

Abraham 3 — Kolob and the Council — the Governing Stars, the Noble and Great Ones, and 'Here Am I, Send Me'

Abraham 3: c. 1995 BC. Abraham given the Urim and Thummim; the astronomical revelation (Kolob and the governing stars); the vision of the eternal intelligences and the noble and great ones organized before the world; the two estates; and the premortal council where the Father asks 'Whom shall I send?'

Abraham 3 may be the most daring chapter the Restoration produced. In twenty-eight verses: a governing star (Kolob) nearest God's throne; God's time measured by it; intelligences that have NO beginning and were never created; a council of noble and great spirits before the world; two estates; and the moment the Father asked "Whom shall I send?" and chose the One who would become Christ over the one who would become Satan. It's also where the apocrypha gets genuinely hard to explain.

Insights

- 3:4 — God's clock.** One revolution of Kolob is "a day unto the Lord... one thousand years" of ours. The Psalmist said it as poetry (Ps. 90:4); Abraham 3 grounds it in astronomy — and hands you the key for reading the creation "days" of chapter 4 as divine days, not 24-hour spans.
- 3:18 — you have no beginning.** *They have no beginning... for they are gnolaum, or eternal.* The real you, the intelligence at your center, was never created — radical against all classical theology, which had God making souls from nothing. You have always been.
- 3:22-23 — chosen before you were born.** *God saw these souls that they were good... these I will make my rulers... thou wast chosen before thou wast born.* Note the order — He saw they were good, THEN chose. That's foreordination, not predestination: the choosing ratified a goodness already there.
- 3:24-26 — the two estates.** Your whole existence in three verses: two tests. The first estate was premortal life, and you kept it. The second is mortality — the test you're in now. "We will go down" — creation is a council deciding together.
- 3:27 — Whom shall I send?** Two volunteers say the identical holy words — "Here am I, send me." The Father chooses by substance, not form: one answered "like unto the Son of Man." Read with Moses 4, it's the complete account of the choice that started everything.
- 3:28 — the rage of the second.** "The second was angry, and kept not his first estate." Lucifer's rebellion was the rage of the one who came in second — and every temptation since is an attempt to overturn that vote.

Hebrew Word Studies

urim ve-tummim / kokhav / kisse (אֲפֹסֶךְ / כֹּכָבִים / מִיִּתְּנוּ פִּירוּא) — **lights and perfections / star / throne vv. 1-3.** *Urim ve-tummim*, "lights and perfections," is the Old Testament's name for the ancient priestly oracle (Ex. 28:30) — and the Restoration's claim is that this revelatory instrument is far older than Aaron, reaching back to the patriarchs, the same *kind* of seer-instrument Joseph Smith would use to translate the Book of Mormon. *Kokhav* is "star," and *kisse* is "throne" — and the way the chapter binds them is the whole idea: the order of the *stars* (some governing others, all arranged around the nearest one to the throne) is a visible model of the order of *spirits*. The heavens are a diagram of heaven. This is the old "as above, so below" intuition, but grounded — the same God who arranges the courses of the stars arranges the ranks of his children, and the Doctrine and Covenants says exactly that: he gave "a law unto all things, by which they move in their times and their seasons... even the courses of the heavens" (D&C 88:42-43). Look up, the chapter says, and you're reading a map of how God governs souls.

olam / et / yom / shanah (עֹלָם / יוֹם / שָׁנָה / עֵת) — **age, eternity / appointed time / day / year vv. 4-9.** Four time-words, and the chapter uses them to make a point that solves an old puzzle. *Olam* means both "eternity" and "an age" — the same word for forever and for a defined era. *Et* is an appointed, set time (Ecclesiastes' "to every thing there is a season"). *Yom* is "day" — but in Hebrew a *yom* can be a 24-hour span or an indefinite era (Genesis itself says "in the day that the LORD God made the earth," meaning the whole creation). And *shanah* is "year." Why does this matter? Because the next chapter, Abraham 4, will narrate creation in "days" — and this chapter has just taught you that a divine "day" can be a thousand years or an age of unstated length. So the creation account isn't a claim about six 24-hour periods; it's organized into divine *yamim*, days on God's scale. Abraham 3 hands you the key for reading Abraham 4. The Hebrew left the creation-clock ambiguous; the Restoration tells you the clock runs on Kolob's time, not ours.

