

# The Son of Abraham in the First Gospel

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The first Gospel begins with the words, “An account of the genealogy of Yeshua the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1).<sup>1</sup> It is not difficult to see how the theme “son of David” pervades Matthew’s magnum opus. The term appears ten times, and Yeshua is portrayed as the shepherd-king of Israel throughout.<sup>2</sup> But how is “son of Abraham” reflected in the story?<sup>3</sup> After all, every Jew is a son (or daughter) of Abraham.<sup>4</sup> One fresh approach to this question has been to identify the son of Abraham as the new Isaac, a Messiah who sacrifices himself for the sins of Israel.<sup>5</sup> While there is much merit to the Akedah interpretation, I propose a way forward more in line with Matthew’s narrative dynamics: that the son of Abraham is *the one who implements the Abrahamic promise and proselytizes the gentile world as Abraham did*. In order to make this case, I will show how the theme of raising up gentile children for Abraham appears at various points in the Gospel and culminates in the son of Abraham’s words, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19).

## Abraham and the Nations in Matthew 1–2

The focus on Yeshua as the son of Abraham in 1:1 should be taken as indicative of the importance that Matthew attaches to the theme. In subsequent chapters, Matthew is concerned to explain not only that Yeshua is the son of Abraham, but also *in what ways* Yeshua is the son of Abraham. In particular, I contend that Matthew wants to show how Yeshua fulfills the promise that God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 (“and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Translation mine. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the NRSV (1989).

<sup>2</sup> See Nicholas G. Piotrowski, *Matthew’s New David at the End of Exile: A Socio-Rhetorical Study of Scriptural Quotations* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Joel Willitts, *Matthew’s Messianic Shepherd-King: In Search of “The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel”* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> One could argue that “son of David” is a central theme of the first Gospel while “son of Abraham” pertains only to the genealogy. However, this would go against the grain of Matthew’s attention to symmetry, such as the apparent inclusio between chs. 1–2 and 27–28. See Jason B. Hood, “The Beginning and Ending of Matthew,” in *The Messiah, His Brothers, and the Nations (Matthew 1.1–17)* (London: T & T Clark International, 2011), 139–56; David D. Kupp, *Matthew’s Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God’s People in the First Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 101; Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 48; Helen Milton, “The Structure of the Prologue to St. Matthew’s Gospel,” *JBL* 81 (1962): 176.

<sup>4</sup> Ulrich Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 24.

<sup>5</sup> Leroy A. Huizenga, “Matt 1:1 ‘Son of Abraham’ as Christological Category,” *HBT* 30 (2008): 103–13. Another approach has been to view the son of Abraham as the ideal Israelite or the goal of Israel’s history. See Edgar Krentz, “The Extent of Matthew’s Prologue: Toward the Structure of the First Gospel,” *JBL* 83 (1964): 411, 414; William L. Kynes, *A Christology of Solidarity: Jesus as the Representative of His People in Matthew* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), 13.

<sup>6</sup> Joshua Jipp, “Abraham in the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Abraham in Jewish and Early Christian Literature*, ed. Sean A. Adams and Zanne Domoney-Lyttle (London: T & T Clark, 2019), 110, 112; Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Kathleen Ess (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 266; David Rudolph, “Yeshua, the Son of Abraham (Matt 1:1; 28:19–20),” *Verge* 1:6 (2009): 4; Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 74; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (Dallas: Word, 1995), 887; Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 171; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 9–10; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 1:158, 160; 3:683.

Matthew begins by describing the relationship between Abraham and Yeshua in salvation history (Matt 1:21). Abraham's name appears at the beginning of the genealogy and in the summary at the end, where the bond between Abraham and the son of Abraham is highlighted. "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations" (Matt 1:17).

God's concern for the gentiles is an additional literary theme developed in Matthew 1.<sup>7</sup> The mention of gentiles who joined themselves to Israel, such as Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Uriah (Matt 1:3, 5, 6), represents a proselytizing subtext within the genealogy.<sup>8</sup> The inclusion of Ruth is of special note.<sup>9</sup> Matthew's emphasis on the nations continues with his description of "wise men from the East" who, after seeing a sign in the heavens, travel from their homeland to pay homage to the king of the Jews (Matt 2:1–2).<sup>10</sup>

Given Matthew's attention to symmetry,<sup>11</sup> it comes as no surprise that he concludes his Gospel by returning to the theme of God's concern for the gentiles, as well as Yeshua's identity as the son of David and Immanuel.<sup>12</sup> But are these the only themes from Matthew 1–2 that reappear at the end of Matthew's Gospel? What about the son of Abraham? As I hope to demonstrate below, there are theological and lexical reasons to suggest that this theme is also present in Matthew 28.

## Raising Up Gentile Children for Abraham

Throughout the first Gospel, Matthew notes the many and diverse ways that Yeshua fulfilled the Scriptures (Matt 5:17). From the virgin birth to Yeshua's betrayal and death, Matthew reminds his readers that the Torah foretold Yeshua's life and ministry. Given this mindset, Matthew may have also viewed Yeshua's commission to "make disciples of all nations" as a prophetic fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 268–71.

<sup>8</sup> Gen 38; *Jub.* 41.1; *T. Jud.* 10.1; Philo, *Virt.* 220–22; Josh 2:10–11; 6:25; Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25; Ruth 1:4, 16; 2 Sam 11:3, 6. See Hood, "Four Praiseworthy Non-Jews," in *The Messiah, His Brothers, and the Nations*, 119–38; Glenna S. Jackson, "Have Mercy on Me": *The Story of the Canaanite Woman in Matthew 15.21–28* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 94–99.

<sup>9</sup> See Ruth 1:16. Luz notes that this subtext relates to the son of Abraham theme: "it reminds us of the broad Jewish tradition which sees Abraham as the father of the proselytes" (Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989], 110).

<sup>10</sup> Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 272–74.

