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Egyptian Papyri and the Book of Abraham: Some Questions and Answers

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In 1835 Joseph Smith began translating some ancient Egyptian papyri that he had obtained from an exhibitor passing through Kirtland, Ohio. He soon announced, “Much to our joy [we] found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham.”¹ While we do not know how much the Prophet translated, we do know that some of his translation was published in serial form and eventually canonized as the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price. For nearly one hundred years, it was thought that all these papyri had eventually made their way to the Wood Museum in Chicago, where they were destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

However, in 1967 New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art presented The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with portions of the papyri Joseph Smith had owned, which the museum had purchased some twenty years earlier. This small collection of eleven papyri fragments came to be known as the Joseph Smith Papyri. Because these papyri contained the drawing which became Facsimile 1 in the Book of Abraham, and because this facsimile is the first page of the Book of Abraham, most people assumed that

the text adjacent to this drawing (drawings on papyrus are known as *vignettes* to Egyptologists) was the source for the Book of Abraham.

When the text that accompanied the vignette was translated, it turned out to be a common late Egyptian funerary text known as the Book of Breathings.² It bore no resemblance to the Book of Abraham that Joseph Smith had translated from his papyri. Furthermore, Egyptological studies of the facsimiles drew conclusions about their meanings that were different than those Joseph Smith had presented. For many, this seemed to prove that Joseph Smith's translation of the papyri and his interpretation of the vignettes were a fabrication and that he did not possess the ability to translate ancient documents. If this is the case, then his ability to translate Egyptian characters from the golden plates into the Book of Mormon is also put into question. If these two books of scripture are fabrications, are any of his revelations or teachings reliable? The credibility of all his revelations is thrown into question.

While these are reasonable questions, the scenario from which they stem is based on assumptions that deserve closer scrutiny—assumptions about the text of the Book of Abraham and about the facsimiles. We will find that in many cases we do not understand exactly what is going on. The evidence we have often does not allow for us to develop a clear picture, and scholars are in the midst of an intensive process of trying to understand the story behind the Book of Abraham. However, we will also see that while we do not necessarily have a definitive answer, it is clear that the answers put forth by the critics of the Prophet are problematic, for the evidence does not generally support their assumptions.

The Source of the Book of Abraham

We should begin by asking what segment of the whole body of manuscripts was the source of the Book of Abraham. As noted above, most critics have assumed that the source of the text is the hieroglyphs adjacent to Facsimile 1 on the papyri,³ but a closer look at the ancient sources themselves and contemporary accounts of Joseph Smith's translation process brings that assumption into question.

To begin with, we must ask if vignettes are always associated with the adjacent text in other Egyptian papyri from this time period. We know with some degree of precision the dating of the Facsimile 1 papyrus (also known as Joseph Smith Papyrus 1, or JSP 1), because we know exactly who the owner of this papyrus was. He lived around 200 BC and was a fairly prominent priest



Book of Abraham, Facsimile 1. Facsimiles from the Book of Abraham were first published on March 1, 1842 in the *Times and Seasons*.

in Thebes.⁴ (Incidentally, this priest is not alone as a practitioner of Egyptian religion who possessed or used Jewish religious texts. We can identify others, particularly priests from Thebes).⁵ During this period, it was common for the text and its accompanying picture to be separated from each other, for the wrong vignette to be associated with a text, and for vignettes and texts to be completely misaligned on a long scroll.⁶ Frequently there is a mismatch between the content of a vignette and the content of the text, or the connection is not readily apparent.⁷ This is particularly common in Books of Breathing, the type of text adjacent to Facsimile 1 on the Joseph Smith Papyri.⁸ Incongruity between texts and adjacent vignettes is endemic to papyri of this era.⁹ Thus, the argument that the text of the Book of Abraham

had to be translated from the hieroglyphs next to the vignette is not convincing when compared with ancient Egyptian texts from the same period.

Besides the relationship of vignette and text, we also have to ask what portion of the papyri Joseph Smith translated from, according to his contemporaries. Eyewitness accounts describe both the papyri collection and which part of the collection was the source of the Book of Abraham. W. W. Phelps writes of “two papyrus rolls, besides some other ancient Egyptian writings.”¹⁰ We can identify five different ancient owners of the papyri from the fragments and facsimiles we have today, which indicates that there were at least five different sets of papyri, at least two of which were scrolls.¹¹ Other contemporary witnesses describe a number of fragments of papyrus contained under glass¹² (also described as “glazed slides”),¹³ a “long roll” on which the Book of Abraham was reported to be written,¹⁴ and “another roll,”¹⁵ thus confirming Phelps’s account of several fragments (adding the information that at some point they had been put in framed glass) and his report of “two papyrus rolls” (specifying that one was longer than the other).

