

אחד היה אברהם

Avraham: The Early Years

The Genesis of Midrashic Visions

(1) בראשית יא:כו-לב

וַיְחִי־תֵרַח שְׁבַעִים שָׁנָה וַיֻּלְדֵי אֶת־אַבְרָם אֶת־נַחֲוֹר וְאֶת־הָרָן: וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת תֵּרַח תֵּרַח הוֹלִיד אֶת־אַבְרָם אֶת־נַחֲוֹר וְאֶת־הָרָן וְהָרָן הוֹלִיד אֶת־לוֹט: וַיָּמָת הָרָן עַל־פְּנֵי תֵרַח אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹלְדָתוֹ בְּאֹר כְּשָׂדִים: וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם וְנַחֲוֹר לָהֶם נָשִׁים שֵׁם אִשְׁת־אַבְרָם שָׂרִי וְשֵׁם אִשְׁת־נַחֲוֹר מִלְכָּה בַת־הָרָן אֵבִי מִלְכָּה וְאָבִי יִסְכָּה: וַתְּהִי שָׂרִי עַקְרָה אִין לָהּ וְלָהּ: וַיִּקַּח תֵּרַח אֶת־אַבְרָם בְּנֹו וְאֶת־לוֹט בְּנֵי־הָרָן בְּדָבָר וְאֵת שָׂרִי בַת־וֹ: וְאֵת אִשְׁת־אַבְרָם בְּנֹו וַיֵּצְאוּ אֹתָם מֵאֹר כְּשָׂדִים לָלֶכֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־חָרָן וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם: וַיְהִי יְמֵי־תֵרַח חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים וּמֵאֵתִים שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת תֵּרַח בְּחָרָן: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־אַבְרָם לֵךְ־לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וּמִמּוֹלְדֹתֶיךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֵרְאֶה: וְאַעֲשֶׂךָ לְגֹוֹ גָדוֹל וְאַבְרָכְךָ וְאֶגְדְּלָה שְׁמֶךָ וְהָיָה בְרָכָה: וְאַבְרָכָה מִבְּרַכְיָךָ וּמִקְלִלְךָ אֹוֹר וּנְבָרְכֹו בְךָ כָּל מִשְׁפַּחַת הָאָדָמָה:

(2) יהושע כד, ג-ג

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל־כָּל־הָעָם כֹּה־אָמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵבֶר הִנְהָר יֵשְׁבוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם מֵעוֹלָם תֵּרַח אָבִי אַבְרָהָם וְאָבִי נַחֲוֹר וַיַּעֲבְדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים: וַאֲקַח אֶת־אָבִיכֶם אֶת־אַבְרָהָם מֵעֵבֶר הִנְהָר וְאוֹלָךְ אוֹתוֹ כָּל־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְאָרֶב וְאָרְבֶּל אֶת־זֶרְעוֹ וְאֶתְּוֹלוֹ אֶת־יִצְחָק:

(3) נחמיה ט, ז-ח

אֶתְהַזְהוּא ה' הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר בְּחַרְתָּ בְּאַבְרָם וְהוֹצֵאתוֹ מֵאֹר כְּשָׂדִים וְשִׁמְתָה שְׁמוֹ אַבְרָהָם: וּמֵצֵאתָ אֶת־לָבָבָו נֶאֱמָן לְפָנֶיךָ וְכָרוֹת עָמְוֹ הַבְּרִית לָתֵת אֶת־אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי הַחֲתִי הָאֱמֹרִי וְהַפְּרִזִי וְהַיְבוּסִי וְהַגְּרָגְשִׁי לָתֵת לְזֶרְעוֹ וְתִקַּם אֶת־דְּבָרֶיךָ כִּי צִדִּיק אָתָּה:

(4) יחזקאל לג:כד

כִּי־אָדָם יֵשְׁבִי חַדְרֹבוֹת הָאֱלֹהִים עַל־אֲדָמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲמַרְסִים לֵאמֹר אֶחָד הָיָה אַבְרָהָם וַיִּירֶשׁ אֶת־הָאֶרֶץ וַאֲנַחְנוּ רַפְּסִים לָנוּ נִתְּנָה הָאֶרֶץ לְמוֹרֶשֶׁה:

