

## Abraham the Iconoclast: Different Interpretations in the Literature of the Second Temple Period, the Texts of Rabbinic Judaism, and the Quran

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### Abstract

The Hebrew Bible does not describe how Abraham, the common patriarch of the three monotheistic faiths, came to know the one God. However, literature from the Second Temple period, texts of Rabbinic Judaism, *targumim* (Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible), the Quran, and other documents abound with narratives based on a common plot that recount how Abraham came to know the one God, confronted the idolatry that had continued until the generation of his father, and broke down the practice through various schemes. This paper presents translations of passages taken from the *Book of Jubilees*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, *Genesis Rabba*, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, and the *Quran* that relate the tradition of “Abraham the iconoclast,” believed to have been highly popular at the time of the writing of the respective texts. The passages are then analyzed to extract a common plot, identify different focal points, and compare in terms of Abraham’s relationship with his father, Terah. From this comparative reading, the following observations can be made: the focus is placed on the importance of knowing one God in the *Book of Jubilees*, and on confrontation with idolatry in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*; various narrative components appear evenly with similar frequency in *Genesis Rabba* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, possibly to maintain conformity as exegeses; in the *Quran*, the focus is on Abraham’s role of introducing the monotheistic notion to local residents.

**Keywords:** Abraham, Monotheism, Idolatry, Biblical Interpretation

### 1. Introduction

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Abraham that appears principally in Genesis Chapters 11 - 24 in the Hebrew Bible is the common patriarch of the three major monotheistic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In each of these religions, Abraham represents an essential element in their origin. In Judaism, Abraham is considered the most important ancestor, the foundation on which the salvation of

the entire Israel depends, for his absolute obedience to God, which Abraham demonstrated when he prepared to offer his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice, as recalled in the Selichot prayer and the Yom Kippur rites.<sup>1)</sup> In Christianity, Abraham is a man of “righteousness which he had by faith,”<sup>2)</sup> and for his genealogical link with Jesus, the entire Christian Church is directly aligned with Abraham.<sup>3)</sup> In Islam, Abraham is revered as the father of Ishmael, one of the patriarchs of the faith, and the founder of the Kaaba in Mecca. In Western languages, there are several expressions with “Abraham” as a component such as “Abraham’s children” and “Abrahamitic faith,” which refer to the monotheistic religions or their adherents.<sup>4)</sup> Abraham is also frequently recalled as a key element or personality in inter-faith dialogues and enterprises aiming for greater mutual understanding among the three religions.<sup>5)</sup> Advanced research has been conducted on the subject of Abraham, especially how his image as described in the Hebrew Bible has been accepted and interpreted in each of the monotheistic faiths.<sup>6)</sup>

The Hebrew Bible describes various events that Abraham undergoes in his life, which have given rise to a wealth of exegetic studies in the respective traditions of the three religions.<sup>7)</sup> In this paper, the author takes interest in the series of narratives that relate the part of Abraham’s life before the starting point of “Abraham’s story” in the Hebrew Bible, i.e., his life before his departure from his father’s house under God’s order as related in the beginning of *Genesis* 12.

The corresponding passage (*Gen.* 11:26-27) reads<sup>8)</sup>:

<sup>26)</sup>When Terah had lived seventy years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

<sup>27)</sup>Now these are the descendants of Terah. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot. <sup>28)</sup>Haran died before his father Terah in the land of Ur of the Chalde’ans.

This is followed by passages describing that Abraham and Nahor were married with their respective wives and that Abraham’s wife Sar’ai is sterile, leading to Chapter 12, where Abraham receives God’s call. In other words, in the section before Abraham’s departure from his father’s house, the Hebrew Bible provides mainly his genealogical information and not much else about his life. To the contrary, the literature in and after the Second Temple period takes great interest in Abraham’s life in his country and in his father’s house, developing a rich narrative tradition. Particularly notable are a series of narratives that may be collectively titled “Abraham the iconoclast.”<sup>9)</sup> These stories can be roughly summarized in a plot as follows: “Abraham’s father, Terah, is an idol worshipper (or Abraham grows up in a land of idol worship). Abraham somehow comes to know one true God, opposes himself to his father and people in the community, and destroys idols using various tactics. He is thrown into fire because of his disputes with the local rulers and people but comes back to life, proving the truthfulness of the one God he worships.”

Such a course of events in Abraham’s life is neither mentioned nor even suggested in the

Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, narratives based on similar plots are found in large numbers in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigraphic literature from the Second Temple period, texts of Rabbinic Judaism written in the subsequent periods, *targumim* (Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible), and the *Quran*. It can be therefore surmised that Abraham's iconoclasm was a widely diffused and popular theme amid the diverse ideological and literary trends during and after the Second Temple period. On the other hand, stories of similar plots or references to them are rarely found in the Christian texts of the same periods.<sup>10)</sup>

The tradition of "Abraham as iconoclast" is sometimes "referred to" in academic research including comparative studies of monotheistic religions. However, the actual texts have rarely been presented in full due to lack of space, and researchers have contented themselves with summaries and partial quotations or references.<sup>11)</sup> Studies on Abraham in the monotheistic religions limit their scope to the acceptance of Abraham in a specific religious or cultural context.<sup>12)</sup> The texts relative to the tradition in question have been studied in detail but separately from one another<sup>13)</sup> and rarely in parallel in a cross-cultural, trans-religious manner. Moreover, it is possible to surmise that this theme has not been frequently treated in academic research perhaps partly due to the popular nature of the episodes describing Abraham as an iconoclast.<sup>14)</sup> The narratives of Abraham's iconoclasm, although widespread in ancient times, are not well known in Japan because they are not at all mentioned in the Hebrew Bible or Christian literature including the New Testament, and because the actual texts containing the narratives are not easily accessible to Japanese readers.

In view of the above, this paper presents translations of various texts that relate episodes of Abraham condemning idolatry to analyze them and identify characteristics of the tradition in each context. Thereby underlining the presence of the narratives that are completely hidden behind the Hebrew Bible and which the Second Temple-period literature, Judaism, and Islam share in abundance beyond the religious boundaries, this paper attempts to clarify how this narrative tradition is perceived by and integrated into each of the monotheistic religions, thereby contributing to deeper mutual understanding by the monotheistic communities of each other's literary and religious traditions.

In the paper, passages relating Abraham's iconoclasm are quoted from (1) the *Book of Jubilees*, (2) the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, (3) *Genesis Rabba*, (4) *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, and (5) the *Quran*. There are other texts that contain similar narratives,<sup>15)</sup> which shall be subjects of future studies.

