



“Abraham is about as radical and visionary a person as we’ve ever had. He lived in a world where people saw the forces of nature as the highest value. The sun, the moon, the stars, trees, various statues – they worshipped these things – Abraham said, ‘none of the above.’ There is a story in both the Midrash in Judaism and in the Koran in Islam about Abraham breaking the idols in his father’s idol factory. He puts his life on the line by doing that and in both traditions is miraculously saved from the fiery furnace that King Nimrod throws him into. Here is a man who has a totally different conceptual take on the true focus for human worship – one that is unified, invisible, and ultimately ethical. And that view ultimately prevails, and we are still living with that view.”

Steve Reich

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| <b>5</b>  | Arts & Faith St. Louis Welcome and Committee |
| <b>6</b>  | About <i>The Cave</i> and The Cave Project   |
| <b>8</b>  | Reflections on <i>The Cave</i>               |
| <b>10</b> | Community Engagement Committee               |
| <b>11</b> | The Cave Project Events                      |
| <b>12</b> | Sponsors, Appreciation & Recognition         |
| <b>14</b> | Alarm Will Sound                             |
| <b>16</b> | About Korot and Reich                        |
| <b>18</b> | Korot and Reich on <i>The Cave</i>           |
| <b>23</b> | <i>The Cave</i> : Synopsis                   |
| <b>24</b> | About the Interviewees in <i>The Cave</i>    |
| <b>26</b> | Libretto                                     |
| <b>39</b> | Save the Date                                |



# THE CAVE

BERYL KOROT | STEVE REICH  
VIDEO | MUSIC

Performed by Alarm Will Sound

Conductor Alan Pierson | Managing Director Gavin Chuck

Presented by Arts & Faith St. Louis

## Act 1

West Jerusalem/Hebron  
May/June 1989  
55 minutes

## Short pause

## Act 2

East Jerusalem/Hebron  
June 1989 and June 1991  
40 minutes

## Intermission

## Act 3

New York/Austin  
April/May 1992  
32 minutes

**Synopsis:** page 23 **Libretto:** page 26

**Saturday, March 11, 2017 at 8 PM**

**Sunday, March 12, 2017 at 2 PM**

John Burroughs School | 755 South Price Road | St. Louis, MO 63124

These performances of *The Cave* are given by arrangement with Hendon Music, Inc., a Boosey & Hawkes company, publisher and copyright owner.

WELCOME

from Arts & Faith St. Louis

In 2011, an interfaith group of community leaders, convened by the Michael and Barbara Newmark Institute for Human Relations at the Jewish Community Relations Council and by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, responded to the St. Louis production of the opera *The Death of Klinghoffer* by creating programming for building understanding and bridging divides. In September of that year, these successful efforts were the inspiration for the creation, with the collaboration of Interfaith Partnership and The Sheldon Concert Hall, of an interfaith concert marking the 10th anniversary of 9/11.

The interfaith commemoration in music has become an annual event. It is presented to capacity audiences each year and provides an opportunity for reflection, unity, and peace and the transformational power of a shared musical experience. The 9/11 Interfaith Concert brings together the beautiful diversity of our community, which is found both on the stage and in the audience. **I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to join us on September 10, 2017 at The Sheldon Concert Hall at 5:30 PM for the seventh annual Arts and Faith Concert.**

More than ever there is a need for bridging divides within our St. Louis community. Therefore, Arts & Faith St. Louis was created in 2012. The mission of Arts and Faith St. Louis is to build a harmonious St. Louis. By presenting the annual interfaith concert and by establishing an ongoing, intentional relationship between the arts and faith communities, this effort has created a new tradition of arts programming in St. Louis that promotes an appreciation of the diversity of our community. We are proud to have The Cave Project as part of the Community Programming Initiative of Arts & Faith St. Louis.

Thank you for joining us today.

**Carolyn W. Losos** | Chair, Arts & Faith St. Louis

## Arts & Faith St. Louis Planning Committee

Carolyn Losos Chair

Batya Abramson-Goldstein Arts & Faith St. Louis

Rev. Karen Anderson Interfaith Partnership

Rev. Christopher Collins, SJ Saint Louis University

Gretta Forrester Arts & Faith St. Louis

Ghazala Hayat, MD Islamic Foundation of Greater St. Louis

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Rev. Dr. David Mehl Interfaith Partnership

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Rev. C. Jessel Strong African Methodist Episcopal Church

When art transmits a message that matters, it has special impact and those messages tend to stick. Through the combination of its compelling new music, extraordinary video and illuminating narratives, *The Cave* is a piece that provides a powerful and possibly transforming experience. The piece focuses the audience on historic roots of Jews, Muslims and Christians through which each hold Abraham to be a shared Patriarch. *The Cave* tells us stories of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Hagar and Ishmael directly from the Torah and Quran. In interviews conducted from 1989-92 we hear the varying impressions of Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims about the importance of these figures to them. They speak as people connected to the land and its history for whom Hebron is significant as the site of the burial place of Abraham in the Cave of the Machpelah. The responses of their American counterparts are quite different. They reflect the great distances in time, place and culture from that same history. Their utterances provide insight into different obstacles we face in the United States in making these common bonds a meaningful source of connection. But one leaves *The Cave* understanding that there is no denying our familial intertwining.

*The Cave* does not threaten with its message but rather transports us through music and images to a rare place where people of all faiths can experience, together, the different narratives and take away their own lessons. How many of us really understood this connection? What does it mean that we have a common “father”? Can this simple awareness help us view each other more positively? What more do we want to ask and learn from one another? What barriers can we take down?

In 1993 I saw *The Cave* in a museum installation. It was an extraordinary artistic experience which left me with a profoundly different understanding of the connections of Jews, Muslims and Christians. It is a message that has stuck. I left the museum with the hope of bringing this piece to St. Louis and having groups, interfaith and otherwise, experience *The Cave* together, to discuss the impact of its messages and to see how it might help us build bridges in this community. Twenty-four years later The Cave Project is happening. It is striking that the messages of *The Cave*, relevant and important in 1993, are profound today. The lessons to be learned are essential for America and the world in 2017.

The Cave Project is happening now because two wonderful organizations were brought together. Arts & Faith St. Louis was established in 2012 with its mission to help build a more harmonious St. Louis using the unique power of the arts.

Its purpose of inspiring thoughtful discussion among diverse audiences, bringing people together, and bridging divides through shared experiences made *The Cave* a perfect piece for Arts & Faith. About the same time, Alarm Will Sound, one of this country’s premiere new music ensembles, began working “in residence” in St. Louis. Alarm Will Sound had performed parts of *The Cave* in the past. In fact, Steve Reich was the inspiration for the formation of AWS and is a current board member. With these two organizations joined in the effort, The Cave Project could become a reality.

Almost one year ago a Community Engagement Committee was convened by Arts & Faith St. Louis. A broad representation of faith, organization and community leaders joined university and seminary presidents and other committed volunteers who saw the opportunities that *The Cave* offered. Through the dedication and commitment of this committee, hundreds of St. Louisans will share the experience of *The Cave* and many more will participate in programming produced for The Cave Project. These programs will encourage further dialogue and sharing. It is our goal that St. Louisans in great numbers will be enlightened by this work and consider, perhaps for the first time, the meaning of shared roots and familial bonds. Through our work we seek to encourage greater understanding of one another, to promote mutually supportive communities and fight the destructive forces of fear and discrimination.

A special thanks to John Burroughs School for its collaboration in The Cave Project. As a school community JBS has a long history of community involvement and committed years ago to engage in important diversity initiatives that shape the school’s culture today. We are so fortunate to have partnered with JBS and to be able to present *The Cave* in wonderful Haertter Hall, and to engage its students in various aspects of this project.

We also want to thank the many donors who made this event possible. The response of these supporters was deeply gratifying and validating. They too recognized the potential of The Cave Project and the need for all of us to work together to build a better St. Louis.

On behalf of all those involved in this production, we hope you enjoy *The Cave*. We hope you will be inspired to join us at our future programming events (see page 39 and TheCaveProject.org), and to create your own discussions.

**Mont Levy** | Chair, The Cave Project

Abraham, as his name suggests, was the “Father of a Multitude.” His patrimony embraces Christians, Jews and Muslims. But, the relations between the offspring of our patriarch are, too often, challenging.

When I learned of *The Cave*, set in the burial place of Abraham, I thought about the experiences of clergy persons who often see families “come together” in a sense of harmony at the time of the burial of a parent. How encouraging it has been to see Christian, Jewish and Muslim siblings “come together,” as a family in planning this event!

How promising it is that we gather, not to mourn our patriarch, but to honor him and his legacy!

**Rabbi Howard Kaplansky** | Founding Chair, Michael and Barbara Newmark Institute for Human Relations/JCRC

Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim Peace be upon him) is the father of three monotheistic faiths. Muslims bless Prophet Abraham and his descendants during five daily prayers. The Muslim descendants of Prophet Ismail, and Jewish and Christian descendants of Prophet Isaac consider The Cave of the Patriarchs the tomb of their revered prophets. The place is sacred to all three Abrahamic faiths. Over centuries countless people have prayed and asked for blessings for the Father of monotheistic religion.

With this strong bond of “family” the three faiths usually find a common ground for dialogue and make bridges. *The Cave* represents how Jewish, Christians and Muslims view the Patriarch; ordinary people, scholars and faith leaders depict the commonality. Even while tracing their roots to two different sons, the faithful shed light to a common source. When there are so many forces active in the world to divide people along religious, ethnic and racial lines, *The Cave* shows the common thread and provides opportunities for future dialogue and collaboration.

**Ghazala Hayat, MD** | Chair, Public Relations Committee, Islamic Foundation of Greater St. Louis

Stories of origin abound. Where did it all begin? Where did we come from? Who are our ancestors? Time and again, the answer comes in the form of a story. America’s beginning has the stories of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. The story of the Civil Rights Movement includes Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. Stories answer our questions of origin. Such is the story of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar. These ancestral stories are not just told; they are recorded in the Jewish Torah, Christian Bible and Muslim Quran. They are in these holy books because all three religions look to Abraham as an ancestor of origin.

Abraham’s story is a family story and although ancient, seems modern in some ways. Modern in the sense that the families are not a mother, father and their children – there are half-brothers and sisters, a shared father, and a different mother. The story points not only to a common ancestor therefore, but also to diverging histories. Family reunions for modern families are complicated affairs; they require sensitivity and risk strained feelings. The same is true for these great religious families of Abraham. Cooperation among these three complex religious families requires sensitivity and may strain feelings.