<sup>11</sup> Oscar Brooks, "Matthew xxviii 16–20 and the Design of the First Gospel," *JSNT* 10 (1981): 2–6.

<sup>12</sup> Hood, "The Beginning and Ending of Matthew," 139–56; Kingsbury, *Matthew*, 48; Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 101.

<sup>13</sup> Given Matthew's Second Temple Jewish perspective informed by a prophetic vision for Israel and the nations (Matt 10:5–6; 15:24; Gen 12:1–3; 18:18; 22:17–18; 26:4; 28:4, 14; Exod 19:5–6; Isa 2:1–4; 49:6; Mic 4:1–4; Zech 14:16–19; *Pss. Sol.* 17:21–32), I contend that τὰ ἔθνη in Matt 28:19 refers to the gentiles without implying that the apostolic mission to Israel was discontinued, "I believe that we have good textual warrant that such a dual mission was in fact the perspective embraced by Matthew. There is no reason to limit our interpretive options to either an exclusive mission to Israel, or to a universal mission to Gentiles that excludes Israel, or 'absorbs' Israel's national identity into its all-encompassing universalism. The 'great commission' to all Nations (Matt 28:16–20) is not simply a 'delimitation' of the Gospel's earlier Israel-exclusive mission (10:5–6), nor does the later commission invalidate the earlier one. These two commissions are not binary opposites, but rather complementary missions that reflect Israel's ongoing election before God and the inclusion of the πολλοί from Nations who also partake of τὸ αἷμα μου τῆς διαθήκης (26:28)" (Akiva Cohen, *Matthew and the Mishnah: Redefining Identity and Ethos in the Shadow of the Second Temple's Destruction* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016], 181–82). See Terence L. Donaldson, "'Nations,' 'Non-Jewish Nations,' or 'Non-Jewish Individuals': Matthew 28:19 Revisited," in *Matthew within Judaism: Israel and the Nations in the First Gospel*, ed. Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2020), 169–94; Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 414; D. R. A. Hare and D. J. Harrington, "Make Disciples of All the Gentiles" (Mt 28:19)," *CBQ* 37 (1975): 359–69. Cf. John Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 187.

Two texts in Matthew's Gospel point in this direction by suggesting that gentiles can (and will) be joined to the family of Abraham.

In Matthew 3:9, John the Immerser addresses a crowd of Pharisees and Sadducees about their spiritual barrenness and "excessive reliance upon physical descent from Abraham."<sup>14</sup> He warns them that God can create additional children of Abraham:<sup>15</sup>

Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

The text is a further development of the theme of God's concern for gentiles introduced in chapters 1–2 and anticipates Yeshua's global mission in Matthew 28:19, which results in raising up gentile children for Abraham (cf. 24:14).<sup>16</sup>

Matthew's emphasis on gentiles joining the family of Abraham also appears in chapter 8. Yeshua is astonished by the Roman centurion—a man who has Abrahamic faith but not Abrahamic descent:

Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matt 8:10–12)

The gentile ministry context of this passage (8:5–10, 13)<sup>17</sup> leads most commentators to conclude that the "many" Yeshua refers to are righteous gentiles like the centurion who will sit with Abraham at the Messianic banquet.<sup>18</sup> As Richard Bauckham notes, however, the return of diaspora Jews *with gentiles* may be closer to the mark:

When he foresees that many will come from the east and from the west and eat with the patriarchs in the kingdom of God (Matthew 8:11; cf. Luke 13:29), Jesus seems most obviously to be echoing prophecies of the return of the Jewish diaspora to Jerusalem

14 Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 57. Overdependence on the "merits of the fathers" may also be at issue. See Keener, *Commentary on Matthew*, 125–27; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:308; Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (New York: Schocken, 1961), 170–98.

15 There is no implication in 3:9–10 that gentile followers of Yeshua will replace the Jewish people as the people of God. Yeshua is speaking to the Pharisees and Sadducees (see esp. vv. 7–8), "This image of fruitfulness and unfruitfulness [Matt 21:33–45] is used to evaluate community leaders elsewhere in Matthew. John the Baptist tells the Pharisees and Sadducees to bear fruit (3:8–10). Prophets are known by their fruits (7:16–20), and Jesus applies this idea to the Pharisees (12:33–34). The parable of the fig tree (21:19) probably refers to the fruitlessness of the Jerusalem leaders" (Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 62). See Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 267; Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 57.

16 Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 266–67; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 50; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:309.

17 Cf. Isa 2:2–4; 25:6; 56:3–8; Mic 4:1–3; Zech 8:20–23; 14:16–19.

18 E.g., Michael F. Bird, "Who Comes from the East and the West? Luke 13:28–29/Matt 8:11–12 and the Historical Jesus," *NTS* 52 (2006): 441–57; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, trans. James E. Crouch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 11; Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 114, 117; Jipp, "Abraham in the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles," 111; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 205–6; Keener, *Commentary on Matthew*, 270. That some members of Israel will be "thrown into the outer darkness" does not imply that gentile followers of Yeshua will replace the Jewish people as the people of God, "What does Jesus mean to say in 8:12, claiming that the 'heirs of the kingdom' will be excluded from the kingdom of heaven? It seems to me that Jesus is here saying precisely what he will be stating in parable form once he has entered Jerusalem and accuses various groups of leaders. While tax collectors and prostitutes—to be sure, also part of 'Israel'—are said to enter the kingdom of God, the chief priests and elders, who did not accept John's proclamation and, consequently have not repented, will be rejected and displaced (21:23–32, 33–46). . . . What is translated in the NRSV as 'the heirs of the kingdom,' in the Greek text literally 'the sons of the kingdom,' thus refers not to the entirety of Israel, but to those who lead Israel, those who were, as the parable has it, first invited to the son's wedding (22:1–6)" (Anders Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew: The Narrative World of the First Gospel* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016], 314). See Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 206–208.

