

#7: “Noah to Abraham and the Abrahamic Covenant”

Monte F. Shelley, 28 Feb 2010

Quotes

- It was not raining when Noah was commanded to build an ark.
- There was no food shortage when Joseph began to store food.
- When we do what we can, God will do what we can't. (Ziggy)

1. The Law, the Prophets, the Writings (TaNaKh)

- The Law (Torah):** Gen, Ex, Lev, Num, Deut.
- The Prophets (Neviim):** Josh, Judg, 1&2 Sam, 1&2 Kgs, Isa, Jer, Ezek, and the 12 minor prophets (Hos, Joel, Amos, Obad, Jon, Mic, Nah, Hab, Zeph, Hag, Zech, Mal).
- The Writings (Ketuvim):** Ps, Job, Prov, Ruth, Song, Eccl, Lam, Esther, Dan, Ezra, Neh, 1&2 Chr.

None ... understand the things which were spoken unto the Jews like unto them, save it be that they are taught after the manner of the things of the Jews. (2 Nephi 25:5)

“When I was a graduate student in philosophy ... one of my professors ... was a devout Jew who was also a lay leader in a nearby small Jewish congregation. ... I asked if he would allow me to study part of the Old Testament with him. He agreed and asked me to propose a course of study for the next quarter. ‘Well, since I don’t want to go too fast, why don’t we just read the book of Genesis?’ I said. He was amazed. Though I thought studying one book of scriptures in eight weeks was a snail’s pace, he thought it impossible to do that much reading in so short a time. He suggested that we read only chapter 1. Since that was equally amazing to me, we compromised on ‘as much as we can get through.’ He warned me that we might not get very far, and we didn’t. We barely made it through chapter 3, and he obviously felt pushed. The first day we met, I had read all of chapter 1 and ... brought several questions. ... One of them was, How do you reconcile the account of creation ... with what is taught in science class? ... He did not think ... it was not worth the time. There were ... more important things to discuss, things pertinent to our lives and salvation. ... He answered [my other questions] so completely that at the end of the hour I still had questions. ... At our next meeting, he finished answering my list of question and ... I said, ‘I’m ready to move to chapter 2.’ ... He began talking about and asking questions about the details of the scriptures, questions that, by focusing on those details, went on and on. He asked about words and patterns of words, pointing out things I had never seen or had thought inconsequential.” (James E.

Faulconer, *Scripture Study: Tools and Suggestions*, 1999, 3–4)

2. “Promises made to the fathers”

Moroni quoted Malachi to Joseph: “Elijah ... shall *plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers*, and the hearts of the children shall *turn* to their fathers.” (JS—H 1:39)

I sought for the blessings of the fathers ... [The priesthood] came down ... through the fathers unto me. (Abr 1:2–3)

3. Dispensations

“A gospel dispensation is a period of time in which the Lord has at least one authorized servant on the earth who bears the keys of the holy priesthood. Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith, and others have each started a new gospel dispensation. When the Lord organizes a dispensation, the gospel is revealed anew so that the people of that dispensation do not have to depend on past dispensations for knowledge of the plan of salvation. The dispensation begun by Joseph Smith is known as the ‘dispensation of the fulness of times.’” (Guide to the Scriptures)

A new dispensation begins when God: (1) visits a new prophet, (2) restores truth, covenants, and priesthood, and (3) makes or renews a covenant. It ends with a judgment. Some covenants do not have conditions. Others include: Author, Blessings, Curses, Duties, how to Enter covenant, and ways to Remember. A dispensation ends with a judgment when the wicked receive covenant curses (sword, famine, pestilence, no prophet, Spirit withdraws) and the righteous are saved.

