

Abraham 1 — The Records of the Fathers — Olishem's Altar, the Rescuing Angel, and the Priesthood of the Fathers

Abraham 1: Ur of the Chaldees, c. 2000 BC. Abraham's own first-person account; the human-sacrifice cult at Olishem; his rescue from the altar by the angel of the Lord's presence; the priesthood of the fathers; the counterfeit priesthood of Pharaoh. Translated by Joseph Smith from Egyptian papyri (1835); first published 1842.

The Bible never tells you WHY Abraham left. Genesis opens his story already in motion. The Book of Abraham fills the silence — in Abraham's own voice — and the answer is startling: the religion of his own father had turned to killing children on altars, and Abraham himself was bound on one of those altars and rescued by an angel. This is autobiography. "I, Abraham." The testimony starts not with the call of Genesis 12 but with a knife over his chest and a prayer that got answered.

Insights

- 1.1:2 — a man who went looking.** Before anything happens TO Abraham, something happens IN him: he wants. *I sought... desiring... I became.* We picture God tapping a passive man; Abraham tells it the other way — he went looking, and the call answered a seeker.
- 2.1:7 — the altar.** His own people had turned to "offering up their children unto these dumb idols" — and when Abraham refused, they put HIM on the altar. The greatest covenant in scripture begins with its founder bound for sacrifice.
- 3.1:15 — the rescue.** *The angel of his presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands.* The One who loosed Abraham's cords (Isa. 63:9 — the premortal Christ) is the One who would let his own hands be bound at Gethsemane. The deliverer would become the offering.
- 4. Gen. 22 — the altar he knew.** Abraham, of all men, would later be asked to bind his own son on an altar — exactly what he was rescued FROM. As an angel stopped the knife at Olishem, an angel stops it at Moriah. The test wasn't random; it was the one thing he understood from the inside.
- 5. 1:27 — the counterfeit.** Pharaoh "would fain claim" the priesthood by descent and could not — NOT a curse on any race (see OD2, 1978; the 2013 essay), but a portrait of authority seized by blood or state power instead of covenant call. The first counterfeit priesthood.

Hebrew Word Studies

bikkesh / nachalah / kohen gadol (בִּקֶּשׁ / נַחֲלָה / כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל) — **he sought diligently / inheritance, patrimony / high priest vv. 1-2.** *Bikkesh* is "seek" in its intensive form — not idle wondering but diligent, hungry searching, the word of "if thou seek him with all thy heart" (Deut. 4:29). That's the energy of Abraham 1:2. And what he sought, "the right belonging to the fathers," is a *nachalah* — an inheritance, an allotted patrimony, the kind of thing that passes down a covenant line rather than something you award yourself. He claims the title *kohen gadol*, "high priest" — but here's the striking part: he claims it centuries before Levi or Aaron exist. This is priesthood by an older order entirely, the one the New Testament will call Melchizedek's, the order Hebrews 7 builds a whole argument around (Abraham paying tithes to Melchizedek). The Restoration's point is that the priesthood didn't begin with Moses' brother; it runs back through the fathers to Adam, and Abraham received it as a true heir, not an inventor.

mal'akh panav / shama / patach (מַלְאֲכַּן פָּנָיו / שָׁמָע / פָּתַח) — **the angel of his presence / he heard / he loosed, opened v. 15.** Three words carry the rescue. "The angel of his presence," *mal'akh panav* — literally "the angel of his face" — appears once in the Old Testament, in Isaiah 63:9: "in all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them." Latter-day Saints read that figure as the premortal Christ. So the One who loosed Abraham's cords at the altar is the same Person who would meet Moses at the bush and, in the meridian of time, let *his own* hands be bound at Gethsemane. The deliverer from the altar would become the offering on the altar. Then *shama*, "heard" — the verb of the great Shema, "Hear, O Israel" — the Lord's listening is covenant attentiveness, not casual notice. And *patach*, "loosed," is the word for opening prison doors and unfastening bonds — the same thing the angel does to Peter's chains in Acts 12:7, "his chains fell off from his hands." Abraham at Olishem is Peter at Herod's prison, nineteen centuries early: the cry, the Presence, the bonds falling.

zera / mishpat / dam (זֶרַע / מִשְׁפָּט / דָּם) — **seed, line / lawful claim / blood, lineage vv. 21-27.** The chapter's lineage words are covenant words, not race words, and that distinction is the whole point. *Zera*, "seed," is the Old Testament's term for a covenant line ("unto thy seed will I give this land," Gen. 12:7) — and the chapter is contrasting Abraham's covenant seed with

Pharaoh's non-covenant claim. *Mishpat* is "lawful claim," the grammar of properly transmitted inheritance; Pharaoh's problem is a claim without the lawful covenant behind it. And here is the key: in scripture, lineage is not skin color but covenant status. The same Bible that records this chapter folds Rahab the Canaanite and Ruth the Moabite straight into the line of David and of Christ (Matt. 1:5), and sends a "mixed multitude" out of Egypt with Israel (Ex. 12:38). Paul states the principle outright: "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel... the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Rom. 9:6-8). Covenant belonging is by faith and repentance, never by genetics — "as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord" (2 Ne. 30:2). Read this way, the chapter is about counterfeit authority, not about race at all.

Apocryphal Correlations — the old books beside the restored text

Jubilees 11-12; Apocalypse of Abraham 1-8. Young Abraham sees through Terah's idols, recognizes the one Creator, and breaks with the family idol-trade. Jubilees: no English until 1888; Apocalypse of Abraham: 1898 — both unavailable. (Its deeper convergence, the heavenly ascent, lands in Abraham 3.)

Book of Jasher / midrash — HONEST CAVEAT. The dramatic idol-smashing-and-furnace legend was reasonably well known via rabbinic midrash (Genesis Rabbah), and an English Book of Jasher was printed in New York in 1840 while Joseph was working on the Book of Abraham. So this is a resonance Joseph could have encountered, NOT a hidden source — flagged openly.

Facsimile 1 / Egyptian iconography. The "altar after the form of a bedstead" (v. 12) matches the documented lion-couch scenes of Late-Egyptian funerary papyri — the text describes what the ancient image actually shows.

Canon = Moses, the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants. These are extra-canonical witnesses, not scripture; the Church takes no position on them. Read per D&C 91. Abraham 1's idol material is a known legend Joseph could have heard; the strong unavailable case (the heavenly ascent) belongs to chapter 3.

Where the threads lead

The angel of his presence. Abraham 1:15; Isaiah 63:9; Exodus 3:2; Acts 12:7 (Peter's chains fall off) — the premortal Christ who looses bonds.

The priesthood of the fathers. Abraham 1:3-4; D&C 84:6-17; Hebrews 7:1-10 — the older order, running back to Adam, received by Abraham as a true heir.

Lineage as covenant, not race. Abraham 1:21-27; Romans 9:6-8 ("the children of the promise are counted for the seed"); 2 Ne. 30:2 — covenant belonging is by faith and repentance, never genetics.

How the chapter changes the reader

Abraham 1 is the encouragement of the seeker. Abraham didn't drift into the covenant; he wanted it, went after it, and was met — though by way of an altar before a blessing. And there's a quieter comfort: his faith grew in the worst soil — a father who had abandoned God, a religion that killed children, a people who tried to kill him. If you feel your background disqualifies you, Abraham is the answer: the greatest covenant in scripture began with a man whose family had lost it, who went looking anyway, and who was unbound from the altar by an angel under a Chaldean sky.