A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri
A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri

John Gee

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS)
at Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah
Design by Bjorn W. Pendleton

John Gee (Ph.D., Yale University) is assistant research professor of Egyptology at FARMS and research associate for the Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (CPART) at Brigham Young University.

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) at Brigham Young University
P.O. Box 7113
University Station
Provo, Utah 84602

© 2000 by The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America
07 06 05 04 03 02 01

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gee, John.
A guide to the Joseph Smith papyri / by John Gee.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-934893-54-3
1. Book of Abraham. 2. Egyptian language—Papyri, Hieroglyphic. I. Title
BX8629.P5 G44 2000
289.3’2—dc21
00-009956
Contents

Illustrations ............................................................................................................. vi
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................. vii
Introduction .......................................................................................................... ix

1. Historical Overview ......................................................................................... 1
   Early History of the Papyri ............................................................................ 1
   History of the Translation of the Book of Abraham .................................. 4
   History of the Publication of the Book of Abraham .................................... 4
   Later History of the Papyri ........................................................................... 6

2. The Ancient Owners of the Papyri ............................................................... 15

3. Theories to Explain the Book of Abraham ................................................... 19
   Relationship of the Book of Abraham Text to the Papyri ....................... 21
   Date of the Text of the Book of Abraham .................................................. 23
   Date of the Papyri ......................................................................................... 25
   Transmission of the Text .............................................................................. 27
   Nature of the Facsimiles ............................................................................ 28

4. The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham ....................................................... 33

5. The Role of the Book of Abraham in Latter-day Saint Scripture ............... 43

6. Further Reading .............................................................................................. 47

Glossary of Names .............................................................................................. 51
Glossary of Terms ............................................................................................... 61
Notes ...................................................................................................................... 65
Illustration Credits .............................................................................................. 67
Illustrations

Egypt in Greco-Roman Times........................................................viii
Joseph Smith Papyrus I...............................................................x
Owners of the Papyri ................................................................ 2
The Joseph Smith Papyri at Thebes ............................................ 3
Timeline for the Translation and Publication of
the Book of Abraham .................................................................. 5
Publication History of the Hypocephalus .................................... 7
Travels of the Joseph Smith Papyri in the United States .......... 8
An Overview of the Papyri That Joseph Smith Owned .......... 10–11
Original Extent of the Joseph Smith Papyri ......................... 12–13
Joseph Smith Papyrus II ............................................................ 14
Egyptian Traditions about Abraham ....................................... 16
Joseph Smith Papyrus III ........................................................... 18
Theories about the Book of Abraham ....................................... 20
Kirtland Egyptian Papers............................................................ 22
Egyptian Chronology .................................................................. 24
Greco-Roman Egyptian Chronology ....................................... 26
Joseph Smith Papyrus IV ........................................................... 32
A Brief Outline of the Contents of
the Book of Abraham ............................................................ 35
Jackal Masks ............................................................................. 36
Facsimile 1 of the Book of Abraham ........................................ 37
Wing or Hand? ......................................................................... 38
Facsimile 2 of the Book of Abraham ........................................ 39
Figure 7 from Cairo CG 9446 .................................................... 40
Facsimile 3 of the Book of Abraham ........................................ 41
Joseph Smith Papyri V and VI .................................................. 42
Joseph Smith Papyri VII and VIII ......................................... 46
Joseph Smith Papyrus IX .......................................................... 50
Joseph Smith Papyri X and XI ................................................ 60
Acknowledgements

This publication would not have been possible without the assistance of several individuals. Without the encouragement and support of M. Gerald Bradford, the director of research at the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, this publication would never have seen the light of day. Clark Gee, Brian M. Hauglid, Matthew Roper, Brian L. Smith, John A. Tvedt
nes, and my wife, Kathleen, have provided important feedback. Wendy H. Christian, Alison V. P. Coutts, and Angela Clyde of the FARMS editorial staff have been unfa
ilingly helpful in preparing the manuscript for publication. I would also like to thank Carmen Cole for helping make the charts readable; Julie A. Dozier, Paula W. Hicken, Linda M. Sheffield, and Sandra A. Thorne for proofreading the manuscript; Rebecca Sterrett for producing the maps; and Bjorn Pendleton for designing the volume. My sincere appreciation also goes to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for permission to publish pictures of the Joseph Smith Papyri and the Kirtland Egyptian Papers, which reside in their archives, and to whom the intellectual property rights of these materials belong.
Egypt in Greco-Roman Times