(5) בראשית רבה (תיאודור-אלבק) פרשת נח פרשה לח

[וימת הרן על פני תרח אביו] אמר ר' חייא תרח עובד צלמים הוה, חד זמן נפק לאתר הושיב אברהם מוכר תחתיו, הוה אתי בר נש בעי דיזבון, אמר ליה בר כמה שנין את, אמר ליה בר חמשין, אמר ליה ווי להווא גברא דאת בר חמשין ותסגוד לבר יומא, והוה מתבייש והולך לו, חד זמן אתת איתתא טעינא חד פינג דסלת אמ' ליה הא לך קרב קדמיהון, קם נסיב בוקלסה ותברהון ויהב ההוא בוקלסה בידי דרבה דבהון, כיון דאתא אבוה אמר ליה מה עבד להון כדון, אמר ליה מה נכפור לך אתת חדא איתתא טעינא חד פינג דסלת ואמרת לי קרב קומיהון, דין אמר אנא אכיל קדמאי ודין אמר אנא אכיל קדמאי, קם הדין רבה נסיב בוקלסה ותברהון, [אמר ליה] מה את מפלה בי, ידעין אינון, אמר ליה ולא ישמעו אזניך מפין, נסתי ומסרתיה לנמרוד, אמר ליה נסגוד לנורא, אמר ליה נסגוד למיאי דמטפין לנורא, אמר ליה נסגוד למיאי, אמר ליה נסגוד לענני דטעני מיא, אמר ליה נסגוד לעננא, אמר ליה נסגוד לרוחא דמובלי עננא, [אמר ליה] ונסגוד לרוחא, אמר ליה נסגוד לבר נשא דסביל רוחא, אמר ליה מלין את משתעי לא נסגוד אלא לאור הריני משליכך בו ויבוא אלהיך שאתה משתחוה לו ויצילך ממנו, הוה תמן הרן קאים פליג אמר מה נפשך אם נצח אברהם אנא אמר מן דאברם אנא, אם נצח נמרוד אמר אנא מנמרוד אנא, כיון שירד אברם לכבשן האש ונוצל אמ' ליה מן דמן את, אמר ליה מן דאברם, נטלוהו והשליכוהו באש ונחמרו מעיו ויצא ומת על פני אביו הה"ד וימת הרן על פני תרח אביו.

(6) בראשית רבה (תיאודור-אלבק) פרשת לך לך פרשה לט

[ויאמר י"י אל אברהם לך לך] וגו'. ר' יצחק פתח שמעי בת וראי והטי אזניך ושכחי עמך ובית אביך אמר ר' יצחק לאחר שהיה עובר ממקום למקום וראה בירה אחת דולקת, אמר תאמר שבירה היתה בלא מנהיג, הציץ בעל הבירה אמר לו אני הוא בעל הבירה, כך לפי שהיה אברהם אבינו אומר תאמר שהעולם בלי מנהיג, הציץ הקדוש ברוך הוא אמר לו אני הוא המנהיג אדון כל העולם, ויתאו המלך יפך ליפותך בעולם, כי הוא אדניך והשתחוי לו ויאמר י"י אל אברהם לך לך וגו'.

(7) מדרש תנחומא (בובר) פרשת לך לך סימן ד

אמר ר' אחא אמר ר' חנינא בן שלש שנים הכיר אברהם את בוראו, מנין שנאמר עקב אשר שמע אברהם בקולי עקב בגימטריא קע"ב, וכל ימיו של אברהם קע"ה, מכאן אתה למד שבן ג' שנים הכיר אברהם את בוראו

