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## Abraham: An Egyptian Connection

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ABRAHAM: AN EGYPTIAN CONNECTION

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Many consider the Book of Abraham as the most vulnerable book of scripture possessed by the Latter-day Saints. The basis of such an opinion rests upon the uncertain relationship between the Book of Abraham and certain Egyptian papyri from which Joseph Smith claims to have derived its text. As early as 1859, Egyptologist Theodule Deveria asserted that the facsimiles of Egyptian papyri published with the Book of Abraham had no connection to the text of Joseph's purported translation.<sup>1</sup> Again in 1912, F. S. Spalding, then Episcopal Bishop of Utah, obtained opinions from eight of the world's most renowned scholars to the effect that Joseph Smith's interpretations of Egyptian papyri were incorrect and that the papyri in question were, in fact, merely poor copies of Egyptian funeral papyri.<sup>2</sup> The fires of debate were rekindled in 1967 by the public announcement of the discovery of fragments of several papyrus rolls, including the Book of the Dead and the Book of Breathings, a specialized form of the Book of the Dead, some of which Joseph Smith identified with the Book of Abraham.

Opinions on the status of the Book of Abraham have polarized in this debate. Some claim that since the papyri may now be demonstrated to date from around the first century A.D., at least 1000 years later than Abraham, Abraham could not possibly have written on the papyri.<sup>3</sup> They also maintain that Joseph Smith incorrectly identified the Egyptian Book of Breathings as the Book of Abraham; therefore, Joseph's fraud and ignorance are evident. Others counter that the negative opinions were biased, cursory, and contradictory. The Book of Abraham, two Mormon

Egyptologists contend, is not a scholarly translation from any Egyptian text; rather, it is the product of divine revelation, a source and method beyond scholarly scrutiny.<sup>4</sup>

The problem, of course, is to reconcile the valid pronouncements of Egyptologists with Joseph Smith's claim that the Book of Abraham is, in some way, related to the facsimiles of Egyptian papyri included therein. The Egyptian connection that Joseph Smith attributed to the Book of Abraham is, nevertheless, enigmatic. First, no single portion of the Book of Abraham was apparently translated from the hieratic script of the Book of Breathings which Joseph possessed.<sup>5</sup> In effect, the entire "translation" of Egyptian papyri given to the world by Joseph Smith is nothing more than the interpretation of vignettes of the Book of Breathings contained in facsimiles one, two and three of the Book of Abraham. Still, the possibility that Egyptian texts of the Book of the Dead could be related to an account of the Patriarch Abraham had never been considered by savants of the early 1800's, and is just beginning to be considered seriously by scholars in our own day.<sup>5a</sup> Equally puzzling are the explanations that Joseph offered of vignettes published with the Book of Abraham, going so far as to associate Osiris with Abraham and the Horus falcon (or possibly the ba bird) with the angel of the Lord.<sup>6</sup> How can one explain such seemingly contradictory identifications?

In part, the problem is a matter of perspective. The problem facing the Book of Abraham is an equation with two unknowns, not just one. Egyptologists have provided the solution to one unknown, the generally accepted origin and Egyptian interpretation of the vignettes of the Book of Breathings possessed by Joseph Smith. In order to solve the problem, however, we must know the relationship of the other often overlooked unknown: Abraham. Scholars have usually tried to treat the

question at hand by explaining the facsimiles and ignoring Abraham, naively assuming that Abraham could have no relation to the Book of the Dead and related documents. In so doing, they have also allowed an assumption to become their strongest case against the Book of Abraham. To treat the facsimiles separately from their association with the Book of Abraham, as many critics have done, discounts any possibility of finding such an association possible. On the other hand, we cannot disregard the Egyptian connection of the facsimiles as many Mormons have attempted to do. The proper perspective oversteps the specialty of Egyptologists since it also includes Abraham; but it also breaks the protective mold of revelation since Egyptian is not divine and no longer wholly inscrutable. In the proper perspective, then, we must search to understand what, if any, relationship exists between the papyri of the Book of Breathings possessed by Joseph Smith and the Book of Abraham. It is the intent of this paper to demonstrate that a relationship was posited between vignettes of the so-called Book of the Dead and pseudographic stories of Abraham by those transmitting accounts of the patriarch Abraham during the period from which the Joseph Smith papyri originated.

#### An Egyptian Connection?

While the actual source of the Book of Abraham remains unknown, we do know that Joseph Smith possessed parts of the late Egyptian Book of Breathings. Rediscovery in recent decades of several texts which relate to Abraham provides valuable clues to the relationship of the Book of Abraham to both Egyptian texts and others telling about the patriarch. Hugo Gressmann provided the first valuable clue in his 1918 study, Vom reichen Mann und armen Lazarus.<sup>7</sup> Gressmann compiled several rabbinic

sources that closely parallel the parable of Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham found in the Gospel of Luke. Gressmann discovered, however, that an Egyptian account known as the Demotic Tale of Satme-Khamuas was an even closer version than any of the seven rabbinic stories he had studied.<sup>8</sup> Gressmann believed that the rabbinic stories probably derived from a single original Hebrew source, which was dependent, in turn, on the Egyptian Tale of Satme-Khamuas. Kendrick Grobel discovered further evidence in the Fayyum that an Egyptian original to a Hebrew account of Abrahamic traditions existed anciently. This evidence consists of a translation of the Gospel of Luke made by a Coptic scribe who lived in the Oasis of Fayyum circa 200 A.D.<sup>9</sup>