Dispensation	New Covenant	Judgment
1. Adam (all living)	E: baptism D: fruitful; serve & preserve, keep commandments B: Messiah promised R: sacrifice	Enoch & righteous Zion taken, apostasy, wicked destroyed by Flood
2. Noah (all living)	Adamic covenant renewed <i>Unconditional Covenant</i> B: no flood, growing seasons R: rainbow as sign	Brother of Jared, Melchizedek (JST Gen 14:34) apostasy; famine; fire destroys Sodom
3. Abraham (family)	E: circumcision D: keep commandments B: land, posterity, priesthood	7 year famine; bondage in Egypt; no prophet; plagues
4. Moses (Israelites)	E: ritual consent (Ex 24:3) D: 10 commandments, Law of Moses, temple , ... R: sacrifice; clothes, Torah, door posts, Ark of the Covenant	Lehi and Nephi 10 Tribes remnant Temple destroyed; captivity in Assyria & Babylon; no Ark; no prophets
5. Christ, Apostles (Jews then Gentiles)	E: baptism, laying on hands D: Sermon on the Mount . led by HG; missionary work; baptism for dead R: Sacrament	Temple, Jerusalem destroyed; Jews scattered; apostasy, apostles killed; no prophets
6. Joseph (Gentiles then Jews)	E: baptism, laying on hands D: keep covenants; temple work , missionary work B: Temple promises and HG R: Sacrament	Righteous and wicked separated; Final judgment
7. Christ 2 nd coming, Millennium	Christ will reign; “every knee shall bow and every tongue confess”, Satan bound D: missionary + temple work	Satan loosed; wicked separated (D&C 43:31–33)

The Old and New Testament are sometimes called the Old and New Covenant. The Old Testament covers the first 4 dispensations. The New Testament covers the 5th dispensation and includes prophesies of the 6th and 7th dispensations.

Joseph: The Priesthood was first given to Adam; he obtained the first Presidency. ... He is Michael the Archangel spoken of in the Scriptures. Then to Noah, who is Gabriel; he stands next in authority to Adam in the Priesthood; he was called of God to this office, and was the father of all living in this day, and to him was given the dominion. These men held keys first on earth, and then in heaven. (TPJS 157)

4. Noah, the Ark and a New Beginning

“The ark: the Hebrew word means ‘box’ or ‘chest.’ It is used elsewhere only for the watertight ‘basket’ in which the baby Moses floated on the Nile—an interesting parallel. The ark is vast, designed to float, not sail—and there were no launching problems! An 18-inch cubit gives the measurements as 450 x 76 x 45 feet.” (OT-I 54, *Eerdmans’ Handbook to the Bible*, 132)

A “window shalt thou make to the ark, ... [with 3] stories. (Gen 6:16)

HEB *tsohar*; some rabbis believed it was a precious stone that shone in the ark. Ether 2:23 (23–24).

Their vessels ... were tight like unto the ark of Noah (Ether 6:7)

The Ark and the Tabernacle were portable sanctuaries that guided and saved God’s people. God revealed design of Ark and Tabernacle. The Ark had three levels and the Tabernacle had three areas. Each deck was the height of the Tabernacle and three times the area.

[Noah] sent forth a raven ... [and] a dove ... olive leaf (Gen 8:7,11)

Raven: black, unclean, wild, bird of prey; and

Dove: white, clean, can be domesticated, eats seeds and fruit.

Rainbow: God said, This *is* the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature... for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. (Gen 9:12–13)

Joseph: The Lord hath set the bow in the cloud for a sign that while it shall be seen, seed time and harvest, summer and winter shall not fail; but when it shall disappear, woe to that generation, for behold the end cometh quickly. (*TPJS* 305).

Adam and Noah
Animals came to Adam for names (2:19–20) and to Noah (7:7–9)
Both lived with animals (Gen 7:16; 8:1)
Entered a lone and dreary world after Fall or Flood (Gen 7:23)
God commanded animals to “be fruitful” (Gen 1:20; 8:17)
Built altars and offered animal sacrifices (Moses 5:5; Gen 8:20)
God accepted sacrifices and promised blessings (8:21–22)
God commanded to be fruitful, and have dominion (1:26; 9:1–2)
Grain was added to Adam’s fruit diet; Animal flesh (sparingly, no blood) added to Noah’s grain and fruit diet (9:3–4; JST 9:11)
Thou shalt not murder, murderer shall die (JST Gen 9:12)
Both grew food and had a garment (3:21, 23; 9:20, 23)
Some offspring chose evil (9:25; 11:1–10; 8:21; Moses 7:46)

5. Noah’s sons: Shem, Ham, Japheth

(1) **Shem**, Eber [Hebrews], ... Terah, Abram; (2) **Ham**: Cush, Nimrod [Babel], Asshur [Nineveh], Canaan; (3) **Japheth**.