(8) בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשת נח פרשה ל

תמים היה בדורותיו, בר חטייא אמר כל מי שנאמר בו תמים השלים שניו למדת שבוע, היה, אמר רבי יוחנן כל מי שנאמר בו היה מתחלתו ועד סופו הוא צדיק, התיבון ליה והכתיב אחד היה אברהם וירש את הארץ מעתה הוא תחלתו והוא סופו, אמר להון אף היא לא תברא דהא רבי לוי בשם ריש לקיש אמר בן ג' שנים הכיר אברהם את בוראו וכו' ר' חנינא ור' יוחנן תרוויהון אמרין בן ארבעים (וח') שנה הכיר אברהם את בוראו, ומה אני מקיים היה, שהיה מתוקן להדריך כל העולם כולו בתשובה,

(9) רמב"ם עבודה זרה וחוקות הגוים א'ג'

כיון שנגמל איתן זה, התחיל לשוטט בדעתו והוא קטן, ולחשב ביום ובלילה, והיה תמיה, היאך אפשר שיהיה הגלגל הזה נוהג תמיד ולא יהיה לו מנהיג, ומי יסבב אותו, לפי שאי אפשר שיסבב את עצמו. ולא היה לו לא מלמד ולא מודיע דבר, אלא מושקע באור כשדים בין עובדי עבודה זרה הטפשים:

ואביו ואמו וכל העם עובדים עבודה זרה, והוא היה עובד עמהן, ולבו משוטט ומבין, עד שהשיג דרך האמת והבין קו הצדק מדעתו הנכונה, וידע שיש שם אלוה אחד, והוא מנהיג הגלגל, והוא ברא הכל, ואין בכל הנמצא אלוה חוץ ממנו:

וידע שכל העם טועים, ודבר שגרם להם לטעות זה שעובדים את הכוכבים ואת הצורות, עד שאבד האמת מדעתם. ובן ארבעים שנה הכיר אברהם את בוראו: א"א: יש אגדה: בן שלש

שנים; יעקב אשר שמע אברהם בקלוי - מנין עק"ב.

כיון שהכיר וידע, התחיל להשיב תשובות על בני אור כשדים ולערוך דין עמהן, ולומר שאין זו דרך האמת שאתם הולכים בה, ושבר הצלמים, והתחיל להודיע לעם שאין ראוי לעבוד אלא לאלוה העולם, ולו ראוי להשתחוות ולהקריב ולנסך, כדי שיכירוהו כל הברואים הבאים, וראוי לאבד ולשבר כל הצורות, כדי שלא יטעו בהם כל העם, כמו אלו שהן מדמין שאין שם אלוה אלא אלו:

כיון שגבר עליהם בראיותיו, בקש המלך להרגו. נעשה לו נס, ויצא לחרון, והתחיל לעמוד ולקרנות בקול גדול לכל העם, ולהודיעם שיש אלוה אחד לכל העולם, ולו ראוי לעבוד. והיה מהלך וקורא ומקבץ העם, מעיר לעיר ומממלכה לממלכה, עד שהגיע לארץ כנען והוא קורא, שנאמר ויקרא שם בשם י"י אל עולם:

וכיון שהיו העם מתקבצים לו, ושואלים לו על דבריו, היה מודיע לכל אחד ואחד לפי דעתו עד שיחזירוהו לדרך האמת, עד שנתקבצו אליו אלפים ורבבות, והם אנשי בית אברהם, ושתל בלבם העיקר הגדול הזה, וחבר בו ספרים, והודיעו ליצחק בנו, וישב יצחק מלמד ומחזיר, ויצחק הודיעו ליעקב ומנהו ללמד, וישב מלמד ומחזיר כל הנלוים אליו:

Jubilees 11-12

The Book of Jubilees, which some may classify as *pseudepigrapha*, is a sectarian work likely produced in the 2nd century BCE. We know that it is sectarian, as it advocates for a solar year of 364 days (as opposed to our lunar-solar year). That would mean that the followers of the group that produced this document would be celebrating מועדים at a different time than the community that we would later refer to as "traditional." The book, as its name implies, is a *chronography*, presenting the history of the world and the Israelite tribe from Creation until Sinai. According to its own words, it was "revealed" by an angel, to Moshe Rabbenu, on Har Sinai. The events presented in יובלים are all dated, by יובל, then "week" (שמיטה), then year, month and day. This implies a strong Greek influence, as there is no chronography in Tanakh, but we know of them from Greek circles. In spite of its sectarian provenance, we can see numerous proto-Midrashic motifs that appear, most prominently, in later Midrashic literature – as we see in this shiur.