Grobel describes in detail how a Hebrew version of Abrahamic tales could be derived from an Egyptian original, and provided further evidence that such a transmission actually occurred. He notes that in the rabbinic tales "Abraham must be a Jewish substitute for the pagan god Osiris."<sup>10</sup> Such a substitution, although unorthodox to modern scholars, was possible for the ancient scribes, since both Abraham and Osiris were a single arche-type:<sup>11</sup> Both Abraham and Osiris represented the figure who must make the journey of the dead to view the afterworld, for "Abraham . . . is the very seat of divine authority, for he was originally the lord of Amente, Osiris."<sup>12</sup> In the Egyptian story of Satme-Khamuas, the trip to one's personal arraignment and final fate was directed by a psychopomp or guide to the afterworld, much like the role of Michael in pseudepigraphic literature. The Book of the Dead was also a guide to the Amnte or afterworld. In such a context, Grobel notes that in rabbinic Abraham accounts "the angels are an instrumentality, substituted surely in the Jewish stage of transmission, for some other, perhaps Horus or the falcon of Horus or simply the bark of death."<sup>13</sup>

All of these conclusions by scholars are certainly germane as hints of how Joseph Smith's own Book of Abraham could be related to Egyptian texts, the Book of Breathings in particular. In Facsimiles #1 and #3 Joseph identifies Osiris as Abraham. In Fac. #1 Osiris is about to make the journey into the afterworld as a result of his death. In Fac. #3 Osiris is enthroned in the Duat or Amnete. According to Grobel, these are exactly the situations in which the ancient scribes thought it proper to substitute Abraham for Osiris. In the Egyptian Book of the Dead, every person who makes the journey to the afterworld was mystically identified with Osiris.<sup>14</sup> In late Jewish and early Christian traditions of Abraham, Abraham filled this role.<sup>15</sup> Fac. #1 also identifies the angel of the Lord with the Horus falcon (or perhaps the ba or "soul-bird;" another Horus falcon that may originally have been on the papyrus is now missing).<sup>16</sup> Diagram #1 illustrates the relationship posited by scholars between an Egyptian source and Abrahamic accounts.

The transmission from an Egyptian source into a Hebrew document established more than the possibility that Joseph Smith's claims for the Book of Abraham are feasible. Such a transmission may give a valuable insight into Joseph Smith's own modus operandi, since he transliterated terms found in the text of the Book of Abraham itself into Hebrew and not into Egyptian. He also explained most Egyptian expressions in the facsimiles by using Hebrew rather than Egyptian. Why Hebrew rather than Egyptian if the text of the Book of Abraham was derived from Egyptian? Could it be that the text of the Book of Abraham was originally in Hebrew or that the Egyptian itself was derived from Hebrew, or vice versa? On the other hand, Joseph may have simply desired to express the Egyptian in terms of Hebrew that the Mormon elders had been studying in the School of Prophets (1835-36).

The theory that some Abraham traditions were associated with the Book of the Dead or other Egyptian sources also receives strong support from the Testament of Abraham, a pseudepigraphic work dating from the beginning of the Christian era.<sup>17</sup> In the Testament of Abraham (hereafter TestAbr), Abraham makes a journey to the afterworld to view the Amnte, a tradition that strongly suggests Abraham's identification with Osiris, who makes a similar journey in the Book of the Dead. Ray Ward, a specialist on Abraham traditions during the New Testament period, noted that the TestAbr also closely parallels Luke's story of Lazarus, although the Egyptian tale of Satme-Khamuas is even closer.<sup>18</sup> In the TestAbr, for instance, the Lord tells his angel, "Take, therefore, my friend Abraham, to the garden where the tabernacles of my righteous ones and the abode of the holy one Isaac and Jacob are in his bosom."

(TestAbr (A) XX). This passage corresponds to Luke's designation of Lazarus in Abraham's "bosom." What Ward failed to note is that the journey of Abraham in TestAbr is very close to the Egyptian source itself. In both cases, the afterworld is viewed in a succession of seven halls or heavens in which different scenes of final fate are observed. For example, both view the final fate of the wicked:

(Satme enters the Duat and then passes through a succession of three halls.)

They entered the fourth hall and Satme saw some men that they were ravenous, there being food, water and bread hung over them, and they hastening to take it down, but others dug pits at their feet to prevent their reaching it.

(F.Ll. Griffith, p.45)

(Abraham ascends to heaven in a chariot of cherubim.)

And he saw people who were suffering, and doing much wrong. And he said to the Lord, "command the earth to open up and to swallow them." And in another direction he saw people plundering and stealing, and despoiling the stranger.

(TestAbr (A) XXV. M. Gaster, TSBA, IX (1893), p.211f.)

After the vision of the wicked, Satme proceeds to behold the councils of Amnte, including "the noble spirits in their places" in the fifth

hall, and the proclamation of the attendants of Amnte in the sixth hall. Abraham, on the other hand, proceeds through the heavens and beholds the council of judgment and the arraignment of the righteous. (TestAbr (A) XXXII. Gaster, p.216.)

The climax of both the Egyptian tale and the TestAbr is the vision of the judge on his throne and the attendant, who weighs good deeds against bad deeds on a balance, while the attendants of Amnte record the proceedings and declaration of the judge:

The entered the seventh hall and behold! Satme saw the figure of Osiris the great god, seated upon his throne of fine gold, and crowned with the atef crown, Anubis the great god being on his left and the great god Thoth on his right; and the gods of the council of the dwellers of Amenti were standing to the left and to the right of him. The balance was set in the midst before them, and they were weighing the evil deeds against the good deeds, the great god Thoth recording, and Anubis giving the word to his colleague.  
(F.Ll. Griffith, p.46).