Descriptions of the vignettes as framed fragments or as glazed slides match the descriptions of the papyri fragments that ended up in the Metropolitan Museum.¹⁶ In fact, one of the fragments in the Met’s collection was still in its frame. It seems that at least some of these slides, probably including the one that contained Facsimile 1, came from the frayed ends of the outside wrap of a papyrus scroll, for outside wraps of scrolls receive the most damage. These ends were likely cut off and put under glass to protect them.¹⁷ Facsimile 1 seems to have been separated from the rest of its scroll in order to protect it, and later owners caused further separation by selling it to the Metropolitan Museum while the scroll from which it was cut went elsewhere.

The other vignettes on the long rolls as described by witnesses match the description provided by the catalog of the Wood Museum of the scrolls they received from Joseph Smith’s collection.¹⁸ Those who saw the papyri in Joseph’s day agreed that the long roll was the source of the Book of Abraham, even accounts from after the time Facsimile 1 had been separated and framed in glass. Because we know the long roll was destroyed in the Chicago fire, assumptions that the Book of Abraham came from the Metropolitan Museum fragments run contrary to contemporary eyewitness accounts. Judging from these accounts, it seems the Book of Abraham came from the scroll, not the fragments.

Was the “long roll” long enough to contain both the Book of Breathing and the text of the Book of Abraham? While it is difficult to reconstruct the

original length of the scrolls, the most accurate attempt to do so comes from John Gee's application of a formula used by other Egyptologists by which the circumference of the roll and how tightly it was wound can be used to calculate the original length of a papyrus roll.¹⁹ Employing this mathematical formula to the long scroll from which Facsimile 1 was cut, Gee has estimated its length at forty-one feet.²⁰ If this calculation is correct, the scroll was undoubtedly long enough to contain the Book of Breathings, the Book of Abraham, and other texts. Long scrolls were not unusual in Egypt in this time period.²¹ While it was common for papyrus scrolls to be written on both sides, we cannot currently know if this was the case with the "long roll." If it was, then according to the formulaic calculation there could be as much as eighty-two feet of writings on this scroll. Long scrolls like this typically contained a variety of texts.

Kirtland Egyptian Papers

Many critics feel there is other evidence for asserting that the hieroglyphs next to Facsimile 1 are the source of the Book of Abraham. Their argument stems from a group of papers known as the Kirtland Egyptian Papers. These poorly named documents are an eclectic collection of papers, 16 of which are associated with Egyptian characters or with the Book of Abraham. A few of these papers contain the text of the Book of Abraham written in English by several individuals with a single Egyptian character written next to each paragraph in the left margin. Because these Egyptian characters match characters from the Book of Breathings, critics have assumed that these manuscripts record the translation process. Supposedly the translator looked at a few characters from the Book of Breathings and derived the Book of Abraham from them.²² This premise assumes that the characters were written first and that the text written next to them was created afterward as an attempt to translate the characters' meaning.

There are, however, a number of problems with this assumption: (1) Scribal errors and other critical textual clues make it very clear that these papers represent later copies of the text of the Book of Abraham, not the original translation; they were probably not even first- or second-generation copies. Thus the characters at the right were not characters they were trying to work through on these papers; they must mean something else. (2) The Egyptian characters appear to sometimes overwrite the English. If this is the case, then it is clear they were later additions. (3) Eyewitness accounts

establish that the long roll, not the glazed slide containing Facsimile 1, was the source of the Book of Abraham. Modern-day theories about the Kirtland Egyptian Papers must reconcile with eyewitness accounts rather than ignore them.²³ (4) We have reason to believe that while Joseph Smith was involved in creating some of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers (two of the sixteen pages contain Joseph's handwriting), at other times his associates did this work without him. The pages whose composition we can date come from a period when the Prophet was out of town and the School of the Prophets seemingly went on without him. Adding up all these scraps of evidence, it seems highly improbable that this collection of papers represents Joseph's original translation.

So what are these papers? Do they represent an attempt on the part of a group who was very interested in ancient languages to create an Egyptian grammar after Joseph had translated the Book of Abraham? Do the Egyptian figures serve as fanciful and archaic bullet points? Were the Egyptian characters placed beside the text to excite the minds of potential readers in hopes of increasing the book's circulation? At the present, we do not have enough evidence to discern what these papers represent, but it seems unlikely that they represent an English translation of the Egyptian characters written on the side. The evidence points away from this conclusion. Thus, while we cannot present an answer as to what these papers are, we can say the evidence does not support the critics' claims.

The Text of the Book of Abraham

When trying to determine the authenticity of any text, we must examine the contents of the text itself. We have two possibilities. Does the text exhibit characteristics of the period it claims to be from or of the time when it was first published? Many have protested that the Book of Abraham contains nineteenth-century anachronisms.