Chapter 11

And in the thirty-fifth jubilee, in the third week, in the first year thereof, Reu took to himself a wife, and her name was 'Ôrâ, the daughter of 'Ûr, the son of Kêsêd, and she bare him a son, and he called his name Sêrôh, in the seventh year of this week in this jubilee. And the sons of Noah began to war on each other, to take captive and to slay each other, and to shed the blood of men on the earth, and to eat blood, and to build strong cities, and walls, and towers, and individuals (began) to exalt themselves above the nation, and to found the beginnings of kingdoms, and to go to war people against people, and nation against nation, and city against city, and all (began) to do evil, and to acquire arms, and to teach their sons war, and they began to capture cities, and to sell male and female slaves. And 'Ûr, the son of Kêsêd, built the city of 'Arâ of the Chaldees, and called its name after his own name and the name of his father. And they made for themselves molten images, and they worshipped each the idol, the molten image which they had made for themselves, and they began to make graven images and unclean simulacra, and malignant spirits assisted and seduced (them) into committing transgression and uncleanness. And the prince Mastêmâ exerted himself to do all this, and he sent forth other spirits, those which were put under his hand, to do all manner of wrong and sin, and all manner of transgression, to corrupt and destroy, and to shed blood upon the earth. For this reason he called the name of Sêrôh, Serug, for every one turned to do all manner of sin and transgression. And he grew up, and dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees, near to the father of his wife's mother, and he worshipped idols, and he took to himself a wife in the thirty-sixth jubilee, in the fifth week, in the first year thereof, and her name was Mêlkâ, the daughter of Kâbêr, the daughter of his father's brother. And she bare him Nahor, in the first year of this week, and he grew and dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees, and his father taught him the researches of the Chaldees to divine and augur, according to the signs of heaven. And in the thirty-seventh jubilee,

in the sixth week, in the first year thereof, he took to himself a wife, and her name was 'Îjâskâ, the daughter of Nêstâg of the Chaldees. And she bare him Terah in the seventh year of this week. And the prince Mastêmâ sent ravens and birds to devour the seed which was sown in the land, in order to destroy the land, and rob the children of men of their labours. Before they could plough in the seed, the ravens picked (it) from the surface of the ground. And for this reason he called his name Terah, because the ravens and the birds reduced them to destitution and devoured their seed. And the years began to be barren, owing to the birds, and they devoured all the fruit of the trees from the trees: it was only with great effort that they could save a little of all the fruit of the earth in their days. And in this thirty-ninth jubilee, in the second week in the first year, Terah took to himself a wife, and her name was 'Êdnâ, the daughter of 'Arâm the daughter of his father's sister. And in the seventh year of this week she bare him a son, and he called his name Abram, by the name of the father of his mother; for he had died before his daughter had conceived a son. 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. And the seed time came for the sowing of seed upon the land, and they all went forth together to protect their seed against the ravens, and Abram went forth with those that went, and the child was a lad of fourteen years. And 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 before they settled on the ground to devour the seed, and said, "Descend not: return to the place whence ye came," and they proceeded to turn back. And he caused the clouds 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 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. And there came to him this year all those that wished to sow, and he went with them until the time of sowing ceased: and they sowed their land, and that year they brought enough grain home and ate and were satisfied. And in the first year of the fifth week Abram taught those who made implements for oxen, the artificers in wood, and they made a vessel above the ground, facing the frame of the plough, in order to put the seed thereon, and the seed fell down therefrom upon the share of the plough, and was hidden in the earth, and they no longer feared the ravens. And after this manner they made (vessels) above the ground on all the frames of the ploughs, and they sowed and tilled all the land, according as Abram commanded them, and they no longer feared the birds.

