Chapter 6

AN EGYPTIAN VIEW OF ABRAHAM

John Gee

My association with Kent Brown has been longer than either of us would wish to admit. Under his tutelage, I had my first classes in Coptic and early Christian history. After I joined the faculty, I have benefited from being a colleague, serving on committees together and, most recently, from his being my department head. It is a pleasure to present this as a tribute to him, both because of my personal association and interests and because it gives me the chance to combine Coptic with Kent’s Latter-day Saint interests.

For the second half of the twentieth century, Coptic studies have been dominated by interest in the Nag Hammadi Library, a collection of manuscripts in Lycopolitan and Sahidic dialects, whose contents can be characterized either as at least heretical or even bizarre. Their very strangeness draws interest. Before that time, the interest in Coptic literature focused on Coptic orthodoxy, whose texts at least make some modicum of sense. Unfortunately, orthodox Coptic literature has fallen on some hard times. The manuscripts are dispersed, largely unpublished, or published in some obscure place.

Extracanonical traditions about Abraham circulated in the ancient world from at least the third century BC on, and a number of
these have been gathered in a volume.¹ The volume, however, does not contain any Coptic material because it had not yet been located. One missed account comes from a Coptic encomium that is found in three manuscripts; notice of one was published with a brief Latin summary first by Georgio Zoega in 1810,² another was published by W. E. Crum.³ E. O. Winstedt published a composite text of the two manuscripts along with an English translation in 1908.⁴ Winstedt made certain assumptions in the presentation of his text that can at least be questioned. Given the wider range of extracanonical traditions about Abraham, this text can be more securely placed within those traditions than it could when Winstedt published it. It deserves to be known to a wider audience.

Text

The text is fragmentary, but the story told about Abraham seems to be complete. I have kept Winstedt’s punctuation but have omitted his superlinear marks as it is not clear to me that he has interpreted them correctly. Coptic manuscripts tend not to have spacing between words, and different editors have different preferences; I have used mine rather than Winstedt’s. The text follows:

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\begin{align*}
\text{ⲥⲱⲟⲩϩ} & \text{ⲙⲛ} \text{ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ} \text{ⲛⲃⲣⲁϩⲁⲙ} \text{ⲁϩⲣⲁⲥ} \text{ⲉⲕϫⲱ} \text{ⲙⲙⲟⲥ} \text{ϫⲉ} \text{ⲁϩⲩⲱⲟϩ} \text{ⲙⲛ} \text{ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ} \text{ⲛⲃⲣⲁϩⲁⲙ} \text{ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲛ} \text{ⲉⲓⲃ} \text{ⲙⲛ} \text{ⲗⲁⲁⲩ} \text{ⲛⲣⲱⲙⲉ} \text{ϩⲓϫⲙ} \text{ⲡⲕⲁϩ} \text{ⲙⲡⲉⲩⲓϣ} \text{ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲩ} \cdot \text{ⲓⲥⲁ} \text{ⲁⲃⲣⲁϩⲁⲙ} \text{ⲙⲁⲩⲇⲥ} \cdot \text{ⲉⲕⲧⲁⲝⲓⲁ} \text{ⲙⲙⲟⲥ} \text{ⲧⲉⲓϩⲉ} \text{ⲧⲏⲣ} \cdot \text{ⲥⲉ} \text{ⲡⲉϫⲁⲥ} \text{ⲛϭⲓ} \text{ⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲫⲏⲥ} \text{ⲇⲁⲩⲉⲇ} \cdot \text{ⲟⲩⲛ} \text{Ⲫⲁⲥ} \text{ⲛⲣⲱⲙⲉ} \text{ϩⲓϫⲙ} \text{ⲡⲕⲁϩ} \text{ⲙⲡⲉⲟⲩⲓⲣ} \text{ⲛⲃⲣⲁϩⲁⲙ} \cdot \text{ⲁⲗⲗⲁ} \text{ⲙⲡⲉⲗⲁⲁⲩ} \text{ⲙⲙⲁⲩ} \text{ⲥⲟⲩⲉⲛ}
\end{align*}
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². Georgio Zoega, Catalogus Codicum Copticorum Manuscriptorum qui in Museo Borgiano velitris adservantur (Rome: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1810), 548.
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The text appears to be a blend of Egyptian and Greek script, with some characters difficult to interpret. It seems to discuss a view of Abraham, perhaps from an Egyptian perspective. Due to the complexity of the script, a direct translation is not provided here. Further analysis or translation by a specialist in ancient Egyptian or early Christian texts would be necessary to provide a clear understanding of the content.
The British Museum fragment begins here with [ἵερα χρήση] μον.