(e.g. Zechariah 8:7–8; Isaiah 11:12; 43:4–6; 49:12; Psalm 107:3), but the prophets also pictured the Gentile nations coming with the returning Jewish exiles from all directions to Zion (Isaiah 49:22–23; 60:1–9; 66:20; Zechariah 8:23).<sup>19</sup>

Once again, we have a passage that associates Abraham with righteous gentiles and appears to anticipate Yeshua's directive in Matthew 28:19 to make disciples of all nations.<sup>20</sup>

A final text that points to gentiles joining the family of Abraham is Galatians 3. Though not a Matthean text, Galatians 3 demonstrates that the apostolic Jewish community, or at least the Pauline stream of it, viewed the gentile mission as a realization of God's promise to Abraham:

Understand, then, that those who believe are *children of Abraham*. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. . . . *He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Messiah Yeshua.* (Gal 3:7–9, 14 NIV-1172)<sup>21</sup>

In Galatians 3 and Romans 4, Paul describes gentile believers as "children of Abraham." This correlation between the Abrahamic promise and the gentile mission seems to have also been noticed by Matthew who, like Paul, looked for ways that the Messiah fulfilled the Torah. Matthew may have also been influenced by Paul.<sup>22</sup> At the end of the day, both arrive at a similar theological interpretation of the gentile mission, as W. D. Davies and Dale Allison point out:

Abraham himself was a Gentile by birth, and in the OT it is promised that "all the nations" will be blessed in him (Gen 12.3; 18.18; etc.). In later Jewish literature Abraham was sometimes portrayed as "the father of many nations" (Gen 17.5; cf. 44.19; 1 Macc 12.19–21) or the first proselyte (e.g. *b. Hag.* 3a); and the promise to Abraham was employed to further the purposes of Jewish mission. When we come to Christianity, we find Paul

19 Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 72–73. Cf. Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 202–208; 267; Dale C. Allison, "From East and West, Q 13:28–29: *Salvation for the Diaspora*," in *The Jesus Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997), 176–91; Dale C. Allison, "Who Will Come from East and West? Observations on Matt 8.11–12—Luke 13.28–29," *IBS* 11 (1989): 158–70; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2:27.

20 Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 267; Keener, *Commentary on Matthew*, 268; R. V. G. Tasker, *Matthew* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1961), 89.

21 Emphasis mine. The NIV-1172 is a Messianic version of the NIV (1984). See *New Covenant Prophecy Edition* (Colorado Springs: International Bible Society, 1991).

22 David C. Sim, "Jew Against Jew: The Reception of Paul in Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community," in *The Early Reception of Paul the Second Temple Jew: Text, Narrative and Reception History*, ed. Isaac W. Oliver and Gabriele Boccaccini with Joshua Scott (London: T & T Clark, 2019), 107–19; David C. Sim, "Conflict in the Canon? The Pauline Literature and the Gospel of Matthew," in *Religious Conflict from Early Christianity to the Rise of Islam*, ed. Wendy Mayer and Bronwen Neil (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 71–86; David C. Sim, "Matthew, Paul and the Origin and Nature of the Gentile Mission: The Great Commission in Matthew 28:16–20 as an Anti-Pauline Tradition," *HTS* 64:1 (2009): 377–92; David C. Sim, "Matthew and the Pauline Corpus: A Preliminary Intertextual Study," *JSNT* 31:4 (2009): 401–22; Eric K. C. Wong, "Matthew's Implicit Criticism of Paul," in *Matthew, Paul, and Others: Asian Perspectives on New Testament Themes*, ed. William Loader, Boris Repschinski, and Eric Wong (Innsbruck, Austria: Innsbruck University Press, 2019), 91–122. Contra Sim, Wong, and others, I am not persuaded that Matthew opposed Paul's law-free gospel for gentile followers of Yeshua. See Joel Willitts, "Paul and Matthew: A Descriptive Approach from a Post-New Perspective Interpretive Framework," in *Paul and the Gospels: Christologies, Conflicts, Convergences*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Joel Willitts (London: T & T Clark International, 2011), 62–85; Joel Willitts, "The Friendship of Matthew and Paul: a Response to a Recent Trend in the Interpretation of Matthew's Gospel," *HTS* 65:1 (2009): 150–58; Daniel J. Harrington, "Matthew and Paul," in *Matthew and His Christian Contemporaries*, ed. David C. Sim and Boris Repschinski (London: T & T Clark International, 2008), 11–26; Cohen, *Matthew and the Mishnah*, 186–211.

representing Abraham as the true father of all who have faith, Jew and Gentile alike (Rom 4.1–25; Gal 3.6–29). Matthew may have held a similar conception. In 8.11–12 we read that many (Gentiles) will come from east and west to sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and in 3.9 the Baptist declares, “God is able to raise up from these stones children to Abraham.” Matthew, we may think, believed that God had in fact raised up from the Gentiles new children to Abraham and that Jesus as the “son of Abraham” had brought them their salvation. . . . Lastly, “son of Abraham” probably implies not only that Jesus is a true Israelite but also—for reasons given above—that with his appearance God’s promise to the patriarch has been realized: all the nations of the earth (cf. 28:19) have been blessed.<sup>23</sup>

### Bauckham concurs:

Less often noticed is the way the Gospel of Matthew interprets the promise to Abraham in the same way that Paul does. Matthew frames the whole story of Jesus between the identification of him as a descendant of Abraham in the opening verse of the Gospel and, in the closing words of Jesus at the end of the Gospel, the commission to the disciples of Jesus to make disciples of all nations. . . . He is the descendant of Abraham through whom God’s blessing will at last reach the nations.<sup>24</sup>

To sum up, the designation “son of Abraham” in the opening verse of Matthew’s Gospel appears to point to Yeshua’s fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise in chapter 28. Notably, the use of πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in Matthew 28:19 matches the wording of LXX Genesis 18:18, 22:18 and 26:4 where the Abrahamic promise is reiterated. That some first-century Messianic Jews read Genesis 12:3 in light of the paraphrastic language of Genesis 18:18, and even conflated the texts, is attested in Galatians 3:8 (“All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you”). Here Paul superimposes the πάντα τὰ ἔθνη of LXX Genesis 18:18 upon LXX Genesis 12:3.<sup>25</sup> Though a small point, it adds to the case that Matthew alludes to the Abrahamic promise in Matthew 28:19.