The *Book of Jubilees* is a text in which angels reveal the events from Creation to Moses while he is on Mount Sinai for 40 days. Its greatest characteristic is that the various events are divided into periods according to an original chronological axis: with Creation in the first year, a cycle of seven years is called one *shabwa*, and a cycle of seven *shabwa*, or 49 years, a *yovel* (jubilee),<sup>16)</sup> and these time units mark major events in the history of Israel. For example,

Abraham's birth occurred in the first year of the second *shabwa* of the 39<sup>th</sup> *yovel*, or 1,870 years ( $49 \times 38 + 7 \times 1 + 1$ ) from Creation. While the presently available versions are in Greek, it is generally established that the Book of Jubilees was originally written in Hebrew. There are several hypotheses as to when the text was written, and it is believed that its writing had been completed around 150 B.C., from the fact that some of the Qumran manuscripts are based on the Book of Jubilees and that it refers to the Revolt of the Maccabees (167–162 B.C.).<sup>17)</sup>

The *Apocalypse of Abraham*, an extended version of the revelation to Abraham, is classified into the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. A major part of the text recounts the life of Abraham before God's revelation to him as related in *Genesis* 12. As the passages quoted below indicate, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* expresses extremely strong opposition to idolatry. It is believed that the text is based on the Gnostic dualistic world view of "idolatry versus Judaism." Since the *Apocalypse of Abraham* mentions the destruction of the Second Temple, and that it was known to Clement, it is believed that the text was completed between A.D. 70 and 150. Only Slavonic manuscripts have survived to date, but it is generally established that a Hebrew version existed initially.<sup>18)</sup>

*Genesis Rabba*, a collection of interpretations of Genesis, is a part of the Oral Torah, which Rabbinic Judaism produced after the destruction of the Second Temple. There are well over 20 Rabbinic works that contain passages relative to the tradition of Abraham's iconoclasm; in this paper, the passages in *Genesis Rabba*, considered the closest to the original among them, are examined, in accordance with the theory advanced by Ginzberg, et al.<sup>19)</sup>

*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* is an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible. It is believed that the Hebrew Bible was extensively translated into Aramaic, the language of everyday life of many Jews after the Second Temple period, for whom reading or listening to Hebrew scriptures became increasingly difficult. *Targumim* probably served as the first introduction to scriptural learning for children in school. There are debates and differing hypotheses over the origin of *targumim*: whether they came into being out of the vortex of Rabbinic Judaism or whether or not their authors were rabbis. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* is a particularly extended *targum* that is believed to be based on an original world view.<sup>20)</sup>

The *Quran*, the fundamental holy text of Islam, is believed to have been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the angel Jibril (Gabriel) over a period of 22 years. Academic discussions have emerged in recent years regarding the relationship of the *Quran* with the Hebrew Bible, various oral portions of the Torah, and the New Testament.<sup>21)</sup>

## 2. Components and Translations

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The *Book of Jubilees* and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* are generally classified as the Pseudepigraphic literature of the Second Temple period, whereas *Genesis Rabba*, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* and the *Quran* were written in relatively close periods and the passages from

these texts are similar in content. For these reasons, the passages discussed in this paper are divided into two groups, and the translations of each group are displayed side by side. Strictly speaking, the adjacent texts do not necessarily demonstrate clear parallelism in content; however, their parallel placement is believed to facilitate the identification of differences and similarities between the texts. All the passages are translated from their Hebrew or Aramaic original texts, except for those from *Genesis Rabba* and Targum, which are translated from their existing English translations. The Japanese translation of the Quran presented below is by Toshihiko Izutsu.

It is possible to extract from the passages a central plot with some variations, ranging from (1) to (3) in its parts. The components that constitute the plot, “A”–“E,” are summarized below, with variations specified, where applicable. These indications are maintained in the parallel display of the translations below.

## **Components**

### **A. Abraham recognizes one God**

This is where Abraham comes to know one God. He comes to recognize the Being that creates and controls all things, either in the middle of a dispute over idol worship (*Genesis Rabba*) or as a result of his solitary contemplation (*Book of Jubilees*).

### **B. Abraham engages in a dispute over idol worship**

- (1) With Terah, his father
- (2) With local people
- (3) With the ruler Nimrod

In this component, Abraham actually refutes the imbecility of idol worship. His opponent in the dispute is (1) his father, (2) people in the community, or (3) the ruler Nimrod.

### **C. Abraham destroys idols**

Abraham engages in physical acts of iconoclasm. He either expounds the imbecility of idol worship at the same time or simply burns up idols.

### **D. Episode involving fire**

- (1) Furnace; Abraham’s return to life
- (2) Fire; burning down the house of idols; burning up idols
- (3) Lightning

All the passages examined in this paper contain at least an episode involving fire in various forms and of various causes: (1) Abraham is thrown into a furnace at the end of a dispute over

idol worship; (2) Abraham sets fire to objects related to idolatry; or (3) fire is sent from Heaven in the form of lightning. Component “D” is often closely related to “E,” since fire is given as the cause of Haran’s death in many narratives. It is generally said that fire is a major common motif in the tradition of Abraham’s iconoclasm because of the place name, Ur. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* refers to fire with regard to the place name mentioned in *Genesis 15:7*.<sup>22)</sup> Nimrod is mentioned presumably because the Tower of Babel, a symbol of Babylonia’s power, appears in the Hebrew Bible slightly before Abraham’s appearance, and this leads to the assumption that Nimrod, a Babylonian leader, was a contemporary of Abraham.

**E. Abraham’s elder brother, Haran, dies**

The Hebrew Bible refers to the death of Haran, Abraham’s elder brother, only succinctly. In *Genesis Rabba* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, on the other hand, it can be said that the entire story of Abraham’s iconoclasm is used to explain Haran’s death. There are also texts that only allude to Haran’s death.

The letters in 【 】 correspond to the components of the plot as summarized above. The parts of the translations that follow the plot are shaded.

I. Second Temple-period literature

<i>The Book of Jubilees 11.14~23)</i>	<i>The Apocalypse of Abraham, Chapter 1~24)</i>
<p>Chapter 11 【A. Abraham recognizes one God】  <sup>14</sup>And in the thirty-ninth jubilee, in the second week, in the first year, Terah took a wife and her name was ‘Edna, daughter of Abram, daughter of his father’s sister.<sup>15</sup>And in the seventh year of that week, she bore a son for him, and he called him Abram, after name of his mother’s father because he died before his daughter conceived a son. <sup>16</sup>And the lad began understanding the straying of the land, that everyone went astray after graven images and after pollution. And his father taught him writing. And he was two weeks of years old. And he separated from his father so that he might not worship the idols with him. <sup>17</sup>And he began to pray to the Creator of all so that he might save him from the straying of the sons of men, and so that his portion might not fall into straying after the pollution and scorn.  <sup>18</sup> And the seed time arrived for sowing in the land. And they all went out together so that they guard their seed from before the crows. And</p>	<p>Chapter 1 【A. Abraham recognizes one God】  <sup>1</sup>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, <sup>2</sup>I (then) Abraham, at the time when my lot came, when I was completing the services of my father Terah’s sacrifice to his gods of wood, of stone, of gold, of silver, of copper, and of iron, <sup>3</sup>having entered their temple for the service, I found a god named Marumath, carved form stone, fallen at the feet of the iron god Nakhin. <sup>4</sup>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, because it was heavy, (being made) of a big stone. <sup>5</sup>But I went and told my father, and he came in with me. <sup>6</sup>And when we both lifted it to put it in its place, its head fell off, even while I was holding it by its head. <sup>7</sup>And it came to pass, when my father saw that the head of his god Marumath had fallen, he said to me, “Abraham!” <sup>8</sup>And he said to me, “Bring me</p>