10. BM: ἢν ὑπὸ τὸν τεθείον τὸν ἀνασφάλεσθαι.
11. BM: ἢν ὑπὸ τὸν ἀνασφάλεσθαι.
12. BM: ἢν ὑπὸ τὸν ἀνασφάλεσθαι.
14. BM: μικροκύκλονος.
15. BM: ἀποδόσις.
16. BM: ἢτη[ῇ...].
17. BM: ζευρ.
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cops mnkhoōyō te etbhnith18 tepeñọtọt rop lō19 mmy ryxọ̄n · tareniqemoom20 eọ̄laxe nmmak — χυω ἰτουηου λπηυου te smoy eπepenwv arbasam xhp, sa 2i χαρp nay mπnnto eβoλ noyωn nym ±· χυω λπηυου te ouνhug eρọc21 ienkmumystpiion22 eίmαπων nai23 eυmaxωπe24 nmo nca on · χυω ἰτευηου λπηωv eροc ·±·

iπeυηου δε αβαραςam ων) eβoλ eπxω mmoς noyωn25 nym · δε ππρο iπεξιwou te τηρου mnkak iπεπηνουyüte · χισu mmoς — χυω ἀνεί eμακε παι ωφωe eсп26 coept ete arbasam 4ε αναρχων mn27 παλoε cooγσ mn πηιηγτε28 ιαβαραςam · δε ππρο iπεξιwou te τηρου mnkak iπεπηνουyüte χισu mmoς · ±·

λμωνς γαρ ω πεπροφιτης ετογυλβ πεπηιωτ29 αλγελα. · πκλαως γαρ τοομε eροc niυλ γι μεπεκκιηταοκς μμαςκοογ · ωμεπκκιηταοφιτης ±· eβoλ 4ε ωυλα0 nοις · πε πεκαςο ω ππρο ιαικλoες πεπηιwτ ετογυλβ αλγελα · ±·

λμωνς ω πεπηιwτε ετογυλβ παποςτεοκς · πετακμε πε ἰπε λκς nym · 2i σποτου nym χω mπετταξειο ±· eβoλ 4ε χω ανεκς πεπηιwς τηρεν μους· εραγη πηικηετεπταοοπ twig πκας · δε παςιwγυ · χυω ναβυω · χωρις πηιωνε00ou ιπτακαρεζε mmoς τηρη mnπνt0 eβoλ mπεπηιwτ · mπεκηατεξεος ετογυλβ · eπxω mmoς · δε παξιwτ ·

18. BM: etbhnityn.
19. BM: λα.
20. BM: tareniqemoom.
21. BM: oυdnhal eβol.
22. BM: ienkmumystpiion.
23. Word omitted in BM.
24. BM: eλχ[...]e.
25. BM: εουoι.
26. BM: χυω λπε[m]παμ\).
27. BM: mεν.
28. BM: mnkhoōyō.
29. The British Museum fragment ends with πεπηιo[τ].
Translation

My translation of the text follows: 30

[. . .] “gathered with the God of Abraham” [Psalm 47:9].

And what is Abraham that you say of him that they gathered with the God of Abraham? And were there not any

30. I have settled on a compromise on the second-person singular pronouns which are translated as thou, thee, thy, and thine when referring to deity. While my personal preference would be to keep the distinction between singular and plural in the second person, these days preserving the distinction is considered unacceptable. However, the use of the plural English pronoun when addressing deity is too jarring to my sense of English—hence the compromise.
men on the earth at that time save Abraham alone since you praise him to all this extent?

Yea, said the prophet David, there were many men on the earth at the time of Abraham, but none of them knew God like Abraham because Abraham mocked them and their idols: They are not Gods, and he did not cease mocking them, until they became angry with him so that they might set fire to him. But when Abraham was thrown into the fire, the angel of the Lord came to him in that moment and saved him from the fire. It did not touch him at all. And his fame came forth in all the land of Mesopotamia because his God saved him from the fire of Sabor the Pharaoh. When Pharaoh heard the fame of Abraham that he was safe from the fire and he was ashamed to speak with him because he was the one who had caused them to set fire to him.

Then Pharaoh collected twelve rulers of the people. He said to them: Go to this man Abraham to learn the truth of everything. How was he saved from the fire? And also take with you other strong men on the way (indeed, I have heard that the people surround him) lest they seize him from you, until you learn the truth of all these things.