Some critics have claimed that the planetary system described in Abraham chapter 3 displays characteristics of a Newtonian understanding of the universe, which was common in Joseph Smith's day.²⁴ The most detailed examinations of the system described in the Book of Abraham cannot yield a firm conclusion as to what known astronomic model is represented, but the Newtonian system is the least similar. Some scholars have argued that the third chapter of Abraham, with its astronomical descriptions, represents the geocentric model that was common in Abraham's day.²⁵ But equally strong evidence points to an astronomic model similar to that subscribed to by

today's astronomers, going well beyond Newtonian physics.²⁶ While both of these models match the Book of Abraham description of astronomy better than a nineteenth-century model, neither is fully capable of accounting for all aspects of Abraham 3. Perhaps this is because the text describes astronomy from an altogether different paradigm that we cannot understand. Perhaps this is allegorical astronomy—not an accurate astronomical paradigm but a model that conveys doctrinal principles.²⁷ In any case, the explanation that most poorly fits the facts is the one put forward by critics.

Similarly, questions about the use of the term “Chaldees”²⁸ and the employment of strange words in the Book of Abraham²⁹ have been answered satisfactorily. These are just some examples of the critiques of the text of the Book of Abraham itself. I am unaware of any that have not been answered to my satisfaction.

Some have maintained that the heading to the Book of Abraham (“The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus”) means that Abraham himself produced the writings on the papyrus that the Prophet Joseph had.³⁰ However, since we know that the papyri date to over a millennium and a half later than when Abraham was in Egypt, the papyri could not have been written by Abraham himself. The critics have confused the difference between a text and a manuscript. A text, however many copies of it exist in the world, is written by one author. However, each copy of that text is its own manuscript. When the heading notes that the text was written by Abraham's own hand, it notes who the author is, not who copied down the particular manuscript that came into Joseph's possession.

While critics pounce on what they see as anachronisms, what they ignore are textual elements that support an authentic Abrahamic context. Space permits only one example: Abraham mentions that the altar on which he was nearly sacrificed was located in a valley called Olishem. During Joseph Smith's day, this name was completely unknown. However, since then an Egyptian text roughly contemporary with Abraham, which outlines geographic areas in the Levant, names an Olishem.³¹ Further, this Olishem is in the same area as a likely candidate for the city Ur.³² The odds that Joseph would make up a random name that happened to match a real ancient place in the correct time and region are extremely slight.

Critics also disregard textual elements within the Book of Abraham that are corroborated in other ancient traditions. A substantial number

of elements that are not found in the Bible are found in both the Book of Abraham and in other ancient texts (for example, the idolatry of Abraham's father and Abraham's near sacrifice and divine deliverance). In all there are too many corroborating elements in other ancient traditions to be easily discounted.³³ Furthermore, an investigation into the common knowledge about Abraham in Joseph Smith's day found that the Book of Abraham contained things unlike anything Joseph's contemporaries were teaching. None of the writings contemporary with Joseph Smith emphasized covenants, a literal promised land, Egypt, the idolatry of Abraham's father, or Abraham's near sacrifice.³⁴ Additionally, an Abrahamic creation account is totally unique to the Book of Abraham.³⁵ It does not appear that this book is a product of nineteenth-century thinking.

The Facsimiles

What about the facsimiles, with their mysterious explanations provided by Joseph Smith? The possible interpretations of the facsimiles are complicated and numerous. What are we to make of them? Typically people have asked what the Egyptians would say these drawings meant, and how this compares with what Joseph said they meant. Here a distinction must be observed, for when this question is asked, it is answered not by ancient Egyptians but by modern Egyptologists. This is, of course, understandable because we do not have access to any ancient Egyptians, and we assume modern Egyptologists are reliable replacements. But we know that Egyptologists are often wrong regarding what Egyptians would have said on the subject. One study demonstrated that in the few instances where we have found Egyptian labels about various figures in hypocephali (the type of drawing that Facsimile 2 is), they hardly ever match up with what Egyptologists say.³⁶ Thus it is problematic to look to modern Egyptologists for what ancient Egyptians would have said various drawings represented.

Furthermore, we cannot be sure that we should be looking to the Egyptians to know how to interpret these symbols in the Book of Abraham. What if Abraham's descendants took Egyptian elements of culture and applied their own meanings to them? We know that his numerous offspring did so on many occasions.³⁷ For example, Jesus himself did this when he gave the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, which clearly draws from the Egyptian tale of Setne-Kamwas. The *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *Testament of Abraham* are two more examples of Semitic adaptations of Egyptian religious traditions.³⁸

Thus, is it not possible that we should look for a Jewish interpretation of the Egyptian drawings, rather than for an Egyptian interpretation? Or what if the drawings were originally done in Jewish/Israelite artistic style, but when they were recopied in the second century BC by an Egyptian, the Egyptian artist redrew them according to his artistic customs? Where should we then look to know how to interpret these drawings?³⁹ It is apparent that there are serious problems with trying to verify or disprove Joseph's explanations of the facsimiles by comparing them to Egyptological explanations.