### The Tradition of Abraham the Proselytizer

A final reason to suggest that Matthew portrays Yeshua as the son of Abraham in Matthew 28:19 is that first century CE Jewish literature describes Abraham as a proselytizer of the gentile world. While a number of scholars argue that the Abrahamic promise is an important theological backdrop to the great commission in chapter 28, and that Matthew depicts the son of Abraham as the implementor of the promise, I propose that Matthew also pictures the son of Abraham as following in the footsteps of *’Avraham ’Avinu* who (in the popular imagination of Second Temple Jews) called polytheistic gentiles to abandon their idols and worship the one true God.<sup>26</sup>

The locus classicus of the proselytizer tradition immediately follows God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 (“in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”). We are told in Genesis 12:4–5:

<sup>23</sup> Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:158, 160.

<sup>24</sup> Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, 33.

<sup>25</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 156.

<sup>26</sup> I am not aware of any prior study that develops this argument.

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, *and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran* (וְאֵת הַנַּפְשׁ אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ בַחָרָן); and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan.<sup>27</sup>

The phrase וְאֵת הַנַּפְשׁ אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ בַחָרָן may be literally translated “and the souls whom they had made in Haran”<sup>28</sup> or “and the souls that they had won in Haran.”<sup>29</sup> Not surprisingly, the earliest Jewish texts that characterize Abraham as a proselytizer refer to Genesis 12:5 or its immediate context (Gen 11:27–12:20). All of the Targums on Genesis 12:5 (c. 100 CE and later) describe Abraham as making converts:<sup>30</sup>

- Tg. Onq.* And Abram took his wife Sarai, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions which they had acquired, *and the persons whom they had subjected to the Law* in Haran (וְיֵית נַפְשָׁתָא דְשַׁעְבִּידוֹ לְאֹרִיתָא בַחָרָן).<sup>31</sup>
- Tg. Neof.* And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot, his brother's son, and all their wealth which they had acquired and the souls *they had converted* (וְיֵית הַנַּפְשָׁת דִּי גִיירוֹ).<sup>32</sup>
- Tg. Ps.-J* Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all the possessions which they had acquired, and all the persons whom they had *converted* in Haran (וְיֵית נַפְשָׁתָא דִּי גִיירוֹ בַחָרָן).<sup>33</sup>

27 I am not aware of any variants of MT Gen 12:5. 4QGen<sup>b</sup>-תרגום (4Q8) has limited textual value. See Eugene C. Ulrich and F. M. Cross, *Qumran Cave 4. VII: Genesis to Numbers* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 62–63.

28 Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Pentateuch* (New York: The Judaica Press, 1986), 62.

29 U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis II* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1964), 321. See also J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Studies in the New Testament V* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 208–10.

30 Additional references to Abraham's apologetic activities in the Targums include *Tg. Neof.* Gen 21:33, “And Abraham planted an orchard in Beersheba and within it gave food to the passersby. And it came about that while eating and drinking they would seek to give him the price of what they had eaten and drunk and he would say to them: ‘You are eating from him who said and the world was.’ And they would not move from there until he would convert them, and would teach them to give praise to the Lord of the world. And he worshiped and prayed in the name of the Memra of the Lord, God of the world” (Martin McNamara, *Targum Neofiti I: Genesis: Translated, with Apparatus and Notes* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992], 115–16); *Tg. Ps.-J* Gen 21:33, “(Abraham) planted an orchard at ‘The Well-of-the-Seven-Ewe-Lambs,’ and in it he prepared food and drink for those who went and came. And he used to proclaim to them there, ‘Give thanks, and believe in the name of the Memra of the Lord, the God of the world’” (Michael Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis: Translated, with Introduction and Notes* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992], 77). Cf. *Tg. Nfmg* and *Frg. Tgs. P, V, N, L* on Gen 21:33. *Frg. Tg. P* uniquely describes Abraham as preaching to the “uncircumcised” (לְעֵרְלִיָּא) until he “made proselytes of them.” See Robert Hayward, “Abraham as Proselytizer at Beer-Sheba in the Targums of the Pentateuch,” *JJS* 49 (1998): 25–37; Mathias Delcor, “La Portée chronologique de quelques interprétations du Targoum Néophyti contenues dans le cycle d’Abraham,” *JSJ* 1 (1970): 105–119; M. Ohana, “Prosélytisme et Targum Palestinien: Données nouvelles pour la datation de Néofiti I,” *Bib* 55 (1974): 317–32. This tradition in *Tg. Onq.* Gen 12:5 (but not 21:33), and the weak exegetical basis for it in Gen 21:33 (with most Targums reading וְיָקְרָא as a *hiph’il* rather than *qal*), suggests to me that the *Tg. Neof./Ps. J.* Gen 21:33 expansion was probably a later development based on the exegetically defensible *Tg. Gen 12:5* tradition, a view defended in B. Barry Levy, *Targum Neophyti I: A Textual Study I* (New York: University Press of America, 1986), 161. The expansion of Gen 21:33 also appears in later non-Targumic texts. E.g. *b. Sotah* 10b discusses Gen 21:33 in the context of Abraham's *modus operandi* for active apologetic work, “‘And he planted a tamarisk tree in Beer Sheba’ (Gen. 21:33): Said R. Simeon b. Laqish, ‘This teaches that he prepared an orchard and planted in it every sort of desirable tree.’ R. Judah and R. Nehemiah – One said, ‘It was an orchard.’ The other said, ‘It was an inn.’ . . . ‘And he called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God’ (Gen. 21:33): Said R. Simeon b. Laqish, ‘Do not read, “He called,” [10B] but rather, “He caused [another] to call.” This teaches that Abraham, our father, put the name of the Holy One, blessed be he, into the mouth of everyone who passed by. How so? After they had eaten and drunk, they arose to say a blessing [to Abraham, by way of thanking him]. He said to them, “Now did you eat what was mine? You ate what belongs to the God of the world.” They gave thanks and blessed him who spoke and brought the world into being” (Jacob Neusner, *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation XVII* [Chico: Scholars, 1984], 80–81). Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 54:6; *Pirqe R. El.* 25; *Abot R. Nat.* 7.