In *The Cave*, we experience some of the strained feelings and encounter the complexity of these religious communities. We also start to realize how bound together these communities are and the origins and histories they share. Ignoring each other is not prudent or even possible. Cooperating, that is, really living and working together is what is called for. I, for one, think such cooperation is the way of peace and is furthered by retelling our stories of origin.

**Dr. David Greenhaw** | President, Eden Theological Seminary

# THE CAVE PROJECT

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

My warm appreciation is extended to the members of the Community Engagement Committee. Your passion for this project, your creativity and your hard work have made possible broad outreach to the community and a range of compelling programming as listed below. Thanks also to the teen participants in *An Interfaith Journey* inspired by The Cave Project. A video based on this experience will premiere at the Arts & Faith St. Louis 9/11 Concert.

**Batya Abramson-Goldstein** | Chair, The Cave Project: Community Engagement Committee

## Community Engagement Committee

Batya Abramson-Goldstein, Chair

Carolyn Losos Arts & Faith St. Louis, Chair  
Bahar Bastani, MD Shia Islamic Education Center  
Pastor Sheila Bouie-Sledge Salem United Methodist Church  
Ellen Bremner John Burroughs School  
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Dr. David Greenhaw Eden Theological Seminary  
Ghazala Hayat, MD Islamic Foundation of Greater St. Louis  
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Dr. Michael Pressimone Fontbonne University  
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Joan Silber AJC  
Imam Eldin Susa St. Louis Islamic Center Nur

The Cave Project

EVENTS

## Community Programming Events for The Cave Project

Please join the upcoming conversations about the roots that bind us together.

### ***The Cave: Common Ground***

Thursday, April 6, 2017 at 7:00 PM  
St. Louis County Library Headquarters  
1640 S. Lindbergh Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63131

The image of a cave is represented in many literary works, and is central to *The Cave*, a multimedia opera about the burial place of Abraham. Dr. David Greenhaw, President of Eden Theological Seminary, explores the significance of Abraham's cave in Hebron to the shared histories of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

### **The Poet Rumi: Love is the Bridge**

Tuesday, May 16, 2017 at 7:00 PM  
Ladue Chapel Presbyterian Church (USA)  
9450 Clayton Road, St. Louis, MO 63124

The message of the oneness of humanity expressed by Jalaluddin Rumi a 13th-century Persian poet, jurist, Islamic scholar, theologian, and mystic has had ongoing, significant impact on the Christian and Jewish traditions. He is regarded as the most popular poet in the United States. The program will include readings, music of the Persian tradition, and discussion.

### **Panel Discussion: Judaism, Christianity, Islam – What Do They Have in Common?**

Sunday, June 11, 2017 at 2:00 PM  
St. Louis Islamic Center Nur  
9528 Reavis Barracks Road, St. Louis, MO 63123

## Past Events

### **Discussion of The Cave Project**

February 19, 2017 at Salem United Methodist Church

### **Interfaith Discussion: Yours, Mine and Ours: Abraham's Modern Family**

February 23, 2017 at Eden Theological Seminary  
Sponsored by Interfaith Partnership

### **Panel Presentations: Understanding the Music and Text of *The Cave***

February 28, 2017 at The Sheldon Concert Hall  
March 5, 2017 at the Islamic Foundation of Greater St. Louis

### **Panel Discussion: Who is This Abraham?**

March 2, 2017 at Fontbonne University Library



## Sponsors, Appreciation & Recognition

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### Benefactors

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
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### Special Recognition

John Burroughs School  
 Mont Levy  
 The Sinquefeld Charitable Foundation

### Special Thanks

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List complete as of February 27, 2017

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### In-Kind Donors

Eden Theological Seminary  
 Opera Theatre of Saint Louis  
 Switch  
 The Sheldon Concert Hall and Art Galleries  
 Our Volunteers

### Collaboration with John Burroughs School

John Burroughs School is committed to providing student and adult programming that cultivates diversity, inclusivity, cultural competency, equity and justice. Such programming includes musical and theatrical performances that are vital to our community – not just for entertainment, but also as a communal event in which performers and audience members consider new ideas, experience the lives and cultures of others, and engage in important and often difficult conversations. Hosting Alarm Will Sound’s production of *The Cave* represents a perfect confluence of these commitments.

Through music and visual art, *The Cave* presents an opportunity for audiences to reflect on ancestral connections as described by Israeli Jews, West Bank Muslims, and their American counterparts. Simultaneously, this beautiful opera offers a platform for engaging in deeper discussions regarding the shared histories of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

Beyond the performance and thanks to the vision and efforts of Arts & Faith St. Louis, audience members will be invited to participate in several opportunities for meaningful conversations with faith leaders, various panelists, and experiences designed for teens. We are excited to have Alarm Will Sound at Burroughs and hope you will join Arts & Faith St. Louis in bringing religious communities in our region together.

**Andy Abbott** | Head of School



Alarm Will Sound is a 20-member band committed to innovative performances and recordings of today’s music. They have established a reputation for performing demanding music with energetic skill. *The New York Times* says that Alarm Will Sound is “one of the most vital and original ensembles on the American music scene.”

The versatility of Alarm Will Sound allows it to take on music from a wide variety of styles. Its repertoire ranges from European to American works, from the arch-modernist to the pop-influenced. Alarm Will Sound has been associated since its inception with composers at the forefront of contemporary music. The group itself includes many composer-performers, which allows for an unusual degree of insight into the creation and performance of new work.

Alarm Will Sound is the resident ensemble at the Mizzou International Composers Festival. Held each July at the University of Missouri in Columbia, the festival features eight world premieres by emerging composers.

In 2013-14, Alarm Will Sound served as artists-in-residence at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Alarm Will Sound may be heard on nine recordings, including our most recent, *Modernists*, released by Cantaloupe in May 2016, and the premiere recording of Steve Reich’s *Radio Rewrite*. Our genre-bending, critically acclaimed *Acoustica* features live-performance arrangements of music by electronica guru Aphex Twin.

For more information and to join the mailing list, visit Alarm Will Sound’s website at [www.alarmwillsound.com](http://www.alarmwillsound.com)

### Alan Pierson, conductor

Alan Pierson has been praised as “a dynamic conductor and musical visionary” by *The New York Times*, “a young conductor of monstrous skill” by *Newsday*, “gifted and electrifying” by *The Boston Globe*, and “one of the most exciting figures in new music today” by *Fanfare*. In addition to his work as artistic director of Alarm Will Sound, he is Principal Conductor of the Dublin-based Crash Ensemble, has served as Artistic Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic, and has guest conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony, the London Sinfonietta, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, the Steve Reich Ensemble, Carnegie Hall’s Ensemble

ACJW, the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, the New World Symphony, and the Silk Road Project, among other ensembles. He is co-director of the Northwestern University Contemporary Music Ensemble, and has been a visiting faculty conductor at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and the Eastman School of Music. Mr. Pierson has collaborated with major composers and performers, including Yo Yo Ma, Steve Reich, Dawn Upshaw, Osvaldo Golijov, John Adams, Augusta Read Thomas, David Lang, Michael Gordon, La Monte Young, and choreographers Christopher Wheeldon, Akram Khan and Elliot Feld. Mr. Pierson received bachelor degrees in physics and music from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a doctorate in conducting from the Eastman School of Music. He has recorded for Nonesuch Records, Cantaloupe Music, Sony Classical, and Sweetspot DVD.

### Members

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Erin Lesser, flute and typing            | Caleb Burhans, violin                         |
| Kristine Poulsen, flute                  | Caitlin Lynch, viola                          |
| Christa Robinson, oboe                   | Stefan Freund, cello                          |
| Andrew Nogal, oboe                       | Elizabeth Bates, soprano and typing           |
| Bill Kalinkos, clarinet                  | Melissa Hughes, alto and typing               |
| Elisabeth Stimpert, clarinets and typing | Michael Harley, tenor and typing              |
| Matt Smallcomb, percussion               | Jeff Gavett, bass                             |
| Luke Rinderknecht, percussion            |   |
| Jeffrey Irving, percussion and typing    | Alan Pierson, Artistic Director and Conductor |
| Ian Sullivan, percussion and typing      | Gavin Chuck, Managing Director                |
| John Orfe, piano                         | Jason Varvaro, Production Manager             |
| Matt Marks, piano and sampler            | Daniel Neumann, Audio and Technical Director  |
| Michael Clayville, sampler and typing    | Peter Ferry, Assistant Production Manager     |
| Courtney Orlando, violin                 |   |

### Acknowledgments

Alarm Will Sound’s performance of *The Cave* is supported, in part, by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional funding provided by Karen and Mont Levy.

Alarm Will Sound’s 2016/17 Season is supported, in part, by the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Amphion Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Robert D. Bielecki Foundation, BMI Foundation, Chestwatyr Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, Sinquefeld Charitable Foundation, and individual donors.



## ABOUT KOROT AND REICH



photo - Alice Arnold

### Beryl Korot

Beryl Korot is a pioneer of video art. Her work has brought the ancient and modern worlds of technology into conversation as she applied specific structures inherent to loom programming to the programming of multiple channels of video. This extended to a body of work on handwoven canvas in an original language based on the grid structure of woven cloth. An early video work, *Text and Commentary* (1977), was acquired recently by MOMA in NYC, and *Dachau 1974* (1974) is in the Kramlich Collection as part of the New Art Trust—shared by SFMOMA, Tate Modern, and MOMA, NYC—and in the Thoma Art Foundation. Her works have been seen at the Whitney Museum (1980, 1993, 2000, 2002); the Kitchen, New York, NY (1975); Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, NY (1977); Documenta 6, Kassel, Germany (1977); The Köln and Düsseldorf Kunstvereins (1989 and 1994); the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, PA (1990); the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (in a mini-retrospective), Ridgefield, CT (2010); bitforms gallery, New York, NY (2012); the Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, England (2013); Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany (2013); Art Basel, Basel, Switzerland (2014), the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (2014); Tate Modern, London, England (2014); the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH (2015); and recently at the new San Francisco MOMA (2016), amongst many others. Two collaborations with Steve Reich brought video installation art into a theatrical context.



photo - Jeffrey Herman

### Steve Reich

Steve Reich has been called “America’s greatest living composer” (*Village Voice*), “the most original musical thinker of our time” (*The New Yorker*), and “among the great composers of the century” (*The New York Times*). His music has influenced composers and mainstream musicians all over the world. *Music for 18 Musicians* and *Different Trains* have earned him two Grammy Awards, and in 2009, his *Double Sextet* won the Pulitzer Prize. Reich’s documentary video opera works—*The Cave* and *Three Tales*, done in collaboration with video artist Beryl Korot—have been performed on four continents. His recent work *Quartet*, for percussionist Colin Currie, sold out two consecutive concerts at Queen Elizabeth Hall in London shortly after tens of thousands at the Glastonbury Festival heard Jonny Greenwood (of Radiohead) perform *Electric Counterpoint* followed by the London Sinfonietta performing his *Music for 18 Musicians*.

