their own.²⁰⁹ "Again and

again," writes J. S. Bloch, "it is compassion and foregiveness alone that are the unfailing family trait of the true descendant of Abraham."²¹⁰ Luzzato discussed the polarity of the human race between "Abrahamism" and "Atticism," with "Abrahamism elaborating the poetry and practice of compassion and tenderness, while 'Atticism' articulated man's cold, calculating, self-centered approach to life."²¹¹ A disciple of Abraham, according to a well-known tract of the Talmud, can be distinguished by "a good eye, a humble soul, a lowly spirit," while the men of the world are marked by "an evil eye, a proud soul, a haughty spirit."²¹² "Man is only worthy of his name, he is only 'really a man' if he has fully acquired the virtues" of Abraham. "It is only then that he is worthy of being called 'lover of God,' or 'God-friend,' like Abraham and David."²¹³ Like Brigham Young, Abraham sought to benefit his fellows in practical ways: as a young man back in Mesopotamia he invented a seeder that covered up the seeds as it sowed them, so the birds could not take them, and for this "his name became great in all the land of the Chaldees."²¹⁴ He apologized to the birds for driving them off, and came to an amicable understanding with them,²¹⁵ for he was kind to all living things: "No one who is cruel to any creature," says an old formula, "can ever be a descendant of Abraham."²¹⁶

Compassion is the keynote of Abraham's life and the teaching that makes the Pearl of Great Price supremely relevant to our own time. This is most unequivocally affirmed in what is the most remarkable passage of the book, where God himself weeps as he is about to bring the flood upon the earth, "... naught but peace, justice, and truth is the habitation of thy throne," cries Enoch; "and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end; how is it thou canst weep? The Lord said . . . in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency; And unto thy brethren . . . commandment, that they should love one another, . . . but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood." (Moses 7:31-33.) ○

FOOTNOTES

- 104 Apollodoros, II, 5, 11 (116-17).
 105 Hyginus, XXXI, 65.
 106 *Descriptio plenaria totius Urbis*, text in T. Hopfner, *Fontes Hist. Relig. Aegypt.*, pp. 532f.
 107 G. Lefebure, in *Bibliothèque Egyptologique*, Vol. 36 (1915), pp. 22, 322.
 108 Probus, *Georgics* (Schol.), III, 4.
 109 Ovid is discussed by J. G. Griffiths in *Annales du Service*, Vol. 48 (1948), p. 411; Hyginus, 56:59-60, who also says that Heracles broke loose just as the sacrificial prayer was being uttered by the King, 31:65.