And then the twelve rulers approached him; the strong men saw him, and they saw the people gathered to our father Abraham. The rulers said to him: Our father Abraham, where is your God, that one who saved you in the fire, so that we may see him ourselves, and may worship him, and you may teach us of a god who is powerful like your God, so that he may save us from the fire like you were saved. And then Abraham smiled. He said to them: O men of Mesopotamia, is it my custom to fashion gods like your

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31. Although the English here is awkward, the Coptic clearly has the unusual (for English) and.
gods? Then surely I would serve them completely. God is this one who saved me from the fire. My father never saw him; neither did he ever worship him.

The rulers said to him: Our lord, Abraham, didn’t we tell you that your God is more honored than ours because he saved you from the fire?

Abraham said to them: But my God is more worthy of honor than gold and precious stones and anything of this world. But if you wish to see my God and to know that he is more worthy of honor than anything which is on the earth, look at the constellations that God created in the heaven; the sun and the moon and the stars and the clouds of the atmosphere let you know that he has power to save me from the fire. Immediately the crowds worshipped him, saying, Our father Abraham, you are not yet even forty years old. Who taught you this saying, this one you told us? If your God taught you this mystery, we ourselves wish to see a mystery so that he can make us believe him ourselves. And then Abraham withdrew himself to one side of the way and spread out his hands and prayed to God. And lightnings and thunders appeared in heaven and then God spoke with Abraham, saying, I am the God of everything. And then the face of Abraham shone like the face of an angel of God because of the glory of God who spoke with him. And immediately the crowd fell to the earth. They could not look in the face of Abraham because of the glory of God who spoke with him. And immediately the crowd fell to the earth. They could not look in the face of Abraham because of the glory of God that appeared on him. And then they cried out, saying with one voice: Abraham, friend of God, entreat your god on our behalf so that this trouble over us might stop, that we might be allowed to speak with you. And immediately God blessed our father Abraham. He gave him beauty and grace in everyone’s presence. And God revealed to him
many other mysteries, those which shall happen to him afterwards, and then he hid himself from him.

Then Abraham cried out, saying to everyone: O Pharaoh of all the strong men of the earth of our God, exalt him! And saying this was what became famous about Abraham, that “the rulers of the people met with the God of Abraham” [Psalm 47:9] so that the Pharaoh of all the strong men of the earth of God exalted him.

For truly, O holy prophet, our father David, the good is appropriate for you at all times, from your shepherding of sheep to your prophecy because your treasury was a treasury of life, O righteous king, our holy father, David.

Truly, O our holy fathers, the apostles, what is proper is that which every tongue and every lip say for your glory because the Christ, the life of all of us, calls you “my brethren and my friends” since you were on earth, without the great glory which he granted to you in the presence of his father and his holy angels, saying: “My father, I desire that the place where I am, that these which are mine might be so that they may see the glory that thou hast granted me because they have kept my word as I myself have kept thy word. O my holy father, the joy of thy word is that which is true and I and my apostles have kept it. I purify myself for their sake, my father, because they have become pure in the truth. O my father, all those whom thou hast called, I have drawn to me by the word of my mouth. They have not sought anything really from me save thy name so that thou mayest keep them so that none of them perish save the son of destruction.”

O our holy fathers, the apostles, if the Son of God commended you in the presence of his father because “they loved me,” it is appropriate for us to love you more. When you love a martyr or a just man, his is the prayer on you because their prayer has great effect in the presence of everyone.

If you do mercy in the name of these holy apostles, even if in an offering which you give in their name, even in a book which you give in their name, and you put it in the church, so that they can read in it, even anything of any sort at all which you give in their name, even in a banquet which will be made in their name for the hungry and the stranger and the needy, then rejoice for yourself, O my beloved, because they have already written your name in their book because they are those who pray perfectly. And the righteous and the martyrs are those who pray. But these apostles, they are judges in the valley of Jehoshaphat. John the Evangelist testifies, saying: If the son made you free, you will actually become free. This commandment which the father gave to his beloved son, the son, himself, granted to his holy apostles. Therefore, him whom the apostles will make free, the Son of God himself will make free. Him whom the apostles will forgive, Christ himself will forgive. And to him to whom the apostles shall give an inheritance, the son will also give an inheritance. But you recognize, O Christ-loving people, this saying which I will say: Do not obstruct me, neither despise me, but like an angel of God receive my saying for the good of your souls. If a brother or sister among you call one in the name of these holy apostles, if it is Peter, do not separate him from Andrew, his brother. If you give alms in the name of John, do not separate him from James, his brother. If you give it in the name of Philip, do not separate him from Bartholomew because it is only one convocation.
If you give it in the name of Thomas, do not separate it from Matthew because it is only one community and one occasion in their midst. If you give it in the name of Simon, do not separate him from James, the son of Alphaeus. You did not see Peter because he is the greatest among the apostles and because the keys of heaven are in his hands; nor did you look to John because he is among the immortal and leave out the rest of these apostles. No. It was only one love that their Lord loved them with, and this grace only is that which the Lord granted to all of them, telling them: You shall eat and drink with me at the table in my kingdom.