31 Bernard Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 63. Cf. “and the persons (lit., souls) which they had subjected to the discipline of the Torah in Haran” (Moses Aberbach and Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: A Critical Analysis Together with an English Translation of the Text* [New York: Ktav, 1982], 78); Alexander Sperber, ed., *The Bible in Aramaic Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts I* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 17.

32 McNamara, *Targum Neofiti I: Genesis*, 86; Alejandro D. Macho, *Neophyti I: Targum Palestinense MS de la Biblioteca Vaticana I* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1968), 63. See also Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Neofiti I: An Exegetical Commentary to Genesis*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman (New York: Sepher-Hermon, 2000), 128.

33 Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 52; M. Ginsburger, *Pseudo-Jonathan: Thargum Jonathan ben Usiël zum Pentateuch* (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1903), 20.

Frg. Tg. P And the persons that they had proselytized (וּיֵת נַפְשָׁא דְגִירִין) (ואת הנפש : וית נפשא דגירין).<sup>34</sup>

Frg. Tg. V And the persons whom they had proselytized (וּיֵת נַפְשָׁתָא דְגִירִין) (ואת הנפש : וית נפשתא דגירין).<sup>35</sup>

Among the Tannaitic Midrashim, *Sifré* to Deuteronomy (early third century CE) depicts Abraham as an active apologist of God:

“The soul that they had made in Haran” (Gen. 12:5). Now is it not the case that if everyone in the world got together to create a single gnat and to bring into it the breath of life, they could never do so? But the sense is that our father, Abraham, made converts and brought them under the wings of God’s presence. (*Sifré* to Deut 32:2)<sup>36</sup>

Even if one dates Matthew’s Gospel before 70 CE, Matthew lived at a time when the tradition of Abraham the proselytizer was extant. In the *Book of Jubilees* (c. 160–150 BCE), Abraham tells his father and brothers, “Do not worship them [idols]. Worship the God of heaven” (*Jub.* 12:3–4).<sup>37</sup> In his rewritten version of Genesis 12:10–20 (c. 93–94 CE), Josephus describes Abraham as an apologist of God par excellence who sought to convert the Egyptians to monotheism through dialogue and persuasion:

34 Michael L. Klein, *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch: According to the Extant Sources* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 1:49; 2:11.

35 Klein, *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch*, 1:132; 2:96.

36 Jacob Neusner, *The Components of the Rabbinic Documents: From the Whole to the Parts. VII. Sifré to Deuteronomy* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1997), 57. On the context of *Sifré* to Deut 32:2, Goodman comments that the “latter phrase [wings of God’s presence] possessed a semi-technical meaning, derived from its use in Ruth 2:12, of converting someone to Judaism. In this passage in *Sifré* the implications of the actions of Israel’s ancestors for contemporary Jews was made explicit. The words of Deut. 6:5 (‘you shall love the Lord your God’) were interpreted by a shift of vowels to mean not ‘you should love’ but ‘you should make the Lord your God be loved [by humanity]’; the reason given for this injunction was that this is what Abraham and Sarah did when they made proselytes (*megayaram*) in Haran. Since what they did was praiseworthy, all Jews should try to follow suit” (Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994], 145). See also Gary Porton, *The Stranger Within Your Gates: Converts and Conversion in Rabbinic Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 262, n. 142. *Sifré* to Deut 32:2 is revised and expanded in later Rabbinic literature. *Gen. Rab.* 39.14, for example, attributes the discussion to R. Eleazar and R. Yose b. Zimra, “‘And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions which they had gathered, and the soul that they had made. . . .’ (Gen. 12:5); R. Eleazar in the name of R. Yosé b. Zimra: ‘If all of the nations of the world should come together to try to create a single mosquito, they could not put a soul into it, and yet you say, “And the soul that they had made”? [they could not have created souls.] But this refers to proselytes.’ Then why should not the text say, “The proselytes whom they had converted.” Why stress, “whom they had made”? This serves to teach you that whoever brings a gentile close [to the worship of the true God] is as if he had created him anew. And why not say, “That he had made”? Why, “That they had made”? Said R. Huniah, “Abraham converted the men and Sarah the women” (Jacob Neusner, *The Components of the Rabbinic Documents: From the Whole to the Parts. IX Genesis Rabbah* [Atlanta: Scholars, 1997], 145). Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 84.4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 43.6; *Abot R. Nat.* 12. For a survey of Abraham’s apologetic activities according to the rabbinic sources, see Moshe Lavee, “Converting Missionary Images,” in *The Rabbinic Conversion of Judaism: The Unique Perspective of the Bavli on Conversion and the Construction of Jewish Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 102–16; Moshe Lavee, “Converting the Missionary Image of Abraham: Rabbinic Traditions Migrating from the Land of Israel to Babylon,” in *Abraham, the Nations and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham*, ed. Martin Goodman, G. H. van Kooten and J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 203–22; Louis H. Feldman, “Conversion to Judaism in Classical Antiquity,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 74 (2003): 115–56; Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire, AD 135–425*, trans. H. McKeating (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), 271–305; Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 288–415; Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Was Judaism in Antiquity a Missionary Religion?” in *Jewish Assimilation, Acculturation and Accommodation: Past Traditions, Current Issues and Future Prospects*, ed. Menachem Mor (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992), 14–23; Martin Goodman, “Proselytizing in Rabbinic Judaism,” *JJS* 40 (1989): 175–85; Bruce E. Schein, “Our Father Abraham” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1973), 40–51; William G. Braude, *Jewish Proselytizing in the First Five Centuries of the Common Era: The Age of the Tannaim and Amoraim* (Providence: Brown University, 1950), 74–9; Bernard Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1939), 175–77.