If we do try to make sense of the facsimiles, what do we find? Let us start with Facsimile 1. While many detractors have said it is a typical drawing accompanying Books of Breathings (and thus could not represent Abraham being nearly sacrificed), this claim is inaccurate. This is the only known example of this type of drawing being adjacent to, or connected in any way with, a copy of the Book of Breathings. While drawings somewhat similar to Facsimile 1 are well known, association with a Book of Breathings is unparalleled. This drawing has no resemblance to drawings ordinarily associated with breathings texts. What are we to make of this anomaly? The most obvious conclusion is that Facsimile 1 is not adjacent to the text it should be associated with.

Some scholars have suggested that Facsimile 1 is a typical embalming scene rather than being a depiction of Abraham on an altar. Yet this vignette is as different from other embalming scenes as it is similar to them. The only similarities are that a person lies on a lion couch with another person standing nearby. Others suggest that this scene's closest parallels are from a series of depictions on the walls of a temple in Denderah and that the figure on the couch ought to be associated with Osiris. The closest iconographic parallel at Denderah is accompanied by a caption that reads that the goddess Bastet has commanded those who follow her to "slaughter your enemies,"⁴⁰ which means that the closest iconographic match to Facsimile 1 also matches what the scene is supposed to be about in the Book of Abraham, namely that someone in the scene was in danger and received protection.

Other lion couch scenes at the Denderah Temple depict Anubis and the sons of Horus defending someone from his adversaries; list Shesmu, a god associated with human sacrifice, as being part of the scene; or discuss being hacked to pieces, being burned, or being sent to the slaughterhouse.⁴¹ While I am not certain that the scenes at Denderah are real parallels to Facsimile 1, if critics want to associate them with the facsimile, they must also be willing

to associate them with the sacrificial elements of the Denderah scenes, which parallel Joseph's interpretation of this facsimile.

The similarities notwithstanding, Facsimile 1 is unique among lion couch scenes in a number of ways. In this scene the figure is neither in mummified form nor naked, as is the case in the supposed parallels. Also, in this scene the figure on the couch has two hands raised in a position that almost certainly denotes a struggle.⁴² And though one cannot tell this from the printed facsimile, on the original papyrus it is clear that the priest is standing between the legs of the person on the altar and the altar itself. I have been unable to imagine a reason for this unless the person on the altar was trying to get off. If the priest were helping him get on the altar, he would not be between his legs; this is equally true for any other scenario of which I can conceive. The unique features of this depiction denote some kind of movement, a feature not found in parallel scenes.⁴³ An embalming scene or a scene having to do with the Book of Breathings would not include the kind of struggle or movement suggested by the outstretched arms and moving legs.

It is also worth noting that there is a papyrus from the Roman period with a person on a lion couch whom the Egyptians themselves labeled as Abraham.⁴⁴ This confirms that Egyptians sometimes associated a figure on a lion couch with Abraham.⁴⁵

Critics have also claimed that Joseph's interpretations of Facsimile 1 could not be correct because the Egyptians did not engage in human sacrifice. However, according to the text, the depicted near-sacrifice of Abraham did not take place in Egypt. Though Abraham tells us that it was done after the manner of the Egyptians (see Abraham 1:11), it may have been a Levantine kind of sacrifice performed with Egyptian trappings. Moreover, we have solid evidence that the Egyptians did in fact engage in human sacrifice, and typically for the same kinds of reasons that the Book of Abraham says brought Abraham to the altar. The ancient owner of JSP 1 was a priest who performed rituals that sometimes included human sacrifice.⁴⁶ This is a topic which I and others have addressed in print and in talks. In my opinion, it is now well established that the Egyptians sacrificed humans, and their practices have striking similarities to the story presented in the Book of Abraham.⁴⁷

Similar arguments can be made for the other two facsimiles as well. While the current venue does not permit space to delve into details, it is worth noting that both Facsimiles 2 and 3 have elements which match up well with Joseph Smith's interpretations, and each has typically been very misunderstood by

critics.⁴⁸ Even more significantly, both of these kinds of drawings were associated by the Egyptians themselves with Abraham. These associations are roughly contemporary with the Joseph Smith Papyri. For example, the Egyptians called Facsimile 2 a *wedjat* eye,⁴⁹ while elsewhere they described Abraham as a pupil of the *wedjat* eye.⁵⁰ The Egyptians typically identified Osiris as the figure who sits on the throne in near-parallels of Facsimile 3, yet at times they labeled this figure as Abraham.⁵¹ To me it is compelling that each facsimile is a type of drawing that the ancient Egyptians themselves associated with Abraham. Coincidence cannot account for all three cases.