Noah HEB *rest* or *repose*

Shem HEB *name* → *honor, authority, character*

Japheth HEB *expansion*; **Ham** HEB *hot*

²⁰ Noah ... drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.²² And Ham ... saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.²³ And Shem and Japheth took a garment ... and covered the nakedness of their father. (Gen 9:20:23)

Nibley: The story of the stolen garment as told by the rabbis ... calls for an entirely different rendering of the strange story in Genesis [9]. ... They seemed to think that the *’erwath* of Genesis [9:22] did not mean ‘nakedness’ at all, but should be given its primary root meaning of ‘skin covering.’ Read thus, we are to understand that Ham took the garment of his father while he was sleeping and showed it to his brethren, Shem and Japheth, who took a pattern or copy of it (*salmah*) or else a woven garment like it (*simlah*) which they put upon their own shoulders, returning the skin garment to their father. Upon awaking, Noah recognized the priesthood of two sons but cursed the son who tried to rob him of his garment. (OT-I 57; *Lehi in the Desert and the World of Jaredites*, 160–62).

6. Nimrod

Nibley: Nimrod claimed his kingship on the ground of victory over his enemies [see Gen 10:8–10]; his priesthood, however, he claimed by virtue of possessing ‘the garment of Adam.’ The Talmud assures us that it was by virtue of owning this garment that Nimrod was able to claim power to rule over the whole earth, and that he sat in his tower while men came and worshiped him. The Apocryphal writers, Jewish and Christian, have a good deal to say about this garment. To quote one of them: ‘the garments of skin which God made for Adam and his wife when they went out of the garden and were given after the death of Adam ... to Enoch’; hence they passed to Methuselah, and then to Noah, from whom Ham stole them as the people were leaving the ark. Ham’s grandson Nimrod obtained them from his father Cush. As for the legitimate inheritance of this clothing, a very old fragment recently discovered says that Michael ‘disrobed Enoch of his earthly garments, and put on him his angelic clothing,’ taking him into the presence of God. (OT-I 57; *Lehi in the Desert* ..., 160–62)

Josephus (AD 37–c. 100; Jewish historian; Roman citizen):

Nimrod ... excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it were through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers!

Now the multitude were very ready to follow ... Nimrod, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God; and they built a tower, neither sparing any pains, nor being ... negligent about the work: and, by reason of the multitude of hands employed in it, it grew very high, sooner than any one could expect; but the thickness of it was so great, and it was so strongly built, that thereby its great height seemed ... to be less than it really was. It was built of burnt brick, cemented together with mortar ... that it might not ... admit water. When God saw that they acted so madly, ... he caused a tumult among them, by producing in them diverse languages, and causing that, through the multitude of those languages, they should not be able to understand one another. The place wherein they built the tower is now called Babylon, because of the confusion of that language which they readily understood before; for the Hebrews mean by the word Babel, confusion. (Ant. I:iv:2)

7. Tower of Babel

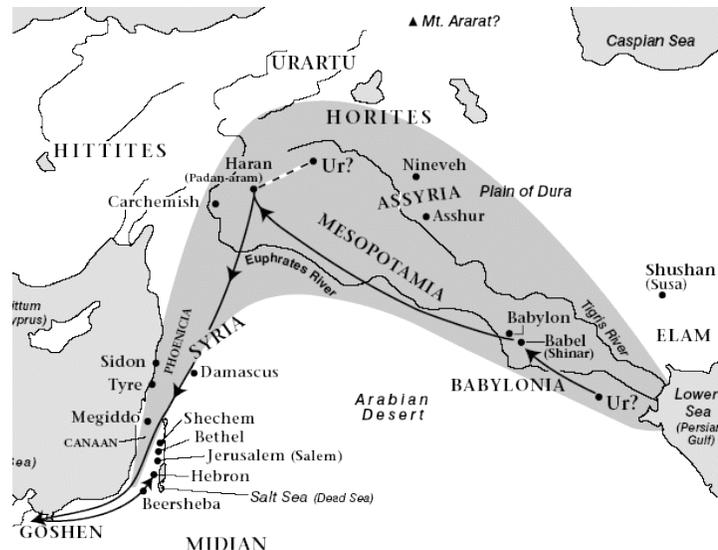
They said, ... let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad (Gen 11:4)



“According to Herodotus, at the top of each ziggurat was a shrine. ... One practical function ... was a high place on which the priests could escape rising water that annually inundated lowlands and occasionally flooded for hundreds of miles. ... Another practical function ... was for security. Since the shrine was accessible only by way of three stairways, a small number of guards could prevent non-priests from spying on the rituals at the shrine..., such as cooking of sacrificial food and burning ... of sacrificial animals. Each ziggurat was part of a temple complex that included a courtyard, storage rooms, bathrooms, and living quarters, around which a city was built.”