As is clear from the text, this story about Abraham is found inside a larger homily.

**Philological Notes**

One of the first concerns we have is knowing whether the story about Abraham is originally in Coptic or Greek or in some other language.

A number of features of the story in the text are striking. There is a limited amount of Greek vocabulary in the story itself; only seventeen words are of Greek origin (αἰτεὸς, ἀι, ἀλλα, ἄρχων, ἄνε, συνάλλος, κόσμος, λόγος, μεσοποταμία, μυστῆριον, πίστις, Παύλος, καθεδρία, καθεδρία, καθεδρία, καθεδρία). The text even uses the native word for king, דָיָם, which comes from pr-ʿם, Pharaoh,33 even though it is not clear that the Pharaoh in the text was king over Egypt. He has normally been equated with one of many Persian kings named Shapur.34 If this is the case, the name has passed through Greek and not directly through Syriac as an intermediary, and the lack of Greek loan words is all the stranger. The other possibility for the name is as a corrupt version of the Fourteenth

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Dynasty ruler $\text{SHOT}_r^\text{c}$, about whom nothing is known other than his name.\textsuperscript{35}

The story also contains only two sentences that use constructions with $\text{HOT}_r^\text{c}$. The term $\text{HOT}_r^\text{c}$ derives from a native Egyptian term,\textsuperscript{36} but it is used primarily for indicating the subject of a sentence, which is a nonnative use for this expression. It appears frequently in translation texts to preserve the syntax of the original Greek. Because of its use in translation texts, especially biblical texts, it passes into the Coptic language but is not used as frequently in native texts.

The vocabulary and syntax are signs that the story is not a translation but a retelling by native speakers that seems to come from an earlier period of Coptic.

**Homilies**

The story about Abraham is part of a larger homily.

The text begins on its third page with a fragmentary quotation of Coptic Psalm 46:9 (Hebrew 47:10; KJV 47:9): $\text{HARXONH HXAAOC AXOCOYR}_2$ $\text{GEOYH NH HNOYTC HARPAM}$. “The rulers of the people gathered with the God of Abraham.”\textsuperscript{37} The story about Abraham is used to explain the wording in this particular Psalm. After the story about Abraham the homily shifts to extolling Jesus’s apostles and urges treating them as a group. After that, the homily, at least as we have it, ends.

The end of the preserved text, however, does not seem to be the end of the homily. Coptic homilies customarily end with an exhortation and benediction on the hearers, and a doxology, for example:

\textsuperscript{35} For the name, see Jürgen von Beckerath, *Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen*, 2nd ed. (Mainz: von Zabern, 1999), 108–9; for what is known about this ruler, see Kim S. B. Ryholt, *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period* (Copenhagen: The Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Near Eastern Studies, 1997), 379.

\textsuperscript{36} Černý, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary*, 119.

And we must produce fruit, and labour in the remembrance of His commandments; and we must make ourselves ready for His glorious rest, and then nothing whatsoever shall give us offence; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, to Whom be the glory, and with Him the Father, and the Holy Spirit, for all ages of ages. Amen.38

This example shows that the customary ending for a homily is absent in the text, and thus the end of the text is not the end of the original homily. So this homily is missing both its beginning and end.

**Traditions about Abraham**

The text can also be seen in the light of other traditions about the biblical patriarch Abraham.