Abram went out with those who went out. And the lad was fourteen years old. <sup>19</sup>And a cloud of crows came so that they might eat the seed, and Abram used to run up to them before they settled upon the earth. And he would call out to them before they settled upon the earth to eat seed, and he said, "Don't come down. Return to the place whence you came." And they turned back. <sup>20</sup>And he caused the cloud of crows to turn back seventy times in the day. And none of the crows settled on any of the fields where Abram was, not one. <sup>21</sup>And all were with him in all of the fields where Abram was, not one. And all of the crows turned away. <sup>22</sup>And his reputation was great in all the land of Chaldea. And all who would sow came to him during that year. And he used to go with them until the seed time passed. And they sowed their land and harvested in that year enough food, and they ate and were satisfied. <sup>23</sup>And in the first year of the fifth week, Abram taught those who were making the implements for oxen, the skilled carpenters. And they made implements above the ground facing the handle of the plows so that they might place seed upon it. And the seed would go down from within it onto the point of the plow, and it would hidden in the earth. And therefore they were not afraid of crows. <sup>24</sup>And they did likewise upon all of the plows handles above the ground. And they sowed and tilled all of the earth just as Abram commanded them. And therefore they were not afraid of the birds.

Chapter 12 【A. Abraham recognized one God; B. Abraham engages in a dispute over idol worship (1) With Terah, his father】

<sup>1</sup> And it came pass in the sixth week, in its seventh year, that Abram spoke to Terah, his father, saying, "O father" And he said, "Behold, here I am, my son." <sup>2</sup>And he said: "What help or advantage do we have from these idols before which you worship and bow down? <sup>3</sup>Because there is not any spirit in them, for they are mute, and they are the misleading of the heart. Do not worship them. <sup>4</sup>Worship the God of heaven, who sends down rain and dew upon the earth,

the axes and chisels from the house." And I brought them to him from the house. <sup>9</sup>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

<sup>1</sup>He made five other gods and he gave them to me and ordered me to sell them outside on the town road. <sup>2</sup>I saddled my father's ass and loaded them on it and went out on the highway to sell them. <sup>3</sup>And behold, merchants from Phandana of Syria were coming with camels, on their way to Egypt to buy kokonil<sup>25</sup> from Nile. <sup>4</sup>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. There of them were crushed and two remained (intact). <sup>5</sup>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 before the ass heard the camel's voice and you would have had no loss. <sup>6</sup>Give us at least the gods that remain and we will give you a suitable price." <sup>7</sup>I considered it in my heart. And they paid both for the smashed gods and the gods which remained. <sup>8</sup>For I had been grieving in my heart how I would bring payment to my father. <sup>9</sup>I threw the 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

<sup>1</sup>As I was still walking on the road, my heart was disturbed and my mind distracted. <sup>2</sup>I said my heart, "What is this inequality of activity which my father is doing? <sup>3</sup>Is it not he rather who is god for his gods, because they come into being from his sculpting, his planning, and his skill? <sup>4</sup>The ought to honor my father because they are his work. What is this food of my father in his works? <sup>5</sup>Behold, Marumath fell and could not stand up in his sanctuary, nor could I myself lift him until my father came and we raised him up.

and who makes everything upon the earth, and created everything by his word, and all life is in his presence. <sup>5</sup>Why do you worship those have no sprit in them? Because they are works of the hands, And you are carrying them upon your shoulders, and there is no help from them for you, except great shame for those who made them and the misleading of the heart for those who worship them. Do not worship them.” <sup>6</sup>And his father said to him, “I also know (that), my son, but what shall I do to the people who have made me the minister before them? <sup>7</sup>And if I speak to them in righteousness, they will kill me because their souls cleave to them so that they might worship them and praise them. Be silent, my son, lest they kill you.” <sup>8</sup>And he told this matter to two of his brothers, and they were angry with him, and he kept quiet.

<sup>9</sup> And in the fortieth jubilee, in the second week, in its seventh year, Abram took a wife and her name was Sarai, daughter of his father, and she became a wife for him. <sup>10</sup>And Haran, his brother, took a wife in the third year of the third week, and she bore a son for him in the seventh year of that week. And he called him Lot. <sup>11</sup>And Nahor, his brother, took a wife.

**【C. Abraham destroys idols; D. Episode involving fire (2) Fire; burning down the house of idols; burning up idols; E. Abraham’s elder brother, Haran dies】**

<sup>12</sup>In the sixtieth year of the life of Abram, i.e. the forth week, in its forth year, Abram arose in the night and burned the house of idols. And he burned everything in the house. And there was no man who knew. <sup>13</sup>And they rose up in the night, and they wanted to save their gods from the midst of the fire. <sup>14</sup>And Haran rushed to save them, and the fire flared up over him. And he was burned in the fire and died in Ur of the Chaldeed before Terah, his father. And they buried him in Ur of the Chaldees.

<sup>15</sup>And Tera went out of Ur of Chaldees, he and his sons, so that they might come into the land of Lebanon and into the land of Canaan and he dwelt in Haran. And Abram dwelt with Terah, his father, in Haran two weeks of years.

<sup>6</sup>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 another god, which he had made without a head. <sup>7</sup>And ...the other five gods, which got smashed (in falling) form the ass, who could not save themselves and injure the ass because it smashed them, nor did their shards come up out of the river.” <sup>8</sup>And I said to my heart, “If it is so, how then can my father’s god Marumath, which has the head of another stone and which is made from another stone, save a man, or hear man’s prayer, or give him any gift?”

Chapter 4 **【B. Abraham engages in a dispute over idol worship (1) With Terah, his father】**

<sup>1</sup>And thinking thus, I came to my father’s house. And I watered the ass and gave him hay. And I took out the silver and placed it in the land of my father Terah. <sup>2</sup>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 labor was not (in) vain.” <sup>3</sup>And answering I said to him, “Listen, father Terah! The gods are blessed in you, because you are god for them, because you made them, for their blessing is their perdition and their power is vain. <sup>4</sup>The did not help themselves; how the can they help you or bless you? <sup>5</sup>I was good for you in this transaction, for through my good sense I brought you the silver for the smashed (gods).” <sup>6</sup>And when he heard my speech he became furiously angry with me, because I had spoken harsh words against his gods.

Chapter 5 **【C. Abraham destroys idols; D. Episode involving fire (2) Fire; burning up idols】**

<sup>1</sup>But having pondered my father’s anger, I went out. And afterward when I had gone out, he called me, saying, “Abraham!” <sup>2</sup>And I said, “Here I am!” <sup>3</sup>And he said , “Up, gather wood chips, for I was making gods from fir before you came, and prepare with them food for my midday meal.” <sup>4</sup>And it came to pass, when I was choosing the wooden chips, I found among them a small god which would fit in my left

**[A. Abraham recognized one God]**

<sup>16</sup>And in the sixth week, in its fifth year, Abram sat up during the night on the first of the seventh month, so that he might observe the stars from evening until daybreak so that he might see what the nature of the year would be with respect to rain. <sup>17</sup>And he was sitting alone and making observations; and a word came into his heart, saying, "All of the signs of the stars and the signs of the sun and the moon are all in the hand of the Lord. Why am I seeking ?