- 110 Quoted in Lactantius, *Div. inst.*, I, 121; see Lefebure, *op. cit.*, p. 273.
 111 *Historia Augusta, Max. Prior*, 8:5 (Lampridius).
 112 Claudian, in Rufinus, *Vitae Patrum*, I, 254-56 (Hopfner, *Fontes h. r. Aeg.*, p. 591).
 113 Orosius, *Hist. adv. paganos*, I, 11 (2).
 114 Isocrates, *Busiris* (9-10), praises the high moral standards of Egypt, and points out (15) that Busiris lived 200 years before Perseus, while Heracles lived four generations after him.
 115 Diodorus, I, 57, 69, discussed by Griffiths, *op. cit.*, pp. 410f.
 116 *Ibid.*, pp. 411f; which Rufinus turns to sarcasm: "O kindly altars of Busiris!" Claudian in Rufin., I, 254-56.
 117 Strabo, *Geog.*, XVII, 1 (802).
 118 I. E. S. Edwards, *The Pyramids*, p. 24.
 119 H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 200; C. Autran, in *Mel. Maspero*, I, ii, 533; J. Griffiths, in *Jnl. Eg. Arch.*, Vol. 53, p. 187.
 120 J. Cerny, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, pp. 105f.
 121 K. Sethe, *Kommentar zu den . . . Pyramidentexten*, I, 91.
 122 *Pyr. Texts*, 477:962, 964, 966.
 123 The monument of Mentu-her-khepeshef, G. Lefebure, in *Bibliothèque Egyptol.*, Vol. 36, p. 285.
 124 Edwards, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
 125 A. Piankoff, *Shrines of Tut.*, p. 59.
 126 Budge, *Osiris*, Vol. 1, p. 212; Kees, *Goetterglaube*, pp. 249, 254; Sethe, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 80, 78-79; *Coffin Text* (de Buck, Vol. 1, p. 155). Hence the crocodile remains ever Suchos the Lord of Busiris, Kees, in *Aeg. Ztschr.*, Vol. 53, pp. 88, 31-32. Even Min of Coptos survived as a sacrificial god at Busiris, H. Gauthier, *Min*, pp. 231f, 234, 236ff.
 127 Pirke R. Eliezer, Ch. 25 (29A.ii), quoting R. Zeera.
 128 W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960), p. 5.
 129 *Apocalypse of Abraham*, 24:2.
 130 Bin Gorion, II, 223; Ginzberg, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 248; Graves & Patai, *Heb. Mythology*, p. 167.
 131 Bin Gorion, II, 235; Ginzberg, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 245-46. A visitor would often have an "accident" that put him at the mercy of the townsmen, Gorion, II, 235.
 132 Ginzberg, Vol. 1, p. 246; cf. bin Gorion, II, 235.
 133 Ginzberg, *loc. cit.*
 134 Bin Gorion, II, 249.
 135 Zohar, I, Vayerah 105b.
 136 *Ibid.*, 106b; bin Gorion, II, 220-23.
 137 Bin Gorion, II, 227.
 138 *Ibid.*, II, 211f, 228.
 139 Zohar, I, Vayerah, 106a.
 140 A. Rainey, *Christian News From Israel*, 14:2 (1963), p. 19.
 141 *Midr. Rab.* 329; *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 22-31; B. Sanh. 109a; P. R. Eliezer, Ch. 24.
 142 P. R. Eliezer, Ch. 24 (28B.i).
 143 *Ibid.*, Ch. 25 (29A.ii).
 144 Zohar I, Vayerah 106a, cf. Dt. 28:47.
 145 L. Ginzberg, Vol. 1, pp. 246-47; Beer, pp. 41, 164.
 146 Beer, p. 164, noting that in the Iliad XVI, 386-9, Procrustes suffers the same fate as Sodom.
 147 Ginzberg, I, 295.
 148 G. Lefebure, in *Biblio. Egyptol.*, Vol. 36, p. 274.
 149 Claudian, in Eutropius, *Breviarium*, I, 161-62 (Hopfner, p. 591).
 150 R. Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Vol. 1, p. 332.
 151 H. Schuetzinger, *Urspr. . . der arab. Abr.-Nimrod Legenden*, p. 36; Koran 37:95, 98.
 152 Falasha, *Anthology*, p. 27.
 153 D. Sidersky, *Origines des Legendes Musulmans*, p. 33.
 154 *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9, p. 310.
 155 Beer, p. 66.
 156 *Midrash Rabbah*, Gen. 42:4, 7, 8; 53:2-4.
 157 Schuetzinger, p. 186; p. 47 for sources on the problem.
 158 *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 34-43; Maase Abraham, in *Beth ha-Midrash*, I, 32-43.
 159 Schuetzinger, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
 160 I. Levi, in *Rev. des Etudes Juives*, Vol. 69, p. 98.
 161 The Egyptians had "an altogether special type of furniture," by whose ministrations one possessed "a new means of spiritualizing the offerings—by literal combustion" in a metal brazier, G. Jecquier in *Rec. Trav.*, Vol. 33 (1911), pp. 166-69. J. Garstang has commented on the strange sacrificial structures in

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the necropolis at Esneh, in *Ann. Serv.*, Vol. 8, p. 148.

182 Schuetzinger, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

183 Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 260.