As was pointed out above, there are many concepts having to do with the Book of Abraham that we are still trying to understand. Do we currently have all the answers? Certainly not. Do we have better answers than our critics? Unabashedly yes. Do we understand as much as we would like? No, and this is part of why we are in such an intensive study of the Book of Abraham. There are so many things we want to understand and so many fruitful avenues of research. I expect that I will spend my life trying to better understand this wonderfully complex book and its accompanying story. Will questions arise in the future for which we will not immediately have answers? Undoubtedly. Are there questions that arise from the facsimiles that I cannot explain now? Yes. Joseph identifies certain people in Facsimile 3 and points out that their names are indicated by the hieroglyphs over their heads. As I translate these hieroglyphs, they do not match Joseph's interpretations. There are some facts that cast light on this. I am not disturbed by Joseph labeling Figure 2 as a male when the picture and text identify a female. This happened more often in Egyptian papyri than one would think. Strikingly, the ancient owner of Facsimile 3 was pictured as both a male and female in his own Book of the Dead. Yet this does not fully satisfy my questions about how I understand the labels Egyptologically as opposed to how Joseph Smith understood them.

While I am not satisfied with the answer thus far, I am not concerned. During more than a decade of research on this subject, I have often found that I have misunderstood the Book of Abraham and made incorrect assumptions about it. Even more frequently I have found mistakes and inaccuracies in my own professional discipline, Egyptology. We are a fairly young discipline, and just as research on the Book of Abraham is a work in progress, so is Egyptology as a whole. Our history as a discipline is full of gaffes, mistakes, stumbles, and wonderful discoveries and corrections. Many of these corrections have been immensely helpful in my efforts to understand the Book of Abraham.

Thus, while there are questions which have not been fully answered, I know that the search for answers is part of scholarly progress. As an Egyptologist I have far more unanswered questions regarding Egyptian history than I have regarding the Book of Abraham. I was once dissatisfied with the question of human sacrifice as depicted in Facsimile 1, and no answer appeared to be forthcoming. But we have learned more, and now I am satisfied. I once was dissatisfied with explanations of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers, but as we have done further research I have become satisfied (though I still have questions as to what they really represent). Claims of textual anachronisms once gave me pause, but research has answered each of these questions. How grateful I am that I did not abandon my faith over these questions, for they have now been answered so well. As we wrestle with these issues, undoubtedly both critics and defenders will make missteps along the way. Most likely there will be questions for which we will not find answers in my lifetime. Perhaps we will in the next. We have eventually found answers to past questions, so I research furiously but wait patiently for answers to current ones. **RE**

Notes

1. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 2:236.

2. The first to recognize the ancient text was Hugh Nibley in his book *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975); for the latest edition of this publication, see Hugh Nibley, *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, vol. 16, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2005). For the best edition and translation of this document, see Michael D. Rhodes, *The Hor Book of Breathings: A Translation and Commentary*, vol. 2 of *Studies in the Book of Abraham*, ed. John Gee (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002).

3. See, for example, Grant H. Palmer, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 16. See also Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Case Against Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1968), 2:159, 3:330; and Charles M. Larson, *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Institute for Religious Research, 1992), 199–226, 151.

4. See Marc Coenen, “The Dating of the Papyri Joseph Smith I, X and XI and Min Who Massacres His Enemies,” in *Egyptian Religion: The Last Thousand Years*, ed. Willy Clarysse, Antoon Schoors, and Harco Willems (Leuven, Belgium: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1998); Robert K. Ritner, “The ‘Breathing Permit of Hôr’ Thirty-Four Years Later,” *Dialogue* 33, no. 4 (2000): 99; Marc Coenen, “Horos, Prophet of Min Who Massacres His Enemies,” *Chronique d'Égypte* 74 (1999): 257–59; John Gee, *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 25–27; John Gee, “History of a Theban Priesthood,” in *Proceedings of “Et maintenant ce ne sont plus que des villages. . .” Thèbes et sa région aux époques hellénistique, romaine et Byzantine* (Brussels, forthcoming); Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 4–6; and Jan Quaegebeur, “Books of Thoth Belonging to Owners of Portraits? On Dating Later Hieratic Funerary Papyri,”

in *Portraits and Masks: Burial Customs in Roman Egypt*, ed. Morris L. Bierbrier (London: British Museum, 1997), 74. While Nibley and Ritner prefer the later Roman period date, the earlier date espoused by Gee, Quaegebeur, and Coenen is almost certainly correct.

5. See John Gee, "Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7, no. 1 (1995): 29–46, 72–75, where he discusses at least twenty examples. See also David E. Aune, "PGM V. 459–89," in *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation including the Demotic Spells*, vol. 1: *Texts*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986), 109–10; and Origen, *Contra Celsum* I, 22.