And he (Abraham) beheld again at the doorway a golden chair, shining like fire, and on it sat a man in the form of the Son of God. . . . And at the head of the table there sat a luminous angel holding a scale in his hands, and at his left hand stood an angel of fire, who held in his hands a paper, and on it were inscribed the temptations and sins. And the man who sat there condemned or liberated the souls. And the two angels who stood to the right and to the left. One wrote virtues and the one of the left wrote sins; and the one at the head of the table weighed the souls.  
(TestAbr (A) XXX. M. Gaster, p. 214f.)

Both accounts are dependent on the judgment scene found in vignettes of the Egyptian Book of the Dead which, according to Francis Schmidt, accounts for the strong correspondence between the two accounts.<sup>19</sup> "In an aggregate of parallels to the Book of Dead of Pamonthes (A.D. 63) and the Tales of Satme-Khamuas (A.D. 50-100), Francis Schmidt finds evidence for the conclusion that the TestAbr used an Egyptian judgment scene as its model."<sup>20</sup> Here, then, is strong evidence that around the first century A.D., scribes utilized the Egyptian Book of the Dead to illustrate or explain Abraham's own visions. It should be noted, however, that both Nickelsburg and Schmidt find Egyptian influence exclusive to recension



A of the TestAbr, while another recension, known simply as B, appears to be free from such influence.<sup>21</sup> Even so, the entire concept of the TestAbr bespeaks Egyptian influence in addition to the other parallels between Satme-Khamuas and the TestAbr independent of this particular Egyptian judgment scene.

The Apocalypse of Abraham (hereafter ApocAbr), is another pseudepigraphic work dealing with Abraham dating from the first century A.D. and bears considerable affinity to the TestAbr.<sup>22</sup> The ApocAbr is clearly Jewish, probably from around Palestine, yet it apparently came from the same literary milieu as II Enoch, also known as the Slavonic Book of Enoch.<sup>23</sup> Scholars have tended to place the origin of II Enoch in Egypt based upon the solar myth and Egyptian cosmology prominent therein.<sup>24</sup> Such a situation also indicates that Egyptian influence on the ApocAbr should be seriously considered. Even so, the best evidence of possible Egyptian influence on the ApocAbr comes from an Egyptian work that can be identified with the Book of Breathings.

In an Egyptian tale edited by F.Ll. Griffith dating from a "little later than the middle of the first century," and coming from Thebes (the same time and place as the Joseph Smith Book of Breathings), a book was discovered that contained two formulas which, when read, provided power to behold heavenly visions.<sup>25</sup> The Egyptians themselves may have considered this book as a type of Book of Breathings. Both the Book of Breathings and the book containing the formulas were placed with the mummy in a similar manner and both claim to have been authored by Thoth for the purpose of saving the soul.<sup>26</sup> In any case, the formulas are strikingly parallel to another formula that serves as an organizing statement for Abraham's vision in the ApocAbr:

When thou readest the first  
formula thou will enchant (1)

I will ascend upon the wings of  
the bird in order to show thee

the heaven, (2) the earth, (3) the underworld, (4) the mountains and the seas, (5) thou wilt discover all that the birds of heaven and creeping things say; (6) thou wilt see the fish of the deep, there being power of god resting in water over them. (F.Ll. Griffith, p. 25).

(1) in heaven; (2) and on the earth; (3) and in the earth, (4) and in the sea, (5) and in the abyss and in the underworld (6) and in the garden of Eden and its rivers, (7) and the fulness of the whole world and its circle-- Thou shalt gaze on them all. (Box. ApocAbr, IXX, p. 51).

A similar combination of elements is also contained in a prayer found on the hypocephalus, or Fac. #2, which Joseph Smith also associated with Abraham's vision in the Book of Abraham: "O god of the sleeping ones, from the time of creation. O mighty god, 1) lord of heaven, 2) and of Earth; 3) the Netherworld, 4) and [his great] waters."<sup>27</sup> The formula thus represents the four regions the sun must traverse in its daily journey and over which the sun reigns. According to the Egyptian Book of the Dead, each soul must make the journey of the sun in its daily course. The hypocephalus also provides instructions for properly negotiating the path of Ra (the sun), as he moves from the celestial heavens (represented by the top third of the disc) to the earth and through the underworld (represented by the middle and the bottom thirds of the hypocephalus, respectively).<sup>28</sup> The sun must also pass through the great waters, of course, on its way to the underworld (this feature explains the presence of solar barks in the hypocephalus). Just as Joseph Smith said, the Hathor cow, "said by the Egyptians to be the sun," dominates the lower third of the hypocephalus, personifying "the lower hemisphere of heaven in which the sun sets in the evening to issue forth from it the next morning, as after a new birth"<sup>29</sup> (cf. Fac. #2, fig. #5). In the ApocAbr it is Abraham himself who makes the journey of the sun, visiting each of the regions mentioned in the formula in the exact order the Lord told him of them. Here again, Abraham makes the journey of Osiris, or of Ra, the earlier counterpart in Egyptian mythology.