<sup>18</sup>If he desires, he will make it rain morning and evening, and if he desires he will not send (it) down, and everything is in his hand." <sup>19</sup>And he prayed on that night, saying: "My god, the Most High God, you alone are God to me. And you created everything, and everything which was the work of your hands, and you and your kingdom I have chosen. <sup>20</sup>Save me from the hands of evil spirits which rule over the thought of the heart of man and do not let them lead me astray from following you , O my God; But establish me and my seed forever, and let us not go astray henceforth and forever."

<sup>21</sup>And he said, "Shall I return unto Ur of the Chaldees who seek my face so that I should return to them? Or shall I dwell here in this place? Make the straight path prosper before you in the hand of your servant that he might serve. And do not let me walk in the error of my heart, O my God."

<sup>22</sup>And he finished talking and praying and behold, the word of the Lord was sent to him by my hand, saying, "Come forth from your land and from your kin and from your father's house into the land which I shall show you, and I shall establish you as a great and numerous people.

<sup>23</sup>And I shall bless you, and I shall make your name great, and all the nations of the earth will bless themselves by you. And whoever blesses you I shall bless

hand. <sup>5</sup>And on its forehead was written: god Barisat. <sup>6</sup>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 fire, saying to him threateningly, <sup>7</sup>"Barisat, watch that the fire does not go out before I come back! If the fire goes out, blow on it so it flares up." <sup>8</sup>I went out and I made my counsel. <sup>9</sup>When I returned, I found Barisat fallen on his back, his feet enveloped by fire and burning fiercely. <sup>10</sup>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 cook food!" <sup>11</sup>And it came to pass while saying this in my laughter, I saw (that)he burned up slowly from the fire and became ashes. <sup>12</sup>I carried the food to my father to eat. <sup>13</sup>I gave him wine and milk, and he drank and he enjoyed himself and he blessed Marumath his god. <sup>14</sup>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 into the fire in order to cook your food." <sup>15</sup>And he said to me, "Then where is he now?" <sup>16</sup>And he said, "He has burned in the fierceness of the fire and become dust." <sup>17</sup>And he said, "Great is the power of Barisat! I will make another today, and tomorrow he will prepare my food."

**Chapter 6 [B. Abraham engages in a dispute over idol worship (1) With Terah]**

<sup>1</sup>When I, Abraham, heard words like this from my father, I laughed in my mind, and I groaned in the bitterness and anger of my soul. <sup>2</sup>I said, "How then is a figment of a body made by him(Terah) an aid for my father? <sup>3</sup>Or can he have subordinated (his) body to his soul, his soul to a spirit, and the spirit to stupidity and ignorance? <sup>4</sup>And I said, "It is only proper to endure evil that I may throw my mind to purity and I will expose my thoughts clearly to him." <sup>5</sup>I answered and said, "Father Terah, whichever or theses gods you extol, you err in your thought. <sup>6</sup>Behold, the gods of my brother Nahor standing in the holy sanctuary are more venerable than yours. <sup>7</sup>For behold, Zouchaios, my brother

and whoever curse you I shall curse.

<sup>24</sup>And I shall be God for you and your son of your son and for all of your seed. Do not fear henceforth and for all the generations of the earth. I am your God.”

<sup>25</sup>And the Lord God said to me, “Open his mouth and his ears so that he might hear and speak with his mouth in the language which is revealed because it ceased from the mouth of all the sons of men from the day of the Fall.” <sup>26</sup>And I opened his mouth and his ears and his lips and I began to speak with him in Hebrew, in the tongue of creation. <sup>27</sup>And he took his father’s books—and they were written in Hebrew—and he copied them. And he began studying them thereafter. And I caused him to know everything which he was unable (to understand). And he studied them (in) the six months of rain.

<sup>28</sup> And it came to pass in the seventh year of the sixth week that he spoke with his father and let him know that he was going from Haran to walk (in) the land of Canaan so that he might see it and return to him. <sup>29</sup>And Terah, his father, said to him: “Go in peace. May God eternal make straight your path, and the Lord be with you, and protect you from all evil [and grant favor upon you and mercy and grace before those who see you]. May none of the sons men rule over you to do evil to you. Go in peace. <sup>30</sup>And when you have seen a land pleasant to your eyes to dwell in, come and take me to you. And take Lot, the son of Haran your brother with you (as) a son for yourself. The Lord be with you. <sup>31</sup>But Nahor, your brother, leave with me until you return in peace. And we will all go together with you.”

Nahor’s god is more venerable than your god Marumath because he is made of gold, valued by man. <sup>8</sup>And if he grows old with time, he will be remodeled, whereas Marumath, if he is changed or broken, will not be renewed, because he is stone. <sup>9</sup>What about Ioav, the god on the other god, who stands with Zouchaios,? For he is also more venerable than the god Barist; he is carved from wood and forged from silver. Because he too is a term of comparison, being valued by man according to external experience. <sup>10</sup>But Barist, your god, when he was still not carved, <sup>11</sup>rooted in the earth, being great and wondrous, with branches and flowers; and praise. <sup>12</sup>But you made him with an axe, and by your skill he was made a god. <sup>13</sup>And behold he has already dried up and his fatness has perished. <sup>14</sup>He fell from the height to the earth, he came from greatness to smallness, <sup>15</sup>and the appearance of his face wasted away. <sup>16</sup>And he himself was burned up by the fire <sup>17</sup>and he became ashes and is no more. <sup>18</sup>And you say, Let me make another and tomorrow he will make my food for me. <sup>19</sup>But in perishing he left himself no strength for his (own) destruction.”

Chapter 7<sup>26</sup> **[A. Abraham recognized one God; B. Abraham engaged in a dispute over idol worship (1) With Terah, his father]**

<sup>1</sup>Abraham, having thought this, came to his father and said, “Father Terah, <sup>2</sup>fire is more venerable than your gods, the gold and silver ones, and the stone and wooden ones, because the fire burns your gods. And your gods, being burned obey the fire, and the fire mocks them while it is consuming your gods. <sup>3</sup>But neither will I call it (fire) god, because it is subjugated to the waters. <sup>4</sup>The waters are more venerable than it (fire), because they overcome fire and sweeten the earth with fruits. <sup>5</sup>But I will not call them god either, for the waters subside under the earth and are subjected to it. <sup>6</sup>But I will not call it a goddess either, for it is dried by the sun (and) subordinated to man for his work. <sup>7</sup>The sun I call venerable than the earth, for with its rays it illuminates the whole universe. <sup>8</sup>But will not call it a god because when night comes it

becomes murky with darkness. <sup>9</sup>Nor again shall I call the moon or the stars gods, because they too at times during the night dim their light. <sup>10</sup>But hear this, Terah my father, let me proclaim to you the God who created all things. <sup>11</sup>But this is the true God who has 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 now in the perplexity of my thoughts. <sup>12</sup>If [only] God will reveal himself by himself to us!”