In 2012, Reich was awarded the Gold Medal in Music by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He has additionally received the Praemium Imperiale in Tokyo, the Polar Music Prize in Stockholm, the BBVA Award in Madrid, and recently the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale. He has been named Commandeur de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, and has been awarded honorary doctorates by the Royal College of Music in London, the Juilliard School, the Liszt Academy in Budapest, and the New England Conservatory of Music, among others. “There’s just a handful of living composers who can legitimately claim to have altered the direction of musical history and Steve Reich is one of them,” states *The Guardian*.

# KOROT AND REICH ON *THE CAVE*

Interview by Jonathan Cott

## **JC** How did the idea for *The Cave* originate?

**BK** We had a meeting at Ellen's Coffee Shop around the corner, because we'd been talking about collaborating, and we felt we had to be on neutral territory to continue our discussions. Steve came with the story about Abraham as the idol-breaker, the iconoclast. In my reading, I had been struck by the story in the Bible of the three strangers (actually angels) who come to visit Abraham while he recovers from his circumcision, and who foretell the birth of his son Isaac and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (over which he later argues with God). Not knowing who they are, but always showing hospitality towards strangers, we are told he runs to fetch a calf. At this point the text leaves off and the oral tradition kicks in. He chases a calf into a cave and there he sees shadows. He knows intuitively that they are the shadows of Adam and Eve, as he also senses something verdant and lush, and again he intuits: this is the Garden of Eden. At that moment he knows that this is the place where he and his family will be buried, and he takes the calf and returns to feed his guests.

That story was magical to me because that simple act of fetching a calf to perform an act of hospitality for strangers connects Abraham with the prehistorical mother and father of all humanity. And the cave still exists, though underneath a partly Herodian, Byzantine, and mostly Islamic structure today in Hebron. And that was important, that there was actually a place that existed now that was connected to events which took place so long ago, that I could actually travel to with my camera.

**SR** Over a year before the meeting, Beryl and I decided to collaborate based on the true underpinnings of the piece, which had nothing to do with the cave or any particular content. I was coming out of *Different Trains* and Beryl was coming out of *Text and Commentary* and *Dachau*. The true underpinnings were our interest in making a new kind of musical theatre based on videotaped documentary sources. The idea was that you would be able to see and hear people as they spoke on the videotape and simultaneously you would see and hear on-stage musicians doubling them – actually playing their speech melodies as they spoke.

## **JC** And the visual style?

**BK** There are no precedents in video as there are for a composer. It's basically a new medium with a developing vocabulary. But in the early 70s when I made my first multiple-channel installation, *Dachau* (1974), I was quite concerned about precedents, and I looked both to the film medium and to the ancient technology of the loom to determine how to work in multiples. And it is the thoughts I had then which I drew on to create my work in *The Cave*. For one, the work, even though you are viewing multiples, remains fiercely frontal, and is to be read as one. That is my allegiance to film. But to create techniques in this new format to relate a narrative I turned to the ancient programming tool of the loom, and conceived of each channel as representing a thread. I then proceeded to make non-verbal narrative works by carefully timing and juxtaposing inter-related images, and by creating individual rhythms for each channel by alternating image and gray leader pause. Those techniques became the underpinnings for the visualization of Steve's score. He gave me the audio for the talking-heads channel. It was up to me to provide the rest and make it work with the score. I chose five screens because of the variety of possibilities you have for interrelating the different threads, so to speak, and because you can still perceive five as one, thus maintaining a tight visual focus.

## **JC** Why this family? Why Abraham?

**SR** Abraham is about as radical and visionary a person as we've ever had. He lived in a world where people saw the forces of nature as the highest value. The sun, the moon, the stars, trees, various statues – they worshipped these things – Abraham said, "none of the above." There is a story in both the Midrash in Judaism and in the Koran in Islam about Abraham breaking the idols in his father's idol factory. He puts his life on the line by doing that and in both traditions is miraculously saved from the

fiery furnace that King Nimrod throws him into. Here is a man who has a totally different conceptual take on the true focus for human worship – one that is unified, invisible, and ultimately ethical. And that view ultimately prevails, and we are still living with that view.

## **JC** So the iconoclasm works on several levels: one is the story of Abraham, the idea of completely new belief systems, and another is how you deal with traditionally bel canto opera – iconoclastic in terms of how "opera" has been practiced.

**SR** I'm not saying other composers shouldn't write bel canto operas, but I've pursued something that interests me now, here in America in the 1990s, which naturally doesn't sound like something from 18th- or 19th-century Italy or Germany. We are living with musical realities that didn't exist during Mozart's or Wagner's time. The bel canto voice had to be loud enough to be heard over Mozart's orchestra, and later, when Wagner much enlarged the brass section of his orchestra, the Wagnerian voice had to be still louder in order to be heard – even a particular hall was built to facilitate this. But today – actually for many years now – microphones easily allow a singer with a pure non-vibrato voice to be heard over an ensemble even with much percussion in it. It seems to me that anyone writing for music theatre today should at least try to decide for themselves: a. What is my orchestra? – and where is it placed in the theatre? – and b. What is my vocal style? All the instruments playing in *The Cave* are amplified except the bass drums and claves. The vocal style for the interview sections of the piece is speech with the inherent speech melody doubled and harmonized by the instruments. Then there are four singers – two lyric sopranos, a tenor, and a baritone – who sing in a natural non-vibrato voice that you would find in my earlier pieces and in earlier eras, Medieval and Renaissance.

## **JC** Something combines the music and the visuals so that when you see it and hear it, it's like one thing.

**BK** In visual terms, it's this commitment to the documentary material we gathered in the interviews. All the visual material had to come from the frame of the interviewee's image. Thanks to some pretty sophisticated computer graphics programs made for the home computer, I was able to grab the interviewees' images from the video into the computer, select details from these, rearrange them, and transfer them back to the video to become the setting for each of the talking heads. I then timed these stills to the music and to the talking heads so that the person speaking became embedded in a musical and visual portrait of him or herself.

**SR** The speech melody of each person really is, as Beryl says, a kind of musical portrait of that person. It's their melody and I begin by writing it down as dictation. I have to find out the exact notes, rhythm, and tempo of what they say. Then there is the orchestration; it's one thing to double a speech melody with clarinet and quite another to punctuate it with bass drums. *The Cave* really comes out of the documentary footage. Whenever there was a musical or visual question about the piece, the solution was to be found by a still more careful examination of the source material itself. To give an example, Acts 1 and 2 end in A minor because I found that inside the cave, or rather the mosque that sits on top of the cave, the acoustical resonance of the space with several prayers being said simultaneously, was a drone in A minor. This was what I recorded there. Then I began looking for significant phrases that were said by the interviewees that were also in A minor so that both acts would cadence there.

## **JC** To what extent does MTV affect your kind of work now?

**BK** Our independent interests preceded MTV, but it definitely reflects on that phenomenon. And it makes our work more relevant because it relates to that type of folk art, though in a very different way. In the early years of video, late 60s, early 70s, we talked about the fact that video was then a one-way communication from the networks to the home, but with the advent of portable equipment, and the proliferation of video equipment in general, people could begin to write in the medium, as well as read it. The possibilities for visual literacy increased, but this whole area of creating with such tools and developing new forms for presenting visual information is still so new. And the idea of creating something that was both rich in information and formally adventurous is a challenge the medium seems to offer, and yet is not often explored.

**SR** We're living in a culture where music videos are a kind of urban folk art. People make them not only in professional studios but on home desktop computers. You can get a good hit on what folk music is today by simply looking in the window of any music store. What do you see? Samplers, amplifiers, electric guitars, and keyboards—all kinds of electronics. These are street instruments. That's what kids use to play rock.

Historically composers have always been interested in folk music and the popular music of their day as well. You have dance forms used in Bach's suites, before him you have popular tunes like L'Homme armé being used as the basis for large mass settings in the Renaissance, and more recently you have Bartók using Hungarian folk tunes in many of his compositions and Kurt Weill actually writing popular tunes and modeling much of his music theatre on the cabaret style of the Weimar Republic. It seems to me when composers look down on all the popular music around them they are generally suffering from some sort of emotional disorder. Personally, for me, it would have been unthinkable to compose any of the music I have if I hadn't heard jazz when I was growing up. Much later, in 1988, in order to compose *Different Trains*, I became involved with the sampling keyboard, which is an essential piece of technology in *The Cave*.

**JC** *I gather you didn't use a libretto.*

**SR** Instead of writing a libretto or having one written, we started out with a story from two holy texts; the Bible and the Koran and some of their associated literature. Then we began asking "Who for you is Abraham?", "Who for you is Sarah?", "Hagar? Ishmael? and Isaac?", to Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans. From their answers we edited out the rest of our libretto. I don't really feel comfortable with the idea of singers acting Biblical roles. We really have no idea how these 4000-year-old characters looked, and it's always awkward when someone portrays them. The reality is that Abraham and the others only live in the words and thoughts of the living. In our piece, *The Cave*, they live in the words of the people we interviewed. I remember trying to explain this back in 1989 to an opera set designer we thought might work on the piece, and he just couldn't get it. He kept insisting that he couldn't begin his work until he had a finished libretto. That was how he worked, click click, and no other way. Of course a few weeks later our set designer, John Arnon, got the idea immediately, as did Richard Nelson, our lighting director, and Carey Perloff, our stage director. Anyway, the fact is that the libretto was finished in January 1993 when the piece was completed.

**BK** As it turned out, the work's a narrative told three times from the points of view of three different cultures. We had a general outline as we began, then a general working procedure, and the libretto evolved as the music and video evolved.

**JC** *What are the politics of this work?*

**BK** In framing the questions in terms of the Biblical characters of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac, we attempted to steer away from the politics of the Middle East and the Arab/Israeli conflict. We feel that the underpinnings to that conflict relate beyond politics to the culture and religion of these peoples, so that is the focus of our work. However, insofar as the main actors of this work are the interviewees speaking today, politics inevitably seeps in around the edges. An Israeli settler answers the question of "Who, for you, is Ishmael?" by saying, "You can see him in the street," whilst a Palestinian woman answers a question about Hagar by saying "She was a refugee, I think." What to us was most revealing, however, was how familiar all those we interviewed, Israeli and Arab, were with these ancient Biblical and Koranic figures. When the chief curator of the Shrine of the Dead Sea Scrolls said of Abraham, "a legendary figure, we know nothing about Abraham," it was not with academic indifference. The "cave" for people living in this part of the world has significance and physical reality. Whether from a secular or religious or historical perspective, they knew who these characters were. However, in America the story is different. We are much further away from the cave here, many people never hearing of it, even among the religious. Abraham to some is Abraham Lincoln. Ishmael is the lonesome cowboy riding off into the sunset, the archetype of the individual going it alone. To a black woman living in Texas: "When I think of Hagar, as a black female, I really think of myself." In Act 3 the "cave" comes home, and the audience, mostly Western, is asked to reflect on itself.