Chapter 12

And it came to pass in the sixth week, in the seventh year thereof, that Abram said to Terah his father, saying, "Father!" And he said, "Behold, here am I, my son." And he said, "What help and profit have we from those idols which thou dost worship, And before which thou dost bow thyself? For there is no spirit in them, For they are dumb forms, and a misleading of the heart. Worship them not: Worship the God of heaven, Who causeth the rain and the dew to descend on the earth, And doeth everything upon the earth, And hath created everything by His word, And all life is from before His face. Why do ye worship things that have no spirit in them? For they are the work of (men's) hands, And on your shoulders do ye bear them, And ye have no help from them, But they are a great cause of shame to those who make them, And a misleading of the heart to those who worship them: Worship them not." And his father said unto him, "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 cleaveth to them to worship them and honour them. Keep silent, my son, lest they slay thee." And these words he spake to his two brothers, and they were angry with him and he kept silent. And in the fortieth jubilee, in the second week, in the seventh year thereof, Abram took to himself a wife, and her name was Sarai, the daughter of his father, and she became his wife. And Haran, his brother, took to himself a wife in the third year of the third week, and she bare him a son in the seventh year of this week and he called his name Lot. And Nahor, his brother, took to himself a wife. And in the sixtieth year of the life of Abram, that is, in the fourth week, in the fourth year thereof, Abram arose 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, and Abram, dwelt with Terah his father in Haran two weeks of years. And in the sixth week, in the fifth year thereof, Abram sat up throughout the night on the new moon of the seventh month 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 desireth, He causeth it to rain, morning and evening; And if He desireth, He withholdeth it, And all things are in His hand." And he prayed that night and said "My God, God Most High, Thou alone art my God, And Thee and Thy dominion have I chosen. And Thou hast created all things, And all things that are are the work of Thy hands. Deliver me from the hands of evil spirits who have sway over the thoughts of men's hearts, And let them not lead me

astray from Thee, my God. And stablish Thou me and my seed for ever That we go not astray from henceforth and for evermore." And he said Shall I return unto Ur of the Chaldees who seek my face that I may return to them, or am I to remain here in this place? The right path before Thee prosper it in the hands of Thy servant that he may fulfil (it) and that I may not walk in the deceitfulness of my heart, O my God." And he made an end of speaking and praying, and behold the word of the Lord was sent to him through me, saying: "Get thee up from thy country, and from thy kindred and from the house of thy father unto a land which I shall show thee, and I shall make thee a great and numerous nation. And I shall bless thee And I shall make thy name great, And thou wilt be blessed in the earth, And in thee will all families of the earth be blessed, And I shall bless them that bless thee, And curse them that curse thee. And I shall be a God to thee and thy son, and to thy son's son, and to all thy seed: fear not, from henceforth and unto all generations of the earth I am thy God." And the Lord God said: "Open his mouth and his ears, that he may hear and speak with his mouth, with the language which hath been revealed"; for it had ceased from the mouths of all the children of men from the day of the overthrow (of Babel). And I opened his mouth, and his ears and his lips, and I began to speak with him in Hebrew in the tongue of the creation. And he took the books of his fathers, and these were written in Hebrew and he transcribed them, and he began from henceforth to study them, and I made known to him that which he could not (understand), and he studied them during the six rainy months. And it came to pass in the seventh year of the sixth week that he spoke to his father, and informed him that he would leave Haran to go into the land of Canaan to see it and return to him. And Terah his father said unto him; "Go in peace: May the eternal God make thy path straight, And the Lord [(be) with thee, and] protect thee from all evil, And grant unto thee grace, mercy and favour before those who see thee, And may none of the children of men have power over thee to harm thee; Go in peace. And if thou seest a land pleasant to thy eyes to dwell in, then arise and take me to thee and take Lot with thee, the son of Haran thy brother, as thine own son: the Lord be with thee. And Nahor thy brother leave with me till thou returnest in peace, and we go with thee all together."