Chapter 8 【D. Episode involving fire (3) Lighting; E. Abraham’s elder brother Haran, dies】

<sup>1</sup>And it came to pass as I was thinking things like these with regard to my father Terah in the court of my house, the voice of the Mighty One came down from the heaven in a stream of fire, saying and calling, “Abraham, Abraham!” <sup>2</sup>And I said, “Here I am” <sup>3</sup>And he said, “You are searching for the God of gods, the Creator, in the understanding of your heart. I am he. <sup>4</sup>Go out from Terah, your father, and go out of the house, that you too may not be slain in the sins of your father’s house.” <sup>5</sup>And I went out. And it came to pass as I went out—I was not yet outside the entrance of the court—that the sound of a great thunder came and burned him and his house and everything in his house, down to the ground, forty cubits.

II. Rabbinical Midrash (Genesis Rabba), Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, the Quran

<i>Genesis Rabba 38.13<sup>27)</sup></i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan<sup>28)</sup></i> Genesis 11.28	<i>Quran<sup>29)</sup></i> Surah 21, The Prophets
<p><b>【B. Abraham engages in a dispute over idol worship (1) With Terah, his father】</b> And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah (Gen.11.28). R. Hiyya said: Terah was a manufacture of idols. He once went away somewhere and left Abraham to sell them in his place. A man came and wished to buy one. "How old are you?" Abraham asked him. "Fifty years," was the reply. "Woe to such a man!" he exclaimed, "You are fifty years old and would worship a day-old object!" At this he became ashamed and departed.</p> <p><b>【C. Abraham destroys idols】</b> On another occasion a woman came with a plateful of flour and requested him, "Take this and offer it to them". So he took a stick, broke them, and put the stick in the hand of the largest. When his father returned he demanded, "What have you done to them?" "I cannot conceal it from you," he rejoined. "A woman came with a plateful of fine meal and requested me to offer it to them. One claimed, 'I must eat first,' while another claimed, 'I must eat first.' Thereupon the largest arose, took the stick, and broke them." "Why do you make sport of me," he cried out; "have they then any knowledge!" "Should not yours ears listen to what your mouth is saying," he retorted.</p> <p><b>【A. Abraham recognized one God; B. Abraham engages in a dispute over idol worship (3) With the ruler Nimrod; D. Episode involving fire (1) Furnace; Abraham return to life; Abraham's elder brother, Haran dies】</b> Thereupon he seized him and</p>	<p><b>【B. Abraham engages in a dispute over idol worship (3) With the ruler Nimrod; C. Abraham destroys idols; D. Episode involving fire (1) Furnace; E. Abraham's elder brother, Haran, dies】</b> It came to pass, when Nimrod cast Abraham into the furnace of fire because he would not worship his idol, the fire had no power to burn him. Then Haran was undecided, and he said: "If Nimrod triumphs, I will be on his side; but if Abraham triumphs, I will be on his side." And when all the people who were there saw that the fire had no power over Abram, they said to themselves: "Is not Haran the brother of Abram full of divination and sorcery? It is he who uttered charms over the fire so that it would not burn his brother." Immediately fire fell from the heavens on high and consumed him; and Haran died in the sight of Terah his father, being burned in the land of his birth in the furnace of fire which the Chaldeans had made for Abram, his bother</p>	<p><b>【B. Abraham engages in a dispute over idol worship (2) With local people; C. Abraham destroys idols; D. Episode involving fire (1) Furnace】</b> <sup>52</sup>Behold! he said to his father and his people, "What are these images, to which ye are (so assiduously) devoted?" <sup>53</sup>They said, "We found our fathers worshipping them." <sup>54</sup>He said, "Indeed ye have been in manifest error - ye and your fathers." <sup>55</sup>They said, "Have you brought us the Truth, or are you one of those who jest?" <sup>56</sup>He said, "Nay, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, He Who created them (from nothing): and I am a witness to this (Truth)." <sup>57</sup>"And by Allah, I have a plan for your idols - after ye go away and turn your backs".. <sup>58</sup> So he broke them to pieces, (all) but the biggest of them, that they might turn (and address themselves) to it. <sup>59</sup>They said, "Who has done this to our gods? He must indeed be some man of impiety!" <sup>60</sup>They said, "We heard a youth talk of them: He is called Abraham." <sup>61</sup>They said, "Then bring him before the eyes of the people, that they may bear witness." <sup>62</sup>They said, "Art thou the one that did this with our gods, O Abraham?" <sup>63</sup>He said: "Nay, this was done by - this is their biggest one! ask them, if they can speak intelligently!" <sup>64</sup>So they turned to themselves and said, "Surely ye are the ones in the wrong!" <sup>65</sup>Then were they confounded with shame: (they said), "Thou knowest full well that these (idols) do not speak!" <sup>66</sup> (Abraham) said, "Do ye then worship, besides Allah, things that can neither be of any good to you nor do you harm?" <sup>67</sup>"Fie upon</p>

<p>delivered him to Nimrod. "Let us worship the fire!" he [Nimrod] proposed. "Let us rather worship water, which extinguishes the fire," replied he. "Then let us worship water!" "Let us worship the clouds!" "Let us rather worship the winds which disperse the clouds." "Then let us worship the wind!" "Let us rather worship human beings, who withstand the wind." "You are just bandying words," he exclaimed; "we will worship nought but the fire. Behold, I will cast you into it, and let your God whom you adore come and save you from it." Now Haran was standing there undecided. If Abram is victorious, [thought he], I will say that I am on Abram's belief, while if Nimrod is victorious I will say that I am on Nimrod's side. When Abram descended into the fiery furnace and was saved, he [Nimrod] asked him, "Of whose belief are you?" "Of Abraham's," he replied. Thereupon he seized and cast him into the fire; his inwards were scorched and he died in his father's presence. Hence it is written, And Haran died in the presence of (al pene) his father Terah.</p>		<p>you, and upon the things that ye worship besides Allah. Have ye no sense?..<sup>68</sup>They said, "Burn him and protect your gods, If ye do (anything at all)!"<sup>69</sup>We said, "O Fire! be thou cool, and (a means of) safety for Abraham!"<sup>70</sup>Then they sought a stratagem against him: but We made them the ones that lost most!<sup>71</sup>But We delivered him and (his nephew) Lut (and directed them) to the land which We have blessed for the nations.</p>
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### 3. Discussions

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Let us now examine the characteristics of the passages in terms of plot development, emphasis, and other aspects.

#### ***The Book of Jubilees***

Components “A” (one God) and “B”-(2) (dispute over idol worship with local people) constitute the center of the narrative.

The *Book of Jubilees* states that Abraham realizes the errors in idol worship not long after his birth (11:16), recognizes one God, the Creator of all things (11:17), and explains the imbecility of idolatry to his father, Terah. Abraham does not, however, resort to schemes that reveal and disparage the powerlessness of idols, as described in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *Genesis Rabba*; instead, he simply and frankly speaks of idols not having spirit, being misleading, and offering no help. In the fifth year of the sixth cycle, Abraham comes to understand once again the presence of the Being that rules over everything, including the movements of heavenly bodies.