8. Abraham's journeys from Ur

In the land of the Chaldeans, ... I, Abraham, saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence; (Abr. 1:1)



⁶ I, Abraham, ... prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord appeared unto me, and said ...: Arise, ... for I have purposed to take thee away out of **Haran**, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. ... ⁹ And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee ..., and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed ... that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations; ¹⁰ And ... as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed. ... ¹¹ And ... in thee ... and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood) ... and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed ...) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal. (Abr 2:6–11; Gen 12:1–3)

⁷ The LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land [of Canaan]. ... ⁸ And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el ... and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD. (Gen 12:7)

HEB *Beth-el* = house of God

9. Abraham received Priesthood (Abr 1)

² Finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right ... [to] be ordained to administer the same; ... desiring ... to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest ...

Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers. (D&C 84:14)

“Is It Possible That Shem and Melchizedek Are the Same Person?” (Alma E. Gygi, *Ensign*, Nov. 1973, 15; OT-I 5-9)

10. Abraham in Egypt

There was a famine ... and Abram went down into Egypt. ... ¹¹ When he was come near to ... Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, ... when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This *is* his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. ¹³ Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that ... my soul shall live because of thee. ... The woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁶ And he entreated Abram well for her sake. ... ¹⁷ And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house ... because of Sarai Abram's wife. ¹⁸ And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, ... why didst thou not tell me that she *was* thy wife? ¹⁹ Why saidst thou, She *is* my sister? ... behold thy wife, take *her*, and go thy way. (Gen 12:10+)

* * * * *

² Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She *is* my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar ... took Sarah. ³ But God came to Abimelech in a dream ... and said ..., thou *art but* a dead man, for the woman ... is a man's wife. ⁴ But Abimelech ... said, ... ⁵ [he said] She *is* my sister? and she ... said, He *is* my brother: in the integrity of my heart ... have I done this. ⁶ And God said ..., I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. ⁷ Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore *her* not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that *are* thine. ⁸ Therefore Abimelech rose early ... and called all his servants, and told all these things ... and the men were sore afraid. ⁹ Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said ..., What hast thou done unto us? (Gen 20)

When I was ... near ... Egypt, the Lord said unto me: Behold, Sarai, thy wife, is a very fair woman to look upon; ²³ Therefore ... when the Egyptians shall see her, they will say—She is his wife; and they will kill you, but they will save her alive; therefore see that ye do on this wise: ²⁴ Let her say unto the Egyptians, she is thy sister, and thy soul shall live. (Abr2:22–4)

“Whereas the Egyptian pharaohs had a strong aversion to committing adultery with another man’s wife, they had no qualms about murdering the man to free his spouse for remarriage. “To kill the husband ... to possess himself of his wife seems to have been a common royal custom.” (OT-I 65)

Nibley: Far from denoting a suspension of faith, the turning over of his wife to another required the greatest faith yet. ... By telling Pharaoh and Abimelech that Abraham really was her brother, Sarah put the two kings in the clear. From then on *they*, at least, were acting in good faith. ... It is made perfectly explicit that it is not the kings who are being tested—God honors and rewards them both. ... No one commands Sarah. ... She ... is being tested. ... The sacrifice of Sarah ... [is found in] the newly discovered [1947] and very old *Genesis Apocryphon* of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Sarah must go to Pharaoh’s bed—a lion couch—where she prays fervidly for deliverance (though it is Abraham’s prayer that receives the most attention), which happens when at the last moment an angel arrives and Pharaoh is smitten and helpless—he ends up confessing the superiority of Abraham’s God and loading the patriarch, and especially Sarah, with royal gifts. (*Abraham in Egypt*, 362–365, 82)

11. Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 17)

¹ When Abram was [99], the Lord appeared to Abram, and said ... I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

Perfect: HEB complete, whole, having integrity. (Gen 6:9 fn)

New Names:

² I will make my covenant between me and thee. ... ⁵ Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but ... Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. ... ¹⁵ As for ... Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah. ... ¹⁶ and she shall be a mother of nations.

Abram HEB *high father*; **Abraham**: HEB *father of a multitude*.