The Apocalypse of Abraham

The Apocalypse of Abraham, which was almost assuredly originally written in Hebrew, has survived exclusively in Old Slavonic recensions. It appears to be a 1st century CE apocalyptic work – it certainly post-dates the חרבן הבית as it references it in ch. 27. The work is apparently sectarian. In spite of the time overlap with Yavneh, it was evidently unrecognized by (and unknown to) the rabbis, yet it reflects older Midrashic (and proto-Midrashic) traditions about Avraham.

Chapter 1

1. On the day I was guarding the gods of my father Terah and the gods of my brother Nahor, while I was testing (to find out) which god is in truth the strongest, 2. I (then) Abraham, at the time when my lot came, when I was completing the services, of my father Terah sacrifice to his gods of wood, of stone, of gold, of 3. silver, of copper, and of iron, having entered their temple for the service, I found a god named Marumath, carved from stone, fallen at the feet of the iron god 4. Nakhin. And it came to pass, that when I saw it my heart was perplexed and I thought in my mind that I, Abraham, could not put it back in its place alone, 5. because it was heavy, (being made) of a big stone. But I went and told my father, 6. and he came in with me. And when we both lifted it to put it in its place, its head 7. fell off, even while I was holding it by its head. And it came to pass, when my father saw that the head of his god Marumath had fallen, he said to me, "Abraham!: 8. And I said, "Here I am!" And he said to me, "Bring me the axes and chisels from the house. "And I brought them to him 9. from the house. And he cut another Marumath from another stone, without a head, and he smashed the head that had fallen off Marumath and the rest of Marumath.

Chapter 2

1. He made five other gods and he gave them to me and ordered me to sell them 2. outside on the town road. I saddled my father's ass and loaded them on it and 3. went out on the highway to sell them. And behold merchants from Phandana of Syria were coming with camels, on their way to Egypt to buy kokonil from 4. the Nile. I asked them a question and they answered me. And walking along I conversed with them. One of their camels screamed. The ass took fright and ran away and threw off the gods. Three of them were crushed and two remained 5. (intact). And it came to pass that when the Syrians saw that I had gods, they said to me. ""Why did you not tell us that you had gods? We would have bought them 6. before the ass heard the camel's voice and you have had no loss. Give us 7. at least the gods that remain and we will give you a suitable price." I considered it in my heart. And they paid both for the smashed gods and the gods which 8. remained. For I had been grieving in my heart how I would bring payment to my 9. father. I threw three broken (gods) into the water of the river Gur, which was in this place. And they sank into the depths of the river Gur and were no more.

Chapter 3

1. As I was still walking on the road, my heart was disturbed and my mind 2. distracted. I said in my heart, "What is the inequality of activity which my 3. father is doing? Is it not he rather who is god for his gods, because they come 4. into being from his sculpting, his planning, and his skill? They ought to honor my father because they are his work. What is this food of my father in his works? 5. Behold, Marumath fell and could not stand up in his sanctuary, nor could I myself 6. lift him until my father came and we raised him up. And even so we were not able (to do it) and his head fell off of him. And he put it on another stone of 7. another god, which he had made without a head. And... the other five gods which got smashed (in falling) from the ass, who could not save themselves and injure the ass because it smashed them, nor did their shards come up out of the 8. river. And I said to my heart, "If it is so, how then can my father ♠ god Marumath, which has the head of another stone and which is made from another stone, save a man, or heart a man ♠ prayer, or give him any gift?"

Chapter 4

1. And thinking thus, I came to my father ♠ house. And I watered the ass and gave him hay. And I took out the silver and placed it in the hand of my father Terah. 2. And when he saw it, he was glad, and he said, "You are blessed. Abraham, by the god of my gods, since you have brought me the price for the gods, so that my 3. labor was not (in) vain." And answering I said to him, "Listen, father Terah! The gods are blessing in you, because you are a god for them, because you made 4. them, for their blessing is their perdition and their power is vain. They did not 5. help themselves; how then can they help you or bless me? I was good for you in this transaction, for through my good sense I brought you the silver for the 6. smashed (gods)." And when he heard my speech he became furiously angry with me, because I had spoken harsh words against his gods.