It is possible to interpret the episode in which Abraham fights off crows (11:18-20) as his metaphorical confrontation with idolatry, considering that before his birth the prince Mastema (11:11) sent crows to cause damage to the local people (11:11) and that it was particularly during Mastema’s reign that idolatry was actively practiced in the land (11:4-6). It is quite intriguing that Abraham triumphs over this confrontation thanks to the tools he has manufactured—possibly a symbol of his intelligence.

With regard to Abraham’s dispute over idol worship, his opponent may appear to be his father, Terah. However, as Terah admits that he is aware of the errors of idol worship and that his practice is because of the local people (12:6), Abraham’s true adversary is them, rather than his father [“B”-(2)].<sup>30</sup> Components “A” (one God) and “B” (dispute over idol worship) repeatedly appear, whereas “C” (actual iconoclasm), “D” (fire), and “E” (Haran’s death) are concisely packed into the passage in which Abraham burns down the house of the idols (12:12-14). Unlike other texts, the *Book of Jubilees* contains no episodes that emphatically describe Haran’s cunningness. At the end of the quoted passages, Component “A” (one God) appears again, describing how Abraham comes to understand the Lord, which controls all things, while observing the movements of the heavenly bodies (12:16-21).

#### ***The Apocalypse of Abraham***

A glance through the text suffices to know that confrontation with idolatry is the principal theme in the tradition of Abraham as iconoclast as recounted in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. The passages translated for this paper mainly develop with Components “B”-(1) (dispute over idol worship with Terah) and “C” (actual iconoclasm). The first part shows Abraham involved

in idolatry alongside Terah, suggesting the uselessness of the idols (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2). In the meantime, Abraham comes to realize the errors in idol worship through his own thinking (Chapter 3, “B”-1), subsequently engaging in the iconoclastic act of burning the god Barisat (Chapter 5, “C”). Abraham’s argument about the imbecility of idolatry is not accepted by Terah (Chapter 7, “A” and “B”-1); Abraham leaves his father. It is possible to view this segment as containing not only the theme of confrontation with idolatry but also that of Abraham’s intellectual development and coming-of-age. Component “D” is detected in the episodes of Abraham’s burning the god Barisat and the lightning.

The narrative of Abraham as iconoclast in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* contains concrete descriptions of the gods, including their names, materials, and methods of installations, etc., such as “the god Marumath,” “the god Barisat,” “the god of stone,” “the god of silver,” and “the god of gold.” This suggests that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* was a firsthand textual witness to the actual practice of idol worship. The fact that the *Apocalypse* begins with the passage describing Abraham’s iconoclasm (translated above) and that as much as a quarter of the 32 chapters of the book are dedicated to this theme indicates that overcoming idolatry was an extremely significant subject of pressing importance at the time of writing. It is possible to say that the passage where lightning burns down everything (8:5) implicitly contains Component “E” (Haran’s death), as Haran does not reappear after the part quoted above, although his death itself is not explicitly mentioned.

### **Genesis Rabba 38.13**

Components “B” (dispute over idol worship), “C” (actual iconoclasm), and “D” (fire) constitute the main part of the narrative. Component “A” (one God) can also be detected in Abraham’s exchange with Nimrod. However, this passage does not describe the process in which Abraham comes to know one God. At this time, Abraham has already acquired this knowledge and uses it to refute Nimrod. In *Genesis Rabba*, Component “E” (Haran’s death) is also an important theme. Therefore, a marked characteristic of Abraham’s story in *Genesis Rabba* is that it uses all the narrative components enumerated above. This is probably because the aim of *Genesis Rabba* is to explain the *book of Genesis*, or more specifically in this context the meaning of Genesis 11:28 “Haran died before his father,” and not to confute idolatry. It was generally believed in those days that specific reasons must have existed if children had died before their parents. Moreover, it was also possible to interpret the passage as referring to some special incident taking place in front of Terah because the Hebrew word for “before,” *bifnei*, also means “in front of (before the eyes of).” It can be surmised in consideration of these factors that the exegesis of *Genesis Rabba* further developed the tradition of Abraham’s iconoclasm, which already existed as a popular legend, by adding a new and previously unemphasized perspective to it.

### Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

As in *Genesis Rabba*, the narrative in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* contains all the components to explain Genesis 11:28. Among them, Component “B” (dispute over idol worship) constitutes the main part, which contains Component “C” (actual iconoclasm) in the process. Given the focus on Haran’s cunningness in the text, it can be said that there is also strong interest in “E” (Haran’s death). “D” (fire) is also an important component as there are references, albeit brief, to fire. In other *targumin*, in reference to the same Genesis passage and the place name Ur, “burning furnace” is mentioned.<sup>31)</sup>

### The Quran

In the section translated above, Components “B”-(2) (dispute over idol worship with local people), “C” (actual iconoclasm), and “D” (fire) constitute the center of the narrative. The Quran contains many passages other than those cited above that refer to Abraham involved in disputes about idolatry. For example, in Sura “The Cattle” (6:71), Abraham expounds the imbecility of planet worship while discussing with his father. This passage contains Component “A” (one God) in that it describes Abraham’s reasoning process leading to the recognition of one God. This suggests the significance of the figure of Abraham as an iconoclast in Islam as well.

Clear parallelism can be detected between the *Quran* and *Genesis Rabba*. In the translations shown above, the passage that corresponds to Component “C” (actual iconoclasm) is more similar to the passage from *Genesis Rabba* than to passages from the *Book of Jubilees* and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, in that the *Quran* passage depicts Abraham employing the scheme of getting the largest idol to destroy the other idols (Sura 21:57-64). However, there are significant differences between the *Quran* and *Genesis Rabba*. In *Genesis Rabba*, Abraham confronts his father and Nimrod, whereas Abraham’s opponent are always the local people around him in the *Quran*. Moreover, Component “D” (fire) appears in the *Quran* only in the passages quoted in this paper, while in *Genesis Rabba* numerous passages of rabbinic texts from various chronological periods contain Component “D,” including Abraham’s “furnace incident,” always describing Abraham as the figure opposed to Nimrod.<sup>32)</sup> As well, Component “E” (Haran’s death), which has particular importance in *Genesis Rabba*, does not appear in the *Quran*. As for responses to Abraham’s argument, people eventually accept it in the *Quran*, while in *Genesis Rabba* Abraham leaves the land of idol worshippers.

These differences suggest that in *Genesis Rabba* Abraham principally plays the symbolic role of confrontation with the otherness of a foreign culture represented by Nimrod, thus a definite departure from idolatry, and that in the *Quran* Abraham’s main role is in persuading the local people out of idol worship.

#### **4. Classification of the Narratives Based on Abraham's Relationship with Terah and Haran**

In the narratives studied in this paper, the components of the plot are slightly modified or differently positioned in each context. Therefore, the characteristics of each of the narratives identified based on these components, as discussed above, are indicative of the functionality of Abraham's tradition in each text, but they do not serve as indices for classifying the narratives. What is probably most useful as their classifier is the attitude that Abraham, or the narrator of each text, assumes toward Terah, Haran, and others, and this attitude closely resonates with the interpretation of the reason why Abraham left his homeland in *Genesis* 12. Accordingly, in this section, how the narratives differ from each other is examined on the basis of Abraham's and the narrator's attitude toward his father and elder brother.