**SR** Abraham and the others aren't here anymore. As I said, they only live in the minds of the living. For some, particularly in the Middle East, they're very much alive, and for others, particularly in America, they become forgotten or turned to other purposes. When I asked the sculptor, Richard Serra, he said, "Abraham Lincoln High School, high on the hilltop midst sand and sea – that's about as far's I trace Abram." When I got to Ishmael he said, "Call me Ishmael – *Moby Dick*." Mary MacArthur says, "The man we all identify with." "He's the James Dean of the Old Testament," says Ann Druyan.

**JC** *You're both Jewish with roots in this country. Did you learn anything new or gain a different perspective on the Muslim tradition concerning Abraham?*

**SR** Yes, absolutely. It was a chance to meet Arabs and talk with them about something we both shared and respected. So it was a very positive experience there, and also here in America where we got advice from Dr. Assad Busool of the American Islamic College in Chicago, Dr. Mahmoud Ayoub of the Temple University Department of Religion, and from Imam Talal Eid, the religious leader of the Islamic Center of New England in Boston. It was a pleasure to meet and work with them, as it was to work with Rabbi Shlomo Riskin of Efrat outside Jerusalem, and Rabbis Ephraim Buchwald and Hershel Cohen of Lincoln Square Synagogue in New York, who advised us about Jewish law and tradition. In a more peaceful world we would have interviewed not only Palestinians but also Egyptians, Syrians, Iraqis, Jordanians, and so on, because they all view themselves as children of Abraham and Ishmael.

**JC** *What about the American response?*

**BK** In the first two acts the people that we interviewed felt very connected to that story and to the cave. They were living with the cave. In the third act most of the interviewees had never heard of the cave. There really is no cave in America – there is no umbilical cord, the connections are very thin.

**JC** *Do you find that sad?*

**BK** There's a kind of sadness, but sometimes the answers were so fresh and alive and contemporary and questioning. Perhaps we're very long on commentary here and shorter on text. At the end of the third act, the borders to the stills become more and more dominant until the slow final downward pans of the visual are all borders, or one could say, all commentary.

**SR** There were several Americans who were very conversant with the Bible. But mostly what we found were people who could barely remember Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac – they gave us either cultural or personal psychological responses to these characters. The young Hopi Indian we interviewed said he had no idea who Abraham was. Later on he said, "When I was growing up, my father never stressed the Indian either. They say you can always go back to the Hopi rez. No matter what." That's his cave. For many Jews and Arabs in the Middle East, there's a sense of living with the cave – a defined, accepted spiritual universe. They aren't looking for something; they have something. They know where they're from, and they're happy still being there and living that. Whereas for the Western Odyssean person, it's the searching that counts. In the American section of our piece you can see some people shedding the spiritual concern: "Drop it, forget it, it's irrelevant."

**JC** *Let me turn the tables on you both. Who are Abraham and Sarah to you?*

**SR** Abraham, for me, was one of the most radical thinkers that ever lived. He had a basically new and different spiritual insight that challenged all the accepted views of his day: The complete absorption in, the worship of, any thing or any one including yourself, is putting blinders on the mind and heart – very risky saying that to Nimrod. He put his life on the line.

**BK** Sarah left Ur too, and traditionally she is viewed as a partner on a new path. Some feminists have suggested that she was a priestess from a matrilineal culture that existed in ancient Iraq and she is trying to assert her dominance in a growing patriarchy. She makes the decision to have her line become the new nation which leads eventually to Moses and David and, in the Christian tradition, to Jesus Christ. Alice Shalvi, the Israeli feminist whom we interviewed, suggested that it was because of the

nature of Isaac's personality that she chose him and not Ishmael to receive the inheritance. He is very different from the heroes of other myths or traditions. He is neither hunter nor warrior, but a herdsman and meditator in the fields. But still, the tension and strife in the story is traced to her (though Abraham is not at his best here either insofar as he lets Hagar and Ishmael leave with no provisions except water). Unlike Sarah, however, Abraham comes down to us as the man who offers hospitality to strangers, and as a true universalist.

#### **JC And Hagar?**

**BK** She was an Egyptian princess in the court of Pharaoh, and supposedly she left with Abraham and Sarah voluntarily. Remember, the Bible is very laconic and many years pass when we hear of no dissension between these two women. Surrogate mothering, as we know today, is a very complicated role to play. She was placed in a difficult situation, and then banished into the wilderness. In the Islamic tradition she goes to Mecca, but remember too that, in the Bible, she is also highly esteemed. After all, she is the first woman whom God speaks to. So what appears to be a simple story of banishment is not simple at all. Her son Ishmael is destined to become father of a great nation. It is just not the nation the Bible focuses on. The story of a particular people, the Jewish people, coexists within its own sacred text with the information that family members go off in other directions and become important figures in other traditions.

#### **JC So, the seed for peace is already in the book of Genesis itself, isn't it?**

**SR** Yes, Isaac and Ishmael come together to bury Abraham. The traditional Jewish view is that Ishmael's and Isaac's presence at their father's burial was a sign of their reconciliation. And if they could do it, perhaps it suggests Arabs and Israelis can, too. But it requires real generosity of spirit and a genuine willingness to accept difference. As the Israeli biblical scholar, Uri Simone, in our piece, says of Ishmael: "He's our relative – he's different."

#### **JC The story of Abraham has a lot to do with the themes of separation and repair.**

**BK** In our interview with Uri Simone, he talks about how Abraham's life is characterized by constant separations, first from his home, his land, his culture, then from Ishmael, and potentially, in the non-sacrifice of Isaac, from him, too.

**SR** He has to give up Ishmael, whom he dearly loves, and then he has to be ready to give up Isaac, too. In the story when Hagar is cast out she finds herself and Ishmael at the well of Be'er lehai Roi. Much later when Isaac is about to meet his future wife Rebecca, he's meditating in the field by Be'er lehai Roi. What is he meditating about? Some in Jewish tradition say he's thinking about his half-brother Ishmael whom he misses. Ishmael is on his mind.

#### **JC What should be on our minds as we experience The Cave?**

**SR** Well, on one hand, that perhaps this is your story. Maybe you've dismissed it, or ignored it for a long time. But you're free to return to it. You came from here. Do you wish to keep your distance or do you want to reacquaint yourself?

On the other hand, just in terms of the music, you may find the many speech melodies an unusual musical guide to personality. As Janáček said, "...Speech melodies are windows into people's souls... For dramatic music they are of great importance." Important because it's impossible to separate the music from the person speaking.

## **THE CAVE: SYNOPSIS**

In the Bible, Abraham buys a cave from Ephron the Hittite as a burial place for his wife Sarah. The Cave of the Patriarchs, as it has come to be known, became the final resting place not only for Sarah, but for Abraham and their descendants as well. In Jewish mystical sources the cave is also a passageway back to the Garden of Eden. It is said that Adam and Eve are also buried there.

The cave is of great religious significance for Moslems as well. While the Jews are descendants of Abraham and Sarah through their son Isaac, the Moslems trace their lineage to Abraham through his son Ishmael born to Hagar, Sarah's handmaid.

Today the cave, located in the largely Arab town of Hebron, in the West Bank, is completely built over and inaccessible. The ancient structures built above it reveal a long history of conflicting claims. One discovers not only the wall Herod erected around the cave, but also the remains of a Byzantine church, and finally the mosque built in the 12th century which has dominated the site ever since. Since 1967 the mosque built above the cave remains under Moslem jurisdiction, while the Israeli army maintains a presence at the site. Though tensions run particularly high, the site remains unique as the only place on earth where Jews and Moslems both worship.

The Cave is in three acts. In each act we asked the same basic questions to a different group of people. The basic five questions were: Who for you is Abraham? Who for you is Sarah? Who for you is Hagar? Who for you is Ishmael? Who for you is Isaac? In the first act we asked Israelis, in the second we asked Palestinians and in the third we asked Americans.

### **Act 1**

West Jerusalem/Hebron  
May/June 1989  
55 minutes

### **Short Pause**

### **Act 2**

East Jerusalem/Hebron  
June 1989 and June 1991  
40 minutes

### **Intermission**

### **Act 3**

New York/Austin  
April/May 1992  
32 minutes

## About the Interviewees in *The Cave*

Information about the interviewees refers to the period during which the interviews were conducted: 1989-1992

### Act 1: West Jerusalem/Hebron May/June 1989

*Israeli interviewees in order of appearance:*

**Ephraim Isaac:** Born in Ethiopia, he has lived in Israel and is currently Director of the Institute of Semitic Studies at Princeton University.

**Baruch Nachshon:** An artist by profession, he lives in the Jewish Settlement of Kiryat Arba in Hebron.

**Magen Broschi:** Chief Curator, the Shrine of the Book, and D.S. and J.H. Gottesman Centre for Biblical Manuscripts. One of the leading experts on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

**Nadine Shenkar:** Writer and Professor of Jewish Art at the Bezalel Academy of Art in Israel, and scholar and practitioner of Kabbalah.

**David Ben Yosef:** Social worker and resident of the Jewish Settlement of Kiryat Arba in Hebron.

**Rivka Gonen:** Archaeologist and chief curator at the ethnography wing of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

**B. Michael:** Political columnist and satirist for the Israeli newspaper *Ha-aretz*.

**Moshe Idel:** Leading scholar and writer on Kabbalah and professor of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

**Yeshayahu Leibowitz:** A biochemist who was known as one of the most incisive and controversial critics of Israeli culture and politics, beginning in the early 1940s.

**Uriel Simone:** Professor at the Department of Bible at Bar Ilan University in Israel, and head of the Institute for the History of Jewish Bible Research. He is active in the religious peace movement, Netivot Shalom.

**Gabriel Barkai:** Prominent archaeologist and scholar, specializing in the Iron Age – the period of the Israelite monarchy (10th century to 5th century B.C.) – and professor at Tel Aviv University.

**Yael Lamm:** Yeshiva student in Efrat near Jerusalem.

*Short pause*

### Act 2: East Jerusalem/Hebron June 1989 and June 1991

*Palestinian interviewees in order of appearance:*

**Sheikh Dahoud Atalah:** Muqri at Al-Aksa Mosque, Jerusalem.

**Suad Karaman:** Poet and editor of *The Women's World* in Arabic. She has also taught English.

**Araydi Naim:** Poet and writer from Maghar Village.

**Khalid M. Suleiman:** Journalist from Hebron.

**Marian Mari:** Doctor of Education, initiator and director of Early Childhood Education Project for the Arab Child in Israel, and President of the Galilee Social Research Center in Nazareth.