Chapter 5

1. 1But having pondered my father ♠ anger, I went out. And afterward when I had 2.(3.) gone out, he called me saying, "Abraham!" And I said, "Here I am!" And he said, "Up, gather wood chips, for I was making gods from fir before you came, 4. and prepare with them food for my midday meal." And it came to pass, when I was choosing the wooden chips, I found among them a small god which would 5.(6.) fit...in my left hand. And on its forehead was written: god Barisat. And it came to pass when I put the chips on the fire in order to prepare the food for my father, and going out to inquire about the food, I put Barisat near the enkindling 7. fire, saying to him threateningly, "Barisat, watch that the fire does not go out 8. before I come back! If the fire goes out, blow on it so it flares up." I went out 9. and I made my counsel. When I returned I found Barisat fallen on his back. His 10. feet enveloped by fire and burning fiercely. And it came to pass when I saw it, I laughed (and) said to myself, "Barisat, truly you know how to light a fire and 11. cook food!" And it came to pass while saying this in my laughter, I saw (that) 12. he burned up slowly from the fire and became ashes. I carried the food to my 13. father to eat. I gave him wine and milk, and he drank and he enjoyed himself 14. and he blessed Marumath his god. And I said to him, "Father Terah, do not bless Marumath your god, do not praise him! Praise rather Barisat, your god, because, as though loving you, he threw himself into the fire in order to cook your food." 15.(16.) And he said to me, "Then where is he now?" And I said, "He has burned in the fierceness of the fire and become dust." And he said, "Great is the power of Barisat! I will make another today, and tomorrow he will prepare my food."

Chapter 6

1. When I, Abraham, heard words like this from my father, I laughed in my mind, 2. and I groaned in the bitterness and anger of my soul. I said, "How then is a figment of a body made by him (Terah) an aid for my father? Or can he have subordinated (his) body to his soul, his soul to a spirit, and the spirit to stupidity 4. and ignorance?" And I said, "It is only proper to endure evil that I may throw 5. my mind to purity and I will expose my thoughts clearly to him." I answered and said, "Father Terah, whichever of these gods you extol, you err in your thought. 6. Behold, the gods of my brother Nahor standing in the holy sanctuary are more 7. venerable than yours. For behold, Zouchaios, my brother Nahor's god is more venerable than your god Marumath because he is made of gold, valued by man. 8. And if he grows old with time, he will be remolded, whereas Marumath, if he 9. is changed or broken, will not be renewed, because he is stone. What about Ioav, the god on the other god, who stands with Zouchaios? For he is also more venerable than the god Barisat; he is carved from wood and forged from silver. Because he too is a term of comparison, being valued by man according to external 10,11experience. But Barisat, your god, when he was still not carved, rooted in the 12. earth, being great and wondrous, with branches and flowers; and praise...But 13. you made him with an axe, and by your skill he was made a god. And behold 14. he has already dried up and his fatness has perished. He fell from the height to 15. the earth, he came from greatness to smallness, and the appearance of his face 17. wasted away. And, he himself was burned up by the fire and he became ashes 18. and is no more. And you say, Let me make another and tomorrow he will make 19. my food for me. But in perishing he left himself no strength for his (own) destruction."

Chapter 7

1. This I say: 2. Fire is more venerable in formation, for even the unsubdued (things) are subdued in it, and it mocks that which perishes easily by means of its 3. burning. But neither is it venerable, for it is subject to the waters. 4. But rather the waters are more venerable than it (fire), because they overcome fire and sweeten the earth 5. with fruits. But I will not call them god either, for the waters subside under the 6. earth and are subject to it. But I will not call it a goddess either, for it is dried by the sun (and) subordinated to man for his work. 7. More venerable among the gods, I say, is the sun, for with its rays it illuminates the whole universe and the various airs. 8. Nor will I place among the gods the one who obscures his course by means of the moon and the clouds. 9. Nor again shall I call the moon or the stars gods, because they too at times during the night dim their light. 10. Listen, Terah my father, I shall seek before you the God who created all the gods supposed by us (to exist). 11. For who is it, or which one is it who made the heavens crimson and the sun golden, who has given light to the moon and the stars with it, who has dried the earth in the midst of the many waters, who set you yourself among the things and who has sought me out in the perplexity of my thoughts? 12. I (only) God will reveal himself by himself to us!"