gnolaum / sekhel / nefesh (נֶפֶשׁ / לֵב / שֵׁשׁ) — **eternal / intelligence, insight / soul, self v. 18.** *Gnolaum* is the chapter's own coined word — the text glosses it for us, "gnolaum, or eternal" — and the closest Hebrew behind it is *olam*, eternity, perhaps with an Egyptian sound on the end. The doctrine it labels is carefully built. *Sekhel* is "intelligence," the discerning mind (Proverbs' "good understanding"). *Nefesh* is "soul," the living personal self (Adam became "a living soul," *nefesh chayyah*, Gen. 2:7). The Restoration distinguishes three things people usually blur: intelligence (the property of knowing), intelligences (the eternal persons who possess it), and souls (those persons clothed in body). Verse 18's claim is precise — the *person*, the bearer of intelligence, is *gnolaum*, without beginning or end. And notice it allows a real hierarchy: one spirit can be "more intelligent than the other," and yet neither was made by the other; both simply always were. So the doctrine isn't that God manufactured souls of varying quality. It's that God, the most intelligent among eternal intelligences, organizes and lifts the rest. Jeremiah caught the edge of it — "before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee" (Jer. 1:5). You were known because you were already there.

bnei ha-Elohim / yatzar / bachar (בָּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים / יָצַר / בָּחַר) — **sons of God / he formed, shaped / he chose vv. 22-23.** *Bnei ha-Elohim*, "sons of God," is the phrase Job uses for the heavenly host who "shouted for joy" at the creation (Job 38:7) — the premortal family, present and rejoicing before the earth existed. *Yatzar*, "form," is the potter's word (God "formed man of the dust," Gen. 2:7) — but here the forming happens to spirits already in being. And *bachar*, "chose," is the key verb, and its grammar carries the doctrine: God "saw they were good" and *then* chose. Throughout the Old Testament that's the pattern — David chosen because "the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7), not by lottery. The Restoration takes this chapter and runs it straight into modern times: in 1918 President Joseph F. Smith saw "the noble and great ones who were chosen in the beginning to be rulers in the Church" and named latter-day prophets among them (D&C 138:55), citing Abraham 3 directly. So this isn't ancient trivia about Abraham. It's a claim about you: your character before birth is, in some real sense, the character you still carry, and a good life now is the continuation of a choice you already made.

hinneni shelacheni / ben ha-adam / bachar (הִנְנִי / בֶּן הָאָדָם / בָּחַר) — **here am I, send me / Son of Man / he chose v. 27.** *Hinneni shelacheni*, "here am I, send me," is the holiest answer in the Old Testament — Isaiah's yes to God (Isa. 6:8), the same *hinneni* Abraham says at the binding of Isaac and Samuel says as a child. And here is the sobering thing: in Abraham 3:27 *both* volunteers say it, word for word. Christ and the rebel use the identical sacred formula. So the Father doesn't choose by the words; the words can be counterfeited. He chooses by *substance* — one answered "like unto the *ben ha-adam*," the Son of Man, carrying the actual identity; the other only wanted the honor. The verb *bachar*, "he chose," is a real choosing between real alternatives. The lesson reaches all the way down to us: the right words are not the same as the right heart, and discernment — by the Spirit — is the work of telling identical forms apart by their differing substances (D&C 50:31-33). The "Son of Man" detail is its own marvel, too: Jesus' favorite name for himself, used over eighty times in the Gospels, traced here to *before the world was*. He was the Son of Man before there was a man.