One of the more interesting features of the text is its mention that an angel saved Abraham from the fire. This is one of the unique and interesting features of the story, and it is missing from Zoega’s notice. Zoega’s entire notice reads as follows: “NUM. CCX-XII.* Folium unum lacerum, paginae ı, ı, characteres classis VI. De Abrahamo, ἀρματωμίῳ τῷ ἀρματωμίῳ, qui a Sapore rege Mesopotamiae in rogum conjectus salvus evasit, quo facto rex ad eum misit duodecim principes populi ut interrogarent, quis esset Deus ejus qui eum ser-vaverat.”39 “Number 222*. One torn folio, pages ı [3], ı [4], in class VI characters. About Abraham, ἀρματωμίῳ τῷ ἀρματωμίῳ, who escaped

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alive after being thrown into a funeral pyre by Sapore, the king of Mesopotamia, because of which, the king sent twelve princes of the people to him to inquire who is that God who saved him.” The account’s description of Abraham being saved by an angel contrasts with the other noncanonical accounts of the involvement of the angels in the attempted sacrifice of Abraham, which are related.

The story of Abraham being delivered from the fire in Chaldea is known in Christian sources both in the East and in the West. In the West, it was preserved by Jerome and a few French clergy. In the East, it had a history of more vigorous retelling. But none of the Christian traditions outside this Coptic text preserve any account of the involvement of angels.

A version of the Abraham story attributed to Eliezer ben Jacob held that the angel Michael descended to rescue Abraham from the fiery furnace, but this is a minority version to the rabbis’ version that God himself rescued him.40 Two rabbis named Eliezer ben Jacob are known. One is supposed to date from the first century and the other, a disciple of Akiba, from the second century. The recorded account dates somewhere between the fifth and tenth centuries.

The Midrash Rabbah Exodus claims that the angels Michael and Gabriel asked to save Abraham when he was cast into the furnace but that God himself decided to save him.41 The recorded account may date as late as the twelfth century.

In the Babylonian Talmud, which dates between the fifth and eighth centuries, Gabriel alone asks God to save Abraham, but God himself intervenes.42

40. Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 44:13, in Tvedtnes et al., Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham, 99; Midrash Rabbah, Song of Songs 1:12.1, in Tvedtnes et al., Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham, 116; Midrash Rabbah, Song of Songs 3:11.1, in Tvedtnes et al., Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham, 117. 41. Midrash Rabbah, Exodus 18:5, in Tvedtnes et al., Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham, 103. 42. Babylonian Talmud, Pesahim 118a, in Tvedtnes et al., Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham, 120.
The medieval Jewish *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, attributed to the twelfth-century Jerahmeel ben Solomon, tells the version of the story from *Midrash Rabbah* Exodus, elaborating the angels’ involvement by having the angels (in the plural) quarrel and naming Michael and Gabriel specifically, but also adds the version from the Babylonian Talmud.

Ka’b al-Aḥbār, a seventh-century Yemenite Jew who converted to Islam, brought the Jewish accounts of the attempted sacrifice of Abraham into Islam. In Ka’b al-Aḥbār’s account, Gabriel asks Abraham while he is flying through the air after having been launched from a catapult if he needs anything. Abraham denies it saying that he will give his request to God alone. God then heard and saved him. Ka’b al-Aḥbār brings into Islam the tradition cited in the Babylonian Talmud that the angel Gabriel is involved and then God saved Abraham himself. This version of the story adds the picturesque element of the fire being so hot that Abraham must be delivered into the flames by a catapult.

The eighth-century Arabic author, Ibn Isḥāq, whose grandfather had been a Jewish slave from Babylon who converted to Islam, compiled a tremendous number of Islamic traditions. He had hung around the *warraqs*, who sold Jewish and Christian scriptures, commentaries, and apocryphal works, as well as copies of the Qur’an. In his version, it is not the angels who ask to be able to save Abraham but “heaven and earth and all the creatures in it except men and Jinn” who do so. But God himself steps in to save him and then sends the Angel of Shade to amuse Abraham in the fire.

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The eighth-century historian Isḥāq ibn Bishr adds to the account of Ka‘b al-Aḥbār the detail that the angel Isrāfīl cooled the way before Abraham, and Gabriel and Isrāfīl brought Abraham clothing from paradise and kept him company the three days that he was in the fire.47

The tenth-century historian al-Ṭabarī repeats Ibn Isḥāq’s story, ascribing it to him.48 He says that the angel Gabriel quenched the fire by saying: “O fire! be coolness and peace for Abraham,” and also includes some other comments by Ibn ʿAbbās about how the cold that God commanded to quench the fire would have killed Abraham had it not been followed by peace.49

Other Arabic authors repeat the story in al-Ṭabarī with variations. The eleventh-century theologian al-Thaʿlabī repeats al-Ṭabarī’s story, which he ascribes to Ibn Isḥāq. The comments of Ibn ʿAbbās, he notes, are echoed in ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib.50 The eleventh-century chronographer al-Ṭarafī reports the story as taken from al-Ṭabarī.51 The eleventh-century theologian al-Zamakhsharī repeats a shortened version of al-Ṭabarī’s story.52 The twelfth-century Imami scholar Rāwandī repeats the story from al-Ṭabarī but claims to have it from a very different chain of authority.53 Other Arabic versions of the story occur later, but they need not concern us here.