6. See Malcolm Mosher Jr., "The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead in the Late Period: A Study of Revisions Evident in Evolving Vignettes, and the Possible Chronological or Geographical Implications for Differing Versions of Vignettes" (PhD diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1989), 1:53–54. On the topic of vignettes and accompanying texts containing incongruencies, see Valérie Angenot, "Discordance entre texte et image. Deux exemples de l'ancien et du nouvel empires," *Göttinger Miszellen* 187 (2002): 11–21.

7. See Marc Étienne, "Livre des Morts au nom de Hor," in *La mort n'est pas une fin. Pratiques funéraires en Égypte d'Alexandre à Cléopâtre*, ed. Alain Charron (Arles: Musée de l'Arles antique, 2002), 145; and Jean-Claude Goyon, *Le Papyrus du Louvre N. 3279* (Cairo: IFAO, 1966), 2.

8. Coenen, "Dating of the Papyri Joseph Smith," 1123.

9. See Coenen, "Horus, Prophet of Min"; Mosher, "Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead"; and Etienne, "Livre des Morts au nom de Hor."

10. W. W. Phelps, letter dated July 19–20, 1835, quoted in Leah Y. Phelps, "Letters of Faith from Kirtland," *Improvement Era*, August 1942, 529.

11. For information on the ancient owners, see John Gee, "The Original Owners of the Joseph Smith Papyri" (FARMS Paper GEE-99a, 1999).

12. Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the past from the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), 386.

13. Henry Caswall, *The City of the Mormons; or, Three Days at Nauvoo, in 1842* (London: Rivington, 1842), 22.

14. Charlotte Haven to her mother, February 19, 1843, in "A Girl's Letters from Nauvoo," *Overland Monthly*, December 1890, 624, cited in Jay M. Todd, *The Saga of the Book of Abraham* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 245.

15. Charlotte Haven to her mother, February 19, 1843, 624, quoted in John Gee, "Eyewitness, Hearsay and Physical Evidence of the Joseph Smith Papyri," in *The Disciple as Witness: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Andrew H. Hedges, Donald W. Parry, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 175–217.

16. John Gee, "New Light on the Joseph Smith Papyri," *FARMS Review* 19, no. 2 (2007): 254.

17. According to Caswall, *City of the Mormons*, 22, JSP 1 was already mounted under glass in a "glazed slide."

18. Gee, "New Light," 254.

19. See Friedhelm Hoffmann, "Die Länge des P. Spiegelberg," in *Acta Demotica: Acts of Fifth International Conference of Demotists* (Pisa: Giardini Editori e Stampatori, 1994), 151.

20. John Gee, "Some Puzzles from the Joseph Smith Papyri," *FARMS Review* 20, no. 1 (2008): 117–18.

21. See W. John Tait, "Demotic Literature: Forms and Genres," in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, ed. Antonio Loprieno (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 182–83. For examples, see The Greenfield Papyrus (in the British Museum) and Papyrus Harris I (also in the British Museum). See also Gee, "Some Puzzles," 118.

22. See Larson, *By His Own Hand*, 41.

23. Brian M. Hauglid, *A Textual History of the Book of Abraham: Manuscripts and Editions* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Studies, forthcoming). This conclusion has been reached independently by Brian Hauglid and by John Gee. Based on my careful examination of high-quality and enlarged photographs of the manuscripts and papyri, I agree with this conclusion.

24. See Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, "Joseph Smith's Scriptural Cosmology," in *The Word of God*, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 218 n. 78; and Palmer, *Insider's View*, 24–25. Palmer's writings show that he accepted the view of anti-Mormon writers without actually critically looking at the evidence himself. This is all too common.

25. For an excellent discussion on this point of view, see John Gee, William J. Hamblin, and Daniel C. Peterson, "'And I Saw the Stars': The Book of Abraham and Ancient Geocentric Astronomy," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies and Brigham Young University, 2005), 1–16.

26. See Michael D. Rhodes and J. Ward Moody, "Astronomy and the Creation in the Book of Abraham," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, 17–35. Portions of this article also appear in modified form in a recent commentary (Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Verse-by-Verse Commentary* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005]). For an excellent discussion on how the two systems work together, see Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 454–55.

27. Kerry Muhlestein, "Encircling Astronomy and the Egyptians: An Approach to Abraham 3," *Religious Educator* 10, no. 1 (2009): 33–50.

28. See Stephen E. Thompson, "Egyptology and the Book of Abraham," *Dialogue* 28 (Spring 1995): 147–55.

29. See Michael D. Rhodes, "The Joseph Smith Hypocephalus—Seventeen Years Later" (FARMS Paper RHO-94, 1994) for examples of words with confirmatory etymological roots we recognize. See Gee, "Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob," 77, for examples of words in other Egyptian papyri which no one recognizes and which sound outlandish.

30. Thompson, "Egyptology and the Book of Abraham," 150.

31. "Inscription of Naram-Sin, the Campaign Against Armanu and Ebla," in William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds., *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 2, *Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 245. The line reads, "From the Bank of the Euphrates until Ulisum." See also Gee, "Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob," 26–27.