**Itaf Ziad:** English instructor at Ramalah Woman's Training Center. She is also an Editor of *Gesher*, a Palestinian magazine in Hebrew.

**Haj Mithkal Natour:** Served for 15 years as director of Arab Education in East Jerusalem. He is also Doctor of Islamic Studies and author of a book about the laws of the Muslim family in Israel according to Islamic and Israeli law.

**Ali El-Khalili:** Poet and editor of *El Fajar*.

**Samia Kazmuz:** Singer and actress. She is also an educational counselor.

**Dr. Abdul Latif Bargouthi:** Professor of Islamic Studies, Bir Zeit University, West Bank.

**Jamil Abu Tormeh:** Principal of a secondary school, East Jerusalem.

**Musbah Tahboub:** From a family which has cared for the mosque of Harem el-Khalil in Hebron for generations.

**Dr. Adel Manna:** Professor of Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University.

**Imam Talal Eid:** Religious director, Islamic Center of New England, and a graduate of Al-Azhar University, School of Islamic Science and Law, Cairo, Egypt. He also holds a Master of Theological Studies degree from Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Mass.

**Khalil Atamna:** Professor of Islamic Studies, Bir Zeit University, West Bank.

**M. Watad:** Journalist and writer. He is also a former member of the Knesset.

**Riad Othman:** Hotel manager.

*Intermission*

### Act 3: New York City/Austin April/May 1992

*American interviewees in order of appearance:*

**Elizabeth Lecompte:** Born in Toledo, Ohio, in 1959, she has lived and worked in New York City for twenty-five years and is Director of the Wooster Group.

**Richard Serra:** Sculptor who lives and works in New York City and Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

**Valerie Steele:** Fashion historian and author of several books, including *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History* and *Women of Fashion: Twentieth Century Designers*.

**Jeffrey Sabala:** Student studying mechanical engineering at the University of Texas in Austin, and co-leader of the Native American Student Organization.

**Ron Havern:** Graduate of Harvard Divinity School. He teaches philosophy and religion at New York University and at Marymount Manhattan College while maintaining a private practice in psychotherapy.

**Fanny DeBose:** One of the pioneers of the Institutional Church of God in Christ in Brooklyn, N.Y. and head advisor to the youth department of the church.

**Valerie Bridgeman Davies:** Minister from Austin, Texas who is studying Hebrew scriptures.

**Elizabeth Brummett:** Registrar of the Juilliard School in New York City.

**Saul Rosenberg:** Is completing his Ph.D. in American Literature at Columbia University, and teaches American Literature, Classical Hebrew and Jewish Education in New York City.

**Sharon Dunn:** Legal assistant for Skadden Arps in New York City, a member of the choir of the Institutional Church of God in Christ in Brooklyn, N.Y. who performed in the choir of *The Gospel of Colonus* on Broadway.

**Leroy Fisher:** Self-employed heating contractor and a longtime member and deacon of the Institutional Church of God in Christ in Brooklyn, N.Y.

**Carl Sagan:** Pulitzer prize-winning Professor of Astronomy and Director of the Laboratory for Planetary Studies at Cornell University who played a leading role in the American space program.

**Cora Nivens:** Longtime member of the Institutional Church of God in Christ in Brooklyn, N.Y. where she is the second of five generations active in the church.

**Cecilia Babcock Smith:** Assistant Rector, St. David's Episcopal Church, Austin, Texas.

**Susan Hewitt:** Was born in England, raised in the Church of England tradition and has now lived in America for 15 years. She taught biology at Yale for one semester, and has taught Hatha Yoga for 10 years. She is a practicing Tibetan Buddhist.

**Dennis Prager:** KABC Radio commentator in Los Angeles, writer and publisher of *Ultimate Issues* quarterly journal on Judaism and life, and Founder and President of the Micah Center for Ethical Monotheism.

**Marion Childress-Usher:** Clergywoman in the United Methodist Church and Director of Campus Ministry for the United Campus Ministry of Austin.

**Jean Houston:** Philosopher, psychologist and cultural historian, known for her many books exploring myth and transformation. She is co-director of the Foundation for Mind Research.

**Mary MacArthur Griffin:** Former Executive Director of The Kitchen in New York City and an arts consultant who lives and works there.

**Lisa Rogers:** Graduate of the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, and program director of Out Youth Austin, a lesbian and gay youth peer support group.

**Keith Sonnier:** Sculptor who lives and works in New York City and Europe. He recently completed a kilometer-long installation at the new Munich airport.

**Daniel Berrigan:** In his own words, a "Jesus priest, author, convicted felon – alleluia!"

**Kerri Logsdon:** Scenic artist, University of Texas Performing Arts Center.

**Arthur Danto:** Johnsonian Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University, art critic for *The Nation*, and the author of many books on philosophy and the visual arts.

**Francis E. Peters:** Chair of the Near Eastern Religions Department at New York University; among his books are *Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity and Islam*.

**Ann Druyan:** Secretary of the Federation of American Scientists and co-author of the *Cosmos* TV series and *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* with Carl Sagan.

**Lynn Lytton:** Lives in Austin, Texas, is a personal computer consultant at the University of Texas, and is active at the University Catholic Center.



# THE CAVE

## LIBRETTO

### Act 1: West Jerusalem/Hebron May/June 1989

#### Genesis XVI *Typed on computers*

1. Now Sarai Abram's wife bore him no children; and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, and her name was Hagar.

2. And Sarai said to Abram  
"Behold now the Lord has restrained me from bearing;  
go in I pray you unto my handmaid;  
perhaps I shall be builded up through her";  
and Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

3. And Sarai, Abram's wife,  
took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid,  
after Abram had dwelt for ten years in the land of Canaan;  
and gave her to Abram her husband to be his wife.

4. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived;  
and when she saw that she had conceived,  
her mistress was despised in her eyes.

5. And Sarai said to Abram: "The wrong done to me is your fault:  
I placed my handmaid in your arms;  
and when she saw that she had conceived I was despised in her eyes:  
the Lord judge between me and you."

6. And Abram said to Sarai: "Behold, your maid is in your hand;  
do to her what is good in your eyes."  
And Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her face.

7. And an angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness,  
by the spring on the way to Shur.

8. And he said: "Hagar, Sarai's handmaid, from where have you come and to where do you go?"  
And she said: "From the face of my mistress Sarai I flee."

9. And the angel of the Lord said to her: "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her hands."

10. And the angel of the Lord said to her: "I will greatly multiply your seed, that it shall not be numbered for multitude."

11. And the angel of the Lord said to her: "You are pregnant, and will bear a son: and you shall call his name Ishmael (meaning, God will hear) because the Lord has heard your affliction."

12. "And he will be man of the wild; his hand against all, and the hand of all against him.  
And in the presence of all his brothers shall he dwell."

#### Who is Abraham?

**E. Isaac:** Who is Abraham? Abraham, for me, is my ancestor – my very own personal ancestor. I was brought up to think like that, and I still, I guess, think like that. It stuck in my mind. My father, when

I was a young person, well, actually a child, used to count the names of our ancestors starting with Adam going all the way down to the Twelve Tribes. And I remember how we used to learn: Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kainan, Mahalalel, Yered, Enoch, Metushelah, Lemech, Noach, and then we would go on down, Noach, Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, Abraham, and then we used to say, Abraham, Yitzhak, Ya'acov, and then we used to say the Twelve Tribes, our ancestors' names, just memorize all of them, Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yehuda, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naftali, Gad, Asher, Josef, Benyamin, and then go all the way down and come down to my great-great-great-grandfather whose name was Shimon, and then Shalom and then Shalom and Harun and Meshah, and Yitzhak and myself. So for me there is a chain of ancestral relationship to Abraham.

**B. Nachshon:** To tell you the truth, it is for me, it's my father.

**M. Broschi:** A legendary figure. We know nothing about Abraham.

**N. Shenkar:** A complete break. An unknown future.

#### Genesis XI

27. These are the Generations of Terah:  
Terah begat Abram, Nahor and Haran, and Haran begat Lot.

And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah, in the land of his birth, in Ur.

#### Midrash Rabbah

##### *(Traditional Biblical commentary)*

**R. Hiya said:** Terah was a manufacturer of idols. He once went away somewhere and left Abraham to sell them in his place. 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 replied. "A woman came with a plateful of fine meal and requested me to offer it to them. One exclaimed '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 (his father) cried; "have they then any knowledge!" "Should not your ears listen to what your mouth is saying," he retorted. Thereupon he seized him and delivered him to Nimrod.

"Let us worship the fire!" he (Nimrod) proposed. "Let us rather worship water, which extinguishes the fire," replied he (Abram). "Then let us worship water!" "Let us rather worship the clouds which bear the water." "Then 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 (Nimrod) 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 (Abram's brother) was standing there undecided. If Abram is victorious (thought he), I will say I am of Abram's belief, while if Nimrod is victorious I will say I am on his side. When Abram descended into the fiery furnace and was saved he (Nimrod) asked him, "Of whose belief are you?"

"Of Abram's," he replied. Thereupon he (Nimrod) 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 his father Terah, in the land of his birth, in Ur.

**N. Shenkar:** A complete break. An unknown future.

#### Genesis XII

1. And the Lord said to Abram, "Go for yourself, out of your country, out of your community, out of your father's house to the land which I will show you."

**N. Shenkar:** He was invited to go to a country he did not know, and whose name he did not get.

**D. Ben Yosef:** Leave everything. Your father and mother, your home, your land, your language – everything.

**R. Gonen:** He came from Iraq.

**D. Ben Yosef:** Leave everything – everything.

**B. Michael:** Pack your things and start walking.

**M. Idel:** He is passing from one place to another.

#### Genesis XII

5. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all their things, and all their servants and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.

### Genesis XIII

14. And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot separated from him:  
"Raise, now, your eyes, and look from the place where you are,  
North, and South and East and West.

15. For all the land which you see,  
to you will I give it and to your seed for ever.

16. And I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth,  
so that if one can count the grains of dust in the earth  
then your offspring may be counted.

17. Up, walk about the land, through its length and breadth, for I give it to you."

18. And Abram moved his tent, and came to dwell by the oaks of Mamre which are in Hebron and he built there an altar to the Lord.

### Genesis XV

1. After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying,  
"Fear not, Abram, I am your shield;  
Your reward shall be very great."

2. And Abram said, "O Lord God, what can You give me seeing I will die childless and my house shall go to (my steward) Eliezer of Damascus."