An undated Hebrew text first published in the eighteenth century in Constantinople called The Story of Abraham Our Father from

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47. Isḥāq ibn Bishr, Mubtadaʾ ‘al-dunyā wa-qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ, folio 168B, in Tvedtnes et al., Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham, 323.
51. Al-Ṭarafī, Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ, 93–96, in Tvedtnes et al., Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham, 378.
53. Rāwandī, Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ, 4, 6, in Tvedtnes et al., Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham, 415–16.
What Happened to Him with Nimrod preserves Kaʿb al-Aḥbār’s account of the angel Gabriel conversing with Abraham as he is lying on the catapult.\(^54\) This shows interaction from Muslim sources and a willingness to borrow back details from them.

The undated Hebrew text Midrash of Abraham Our Father takes the Babylonian Talmud’s account and changes the angel from Gabriel to Michael, a slight return to the Midrash Rabbah versions attributed to Eliezar.\(^55\)

Placing the Coptic account of the angel delivering Abraham from the fire into the other accounts of the angel’s involvement with the deliverance of Abraham shows a stark contrast with most Jewish and Muslim versions of the story. The Coptic version somehow preserves a detail otherwise only preserved by Eliezar ben Jacob and rejected by the majority of the rabbis.

**Martyrdoms**

In our focus on this as an Abraham story, we should not forget that this story has some affinities with the rich tradition of Coptic martyrdoms. Coptic martyrdoms, as such accounts are called, take an almost sadistic pleasure in describing gruesome tortures inflicted on the martyrs. Burning the martyr is one of these tropes.

In the second martyrdom of Apa Victor, Victor is thrown into the furnace that heats the baths, and then “Michael the holy archangel came down from heaven and went into the furnace of the bath and spread under Apa Victor his holy cloak and caused the flame of the fire to become like the wind of the first hour.” \(^56\)

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is thrown into a furnace that has been heated for four days, but he is not harmed.\textsuperscript{57} He is finally beheaded. The manuscript for Apa Victor dates to AD 951. The detail about Michael coming down and making the fire like the morning breeze is shared with the Islamic accounts about the sacrifice of Abraham.

An exceptional example is the martyrdom of Eustathius. This martyrdom is exceptional in many ways. First, it takes place during the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian rather than of Diocletian, when most Coptic martyrdoms are set. Second, it is modeled on the recognitions genre. Third, there are no protracted tortures; the family is put to death inside a burning bull.\textsuperscript{58} The miracle, like that of Njál and his wife in \textit{Brennu-Njals Saga}, is that the bodies are preserved.\textsuperscript{59}

The treatment of human sacrifice by burning in the Abraham homily differs from those in the martyrdoms because Abraham is not repeatedly tortured and then put to death. He is saved by an angel and that is the end of the attempts on his life. More verbiage is spent on the aftereffects of the attempted burning than describing the act itself, which seems to be of excessive interest in Coptic martyrdoms.

**Conclusion**

The Coptic homily on Abraham interacts with various genres and types of stories available in Coptic and in the wider ancient world. Like most Egyptian stories about Abraham, it does not fit into the standard mold that we have come to expect from other Jewish, Christian, and Muslim accounts of Abraham’s attempted sacrifice.

I am certain that Kent can think of other Egyptian accounts in which a king attempts to put Abraham to death only to have him

\textsuperscript{57} Fourth Martyrdom of Apa Victor, fol. 21b–22a, in Budge, \textit{Coptic Martyrdoms}, 37–38, 290.

\textsuperscript{58} The Life of Saints Eustathius and Theopiste, fol. 20b–22a, in Budge, \textit{Coptic Martyrdoms}, 125–27, 378–79.

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Brennu-Njals Saga} 128, 131. Interestingly, Njál and Bergthora and their grandson Thord are covered with an ox hide.
delivered by an angel and also have Abraham afterwards attempting to teach the king and his court about the true God through the use of astronomy.

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