184 G. Foucart, *Bibliothèque d'Etudes Coptes*, Vol. 1, Fol xi (in *Inst. Fr. d'Arch. Fr. de Caire*, 1919).

185 As pointed out by B. Gemser, in *Venus Testamentum*, Supplement VII, 121ff.

186 Clementine Recognitions, I, 32.

187 T. Boehl, *Ex Oriente Lux*, Vol. 17, p. 136.

188 J. C. L. Gibson, in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Vol. 17 (1962), p. 61.

189 M. Buber, *Judaism*, Vol. 5 (1956), p. 295.

190 Mich. Asin, in *Patrologia Orientalia*, XIII, 407f. The famous story of the hospitable Philemon and his wife Baucis has been tied to the age of Abraham through Lot by J. Fontenrose, *Philemon, Lot, and Lycan* (University of California Press, 1945), p. 119, deriving both from "a subtype of the Babylonian flood myth."

191 Zohar (trsl. H. Sperling and M. Simon), *Vayera 107b*; so 113a: "When the angel of destruction obtains authorization to destroy, he does not discriminate between the innocent and the guilty."

192 W. Braude, *Midrash to Ps. 110:1*.

193 P. R. Eliezer, *Ch. 25 (29A.ii)*.

194 Jubilees 24:18; bin Gorion, II, 272; *Book of Lights*.

195 Jasher, XXII, 11-12.

196 Ginsberg, Vol. 1, p. 271; cf. bin Gorion, II, 231; Beer, p. 56.

197 Ginzberg, Vol. 1, pp. 269f.

198 P. R. Eliezer, *Ch. 25 (29A.ii)*; Zohar I, *Vayera 105a*; bin Gorion, II, 23f.

199 Beer, p. 206.

200 P. R. Eliezer, *Ch. 29 (33B, ii)*.

201 Bin Gorion, II, 198.

202 This tradition is discussed by J. Perles, in *Rev. des Etudes Juives*, Vol. 21 (1890), p. 247.

203 The stories, based on Genesis 18, are told with the sources in bin Gorion, II, 201-3, and Beer, p. 37.

204 Bin Gorion, II, 258-63.

205 Testament of Abraham 1:1ff, 2:1ff.

206 Ginzberg, Vol. 1, p. 281.

207 J. Goldin, *Rabbi Nathan*, p. 131.

208 W. Braude, *Midr. Ps. 110:1*.

209 Ps. Philo, XXI, 5.

210 Text reproduced and discussed by D. C. Jessee, in *BYU Studies*, Vol. 9 (1969), pp. 280f.

211 Ginzberg, Vol. 1, pp. 211.

212 M. Kadushin, *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 225; Moses 7:36.

213 C. Montefiore, *Rabbinic Anthology*, p. 84.

214 W. Buber, in *Judaism*, 5:295.

215 Braude, *Midr. Ps. 26:2*.

216 Ginzberg, Vol. 1, p. 261.

217 Maimonides, *Daalat*, II, 302.

218 Josephus, *Ant. I*, 183, contrasts the two kings who met Abraham at the same time, the King of Sodom being the opposite number to Melchizedek, "the righteous king."

219 *Ibid.*, I, 176.

220 Bin Gorion, II, pp. 268f.

221 K. Kohler, in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 7, pp. 584-85.

222 Beer, p. 51.

223 Zohar, I, *Vayera 107a*.

224 G. A. Kohut, *Jew. Quart. Rev.*, Vol. 15 (1903), pp. 105, 110.

225 *Ibid.*, p. 104; this story is independently attested by Tabari and early Jewish writers.

226 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

227 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

228 For which in turn Pharaoh enjoyed a special blessing, Z. H. Chajes, *Student's Guide through the Talmud* (London, East & West Library, 1952), p. 156.

229 For which they too received a special blessing, Beer, p. 76.

230 J. S. Bloch, *Israel und die Voelker* (Berlin, B. Hart, 1922), p. 513.

231 J. B. Agus, *The Vision and the Way* (New York: Ungar, 1968), p. 4.

232 Aboth V, 22, cited by G. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition* (Studia Post-biblica, Vol. 4, 1961), p. 172. The same was said of the followers of Christ and Satan, Peter Cantor, in *Patrol. Latina*, 205:47f, 58.

233 Seder Elyahu, cited by R. J. Werblowsky, in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol. 6 (1955), p. 217.

234 Jubilees 11:19, 21, 23.

235 *Ibid.*, 11:13.

236 Bez, cited by Beer, p. 90.