Joseph Smith interprets the hypocephalus in much the same way, using it as a map of celestial movement and of descriptions of time measurement that was revealed to Abraham in visions given him of the Lord. Egyptologists concur that the hypocephalus "conveys the idea of the renewal of a period, like a full moon, the solstice, the equinoxes, etc.," while at the same time personifying the movements of various celestial bodies.<sup>30</sup>

The Egyptian tale also includes another formula that is quite stock in apocalyptic literature, not to mention the Book of Abraham: "He read another formula; he saw Ra shining forth in heaven with all his divine cycle, and the Moon rising and the stars in their procedures."<sup>31</sup>

I Enoch 72:4; 73:1, 74:1

ApocAbr XIX

Book of Abraham 3:13

And first there goes forth the great luminary named the sun and his circumference of the heaven. . . and after this law I saw another law which is named the Moon and her circumference of the heaven. . . and the leader of the head of the thousands who are placed over the whole creation and over all the stars.

And I saw there on the fifth heaven, the powers of the stars which carry out of the commands laid upon them. . . Abraham! Consider from above the stars which are beneath thee, and number them to me. And I said, "How can I, I am but a man." And He said, "As the number of the stars and their power, so will I make they seed a nation."

And the Lord said to me, "This is Shinehah, which is the sun." And he said to me, "Kokob, which is star." And he said unto me, "Olea, which is the Moon." And He said unto me, "Kokaubeam, which signifies stars or all the great lights which were in the firmament of the heaven." And it was the night time when the Lord spake these words unto me: "I will multiply thee, and thy seed after thee like unto these [stars], and if thou canst number the sands, so shall be the number of they seeds."

This type of parallel is so common in the pseudigraphic literature that it cannot be considered as conclusive evidence that one document has directly influenced the other, although it does not rule out the possibility. The importance of the Egyptian formula lies in the evidence it provides that the Egyptians themselves associated formulas such as those contained in the Book of Breathing as catalysts for visionary

experiences such as those contained in the Book of Abraham. F.Ll. Griffith explained: "The first [formula] gives magic power to know all that is going on in earth, sky, and water among the creatures that inhabit them; the second to see the celestial gods themselves in their courses."<sup>32</sup>

#### Inscribed by Abraham Himself?

The public announcement of the rediscovery of the J. S. papyri in 1967 altered the parameters within which we can feasibly search to find an ancient counterpart to the Book of Abraham. As noted before, the papyri in question date from around the first century A.D. Thus, while the story of the Book of Abraham may revert to Abraham himself, nevertheless, the milieu of the book itself may be that of the first century. One would therefore expect the Book of Abraham to be comparable to that corpus of literature that would "purport to be" written by the ancient patriarchs, i.e., the pseudepigrapha. In fact, when Joseph Smith published the Book of Abraham in 1842, he declared that it was "A translation of some ancient records that have fallen into our hands, from the catacombs of Egypt, purporting to be the writings of Abraham." Although later editions of the Book of Abraham were changed by associates of Joseph Smith to indicate that Abraham himself had pressed the papyri with his own hand, Joseph indicated simply that he gave the world a book "purporting" to be Abraham's. A better description of a pseudepigraphic work could not be asked for.

The Book of Abraham is actually a faithful counterpart to the Abrahamic corpus of literature that existed around the first century A.D. The relationship is easily demonstrated by comparing the Book of Abraham to a single source, the ApocAbr, while also demonstrating that

both are representative of the vast Abrahamitic corpus. The Book of Abraham tells the unique story of these ancient sources, none of which were available to Joseph Smith.

### Abraham Battles Idolatry

Although Joshua 24:2 hints that Abraham's forefathers "served other gods," the development of the legend that Terah, Abraham's own father, was an idol maker and that Abraham opposed his father's -- indeed, the whole nation's idolatry -- can be found only in pseudepigraphic and rabbinic sources dating back at least to the second century B.C.<sup>33</sup> According to G.H. Box, who edited a number of these sources in his translation of the ApocAbr, "Abraham's emergence from the prevalent idolatry early became the theme of a legend, which assumed various forms and was widespread."<sup>34</sup> The ApocAbr gives a good description of Abraham's battle against idolatry and the reaction of his father:

Hear, O my father, Terah! Blessed are the gods of thee, for thou art their god since thou hast made them; their blessing is ruination and their power is vain. . . . And when he heard my word, he became furiously angry with me because I had spoken hard words against his gods.  
(Box, ApocAbr, IV, p.38f.)

My fathers having turned from their righteousness. . . unto the worshipping of the gods of the heathen, utterly refused to hearken to my voice.  
(Book of Abraham 1:5)

The ApocAbr steps beyond the formal legend along with the Book of Abraham and gives a vivid picture of the human sacrifice that resulted from idol worship in the days of Abraham:

I saw the likeness of an idol of jealousy, having the likeness of wood work such as my father was wont to make, and its statue of glittering bronze, and before it a man and he worshipped it; and in front of him an altar, and upon it a boy slain in the presence of the idol (cf. fac.