3. And Abram said, "Behold, to me You have given no offspring and my steward shall be my heir."

4. And, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying;  
"This man shall not be your heir,  
but one come out of your own seed your heir shall be."

5. And He brought him outside and said:  
"Look, now, toward the heavens and count the stars if you are able to count them" and He said to him: "So shall your offspring be."

### Genesis XVI

1. And Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children.

### Who is Sarah?

**Y. Leibowitz:** Abraham's first wife.

**U. Simone:** His wife Sarah was barren.

**M. Broschi:** Again, she's a literary figure.

**G. Barkai:** A very beautiful woman.

**N. Shenkar:** She's beautiful.

**G. Barkai:** Very realistic.

**N. Shenkar:** She's stronger and closer to the source.

**R. Gonen:** She was very good-looking – and she didn't have children.

**U. Simone:** His wife Sarah was barren.

### Genesis XVI

2. And Sarai said to Abram  
"Behold now the Lord has restrained me from bearing:  
go in I pray you unto my handmaid;  
perhaps I shall be builded up through her."  
and Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

3. And Sarai, Abram's wife,  
took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid,  
...and gave her to Abram her husband, to be his wife.

4. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived;  
and when she saw that she had conceived,  
her mistress was despised in her eyes.

### Who is Hagar?

**N. Shenkar:** So feminine and at the same time so unpleasant.

**E. Isaac:** But perhaps maybe she started elevating herself.

**N. Shenkar:** Very unpleasant.

**E. Isaac:** But perhaps maybe she started elevating herself.

**N. Shenkar:** Definitely she becomes very aggressive towards her mistress.

### Genesis XVI

5. And Sarai said to Abram: "The wrong done to me is your fault:  
I placed my handmaid in your arms;  
and when she saw that she had conceived I was despised in her eyes:  
the Lord judge between me and you."

6. And Abram said to Sarai: "Behold, your maid is in your hand;

do to her what is good in your eyes."  
and Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her face.

**M. Idel:** Someone who had a chance but she was not able to prevail.

**N. Shenkar:** Very pathetic – and a little aggressive.

**U. Simone:** Hagar "rose her nose." So I won't judge Sarah so severely. It was very daring of her, to let another young woman into the bed of her husband.

### Genesis XVI Typed on computers

7. And an angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness,  
by the spring on the way to Shur.

8. And he said: "Hagar, Sarai's handmaid, from where have you come and to where do you go?" and she said: "From the face of my mistress Sarai I flee."

9. And the angel of the Lord said to her: "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her hands."

10. And the angel of the Lord said to her: "I will greatly multiply your seed, that it shall not be numbered for multitude."

11. And the angel of the Lord said to her: "You are pregnant, and will bear a son; and you shall call his name Ishmael because the Lord has heard your affliction.

12. And he will be a man of the wild; his hand against all, and the hand of all against him; and in the presence of all his brothers shall he dwell."

### Who is Ishmael?

**E. Isaac:** The first son of our ancestor Abraham. A relative.

**Y. Leibowitz:** Abram's firstborn son.

**U. Simone:** He's our relative. He's different. He's our relative.

**E. Isaac:** A relative.

**U. Simone:** He's our relative. He's different.

**E. Isaac:** An ambivalent kind of attitude towards Ishmael – with which I was brought up.

**M. Broschi:** An ancestor of the Arabs.

**B. Nachshon:** But the children of Ishmael – we can see them in the streets.

**N. Shenkar:** A fighter.

**M. Broschi:** Fighter.

**E. Isaac:** An ambivalent kind of attitude towards Ishmael.

**B. Nachshon:** We can see them in the streets.

**U. Simone:** He's our relative.

### Genesis XVIII

1. And the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the opening of his tent in the heat of the day.

2. And he raised his eyes and looked and behold, three men standing by him.

9. And they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "Behold, in the tent."

10. And one said, "I will certainly return to you at this time next year and behold, Sarah your wife will bear you a son." And Sarah heard from behind the opening of the tent.

11. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years, and Sarah had stopped having the periods of women.

12. And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "Now that I have grown old shall I have my heart's desire, with my husband old as well?"

13. And the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh?

14. Is anything too difficult for the Lord?"

### Genesis XXI

1. And the Lord remembered Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken.

2. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken.

3. And Abraham called the name of his son, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.

### Who is Isaac?

**B. Michael:** I don't really know. Almost a pale figure.

**M. Idel:** More contemplative.

**N. Shenkar:** His name means, "He will laugh."

**B. Michael:** Almost a pale figure.  
**Y. Leibowitz:** The second son of Abram.  
**R. Gonen:** But the son of the favorite wife.  
**U. Simone:** Very difficult to be a son of a revolutionary. The obedient son. To continue – what his father has done. And we need such people.  
**G. Barkai:** Continuity.  
**B. Michael:** Almost a pale figure.  
**G. Barkai:** Continuity.  
**B. Michael:** Almost a pale figure.  
**G. Barkai:** Continuity.

#### Genesis XXI

8. And the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day Isaac was weaned.

9. And Sarah saw the son, whom Hagar the Egyptian bore to Abraham, mocking.

10. And she said to Abraham, “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with my son Isaac.”

11. And the thing was very troublesome in the eyes of Abraham because of his son.

12. And God said to Abraham, “Do not be troubled because of the boy and your slave woman. All that Sarah says to you, listen to her voice, for in Isaac shall your seed be called.

13. And also from the son of the slave woman I will make a nation, for he is your seed.”

14. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar, placing it on her shoulder, and sent her and the boy away. And she went and strayed in the wilderness of Beer-sheva.

15. And the water was gone from the skin, and she left the boy under one of the shrubs.

16. And she went and sat facing him, about a bow shot away, for she said, “Let me not see the boy die.” So she sat facing him, weeping loudly.

17. And God heard the voice of the boy, and an angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is.

18. Arise, lift up the boy and hold him tight, for I will make him a great nation.”

19. And God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water, and she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy to drink.

20. And God was with the boy and he grew; and he lived in the desert and became an archer.

#### *The Casting Out of Ishmael and Hagar*

**N. Shenkar:** Sarah wanted him to go. The decision comes from Sarah.

**Y. Lamm:** Avraham, I don't think he really noticed. She had to decide.

**E. Isaac:** She was just protecting her turf. As any woman today would do.

**Y. Lamm:** She had to decide.

**M. Idel:** Crucial in the crucial moment.

**R. Gonen:** She sent away her handmaid. And Ishmael, to the desert.

**B. Michael:** He was kicked out, will constantly fight.

**B. Nachshon:** Sarah saw everything.

**N. Shenkar:** The man of the desert. The man of the bow. Everything is – is caught – by the sword.

**B. Nachshon:** We can see them in the street.

**U. Simone:** He's our relative.

*During video of Burial Caves and Genesis XXIII text below, some of the interviewees' comments are heard as voice-over:*

**N. Shenkar:** She has just died here, and he's buying this cave to bury her.

**R. Gonen:** Abraham comes and he wants to purchase a cave, and they say, look, we have here a whole field, pick yourself one.

**G. Barkai:** He couldn't accept a gift; a gift he got it from the Almighty.

**N. Shenkar:** He says no, it's a gift and I shall give it to you, and at the same time he (Ephron) says what is a land of 400 shekels between you and me? And Abraham knows that the right price is 400 shekels – and he will pay it in cash.

**G. Barkai:** This is the first time that Abraham buys land, and he buys it for eternity.

#### Genesis XXIII

1. And the life of Sarah was 127 years.

2. And Sarah died in Kiryat Arba, which is Hebron in Canaan. And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

3. And Abraham rose up from beside his dead, And spoke to the children of the Hittites saying:

4. “I am a stranger and sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead from beside me.”

5. Now the children of the Hittites answered Abraham:

6. “You are a mighty prince among us; in the choice of our graves bury your dead.”

7. And Abraham bowed down before the people of the land, saying:

13. “If you will, I pray you, hear me: I will give the price of the field; take it from me and I will bury my dead there.”

14. And Ephron the Hittite answered:

15. “My Lord listen to me: a piece of land worth 400 shekels of silver, what is that between you and me? Therefore, bury your dead.”

16. And Abraham took Ephron at his word, and Abraham weighed the silver to Ephron, Which Ephron had named in the presence of the children of the Hittites, 400 shekels of silver.

19. And after this, Abraham buried Sarah, his wife, in the cave of the field of Machpelah, facing Mamre, which is Hebron in the land of Canaan.

#### *Machpelah Commentary*

**R. Gonen:** The Midrash says that Adam and Eve were buried there.

**E. Isaac:** There is great power attached to this place.

**Y. Leibowitz:** The cave is for the dead, not for the living.

**U. Simone:** Not the stones and not this place. The book is more important than the grave.

**R. Gonen:** Herod has taken a site which was considered holy, and reshaped it, and what we see today is basically Herodian. It was holy to the Jews as the burial place of the Patriarchs. Then came the Christians, Byzantines – the Romans

had nothing to do with it, and the Byzantines built a church there which was later converted into a mosque when the Moslems came.

**B. Nachshon:** Years ago, our cousins would not let us enter to the Machpelah, anytime.

**G. Barkai:** I was looking for the hole in the wall and the steps unto which Jews were allowed to go in the old days. They were not allowed to go to the cave of Machpelah. They had seven steps leading up to that place and up to that point they were allowed to go.

**N. Shenkar:** Everything is in the names here. This is Hebron. And “hevron” in Hebrew means a friend, a link. When the father dies both of them meet at Machpelah.

**U. Simone:** Ishmael and Isaac buried Abraham.

**Genesis XXV Chanted in Hebrew, from the Torah, by Ephraim Isaac**

7. And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life, 175 years.

8. And Abraham expired and died at a good ripe age, old and satisfied, and was gathered to his people.

9. And they buried him, Isaac and Ishmael, in the Cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron, son of Zohar, the Hittite, facing Mamre;

10. the field which Abraham bought from the children of the Hittites; there Abraham was buried and Sarah his wife.

#### *Short Pause*

## Act 2: East Jerusalem/Hebron June 1989 and June 1991

**The Koran – Surah 3** *Chanted in Arabic from the Koran by Sheikh Dahoud Atalah, Muqri of Al-Aksa Mosque*

65. Ye people of the Book!  
Why dispute ye  
About Abraham, when  
The Torah and the Gospel  
Were not revealed  
Till after him?  
Have ye no understanding?

66. Ah! Ye are those  
Who fell to disputing  
(Even) in matters of which  
Ye had some knowledge  
But why dispute thee  
In matters of which  
Ye have no knowledge?  
It is Allah Who knows,  
And ye who know not!