Apocryphal Correlations — the old books beside the restored text

Apocalypse of Abraham 9-32 — the strong case. Abraham is carried up into the heavens, shown the cosmos, the stars, the multitude of pre-existent souls, the ages, and the fall of the adversary — the exact structure of Abraham 3. No Western edition until 1897 (German), no English until 1918, far beyond Joseph (d. 1844). After the Book of Giants, the second genuinely unavailable convergence of this overhaul.

2 Enoch 24-33; Testament of Abraham. God's own account of creation and the pre-existent order; Abraham's heavenly tour. Reinforce the ascent-and-cosmic-vision tradition. 2 Enoch unknown in the West until 1896.

1 Enoch 72-82 (Astronomical Book) — CAVEAT. The courses and governing of the heavenly luminaries — a resonance with the governing stars. But available to Joseph (Laurence 1821), so: resonance, not hidden source.

Canon = Moses, the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants. Read per D&C 91. The governing-stars astronomy echoes 1 Enoch (available, 1821); but the deep structure — a prophet taken up, shown the cosmos, the pre-existent souls, the fall of the rebel — matches the Apocalypse of Abraham, unavailable in any language Joseph read until 1897/1918.

Where the threads lead

Intelligence uncreated. Abraham 3:18; D&C 93:29-30 ("intelligence... was not created or made"); Jeremiah 1:5 ("before I formed thee... I knew thee").

Foreordination, not predestination. Abraham 3:22-23; Alma 13:3-5 (called "on account of their exceeding faith"); D&C 138:55 (the noble and great ones, Joseph F. Smith's vision).

The two answerers and the fall. Abraham 3:27-28; Moses 4:1-2 (the second one's pitch in full); Revelation 12:7-9; Isaiah 14:12-15 — the complete account of the council and the rebellion.

God’s clock and the creation days. Abraham 3:4, 9 (Kolob’s time); 2 Peter 3:8; D&C 77:6-7 (seven thousand years) — a divine “day” can be an age, which is the key to reading the creation days of Abraham 4.

The Son of Man, before the world. Abraham 3:27 (“like unto the Son of Man”); Moses 6:57 (“the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man”); Daniel 7:13; the Gospels’ eighty-plus uses — the title is older than Daniel, older than Eden.

Heirs of God. Abraham 3:19 (“I am more intelligent than they all”); Romans 8:17 (joint-heirs with Christ); 2 Peter 1:4 (partakers of the divine nature) — God is the most intelligent of his own kind, so the hope of growing toward him is real.

The seer’s instrument. Abraham 3:1 (the Urim and Thummim, centuries before Aaron’s breastplate); Exodus 28:30; 1 Samuel 28:6; D&C 17:1; JS—H 1:35 — one continuous line of revelatory instruments from the patriarchs to Joseph Smith.

A governed cosmos. Abraham 3:3, 9 (the governing stars); D&C 88:36-47 (“a law unto all things... even the courses of the heavens”); Job 38:7 (the morning stars and the sons of God in parallel) — the order of the stars is a diagram of the order of souls.

Face to face, ‘my son’. Abraham 3:11-12 (the Lord’s hand on Abraham’s eyes); Mark 8:23 (Christ’s hand on the blind man’s eyes); Exodus 33:11 (the Lord spoke to Moses “as a man speaketh unto his friend”) — theophany as a Father’s tenderness, not court protocol.

How the chapter changes the reader

Abraham 3 changes how you see your own existence to the floor of it. You are not an accident of conception — the intelligence at your center is gnolaum, without beginning, and the God who is “more intelligent than they all” knew and chose you before the world was, because he saw you were good. Your worth isn’t earned by achievement; it’s the eternal substrate you already are. And your life now is the SECOND estate — the second half of a test whose first half you passed. You were in that council. You kept your first estate. The choice you made then is the choice the gospel is quietly asking you to keep making now.