Therefore they turned their hearts to the sacrifice of the heathen in offering up their dumb idols, and hearkened not to my voice, but endeavored to take away my life by the hand of the priest of Elkenah, (the priest of Elkenah was also the priest of Pharaoh). Now at this time it was the custom of Pharaoh, the

#1). . . . The statue which thou sawest is mine anger where-with the people anger Me who are to proceed from thee. But the man whom thou sawest slaughtering -- that is he who inciteth murderous sacrifices.  
(Box, ApocAbr, XXV, p.72f.)

king of Egypt, to offer up upon the altar which was built in the land of Chaldea, for the offering unto these strange gods, men, women and children.  
(Book of Abraham 1:7-8)

### The Death Sentence of Abraham

Abraham intimates in the Book of Abraham, and all the sources agree, "Abraham battled against idolatry, and . . . his fight was a solitary one, exposing him to considerable danger."<sup>35</sup> Specifically, Abraham's opposition to idolatry caused friction between himself and Nimrod, Abraham's archenemy, who is also identified with Pharaoh.<sup>36</sup> The opposition to idolatry led Nimrod-Pharaoh to sentence Abraham to death-- to be thrown into a fiery furnace according to most accounts.<sup>37</sup> At this point, Abraham is miraculously delivered by Michael, or Jehovah himself in other versions, while Nimrod-Pharaoh is humiliated.<sup>38</sup> The ApocAbr and the Book of Abraham tell the story in similar terms. The order to leave his father's home came to Abraham from Jehovah at the time of his deliverance from this death sentence, vividly portrayed in these sources as a death by fire. In the ApocAbr the fire motif is mixed with Terah's own death and Abraham's deliverance from idolatry. However, the fire mentioned in the ApocAbr, as Box avers in his own commentary, clearly indicates Abraham's own deliverance from death.<sup>39</sup>

Then cometh down a voice of a Mighty One from heaven in a fiery cloud burst crying, "Abraham! Abraham!" And I said, "Here am I." And He said, "Thou art seeking understanding of thine heart the gods and the Creator, I AM HE! Go out from the house, that thou also be not slain in the sins of they father's house

The Lord hearkened and heard, and He filled me with the vision of the Almighty, and the angel of His presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands; and His voice was to me "Abraham! Abraham! Behold, my name is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to take thee away from thy father's house, and from all thy kinsfold, into a strange land which thou

. . . . I am called JAOEL  
(Jehovah is God) by Him that  
moveth that which existeth with  
me on the seventh expanse. . . .  
I am He who was commissioned to  
set on fire they father's house  
together with him, because he  
displayed reverence for dead  
idols. I have been sent to  
bless thee and the land which  
the Eternal One, whom thou hast  
invoked, hath prepared for thee,  
and for thy sake have I wended  
my way upon the earth. Stand  
up Abraham! Go without fear; be  
glad and rejoice; for I am with  
thee! For Eternal Honour hath  
been prepared for thee by the  
Eternal One."

(Box, ApocAbr, I, VIII; II,X)

knowest not. And this because they have  
turned their hearts away from me, to  
worship the god of Elkenah, and the god  
of Libnah. . . . I have come down to  
visit them, and to destroy him who hath  
lifted his hand against thee, Abraham,  
my son, to take away thy life. Behold,  
I will lead thee by my hand, and I will  
take thee to put upon thee my Name,  
even the priesthood of thy father, and  
my power shall be over thee. As it was  
with Noah so shall it be with thee;  
but through thy ministry my name shall  
be known in the earth forever, for I am  
thy God!"

(Book of Abraham 1:15-17; 19)

### Abraham's Visions

Perhaps the most singular aspect of the Book of Abraham is the vision, "revealed from God to Abraham, as he offered sacrifice upon an altar which he had built unto the Lord." (Fac. #2, Fig. #2) Numerous legends developed concerning the vision given to Abraham "among the severed carcasses," building upon Genesis 15:1-21.<sup>40</sup> In the ApocAbr, God prescribes the sacrifice to Abraham, telling him, "And in this sacrifice I will lay before thee the ages (to come), and make known to thee what is reserved." (ApocAbr, II,IX).

I have already demonstrated the parallel between the ApocAbr and the Book of Abraham concerning movements of celestial bodies. Numerous pseudepigraphic and rabbinic sources attribute to Abraham a profound knowledge of heavenly bodies.<sup>41</sup> Joseph Smith says that Fac. #3 represents, "Abraham reasoning upon the principles of Astronomy, in the king's court." Interestingly, sources that can be traced back to the first half of the first century B.C. also claim that Abraham taught astronomy

to the Egyptians in general, and to "Pherethon, king of the Egyptians" in particular.<sup>42</sup> Here is a king of Egypt whose name may actually have been essentially "Pharaoh!" (cf. Book of Abraham 1:25).

Abraham's vision was extended to include a description of the heavenly council and the pre-existent spirits of the noble and great ones. Both the Book of Abraham and the ApocAbr give a description of a similar scenario that is even more impressive because of its uniqueness:

O Eternal Mighty One, what is this picture of these creatures? And he said to me. "This is My Will with regard to those who exist in the (divine) world council, and it seemed well pleasing in my sight, and then afterwards I gave commandments to them through my WORD. And it came to pass, whatever I had determined to be was already planned beforehand in this (picture) and it stood before me ere it was created, as thou hast seen. (Box, ApocAbr, XXII, p. 68).

Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was, and among all these were many of the noble and great ones. And God saw these souls that they were good, and He stood in the midst of them, and He said, "These I will make my rulers," for He stood among those that were spirits and he saw that they were good. (Book of Abraham 3:22-23).