67. Abraham was not a Jew  
Nor yet a Christian;  
But he was true in Faith  
And bowed his will to  
Allah's (Which is Islam),  
And he joined  
Not gods with Allah.

68. Without a doubt,  
Among men, the nearest  
Of kin to Abraham,  
Are those who follow him,  
As are also this Prophet  
And those who believe:  
And Allah is the Protector  
Of those who have faith.

### Who is Ibrahim?

**S. Karaman:** Ibrahim was neither Jew nor Christian, but a Muslim. It means the man who surrenders his soul to God. We call him our father Abraham – Ibrahim.

**A. Naim:** He is the father of Ishak and Ismail. Ibrahim or Abraham is this bridge between the two cultures.

**K. Suleiman:** He is our common ancestor – see?

**M. Mari:** The father – he's a fatherly figure, who actually left something behind him, that's really never been resolved.

**I. Ziad:** For me Ibrahim is the father of the prophets – simply like that. I mention his name sixteen times a day when I pray.

**M. Natour:** Ibrahim is our father – peace upon him!

### *The Breaking of the Idols*

**S. Karaman:** Ibrahim when he was in Iraq.

**A. El-Khalili:** Ibrahim came from Ur.

**S. Karaman:** He told them, "How could you pray to these – statues?"

**S. Kazmuz:** He broke all the idols.

**S. Karaman:** And he gave the axe to the biggest one. When they came – "Oh who did that?"

**M. Natour:** You did it Ibrahim?

**A. Bargouthi:** He said, "Well, ask their chief."

**S. Karaman:** They said, "Oh how can he do it?" He can't move; he can do nothing.

**I. Ziad:** So they have to think.

**S. Karaman:** How do you pray to it?

**I. Ziad:** So they have to think.

**S. Karaman:** After that they wanted to burn him.

**J. Torneh:** He was cast into the fire by Nimrud.

**M. Tahboub:** God saved him.

**S. Karaman:** A fire didn't hurt Ibrahim.

**A. Manna:** It was a revolutionary thing.

**K. Suleiman:** He decided to challenge, to defy them. And that was not an easy thing. That was very difficult because he put his own life at risk.

**al-Tabari: "History of the Prophets and Kings"**  
*Read in Arabic by Imam Talal Eid, Imam of Boston.*

Abraham, the Prophet of God, brought Ishmael and Hagar and set them down in Mecca at the place of the Zamzam. As he was leaving Hagar called out to him, "O Abraham, I ask you three times, who commanded you to set me down in a land without grain, without cows' udders, without people, without water, and without provisions?" He said, "My Lord commanded me." She said, "Verily, He will never lead us astray." As Abraham was retracing his path (back to Syria) he said, "O Lord! You know both the sadness we hide and the sadness we reveal. Nothing on earth or in heaven is hidden from God."

When Ishmael grew thirsty, he began to scuff at the ground with his heel. Hagar climbed the mountain of al-Safa. At that time the valley was lakh, that is to

say, deep, so when she climbed al-Safa and looked down to see whether she could see anything, she saw nothing. So she came down and ran along the valley until she came to al-Marwah. She climbed it but could not see anything from there either. She did that seven times and then came down from al-Marwah to Ishmael, and she found him scuffing the ground with his heel. The spring Zamzam had begun to flow, and she began scraping the ground away from the water with her hand. Wherever some water collected on the ground she scooped it up in her cup and poured it into her waterskin.

The Prophet said: "May God have mercy on her! Had she let it be, it would have remained a flowing spring until the day of resurrection."

### Who is Hajar?

**I. Ziad:** Hajar is the second wife of Abraham – she's, as I was told, Egyptian – she was pretty.

**K. Suleiman:** She is the mother of Ishmael, who is considered the father of the Arabs – Ishak being the father of the Jews.

**A. Bargouthi:** In the Islamic culture the second wife is called "dorah." "Dorah" means something harmful. Harmful to who? To the first wife. Sarah and Hajar were not on good terms.

**K. Atamna:** Hajar has no alternative but to accept the decision of Sarah and Abraham to send her far – from Palestine. Hajar has no alternative.

**M. Mari:** She's been used and she was ready to sacrifice and give.

**I. Ziad:** I believe that was for a special purpose from God.

**M. Watad:** She did not resist in anything. She accepted everything.

**S. Kazmuz:** She lived in a tent – as a refugee I think.

**The Koran – Surah 37** *Chanted in Arabic by Imam Talal Eid, Imam of Boston.*

99. He said: "I will go  
To my Lord! He  
Will surely guide me!

100. "O my Lord! grant me  
A righteous (son)!"

101. So We gave him  
The good news  
Of a boy ready  
To suffer and forbear.

102. Then when (the son)  
Reached (the age of)  
(Serious) work with him,  
He said: "Oh my son!  
I see in a vision  
That I offer thee in sacrifice:  
Now see what is thy view!"  
(The son) said:  
"Oh my father! Do  
As thou art commanded:  
Thou will find me,  
If Allah so will one  
Practicing patience and  
Constancy!"

103. So when they  
had both  
Submitted their will  
(to Allah),  
And he had laid him  
Prostrate on his forehead  
(For sacrifice),

104. We called out to him, "O Abraham!

105. "Thou hast  
already fulfilled  
The vision! – thus indeed  
Do We reward  
Those who do right.

106. For this was obviously  
A trial –

107. And We ransomed him  
With a momentous sacrifice:

108. And We left (this blessing) for  
Him among generations  
(To come)  
In later times:

109. "Peace and salutation  
To Abraham!"

110. Thus indeed do  
We reward  
Those who do right

111. For he was  
Of Our  
Believing Servants.

112. And We gave him  
The good news  
Of Isaac – a prophet –  
One of the Righteous.

113. We blessed him and Isaac:  
But of their progeny  
Are (some) that do right  
And (some) that  
Obviously do wrong,  
To their own souls.

#### *The Near Sacrifice*

**K. Suleiman:** There's a little discrepancy between the Old Testament account of that and the Koranic account.

**A. Bargouthi:** In the Torah it is Isaac. In the Koran it is Ismail.

**J. Tormeh:** Ismail is the first born of Ibrahim. His father told him, "I had a dream."

**M. Tahboub:** I saw in my dream that I am sacrificing you.

**K. Suleiman:** The son said, "Do as you are commanded."

**R. Othman:** The moment he put the knife on his neck.

**K. Suleiman:** The Archangel Gabriel saved the son.

**I. Ziad:** He was ready to sacrifice his life for his father.

**J. Tormeh:** An obedient son.

**M. Mari:** He was not the revolutionary type, he accepted things

**A. El-Khalili:** Ismail – he's the father of Arabs, a Prophet.

**M. Natour:** He's our father, the father of Muhammed.

**J. Tormeh:** Ishak is the second born of Ibrahim.

**A. El-Khalili:** Ishak is one of the Jewish Prophets.

**K. Suleiman:** Isaac was the ancestor of the Kings of Israel and the Prophets and Jesus Christ as well.

**M. Mari:** A challenger and also spoiled and snobbish and arrogant. Ishmael is the oldest and he's the inheritant and we are the descendant and that's that.

**J. Tormeh:** Half-brothers from different mothers.

**M. Natour:** They are all the time connected – one by the other.

#### *El Khalil exterior and towers*

**K. Suleiman:** The Arabic name of Hebron is El Khalil. We call it Abraham "Khalilulah" which means in Arabic the friend of God.

**K. Atamna:** It was reported that King Solomon was ordered by God from Heaven to establish a kind of wall around The Cave. The Moslems, after the conquest of Palestine, destroyed the church and built the mosque there.

**A. El-Khalili:** I visited while it was divided between Moslems and Jews. And inside El Harram Ibrahim I saw a young Israeli soldier with his gun and with his musical radio. On the right it was for Jews – on the left, I think, it was for Moslems, and he is sitting on the middle.

#### *El Khalil Commentary*

**K. Suleiman:** The Arabic name of Hebron is El Khalil. We call Ibrahim, Khalilulah.

**A. Naim:** It was called on his name, El Khalil, which means, friend of God.

**M. Natour:** They say that Abraham is a Jew – he was a Muslim. This place is holy for me. You can't make war against my feelings; it's impossible to get in my heart.

**S. Kazmuz:** It's very mysterious place.

**M. Natour:** I thought of all the history of them. I felt myself a very little piece.

**R. Othman:** I am living now and he lived four thousand years ago and he was a prophet. The Angels, the invisible Angels were sent to him and I'm standing next to his grave.

**A. Naim:** Who knows four thousand years ago was buried? Was a man called Abraham? For me it's in faith, yah? – inside.

**M. Natour:** I hope that Insh'Allah I'll get to Paradise – who knows?

**A. Naim:** You want him, he is near you. This is Khalil – but especially in the night, yah?

#### *Intermission*

### **Act 3: New York City/Austin April/May 1992**

#### **Who is Abraham?**

**E. Lecompte:** Abraham Lincoln?

**R. Serra:** Abraham Lincoln High School, high on the hilltop midst sand and sea, that's about as far's I trace Abram.

**V. Steele:** If I thought of Abraham I would think of the Abraham and Isaac story and I'd think of Renaissance and Mannerist art.

**J. Sabala:** I have no idea who Abraham is or what he represents.

**R. Havern:** – our mythology. The Bible is our mythology.

**R. Serra:** Irrelevant. Introduced and forgotten. In the drawer in the hotel.

**F. DeBose:** – and when you read the Bible, it's God speaking to you, and you speak back to God in prayer.

**V. Davis:** When people say to me, "It has nothing to say to us," I think they've never read it.

**R. Serra:** Old Testament – never read it.

**E. Brummett:** The Old Testament is – history.

**S. Rosenberg:** The Hebrew word has nothing old about it – Torah – teaching.

**E. Brummett:** Jesus is traced back to Abraham.

**F. DeBose:** The father of the faithful.

**S. Dunn:** The father of faith.

**L. Fisher:** The father of faith.

**C. Sagan:** I think of Abraham like this: It's 2100 B.C. or thereabouts. He's living in the third dynasty of Ur. It's a polytheistic society. The chief god is "Nana," who's the moon god. Abraham grows up, he's a city kid. His father makes idols, he crafts idols.

**S. Rosenberg:** God says "Go, I'll tell you where later;" Abraham ups and leaves.

**C. Nivens:** Just leave mother, father, everybody else and go.

**S. Rosenberg:** Abraham ups and leaves.

#### **Genesis XII**

5. And Abram took Sarai his wife,  
and Lot, his brother's son  
and all their things.

#### **Who is Sarah?**

**C. Smith:** She packs up her pots and pans – when she doesn't know where they're going.

**S. Hewitt:** It was God who gave her the name "Sarah."

**C. Smith:** He goes into Egypt and passes Sarah off as his sister.

#### **Genesis XII**

10. And there was a famine in the land  
and Abram went down to Egypt  
to stay there a while  
for the famine was severe in the land.