The Antiquities of the Jews

Flavius Josephus (c. 37–100 CE) was a Jewish historian and priest whose works bridge the world of ancient Judaism and Greco-Roman historiography. Born in Jerusalem to an aristocratic priestly family, Josephus was deeply versed in Jewish scripture and tradition, yet also well acquainted with Greek learning. After serving as a commander in the Jewish revolt against Rome, he surrendered, later becoming a historian under Roman patronage. His major works—*The Jewish War* and *Antiquities of the Jews*—aimed to explain Jewish history and beliefs to a Roman audience.

In *Antiquities* Book I, Chapter 8, Josephus recounts the story of Abraham, expanding on the terse biblical narrative found in Genesis. Here, Abraham is portrayed not only as a man of faith but also as a philosopher and scientist—a seeker of truth who, through reason, deduces the existence of one God behind the natural order. This depiction reflects Josephus' desire to present Abraham as an exemplar of wisdom recognizable to Hellenistic readers, aligning the patriarch with the ideals of the philosopher-sage.

The passage thus reveals both Josephus' reverence for the biblical patriarch and his effort to reinterpret Israel's origins in terms intelligible—and admirable—to the cultured world of the first century.

BOOK I CHAPTER 8.

THAT WHEN THERE WAS A FAMINE IN CANAAN, ABRAM WENT THENCE INTO EGYPT; AND AFTER HE HAD CONTINUED THERE A WHILE HE RETURNED BACK AGAIN.

1. NOW, after this, when a famine had invaded the land of Canaan, and Abram had discovered that the Egyptians were in a flourishing condition, he was disposed to go down to them, both to partake of the plenty they enjoyed, and to become an auditor of their priests, and to know what they said concerning the gods; designing either to follow them, if they had better notions than he, or to convert them into a better way, if his own notions proved the truest. Now, seeing he was to take Sarai with him, and was afraid of the madness of the Egyptians with regard to women, lest the king should kill him on occasion of his wife's great beauty, he contrived this device : - he pretended to be her brother, and directed her in a dissembling way to pretend the same, for he said it would be for their benefit. Now, as soon as he came into Egypt, it happened to Abram as he supposed it would; for the fame of his wife's beauty was greatly talked of; for which reason Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, would not be satisfied with what was reported of her, but would needs see her himself, and was preparing to enjoy her; but God put a stop to his unjust inclinations, by sending upon him a distemper, and a sedition against his government. And when he inquired of the priests how he might be freed from these calamities, they told him that this his miserable condition was derived from the wrath of God, upon account of his inclinations to abuse the stranger's wife. He then, out of fear, asked Sarai who she was, and who it was that she brought along with her. And when he had found out the truth, he excused himself to Abram, that supposing the woman to be his sister, and not his wife, he set his affections on her, as desiring an affinity with him by marrying her, but not as incited by lust to abuse her. He also made him a large present in money, and gave him leave to enter into conversation with the most learned among the Egyptians; from which conversation his virtue and his reputation became more conspicuous than they had been before.

2. For whereas the Egyptians were formerly addicted to different customs, and despised one another's sacred and accustomed rites, and were very angry one with another on that account, Abram conferred with each of them, and, confuting the reasonings they made use of, every one for their own practices, demonstrated that such reasonings were vain and void of truth: whereupon he was admired by them in those conferences as a very wise man, and one of great sagacity, when he discoursed on any subject he undertook; and this not only in understanding it, but in persuading other men also to assent to him. He communicated to them arithmetic, and delivered to them the science of astronomy; for before Abram came into Egypt they were unacquainted with those parts of learning; for that science came from the Chaldeans into Egypt, and from thence to the Greeks also.