Both accounts also allude to the foreordination of certain spirits and the rejection of others. Box concludes that the concept in the ApocAbr is close to rabbinic accounts that "often employ the figure of an architect and plans." In this way, preplanning also allows for "man's moral freedom."<sup>43</sup>

O Lord, Mighty & Eternal! Who are the people in this picture on this side and on that?" And He said to me: "These which are on the left side are the multitude of the peoples which have formerly been in existence and which have been after thee prepared, some for judgment and restoration, others for vengeance and destruction at the end of the world. But these who are on the right side of the picture - they are the people set apart for me of the people with Azazel. These are they whom I have ordained to be born of thee

And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and He said, ". . . we will prove them herewith to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads forever. . . . and he said, "These I will make my rulers." for He stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good. And he said to Abraham, "Thou art one of



and to be called, "My People."  
(Box, ApocAbr, XXII, p. 69)

them; thou wast chosen before thou  
was born."  
(Book of Abraham 3:25; 23)

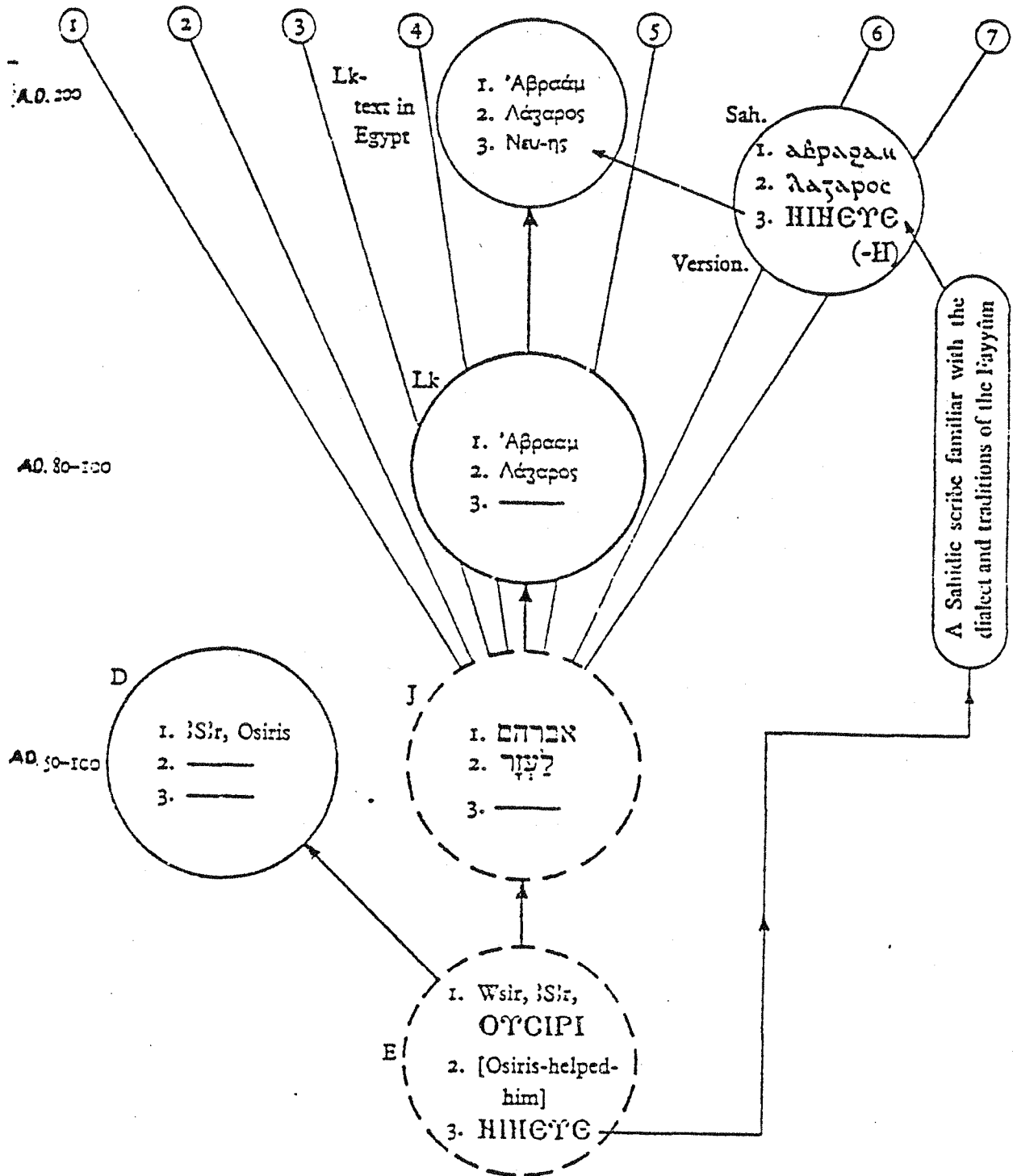
From the vision of the pre-existence and the judgment prepared from the foundation of the world, Abraham's vision expands to a journey of greater scope, including a vision of the whole history of the earth. The TestAbr vision indicate familiarity with the traditions found in ApocAbr, the Pseudo-Philo, & II Baruch IV,5: "while I am yet in this body, I wish to see the whole world and all created things which you established through one WORD." (TestAbr (A) IX, 87:3-5).<sup>44</sup> In the Book of Abraham, Abraham is shown a vision of the creation and the emergence of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. The ApocAbr begins Abraham's tour of history, departing from the garden of Eden and extending through to the final judgment (Box, ApocAbr, XXXIII ff.).