32. For a discussion on another text naming Olishem (in the Rim-Sin inscription) and the location of Ur, see John Lundquist, "Was Abraham in Ebla?" in *Studies in Scripture II: The Pearl of Great Price*, ed. Robert L. Miller and Kent Jackson (Salt Lake City: Randall, 1985), 234–35; and Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Where Was Ur of the Chaldees?" in *The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God*, ed., H. Donl Peterson and Charles W. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1989), 136 n. 44.

33. See Brian M. Hauglid, "The Book of Abraham and Muslim Tradition," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, 131–46; Jared Ludlow, "Abraham's Visions of the Heavens," in

Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant, 57–74; and John Gee, Brian M. Hauglid, and John A. Tvedtnes, *Traditions About the Early Life of Abraham*, vol. 1 of *Studies in the Book of Abraham*, ed. John Gee (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001).

34. Andrew H. Hedges, “A Wanderer in a Strange Land: Abraham in America, 1800–1850,” in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, 175–88. See also Kerry Muhlestein, “Approaching Understandings in the Book of Abraham,” *FARMS Review* 18, no. 2 (2006): 235.

35. Muhlestein, “Approaching Understandings in the Book of Abraham,” 235.

36. John Gee, “Towards an Interpretation of Hypocephali,” “*Le lotus qui sort du terre*”: *Mélanges offerts à Edith Varga*, Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts Supplément-2001 (Budapest: Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts, 2001), 325–34.

37. See Kevin L. Barney, “The Facsimiles and Semitic Adaptation of Existing Sources,” in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, 107–30.

38. See Barney, “Facsimiles and Semitic Adaptation”; Jared W. Ludlow, “Reinterpretation of the Judgment Scene in the Testament of Abraham” in *Proceedings of the Evolving Egypt: Innovation, Appropriation and Reinterpretation*, ed. John Gee and Kerry Muhlestein (British Archaeological Reports, forthcoming); and Jared W. Ludlow, *Abraham Meets Death: Narrative Humor in the Testament of Abraham* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

39. Muhlestein, “Approaching Understandings,” 239.

40. Text in Sylvie Cauville, *Le temple de Dendara: les chapelles osiriennes vol. x* (Cairo, French Institute of Oriental Archaeology, 1997). I am indebted to John Gee for providing this translation.

41. See Gee, “Some Puzzles,” 120.

42. While some have doubted this idea, the latest treatment by a non-LDS Egyptologist supports it (see Lanny Bell, “The Ancient Egyptian ‘Books of Breathing,’ the Mormon ‘Book of Abraham,’ and the Development of Egyptology in America,” in *Egypt and Beyond: Essays Presented to Leonard H. Lesko upon His Retirement from the Wilbour Chair of Egyptology at Brown University June 2005*, ed. Stephen E. Thompson and Peter Der Manuelian [Providence: Brown University Press, 2008], 28).

43. Bell, “Ancient Egyptian ‘Books of Breathing,’” 27, states that “every proposed reconstruction of the vignette of P. JS 1 entails attributing to it at least one ‘unique’ element.”

44. John Gee, “References to Abraham Found in Two Egyptian Texts,” *Insights* (September 1991): 1, 3; Rhodes, “Joseph Smith Hypocephalus”; John Gee, “Abraham in Ancient Egyptian Texts,” *Ensign*, July 1992, 60–62.

45. See Gee, “Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob,” 29.

46. See Gee, “History of a Theban Priesthood,” 9–11; Kerry Muhlestein, “Violence in the Service of Order: The Religious Framework for Sanctioned Killing in Ancient Egypt” (PhD diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2003), 86–93; Kerry Muhlestein, “Human Sacrifice in Ancient Egypt” in *CLIO World History Encyclopedia* (forthcoming); John Gee and Kerry Muhlestein, “Human Sacrifice in the Middle Kingdom,” in *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity*, forthcoming; and Kerry Muhlestein, “Execration Ritual,” in *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, ed. Willeke Wendrich and Jacco Dieleman, <http://www.uee.ucla.edu>.

47. Besides the references cited above, see also Kerry Muhlestein, “Royal Executions: Evidence Bearing on the Subject of Sanctioned Killing in the Middle Kingdom,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 51, no. 2 (2008): 181–208.