37 “In 12:1ff. he tries to convert Terah” (W. L. Knox, “Abraham and the Quest for God,” *HTR* 28:1 [1935]: 57). Abraham’s statement (*Jub.* 12:3–4) is an act of proselytizing by Goodman’s minimalist definition (*Mission and Conversion*, 3–6). Cf. Jacques T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, *Abraham in the Book of Jubilees: The Rewriting of Genesis 11:26–25:10 in the Book of Jubilees 11:14–23:8* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 30–31; Nancy Calvert-Koyzis, *Paul, Monotheism and the People of God: The Significance of Abraham Traditions for Early Judaism and Christianity* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 10–11.

Some time later, Canaan being in the grip of a famine, Abraham, hearing of the prosperity of the Egyptians, was of a mind to visit them, alike to profit by their abundance and to hear what their priests said about the gods; intending, if he found their doctrine more excellent than his own, to conform to it, or else to convert them to a better mind should his own beliefs prove superior. . . . Abraham conferred with each party and, exposing the arguments which they adduced in favour of their particular views, demonstrated that they were idle and contained nothing true. (Josephus, *Ant.* 1.161, 166 LCL)

Josephus implies that Abraham won the disputation and converted his hearers' religious convictions through powerful and compelling arguments.<sup>38</sup> Abraham's apologetic activity comes as no surprise to the reader, for only six verses earlier Josephus comments that Abraham "began to have more lofty conceptions of virtue than the rest of mankind, and determined to reform and change the ideas universally current concerning God. He was thus the first boldly to declare that God, the creator of the universe, is one" (*Ant.* 1.155 lcl). The thematic link between the two passages is emphasized by Josephus' description of Abraham as exceptionally persuasive (*Ant.* 1.154, 167),<sup>39</sup> a theme that Philo develops (*Virt.* 217–219).<sup>40</sup>

The sources we have surveyed span from the mid-second century BCE to the third century CE. They are well distributed and reflect a variety of languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic) and genres (Rewritten Scripture, Targum, Tannaitic Midrash). Moreover, the

38 "... become their disciple if they were found to be better . . . or convert them to better mind if his thoughts should be better" (*Ant.* 1.161). From the events described in *Ant.* 1.166–167, it seems that the latter [conversion] is precisely what happened; after all, Abraham convinced the Egyptians through rational argument that their ideas 'lacked substance and contained nothing true.' Yet, we find no explicit statement about the issue of monotheism—let alone conversion. . . . It seems probable that Josephus here (as elsewhere in the *Antiquities*) refrains from making any explicit statement about proselytism or conversion, due to his sensitivity to 'pagan' critiques of the purported Jewish zeal for proselytizing, particularly in the wake of the expulsion of Jews from Rome in 139 BCE and possibly 19 CE. Nevertheless, the theme lies implicit in the narrative progression of *Ant.* 1.154–168, as well as in the tacit contrast between the Chaldean and Egyptian reactions to Abraham's new religious ideas. Furthermore, the nature and scope of philosophy in Josephus' time may not support a strict division between the theological/philosophical ideas that he attributes to Abraham and the 'scientific' ones. Indeed, when Josephus explicitly attributes to Abraham the transmission of astronomical/astrological and mathematical knowledge to the Egyptians, the reader already knows that Abraham's understanding of the celestial cycles is unique; it has been shaped by an innovative view of the relationship between the cosmos and the divine, based on his recognition of a single Creator, from whom the celestial bodies gain the only measure of order and power that they possess. Even in the most positive treatment of astronomy/astrology in *Antiquities*' account of Abraham (i.e., *Ant.* 1.167–168), Josephus may thus subordinate the patriarch's involvement with this science to the monotheism discovered by him and faithfully cultivated by the nation that came forth from him" (Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Abraham as Chaldean Scientist and Father of the Jews: Josephus, *Ant.* 1.154–168, and the Greco-Roman Discourse about Astronomy/Astrology," *JSJ* 35:2 [2004]: 132, 135). Rokéah concurs, "Reading Josephus's description carefully shows that he actually hinted at Abraham's theological-missionary work. Abraham, he said, argued with the Egyptian priests, and succeeded in proving the hollowness and untruthfulness of their beliefs, that is, in persuading them about the superiority of monotheistic Judaism" (David Rokéah, "Ancient Jewish Proselytism in Theory and in Practice," *TZ* 52 [1996]: 214). Cf. Louis H. Feldman, trans., *Flavius Josephus, Translation and Commentary: Judean Antiquities* 3, ed. Steve Mason (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 63–64; Louis C. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 157–60; Louis C. Feldman, "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus," *TAPA* 99 (1968): 145; Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Respect for Judaism by Gentiles According to Josephus," *HTR* 80:4 (1987): 428–29; Calvert Koyzis, *Paul, Monotheism and the People of God*, 64. Contra Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, 89; Martin Goodman, "Jewish proselytizing in the first century," in *The Jews Among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire*, ed. Judith Lieu, John North and Tessa Rajak (London: Routledge, 1994), 75.