### Conclusion

The Egyptian connection of the Book of Abraham is much less enigmatic in light of more recently discovered Abrahamic sources of two millenia ago. Evidence that hails from the ancient world would seem to demand that we now consider the possibility of an ancient Hebrew "Book of Abraham" that was originally dependent on an Egyptian text. A concrete example of Egyptian elements in a Hebrew Abrahamic text can be found in the TestAbr. The author of TestAbr seemingly utilized a vignette of the Book of the Dead to describe Abraham's experiences!! In much the same way, Joseph Smith adapted vignettes of the Book of Breathing, a specialized form of the Book of the Dead, to explain Abraham's experiences. Thus, although Joseph Smith has been much berated for associating vignettes of the Book of the Dead with a book claiming to tell of Abraham's experiences, he was actually duplicating an ancient practice about which he could not

have known from secular sources available in his day. Further, some of the most difficult identity associations in the facsimiles of the Book of Abraham may now be understood as the transposition of the role of one archetypal figure (Osiris) to that of another figure (Abraham) who fulfills the same role in another tradition. Many aspects of the Book of Abraham are problematic, despite our best efforts to understand them. Even so, the Book of Abraham so closely resembles the Apocalypse of Abraham and other Abrahamic traditions that any theory that explains the Book of Abraham as a modern product of Joseph Smith alone must be ruled out. Just how Joseph Smith utilized the papyri he possessed, if at all, to produce the English-language text of the Book of Abraham must now be investigated along new lines because of this evidence.

FARMS Preliminary Reports are notes or tentative papers reflecting substantial research but not yet ready for final publication. They are made available to be critiqued and improved and to stimulate further research.



GRESSMANN'S HYPOTHESIS WITH SUPPLEMENTS

E = Egyptian original (hypothetical); J = Jewish popular version (deducible); D = Demotic story of Same; Lk = Gospel of Luke; Lk-text = Greek text of Luke in Egypt about A.D. 200 (P<sup>23</sup>); 1-7 = Rabbinic splinters, mostly late, of J.

Diagram #1: K. Grobel provided this diagram to explain the relationship between the hypothesized Egyptian original, the substitution of Abraham for Osiris in the Hebrew transmission, and the final result in the Gospel of Luke. Cf. K. Grobel p.377.

## FOOTNOTES

1. See Deveria's 1859 commentary on the facsimiles in Remy, Voyage aux pays des Momons, II (Paris: Dentu, 1860), 462-7, or Jules Remy and Julius Renschley, A Journey to the Great Salt Lake City (London: W. Jeffs, J.E. Taylor, 1861), 2:540-6.
2. Franklin S. Spalding, Joseph Smith, Jr., As a Translator (Pamphlet Arrow Press, SLC, Nov. 1912).
3. Jerald and Sandra Tanner, The Changing World of Mormonism, 1st ed. (Moody Bible Institute: Chicago, 1980), pp.329-338; Nibley fixes the date of the particular Book of Breathing possessed by Joseph Smith to the latter part of the first century. See Hugh Nibley, The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment (Deseret Book: SLC, 1965), p.4.
4. Nibley, pp.49-54; Edward Ashment, "The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham: A Reappraisal," Sunstone, 4:4 & 5: (1979), 42, 44.
5. Hugh Nibley, "The Meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers" BYU Studies, 11: (1971) 350-399; "The Book of Abraham Acquitted" (n.d.,) available from Institute for Ancient Studies, BYU; "The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham: A Response" Sunstone, 4: (1979), 4 & 4: 50. Nibley has demonstrated that the Hieratic signs contained in the Kirtland Egyptian papers were produced after the text of the Book of Abraham was already completed and used, perhaps, as a means of translating the Egyptian from the Book of Abraham instead of vice-versa as critics have claimed. According to the Willard Richards statement published as Joseph Smith's History, Joseph was involved in "preparing a grammar of the Egyptian Language" a year after the Book of Abraham had been published (IDS Journal History, 15 Nov. 1843). A possible indication of a translation of Egyptian script may be Joseph Smith's explanation of Fac. #3 that the names of Pharaoh and Shulem are written "in the characters above his hand." (figures #3 & #5) Even here, however, a translation of the name is not provided. In the final analysis, Joseph's work with the facsimiles was not a translation at all in the sense of rendering an Egyptian writing into English; rather, his work is confined to merely explaining the meaning of Egyptian figures in vignettes accompanying the text.
- 5a. Henry O. Thompson, Mekal: God of Beth Shan (Leiden: Brill, 1970), pp. 172-3; H. Nibley, Message of the JSP, p. 14, citing B. H. Stricker, CMRO, 37:52.
6. Hugh Nibley supports the conclusion that Fac. #1, fig. #2, represents the Horus falcon in the office of messenger of the Lord in "As Things Stand at the Moment" BYU Studies 9: (1968), 86, Improvement Era July 1969, pp. 108-110; August 1969, pp.75-80. Edward Ashment believes the figure to represent the ba or soul bird. Ashment, p.38. Both views can be accounted.
7. (Berline: Akademie Der Wissenschaften: 1918), #7.