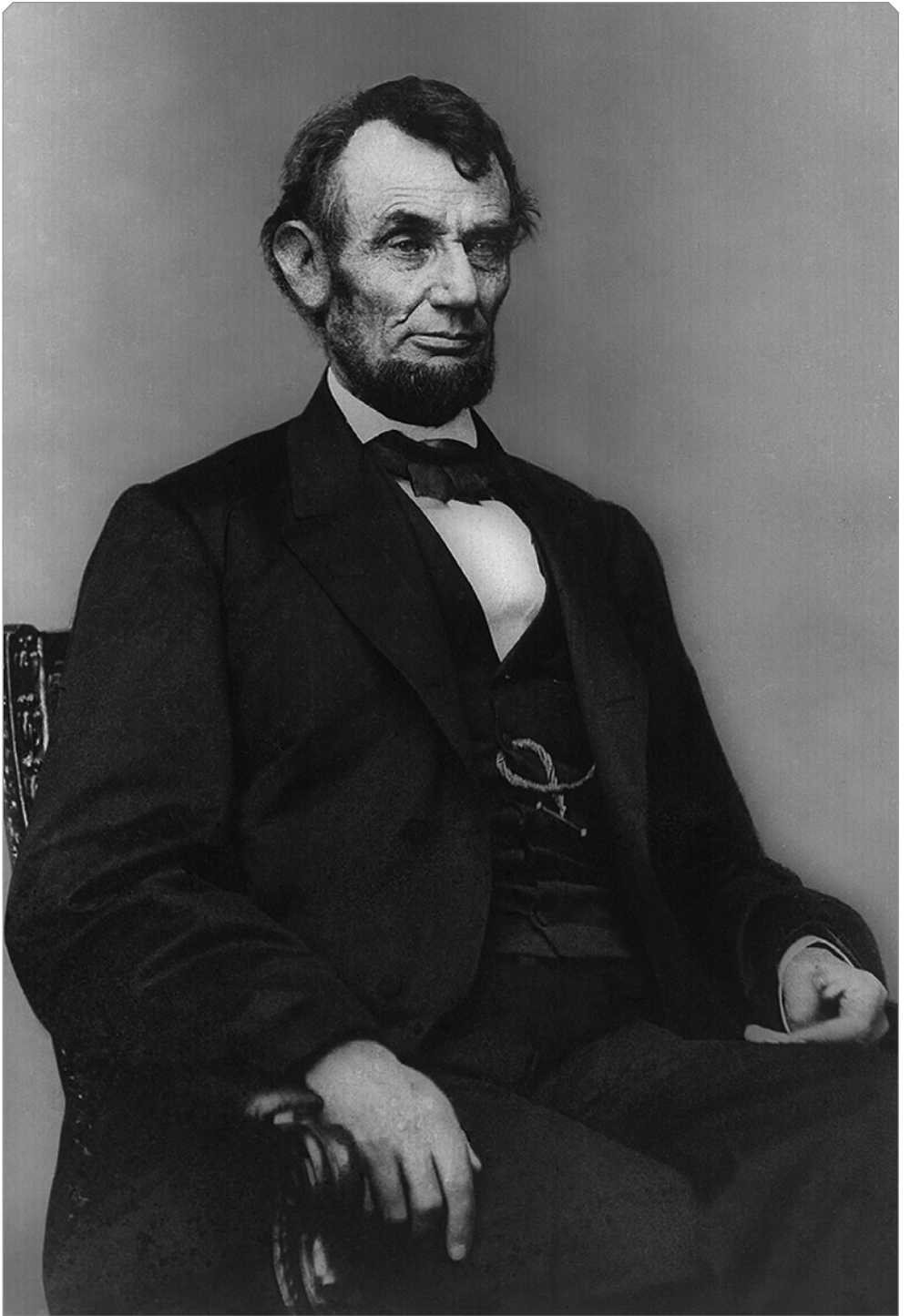
48. See John Gee, “Facsimile 3 and Book of the Dead 125,” in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, 95–105; Jared W. Ludlow, “Reinterpretation of the Judgment Scene in the Testament of Abraham” in *Proceedings of the Evolving Egypt: Innovation, Appropriation and*

Reinterpretation; Michael D. Rhodes, "Teaching the Book of Abraham Facsimiles," *Religious Educator* 4, no. 2 (2003): 115–23; John Gee, "Notes on the Sons of Horus" (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1991).

49. It is not Facsimile 2 in particular that is identified as a *wedjat* eye, but this type of drawing in general.

50. Edith Varga, "Le Fragment d'un hypocéphale égyptien," in *Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts* 31 (1968): 12–15; Edith Varga, "Les travaux préliminaires de la monographie sur les hypocéphales," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 12 (1961): 247; Rhodes, "Joseph Smith Hypocephalus"; Gee, "References to Abraham Found in Two Egyptian Texts"; Gee, "Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob," 29, 77–80; and Gee, "Abraham in Ancient Egyptian Texts," 60–62.

51. John Gee, "A New Look at the *ankh pa'* by Formula," in *Proceedings of IX^e Congrès International des Études Démotiques*, forthcoming. See the section on "descendants."



Abraham Lincoln, by Anthony Berger, taken February 9, 1864, Library of Congress

Modern General Authorities appreciate and delight in the words of Abraham Lincoln because they help portray gospel concepts in an imaginative and practical manner that appeals to common people.