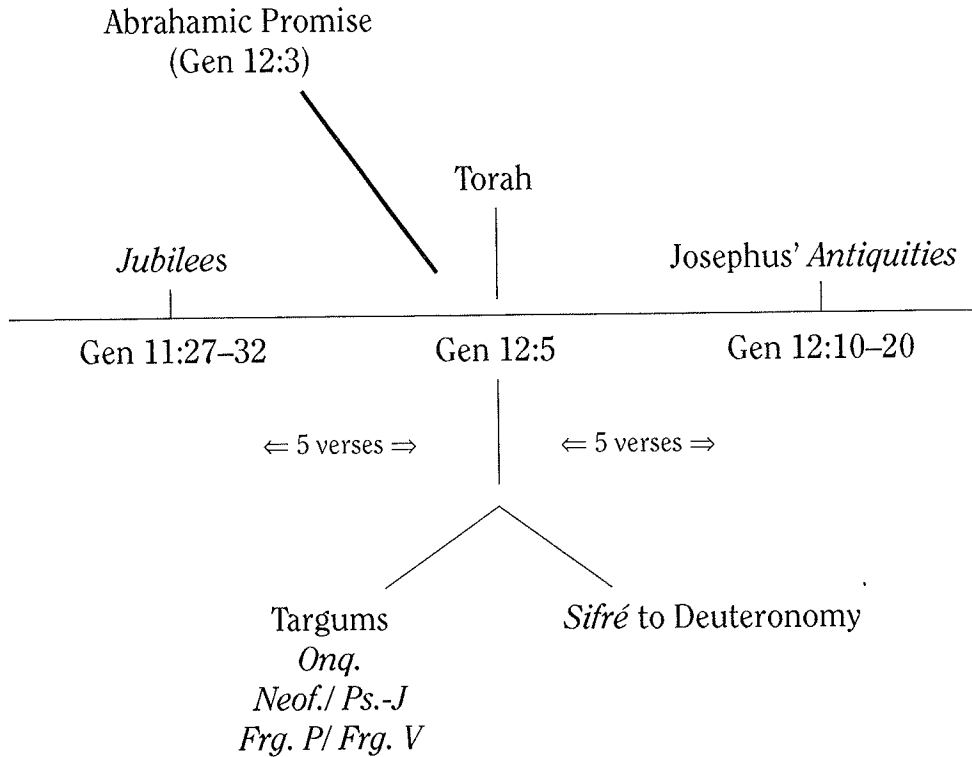
39 Cf. the NT use of *πειθώ* with reference to bearing witness (2 Cor 5:11; Acts 18:4; 26:28; 28:23).

40 Philo describes Abraham as manifesting a Spirit-empowered persuasiveness: "For the divine spirit which was breathed upon him [Abraham] from on high made its lodging in his soul, and invested his body with singular beauty, his voice with persuasiveness (*πειθώ*), and his hearers with understanding. . . . He [Abraham] is the standard of nobility for all proselytes" (*Virt.* 217, 219 LCL). Abraham's concern for the salvation of souls is described by Philo in *QG* 4.26, "For he [Abraham] entreats Him not to destroy the righteous together with the impious, nor thought with thought. But it seems to me that the uncorrupted and righteous character, in which there is no admixture of unrighteousness, is removed from the argument that is now put before us. For it is to be firmly believed that such a person is worthy of salvation and will by all means be saved. But he [Abraham] trembles and shudders for the man who is mixed and jumbled up and, as it were, (both) righteous and unrighteous. For he hopes that such a person, having a revived spark of brightness and a gleam of the fire of righteousness, can be converted to spiritual health" (LCL). Cf. Philo, *Praem.* 166; *T. Ab. RecLng.* 14.1–14; 18.1–11.



sources that postdate Philo almost certainly contain haggadic material from Philo's time. The period of transmission is only a matter of decades in the case of Josephus. Finally, all of the texts that depict Abraham as an apologist of God, including the rewritten accounts of Abraham's life,<sup>41</sup> either focus on Genesis 12:5 (only two verses away from the Abrahamic promise in 12:3) or cluster around it.<sup>42</sup>

### *Abraham the Proselytizer in Hellenistic-Roman Era Literature*



Taken together, the cumulative evidence indicates that the tradition of Abraham the proselytizer was extant, if not widely known, in the first century CE.

As a Second Temple Jew, Matthew was likely familiar with the *p'shat* reading of Genesis 12:5 (ואת הנפש אשר עשו בהרן) and the legends surrounding it. Matthew 23:15 indicates his familiarity with the idiomatic use of ποιέω ("to make") in relation to converts—"For you cross sea and land to *make* (ποιήσαι) a single convert"<sup>43</sup>—suggesting

<sup>41</sup> *Jub.* 12:1–8; *Ant.* 1.161–168.

<sup>42</sup> Josephus' reference to "those who had increased in numbers from him [Abraham]" (οἱ ἀπ' ἐκείνου πληθύνσαντες) (*Ant.* 1.160) is a likely allusion to ואת הנפש אשר עשו בהרן in Gen 12:5. See Reed, "Abraham as Chaldean Scientist and Father of the Jews," 130 n. 24.

<sup>43</sup> The idiom continued into the Rabbinic period, "A convert says *mil'abad yehuda'i*, 'I wish to be made a Jew,' in Tanhuma Huqat (midpas) 6 (p. 79b), *na'aseiti Yisrael*, 'I was made an Israelite,' in Tanhuma Shoftim (midpas) 10 (p. 114a); a gentile requesting conversion says *ya'asuni gigoret*, 'let them make me a convert' (many testimonia have *ya'asuni ivriyah*, 'let them make me a Hebrew'), in B. Menahot 44a (see below note 77); the Roman governor Turnus Rufus asks his father through necromancy, *abba, min demayyat, itabadt yehudi*, 'Father, did you become a Jew [lit., were you made a Jew] after your death?' in Genesis Rabbah II.5 (94T-A)" (Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999], 160 n. 70). The Gospel of Philip (c. 180–250) begins with the statement, "A Hebrew makes another Hebrew, and such a person is called *proselyte*" (Wesley Isenberg, trans., *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, ed. Bentley Layton [Leiden: Brill, 1989], 1.191). Cf. James Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), 141.

that he would have recognized “souls they *made*” as a rendering of Genesis 12:5. In sum, a compelling case can be made that Matthew and his community were familiar with the tradition of Abraham the proselytizer and that Matthew portrays the son of Abraham in chapter 28 in light of this tradition.