11. And when he was about to enter Egypt,  
he said to Sarai his wife  
"Behold, I know what a beautiful woman you are."

**C. Smith:** And passes Sarah off as his sister.

#### **Genesis XII**

12. "And it will come to pass  
when the Egyptians see you  
that they will say,  
'This is his wife'  
and they will kill me  
and keep you alive.

13. I pray you,  
say that you are my sister  
that it may go well with me  
for your sake,  
and that my soul shall live  
because of you."

**C. Smith:** Abraham does this so that he will be safe.

#### **Genesis XII**

14. And when Abram entered Egypt,  
the Egyptians saw  
how beautiful the woman was.

15. And the Princes of Pharaoh saw her  
and praised her to Pharaoh,  
and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's palace.

**C. Smith:** So that he will be safe.

**D. Prager:** What was his choice?

#### **Genesis XII**

17. And the Lord afflicted Pharaoh  
and his house with powerful plagues  
because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

**M. Usher:** They say, "divine intervention."

## Genesis XII

18. And Pharaoh sent for Abram and said:  
“What is this you have done to me?  
Why did you not tell me that  
she was your wife?”

20. And Pharaoh put men in charge of him,  
and they sent him off  
with his wife and all he possessed.

**D. Prager:** What was his choice? Says ya know they'll look at you – they see you're beautiful. They'll kill me and take you.

**J. Houston:** Sarah, Sarai, she's the princess, she's the queen. She is also the remembrance of the old matrilineal cultures.

**L. Fisher:** Well, Sarah is naturally the woman who laughed.

**M. MacArthur:** She seems someone to be contended with.

**D. Prager:** She is strong, she laughs – huh – she's real!

**L. Rogers:** Who me? I'm too old.

**V. Davis:** Sarah says to Abraham, “You gotta get rid a this other woman” – and he doesn't say anything back.

**D. Prager:** God says to Abraham. “Listen to what Sarah says.”

## Who is Hagar?

**K. Sonnier:** The next wife I think was Egyptian. I didn't really know very much about her.

**S. Rosenberg:** Hagar is a woman in a difficult position.

**L. Fisher:** Well, she is on the other side.

**D. Berrigan:** I understand Hagar because of my own mother. She was a German immigrant who was never accepted in the Irish clan.

**S. Rosenberg:** Hagar is a woman in a difficult position.

**F. DeBose:** The servant – and of course a servant takes orders.

**C. Nivens:** Whatever you tell them to do – they do it.

**K. Logsdon:** Sarah wanted a child.

**C. Nivens:** His wife was too old – she was past age. Sarah told him – told her husband to go into – to this young woman.

**C. Smith:** She bears a son.

**S. Hewitt:** Got kinda snotty and uppity when she – she was pregnant by the master. Whereas the mistress couldn't manage it.

**A. Danto:** Abraham says, “Look, she's just a maid, do with her what you want.”

**L. Rogers:** She gets kicked out.

**A. Danto:** You can see Lillian Gish playing the part of Hagar – some terribly vulnerable woman.

**V. Davis:** When I think of Hagar, as a black female, I really think of myself.

**L. Rogers:** She gets kicked out.

**V. Davis:** She's the first female that God speaks to.

**L. Rogers:** The first single mother.

**C. Smith:** She doesn't plead and doesn't beg, she goes.

## Who is Ishmael?

**F. Peters:** The first born son of Hagar.

**C. Niven:** He caused a lot a trouble.

**S. Hewitt:** The Lord says he's gonna be a wild man.

**F. Peters:** Driven away with his mother.

**A. Druyan:** He's sort of the James Dean of the Old Testament.

**V. Steele:** From *Moby Dick* – call me Ishmael!

**R. Serra:** As big as the Bible for other people.

**A. Danto:** Call me Ishmael – an outsider, a stranger.

**M. MacArthur:** The loner, and the person we all identify with.

**A. Danto:** The loner, he's the first cowboy. The guy who walks off into the sunset, all by himself.

**S. Rosenberg:** The outsider is a good guy.

American mythic thinking values the man alone.

**V. Steele:** From *Moby Dick!* That would be my first, second, and third response, and then I'd have to really think and go, “oh yeah, and that's from the Bible.”

**F. Peters:** Driven away with his mother.

**S. Rosenberg:** Ishmael is not at all the outcast, in any larger vision of world history.

**F. Peters:** The father of the Arabs, the Arab people.

**V. Davis:** Can we? Can we live with Ismail?

**V. Steele:** From *Moby Dick!* – a kind of everyman who wanders through the world.

**A. Danto:** The loner, the guy who walks off into the sunset, all by himself and looking for something, looking for something.

## The Binding of Isaac

### Genesis XXII

1. And it came to pass, after these things, that God put Abraham to the test and He said to him “Abraham” and he said “Here I am.”

**S. Hewitt:** Sort of testing, testing a metal for strength.

### Genesis XXII

2. And He said: “Take now your son, your favored one, whom you love, Isaac. And go to the land of Moriah and offer him as a burnt offering.”

**S. Hewitt:** Until you push yourself right to the edge, you don't actually know if you've got it in you or not.

### Genesis XXII

3. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, saddled his donkey and took two servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering and set out for the place of which God had spoken.

**V. Steele:** Very difficult for modern people to conceive of.

### Genesis XXII

7. And Isaac said to Abraham his father. “My father,” and he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said “Behold, the flint and the wood, but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?”

**M. Usher:** The kid knows that something is about to happen.

### Genesis XXII

8. And Abraham said, “God will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them walked on together.

**V. Steele:** I wonder why he wouldn't fight his father.

### Genesis XXII

9. And they came to the place of which God had spoken, and Abraham built an altar there.

**S. Rosenberg:** Isaac asks, says, “Look father, I'm a young man, when I see that knife, I don't know what I'll do. Why don't you bind me?”

### Genesis XXII

9. (continued) He laid out the wood, bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar.

10. And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son.

11. And an angel of the Lord called to him from heaven saying, “Abraham, Abraham” and he said, “Here I am.”

12. And He said, “Do not raise your hand against the boy, for now I know you fear God since you have not withheld your son, your favored one from me.”

**D. Prager:** Isaac was never sacrificed – that's the whole point of the story.

**L. Lytton:** There were people around that did that.

### Genesis XXII

15. And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven saying,

16. “I will bless you exceedingly and I will greatly multiply your seed like the stars of heaven and like the sand on the shore of the sea.”

17. “And by your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have listened to my voice.”

**F. DeBose:** Isaac was God's promise.

**C. Smith:** He's almost a connector for me.

**V. Steele:** Very difficult for modern people to conceive of.

### The Cave of Machpelah

**E. Brummett:** He bought a cave – to bury Sarah. It has no particular meaning to me.

**J. Sabala:** I have no idea. I knew growin' up all along that I was Indian, I knew I was Hopi, but...I have no idea.

**V. Steele:** I never heard of it.

**M. MacArthur:** Nothing, it never rang a bell.

**E. Brummett:** And he eventually was buried in it himself.

**S. Rosenberg:** Isaac and Ishmael come together, to bury Abraham.

**F. Peters:** You're talking about our common ancestor, so the stakes are fairly high in a place like that.

### Genesis XVIII

1. And the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the opening of his tent in the heat of the day.

2. And he raised his eyes and looked and behold, three men standing by him. He saw them, ran from the entrance of his tent and bowed to the ground.

**A. Danto:** Why some particular cave would've been chosen is hard to say, but somebody must've been buried there before.

#### **Genesis XVIII**

3. And he said, "My lords, if it please you, do not pass by your servant.

4. Let a little water be brought: bathe your feet and recline under the tree."

6. And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick, three measures of fine flour! Knead, and make cakes!"

7. And Abraham ran to the herd, took a calf, tender and choice...

**F. Peters:** Three strangers come and Abraham without asking questions offers them hospitality.

#### **Midrash, "Chapters of R. Eliezer," 36**

When the angels were revealed to him, he thought they were three travelers from among the ordinary people of the land. He ran to meet them, and wished to prepare a feast for them.

**R. Havern:** Other mythologies take place in sort of a never-never land or off on Mt. Olympus.

**C. Sagan:** There really was an Ur of the Chaldees. Every city was right. There really were herdsmen like Abraham.

#### **Midrash, "Chapters of R. Eliezer" 36 (continued)**

He ran to fetch a calf. But the calf ran before him and into the Cave of Machpelah. And he went in after it and found Adam and Eve on their biers, and they slept, and lights were kindled above them, and a sweet scent was upon them. (And Abraham returned to his guests.)

**D. Berrigan:** Entertaining angels unawares –

**S. Rosenberg:** I expected a cave. All I remember is a narrow thin grate in the ground, and I was pointed by the guide who said, "There, underneath, is, ah, Abraham, there's Sarah, there's Adam and Eve, so the tradition goes."

**D. Berrigan:** Entertaining angels unawares, even in some very clumsy or momentary way.

#### **Genesis XVIII**

8. And he took curds and milk and the calf that was prepared and set these before them, and he stood by them, under the tree, as they ate.



The End



SAVE THE DATE

## **Community Programming Events for The Cave Project**

### **The Cave: Common Ground**

Thursday, April 6, 2017 at 7:00 PM

St. Louis County Library Headquarters  
1640 S. Lindbergh Boulevard  
St. Louis, MO 63131

### **The Poet Rumi: Love is the Bridge**

Tuesday, May 16, 2017 at 7:00 PM

Ladue Chapel Presbyterian Church (USA)  
9450 Clayton Road  
St. Louis, MO 63124

### **Panel Discussion: Judaism, Christianity, Islam – What Do They Have in Common?**

Sunday, June 11, 2017 at 2:00 PM

St. Louis Islamic Center Nur  
9528 Reavis Barracks Road  
St. Louis, MO 63123

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## **Arts & Faith St. Louis Annual September Concert**

The annual interfaith concert at The Sheldon Concert Hall, a signature effort of Arts & Faith St. Louis, will take place on **Sunday, September 10, 2017 at 5:30 PM**. The event began six years ago on the 10th anniversary of 9/11 and has continued each year to inspire thoughtful discussion among faith and arts communities through shared experiences of music and the visual arts. This coming year's event will focus on youth and will feature both top outstanding professional musicians and young singers from many faith traditions.

Please plan to join us on September 10, 2017 as we continue to work together to build a harmonious St. Louis!



Arts & Faith St. Louis

3648 Washington Blvd.

St. Louis, MO 63108

314.533.9900 | [artsfaithstl.org](http://artsfaithstl.org)