In the *Book of Jubilees*, Abraham has a favorable relationship with his father, Terah. The father admits to his son that he is aware of the errors in idolatry but he could not help but engage in the production of idols because of the people in the community (14:6-8). Moreover, the *Book of Jubilees* contains no passages in which Abraham disparages idols, as in the other texts, using tactics to make it look as if an idol has destroyed other idols (*Genesis Rabba* and the *Quran*) or resorting to sarcasm, saying to a burned idol that he can cook (*Apocalypse of Abraham*). Such actions can be considered malicious behavior addressed via idols to his father, who worships idols. The *Book of Jubilees* contains none of this kind of attitude; Abraham simply and directly destroys idols by setting fire to them. Furthermore, the text describes no confrontation between Abraham and local leaders such as Nimrod. Eventually, Terah gives blessing to Abraham's departure (14: 29-31). In other words, Abraham's good relationship with his ancestors remains intact.

In the opening of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, a considerably long section is taken up by Abraham's argument against idolatry addressed to his father. At the same time, Abraham's words suggest a measure of hesitation or consideration for his father. Yet, in the end, fire from heaven strikes the father's house, as if to imply the inevitability of Abraham's separation from his father through third-party force.

In *Genesis Rabba* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, separation from family and relatives is more evident. Abraham as described in *Genesis Rabba* never utters kind words, in consideration of Terah. Abraham squarely confronts himself with his father, who conspires with Nimrod and hands over his son to the ruler without any hesitation. In *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, on the other hand, confrontation occurs between Abraham and Nimrod only, and Terah is not mentioned at all. Moreover, Abraham's elder brother, Haran, is presented like a magician. It is surmised that as a Rabbinic text, the Targum was written with the intention of presenting Abraham as not only an iconoclast but also as someone who breaks up earthly family relations. This is also related to the intended narrative development of the two texts that links Abraham's iconoclasm directly with Haran's death before his father. The intention of

simultaneously severing Abraham from his territorial and family bonds is noteworthy.

In the *Quran*, Abraham's territorial bond is not severed, but focus is rather placed on the introduction of the concept of one God into the place of that bond. Abraham is thrown into fire, but this incident does not cause him to leave the land. It can be said that the episode is used to demonstrate to the people in the land the power of the one God that Abraham believes in.

## Conclusion

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The existence of numerous narratives that relate how Abraham destroyed idols suggests the great popularity of this tradition at the time of their writing. The tradition of a long history has been understood as a common source of passages in Rabbinic exegetic texts and the *Quran*, and differences among the narratives have also been studied.

In this paper, we have analyzed the components of the common plot of the narratives of Abraham's iconoclasm in several texts and examined different focal points in the respective texts. We have also comparatively examined the narratives in terms of Abraham's relationship with his adversaries.

As a result, the following points have been clarified: the *Book of Jubilees* emphasizes the concept of one God, while the *Apocalypse of Abraham* places its focus on the refutation of idolatry. As well, compared to the other texts studied in this paper, it is surmised that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* was written within a situation in which idolatry was still in practice in proximity and opposition to it was a pressing issue. In terms of Abraham's relationship with his father, Terah, the father-son bond is maintained in the *Book of Jubilees*, whereas in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* he eventually breaks away from Terah while expressing his respect for his father. In *Genesis Rabba* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, all the narrative components examined in this paper appear, probably because of the strong authorial intention of providing an exegetic interpretation of the reason for Haran's death before Terah, as mentioned in *Genesis*. In addition, the presentation of Nimrod, who symbolizes the otherness, as Abraham's constant opponent, as well as the same level of criticism reserved for Abraham's family members who worship idols as for Nimrod, suggest that the tradition of Abraham's idolatry is included not to condemn idolatry itself but to criticize idol worshippers, hence the severing of ties between Abraham and his idol-worshipping family members, as depicted in some of the texts. The *Quran* has many passages in which Abraham expounds the errors in idolatry. In these passages, Abraham always addresses his words to local people, and he does not leave their land. This probably reflects Islam's position that aims at converting idol worshippers to monotheistic religion and settling in their place of residence.

The scope of the study presented here is limited to the literature of the Second Temple period, exegetic texts of Rabbinic Judaism, and the *Quran*. In future studies, the author wishes

to collect materials widely from texts and discursal materials by Christian Church fathers and exegeses by philosophers, etc., for a more comprehensive understanding of the monotheistic religions, based on the acceptance of Abraham's iconoclasm in the respective monotheistic communities.

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**Notes**

- 1) Hiroshi Ichikawa, *Tsumi-no Yurushi-to Fuso-no Toku – Yudaya-kyo Surihoto-no Inori* (Pardon of Sins and Ancestral Virtues; Selichot Prayer of Judaism), *Tsukuba Daigaku Chiiki Kenkyu (Journal of University of Tsukuba Graduate School of Area Studies*, VI (1988), pp. 259–275.
- 2) Rom. 4: 11; Gal. 3: 6.
- 3) J. Gnllka, *Seisho to Koran: Doko-ga onaji-de doko-ga chigau-ka* [originally published as *Bibel und Koran: Was sie verbindet, was sie trennt* (Freiburg: Herder, 2007)], trans. Yoshiaki Yauchi (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 2012), pp. 145–147.
- 4) N. Solomon, R. Harries, T. Winter eds., *Abraham's children: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in conversation*, (London: T&T Clark, 2005); Joan Chittister *et al. eds.*, *The tent of Abraham : stories of hope and peace for Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006); G. Atsmon *et. al.*, "Abraham's Children in the Genome Era: Major Jewish Diaspora Population Comprise Distinct Genetic Clusters with Shared Middle Eastern Ancestry" in *American Journal of Human Genetics* 86 (2010), pp.850-59; E. Noort, "Abraham and the Nations" in M. Goodman, G. H.van Kooten and J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten eds., *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarite*, (Leiden, Boston: Brill 2010), pp. 3-31
- 5) Refer to E. Noort, "Abraham and the Nations" p. 4 for the role that the Abrahamic monotheistic concept plays as a "slogan" in inter-faith dialogues. In N. Solomon, R. Harries, T. Winter eds., *Abraham's children*, Moses and other concepts from the respective religious traditions are also discussed, while only Abraham appears in the book title. For the danger in the non-critical and optimistic use of Abraham in inter-faith dialogues when excluding other religious traditions such as Hinduism, refer to P. Joyce, "Abraham from a Christian Perspective" in N. Solomon, R. Harries, T. Winter eds., *Abraham's children*, pp.18-27 (26-27).
- 6) For example, K. J. Kuschel, *Abraham: Sign of Hope for Jews, Christians and Muslims, Continuum*, (New York: Continuum, 1995); A. Shinan, M. Lahham, M. A. Sway, *Abraham in the three monotheistic faiths*, (Jerusalem: PASSIA, Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, 1999); M. Goodman, G. H. van Kooten and J. T. A. G. M.van Ruiten eds., *Abraham, the Nations*; A. Shinan, "The Life of the Man Abraham as Reflected in Ancient Jewish, Christian and Moslem Literature," *The proceedings of the 4th CISMOR Conference on Jewish Studies "Jews, Christians, Jews and Muslims: The Interactions of these Religions from Historical and Cultural perspectives,"* (Kyoto: Doshisha University Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic

- Religions, 2011), pp. 72–90; J. Gnilka, *op. cit.*
- 7) For example, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam refer to the event described in *Genesis* 15:6 respectively in the New Testament (*Rom.* 4:1-25, *Gal.* 3:6-14, and *Heb.* 11:18-19, among others); in *Genesis Rabba* 38:13; and Sura 3.65, 67, and 68, among others. Also refer to E. Noort, “Abraham and the Nations,” p. 4, n.2.
  - 8) Revised Standard Version Bible was used as the source text of the translation
  - 9) Abraham is the name given to him upon his performance of circumcision (*Gen.* 17). In *Genesis* 11, he is still called “Abram.” In the ancient literature discussed in this paper, however, both Abram and Abraham are used even in the descriptions of events taking place before the period corresponding to *Genesis* 11. Since it is believed that the difference between the two names is irrelevant with regard to the subject of iconoclasm, the name Abraham is used throughout this paper to avoid confusion. It should be also noted that “Ibrahim,” the name by which Abraham is known in Islam, is used in this paper only in quotations from the *Quran*.
  - 10) Shinan (*op. cit.*, p. 77–78) states that the New Testament, which places emphasis on Abraham’s idealized image of a great man of faith and righteousness, rather than on his life as a man, is more interested in theological matters, such as God’s blessings on Abraham, promise with him, and his selection. Therefore, it is possible to say that events in Abraham’s life before *Genesis* 12, such as those discussed in this paper, and the humanness of Abraham, did not interest the New Testament authors. In Origen’s exegesis of *Genesis*, the homilies and commentaries relative to the verses near *Genesis* 11:26 do not allude to the Abrahamic tradition that interests us in this paper (Origen, *Homilies of Genesis and Exodus*, trs. R. H. Heine, (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982). Other more general Christian exegetic texts do not contain any reference to Abraham as iconoclast in connection to the verses near *Genesis* 11:26 (A. Louth ed. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament I, Genesis I-II*, (Chicago, London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001), pp.173-75). This work contains the interpretations by St. Augustine and St. Jerome, but no mention of Terah’s practice of idol worship and Haran’s death. This indicates that even if the episodes of “Abraham as iconoclast” were indeed part of the Christian tradition, the theme did not interest the editors of those exegetic works. In other words, focus in the Christian study of Abraham has been on its theological and abstract aspects. P. Joyce (“Abraham from a Christian Perspective,” *op. cit.*, pp.19-21) considers faith, universalism, and covenant as essential factors in the Christian exegesis of Abraham.
  - 11) J. Gnilka, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-152; Shinan, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
  - 12) In M. Goodman, G. H.van Kooten and J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten eds., *Abraham, the Nations*; N. Solomon, R. Harries, T. Winter eds., *Abraham’s children*, the discussions are separately presented for respective chronological periods and religions. Shinan (*op. cit.*) examines relatively numerous texts of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.
  - 13) With regard to the Book of Jubilees, refer to J. T. A. G. M. Van Ruiten, “Abrham and the Nations in the Book of Jubilees” in M. Goodman , G. H.van Kooten and J. T. A. G.

- M. van Ruiten eds., *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarite*, pp. 105-138. Considering that Abraham's story has extensive sources, Shinan (*op. cit.*, p. 87) presents and analyzes passages from the Quran, as an example of how Abraham is interpreted in the Quran.
- 14) Greater emphasis has been placed in academic research on more abstract concepts such as Abraham and the nation, blessings bestowed on him, etc., and the offering of Isaac (*akedah*), which is considered the climax of Abraham's life related in Genesis 12. On the subject of *akedah*, refer to S. Spiegel *The last trial: on the legends and lore of the command to Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice: The akedah.*, J. Goldin trs., (New York Schocken Books, 1969), among others.
  - 15) For example, Pseudo-Philo among the Apocrypha; *Exodus Rabba* (23:4), *Abot de Rabbi Natan* 33, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 26 among many other Rabbinic texts; *Antiquities of the Jews* by Josephus also contains descriptions of Abraham reflecting on one true God, although this text does not relate his iconoclasm.
  - 16) Leviticus 25:10 and the subsequent passages state rules regarding a jubilee year, the 50<sup>th</sup> year after 49 years or seven cycles of seven years. The various rules governing a jubilee year, a sacred sabbatical year, include those that liberate all inhabitants, forbid cultivation and harvesting, return land to original owners, and exempt debts. The title of the book comes from the jubilee year.
  - 17) S. Wintermute trans., Jubilees, in J. H. Charlesworth ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol.2, (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday, 1985), pp.43-45.
  - 18) R. Pubinkiewiz, trans., Apocalypse of Abraham, in J. H. Charlesworth ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol.1 *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, (New York, London: Doubleday, 1983), pp. 681-88.
  - 19) L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. V, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1967-1969), p210, n.16.
  - 20) For an overview of, and a history of research on, the *targumin*, refer to E. Katsumata, *Priests and Priesthood in the Aramaic Targums to the Pentateuch: New Approach to the Targumic Literature*, (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012), pp. 38-104.
  - 21) J. Gnilka, *op. cit.*, pp. 138–152; Shinan, *op. cit.*, p.85-87.
  - 22) M. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis, The Aramaic Bible 1B*, (T&T Clark: Edinburgh, 1992), p.51, n.17.
  - 23) S. Wintermute trans., Jubilees, in J. H. Charlesworth ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol.2, pp.35-142, was used as the source text of the translation.
  - 24) R. Pubinkiewiz trans., Apocalypse of Abraham, in J. H. Charlesworth ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol.1, pp.689-705, was used as the source text of the translation.
  - 25) Unclear word. Greek *kokkina*, red cloth? see, R. Pubinkiewiz trans., Apocalypse of Abraham.
  - 26) Chapter 7 exists in two major versions; for this paper, the version comprised of R.

- Pubinkiewiz's *The Volokalasmk Peleja Tolkovaja*, Moscow, Lenin Library, Mosk. Dukh. Akad. 172/549, fols. 85-101 and others was used as the source text of the translation.
- 27) Theodor-Albeck eds., *Bereshit Rabba*, (Berlin: Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, 1936).
- 28) E. G. Clarke, *Targum Pesudo-Jonathan of the Pentatuech: Text and Concordance*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1984).
- 29) <http://www.islam101.com/quran/yusufAli/QURAN/21.htm>. was used as the source text of the English translation.
- 30) The *Book of Jubilees* 11:4-7 states that idolatry was widely practiced in the land of Ur before Terah's birth.
- 31) *Genesis* 11:28 in *Targum Neofiti*.
- 32) Refer to note 21.