## Conclusion

Yeshua reveals himself as the son of Abraham in the final chapter of the first Gospel when he directs the eleven, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). Here Yeshua initiates the Abrahamic promise (“in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” [Gen 12:3]) by instructing his disciples to raise up gentile children for Abraham (cf. Matt 3:9; 8:10–12). Like Paul, Matthew draws attention to the prophetic fulfillment of God’s pledge to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 by using the words πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (“all nations”), an allusion to the recapitulation of the promise in LXX Gen 18:18, 22:18 and 26:4 (cf. Gal 3:8, 14). Matthew 28:19 also evokes the tradition of Abraham the proselytizer who calls polytheistic gentiles to abandon their idols and worship the one true God.

When Yeshua is viewed as the son of Abraham who brings salvation to the gentiles in fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise, the relationship between the son of David and the son of Abraham in Matthew 1:1 becomes apparent. These two Messianic identities point to the particular and universal aspects of Yeshua’s ministry respectively and give opening vision to how these ministries appear chronologically and concomitantly in the narrative. Matthias Konradt explains:

The inverted order of υἱὸς Δαυὶδ and υἱὸς Ἀβραάμ in Matt 1.1 makes sense. The (post-)Easter extension of the ministry of salvation to the Gentile world is preceded by the phase of Jesus’ earthly ministry in which he was sent only to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Thus, to a certain extent, Matt 1.1 signals the “chronology” of these two phases. If Matthew makes a reference to the universality of salvation with the words υἱὸς Ἀβραάμ, this need not be set as an exclusive alternative against Abraham’s significance as *Israel’s* patriarch. Rather, the two aspects can be positively interconnected: precisely as the patriarch of Israel, Abraham is at the same time the bearer of the promise for the nations.<sup>44</sup>

The son of Abraham motif presumably helped Matthew’s community gain vision for the gentile mission. By depicting Yeshua as the son of Abraham at the beginning and end of the narrative, and as a proselytizer of the gentile world like *’Avraham ’Avinu*, Matthew was able to communicate to his fellow Jews that the gentile mission—and Paul’s pioneering of it that elicited more than a little concern in the early Messianic movement and beyond<sup>45</sup>—was the actualization of the Abrahamic promise. For Messianic Jews today, there is much missiological value in reviving the tradition of Abraham the proselytizer

<sup>44</sup> Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 267–68.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Acts 15:1f.

(a legend that midrashic compilations incorporated as late as the tenth century)<sup>46</sup> and in seeing Yeshua as embodying this tradition in Matthew 28:19.<sup>47</sup>

The son of Abraham theme also makes an important contribution to the modern Christian. Many gentile believers today interpret the great commission as reflective of Christianity's universal mission that transcended the particularistic concerns of Judaism.<sup>48</sup> However, when we see Yeshua as the son of Abraham in the opening and closing chapters of Matthew, and understand Yeshua's call to go to "all nations" as an implementation of the Abrahamic promise, we realize that the universal dimension of Christianity is not a departure from Judaism but the fulfillment of Israel's global vision, even as Abraham's name in Hebrew means "father of many nations" (Gen 17:5).<sup>49</sup> The son of Abraham in Matthew's Gospel is thus a powerful reminder to gentile believers that they are children of Abraham—without displacing the children of Israel—and share in a rich heritage from the Lord as members of Abraham's family.

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46 Lavee, "Converting Missionary Images," 103; Lavee, "Converting the Missionary Image of Abraham," 208–209.

47 Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) for 23 years, encouraged Reform Jews to look to Abraham as a model for Jewish proselytizing, "The notion that Judaism is not a propagating faith is wide of the truth. That may have been true for the last four centuries, but it is not true for the four thousand years before that. Abraham was a convert and our tradition lauds his missionary zeal. Isaiah enjoined us to be a 'light unto the nations' and insisted that God's house be a 'house of prayer for all peoples'" (Alexander M. Schindler, "Presidential Address" [UAHC Board of Trustees, December 2, 1978], in *Readings on Conversion to Judaism*, ed. Lawrence J. Epstein [Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1995], 76). Similarly, the Chabad training manual for outreach opens with a reminder that the readers are walking in the footsteps of Abraham, "By bringing these ideals to fruition, we are guaranteed to be in the forefront of the march, alongside our 'Nefashos Asher Osu B'Charan' with the Rebbe, shlita, B'roshainu, to Artzainu Hakdosha, speedily in our days, Amen" (Boruch Shlomo Cunin, "Foreword," in *Shlichus: Meeting the Outreach Challenge, A Resource Handbook for Shluchim* [Brooklyn: Nshei Chabad, 1991], xi).

48 See Anders Runesson, "Aspects of Matthean Universalism: Ethnic Identity as a Theological Tool in the First Gospel," in *Matthew within Judaism: Israel and the Nations in the First Gospel*, ed. Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2020), 103–34; Jon D. Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 35.

49 Michael Wyschogrod, "The Dialogue with Christianity and My Self-Understanding as a Jew," in *Abraham's Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. R. Kendall Soulen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 236; Jacob Neusner, *Recovering Judaism: The Universal Dimension of Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), ix–x, 1, 4–5, 7; Terence L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 469–513.

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(Yisrael ben Shmuel) on the Occasion of Fifty Years of Service***