8. Gressmann, pp.27ff; Cf. F.Ll. Griffith. Tales of the High Priests of Memphis (Oxford: 1900), pp.45ff.; H. Nibley, Message of the JSP, pp.177-8.
9. Kendrick Grobel. ". . .Whose Names was Neves," NTS, 10: (1963-64), 373-382.
10. Grobel, p.382.
11. Windisch. Neiuw Theol. Tijdschrift XIV (1925), p.343. "De eschatologische vorstellingen die in de evangelischche parable voorkomen zijn noch specifiek christelijk, noch joodsh van oorsprung, maar egyptisch; alleen is inde plaats van, Osiris-Abraham komen staan." Cf. Ray Bowen Ward. "Abraham Traditions in Early Christianity" Studies on the TestAbr SCS #2 (1972), p.177, the Lukean story "is probably dependent on an Egyptian Tale (i.e., Satme-Khamuas) whose closest descendent is the Demotic Tale of Satme. The role of Osiris in the Egyptian tradition has been replaced in the Lukean story by Abraham."
12. Grobel, p.380.
13. Grobel, p.378.
14. E.A.W. Budge. The Book of the Dead: Papyrus of Ani (New York: Putnams 1913/University, 1960), p.339.
15. Hugh Nibley, "Setting the Stage: The World of Abraham," The Improvement Era 73:1970, pp.56-65, see footnotes 228-235, 314-322.
16. Ashment, p.361.
17. B. J. Bamberger. The Interpreters Dictionary "The Testament of Abraham" (Abingdon: 1962), p.21, J. B. Frey, Dictionaire de la Bible Supp. Tome #1, (Paris: 1928), p.33f. Jewish Encyclopedia, 1:6, p.95; Mathias Delcor, "De l'origine de quelques traditions contenues dans le Testament d'Abraham" Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Ed., P. Peli (Jerusalem: 1969), Vol.1, pp.192-200.
18. Ward, p.170.
19. Francis Schmidt, "Le Testament d'Abraham: indroduction, edition de la recension courte, traduction et notes," Dissertation (Strasbourg, 1971); Cf., Francis Schmidt. "The Two Recensions of the TestAbr: In Which Direction Did the Transofrmation Take Place?" Studies on the TestAbr, ed., G.W.E. Nickelsburg Jr., SBL Septuagint & Cognate Studies 6 (Scholar's Press: 1976), pp.78ff.
20. George Nickelsburg Jr., "Eschatology in the TestAbr" Ibid. p.33.
21. Nickelburg, p.55; Nickelsburg thinks that the longer recension (A) has priority over the shorter (B), which corrupts and deletes material. Schmidt, p.80, concluded that "the long recension is the reworking, done in the Jewish diaspora of Egypt, of an older document coming from a Palestinian Jewish circle that was open to Iranian influences."

22. G.H. Box. The Apocalypse of Abraham (London: 1918), pp.xxi, xxxi.

23. Box, pp.x, 65; Cf. J.B. Frey, p.29, "l'Apocalypse d'Abraham presents aussi certaines analogies avec Henoch slave; mais rien n'oblique a admettre une dependance litteraire de l'un vis-a-vis l'autre, le tresor commun des traditions juives suffit a expliquer traits de parente."

24. Nickelsburg, p.16; Cf. R.H. Charles, The Apocrypha & Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, Vol. II, Pseudepigrapha (Oxford: 1913), p.429.

25. F.Ll. Griffith, p.16.

26. F.Ll. Griffith, p.20. Compare the Tales of Satme with the Book of Breathings: "Thoth who wrote it (the book of formulas) with his own hand when he went down following the gods" (Satme III, 20), "Thoth comes to thee, the twice great, Lord of Hermopolis, who hath written the Book of Breathings with his own fingers." (Book of Breathings lines 30-31), in Nibley, Message, p.77; for the tie between the High Priest's tales of Memphis and the Book of Breathings see pp.177; 238ff.

27. Michael Rhodes, "A Translation & Commentary of the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus," BYU Studies, 17:(1977), 264-265; Ashment, p.43, plate 6.

28. P.J. De Horrack, Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, Letter to Samuel Birch, (Ed.), March 4, 1884, p.265; Cf. Hugh Nibley. The Three Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham (n.p. BYU Ancient Studies Institute, 1980), pp.14-28; 37-40; Deveria in Bibliothèque Egyptologique, 4:197, n.l.

29. De Horrack, p.127; Rhodes, pp.268, 272.

30. De Horrack; Cf. Nibley, p.38.

31. F.Ll. Griffith, p.25.

32. Griffith, p.20.

33. Hugh Nibley, "The Unknown Abraham" Improvement Era, 72:1:(1969), pp.28ff.

34. G. Vermes, Scripture and Tradition in Judaism (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1973), p.84; Cf. Jubilees 12:16f.; Ma'ase Abraham 23-24; Beth haMidrash 24-30; Bereshith Rabba 38:19 (on Gens. 11:28).

35. Box, p.88; Cf. Vermes, pp.83-85; Beer, Leben Abrahams (Leipzig: 1859), Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, Hebrew Myths (New York: 1963), pp.140-141.

36. Vermes, p.85; Nibley, "The Unknown Abraham" Improvement Era, Feb. 1969, pp.64-67.

37. Sefer haYashar 24-27, text in Vermes, pp.68-74; Ma'ase Abraham, Adolph Jellinek, Beth haMidrasch (Wahrmann: Jerusalem, 1967); see his "Erzählung von Abraham und Nimrod," p.25ff; Nibley, April, 1969, pp.69-72.

38. Sources in notes 35 and 37, Genesis Apocryphon 20:28-30.
39. Box, pp.43, 89.
40. II Baruch 4:5; IV Ezra 3:13; Bereshith Rabba 437; Graves & Patai, pp.152-153.
41. Bereshith Rabba 44:14ff.; Pseudo Philo 18:5; Vermes, pp.80-81; Jubilees 12:16-18; Daniel Harrington, "Abraham Traditions in the Testament of Abraham and in the 'Rewritten Bible' of the Intertestamental Period" SCS #2 (1972), p.171.
42. Vermes, p.80f., Eusebius, Preparatio Evangelica, ix, 17:3-4; 18, 1; Josephus, Antiquities, 1, 7, 2; C. Black and J.T. Milik, The Book of Enoch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p.9.
43. Box, p.68.
44. Nickelsburg, p.25.