Sarai = “princess of her own people” and **Sarah** = “princess of all people,” (Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 365)

Circumcision: (JST Gen 17)

³ Abram fell on his face, *and called upon the name of the Lord*. ⁴ And God talked with him, saying, *My people have gone astray from my precepts, and have not kept mine ordinances...* ⁵ *And they have not observed mine anointing, and the burial, or baptism ...*; ⁶ *But have ... taken unto themselves the washing of children, and the blood of sprinkling*; ⁷ *And have said that the blood of the righteous Abel was shed for sins; and have not known wherein they are accountable before me*. ... ¹¹ And I will establish a covenant of circumcision with the ,... and thy seed ...; *that thou mayest know for ever that children are not accountable before me until they are eight years old*. ¹² *And thou shall observe to keep all my covenants wherein I covenanted with thy fathers; and thou shall keep the commandments which I have given thee with mine own mouth, and I will be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee.*

Circumcision was instituted as a token of the covenant ... because the people were in a state of apostasy, had lost sight of the true meaning ... of baptism, and were washing their children and sprinkling them with blood so that they would be free from sin. Circumcision reminded the people that while children were born in the covenant they were not to be held accountable until they were eight years of age (see JST, Gen. 17:4-11). ... The Abrahamic covenant makes frequent reference to one's seed. ... The organ of the male body that produces seed and helps bring about physical birth is the very part of the body which bears the token of the covenant. However, the organ of spiritual rebirth is the heart (see 3 Ne. 9:20). Thus, when a person was circumcised it signified that he, like a child, was born into the covenant but need not be baptized until he became accountable before the Lord. But spiritual circumcision, or the circumcision of the heart, must take place once one becomes accountable, or one is not considered as true Israel. As Paul said so aptly, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28-29). (Gerald Lund, "Old Testament Types and Symbols," 43-44; OT-I 5-17)

Nibley: "In Israel circumcision was definitely a sign of blood sacrifice and of atonement, the mark of the initiate and the covenant, the subjects being treated as sacrificial victims." (*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 2005, 385)

Blessings and Duties of the Abrahamic Covenant

Earthly Blessings	Promised <i>land</i> (Abr 2:6,19; Gen 12:7; 17:8)	Great <i>posterity</i> (Abr. 2:9-10; Gen. 12:2-3; 17:2, 4-6)	Gospel, <i>priesthood</i> for his posterity (Abr 2:2-11; Gen. 17:7)
Eternal Parallels (D&C)	Celestial kingdom (88:17-20)	Eternal marriage + eternal increase (132:19-22)	Exaltation and eternal life (132:23-24)
Duties	Help all receive full Gospel blessings (Abr 2:9,11); Obey God's commandments (Gen. 18:19)		

Abrahamic Covenant: (Guide to the Scriptures)

"Abraham received the gospel and was ordained to the higher priesthood (D&C 84:14; Abr. 2:11), and he entered into celestial marriage, which is the covenant of exaltation (D&C 131:1-4; 132:19, 29). Abraham received a promise that all of the blessings of these covenants would be offered to his mortal posterity (D&C 132:29-31; Abr. 2:6-11). Together, these covenants and promises are called the Abrahamic covenant. The restoration of this covenant was the restoration of the gospel in the last days, for through it all the nations of the earth are blessed (Gal. 3:8-9, 29; D&C 110:12; 124:58; Abr. 2:10-11)."

Quotes

S. Michael Wilcox: "In brief, then, through the Abrahamic covenant, the Lord has a message for all of us who have received the gospel and are therefore Abraham's seed. The message could be said to be: I promise you the blessings of the priesthood that lead to exaltation with eternal increase, but in exchange you must take my gospel to every family in every nation in all the world so that they, too, can receive the same blessings of the priesthood." ("The Abrahamic Covenant," *Ensign*, Jan. 1998, 46)

Bruce R. McConkie: What, then, is the Abrahamic covenant? It is that Abraham and his seed (including those adopted into his family) shall have all of the blessings of the gospel, of the priesthood, and of eternal life. The gate to eternal life is celestial marriage, which holy order of matrimony enables the family unit to continue in eternity, so that the participating parties may have posterity as numerous as the sands upon the seashore or the stars in heaven. The Abrahamic covenant enables men to create for themselves eternal family units that are patterned after the family of God our Heavenly Father. A lesser part of the covenant is that the seed of Abraham have the Millennial destiny of inheriting as an everlasting possession the very land of Canaan whereon the feet of the righteous have trod in days gone by. (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 1985, 505)

Joseph Fielding Smith: The great majority of those who become members of the Church are literal descendants of Abraham through Ephraim, son of Joseph. Those who are not literal descendants of Abraham and Israel must become such, and when they are baptized and confirmed they are grafted into the tree and are entitled to all the rights and privileges as heirs. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:246)

Joseph: The effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham. That man that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost. (*TPJS*, 149)