

IS THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM TRUE?



By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

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Is the Book of Abraham True?

In the year 1835 the Mormon people purchased some Egyptian mummies and rolls of papyrus. Joseph Smith claimed that one of the rolls contained the “writings of Abraham.” He translated a portion of the papyrus and published it under the title “The Book of Abraham.” This book is now found as part of the *Pearl of Great Price* (one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church).

For a long period of time the Mormon leaders claimed that the original papyri were burned in the Chicago fire. On November 27, 1967, however, the *Deseret News* (a Mormon newspaper) announced:

NEW YORK — A collection of papyrus manuscripts, long believed to have been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871, was presented to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints here Monday by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

.....

Included in the papyri is a manuscript identified as the original document from which Joseph Smith had copied the drawing which he called “Facsimile No. 1” and published with the Book of Abraham. (*Deseret News*, November 27, 1967, p. 1)

Trouble Ahead

After the discovery was announced many members of the Mormon Church felt that Joseph Smith’s work had been vindicated. Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, however, began to warn his people to be cautious:

We ought to be very careful in our estimation of these things. I[t] would be better for us to take a conservative view now, than to go out on a limb and say they prove more than they actually do.

.....

I should like to emphasize again that as members of the Church we ought not to overrate the importance of this discovery. It would be better to be conservative, then to be overly expansive in our estimate of the value of the papyrus sheets. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology*, Brigham Young University, March 1, 1968, pp. 6 and 8)

Dr. James R. Clark gave a similar warning on page 8 of the same publication:

DR. CLARK: I agree with that point of view, Dr. Sperry. If there is anything we should stress here tonight, it is that conclusions should not be drawn at this point.

Is the Book of Abraham True?

We might even set ourselves up as a committee of three to serve as a warning voice to alert members of the Church to the great danger of claiming too much at this stage. The new materials have not yet been studied, and it would be better to reserve judgment for a time.

Dr. Hugh Nibley, who is supposed to be the Mormon Church's top authority on the Egyptian language, warned his people that there was trouble ahead. On December 1, 1967, the *Daily Universe*, published at the Brigham Young University, reported these statements by Dr. Nibley:

"The papyri scripts given to the Church do not prove the Book of Abraham is true," Dr. Hugh Nibley said in an Academics Office-sponsored assembly Wednesday night. "LDS scholars are caught flat footed by this discovery," he went on to say.

According to Dr. Nibley, Mormon scholars should have been doing added research on the *Pearl of Great Price* years ago. Non-Mormon scholars will bring in questions regarding the manuscripts which will be hard to answer because of lack of scholarly knowledge on the subject.

In the speech delivered primarily on the attitude of Brigham Young on education, Dr. Nibley said worldly discoveries are going to "bury the Church in criticism" if members of the Church don't take it upon themselves to become a people of learning. . . . Mormons ought to know as much or more as others, "but they don't," Dr. Nibley said, quoting Brigham Young. (*Daily Universe*, Brigham Young University, December 1, 1967)

Dr. Nibley also stated:

When I first saw photos of the papyri I made myself disagreeable by throwing a great deal of cold water around. For publicity they were great, and as far as I can see their main value is still in calling the attention of Latter-day Saints to the existence of scriptures which they have studiously ignored through the years. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1968, p. 102)

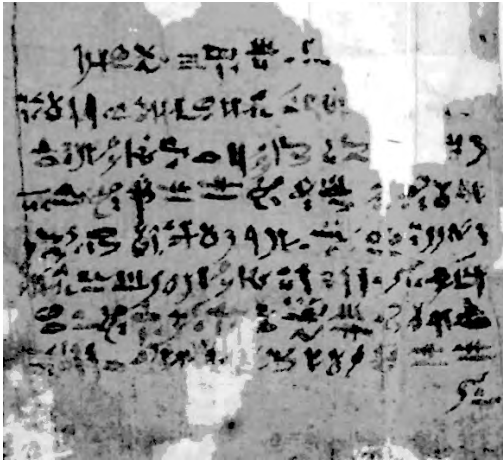
Dr. Nibley wrote the following in the *BYU Studies*:

. . . a few faded and tattered little scraps of papyrus may serve to remind the Latter-day Saints of how sadly they have neglected serious education. . . . Not only has our image suffered by such tragic neglect, but now in the moment of truth the Mormons have to face the world unprepared, after having been given a hundred years' fair warning. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter 1968, pp. 171-172)

Recent developments with regard to Joseph Smith's Egyptian Papyri have demonstrated the truth of Dr. Nibley's statement. Since the day the Metropolitan Museum of Art presented the papyri to the Church, the Mormon leaders have made one mistake after another until they have painted themselves into a corner, and truth now demands that they repudiate the Book of Abraham.

The fall of the Book of Abraham has been brought about by the identification of the piece of papyrus from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham.

Below is a photograph of the right side of this fragment of papyrus.



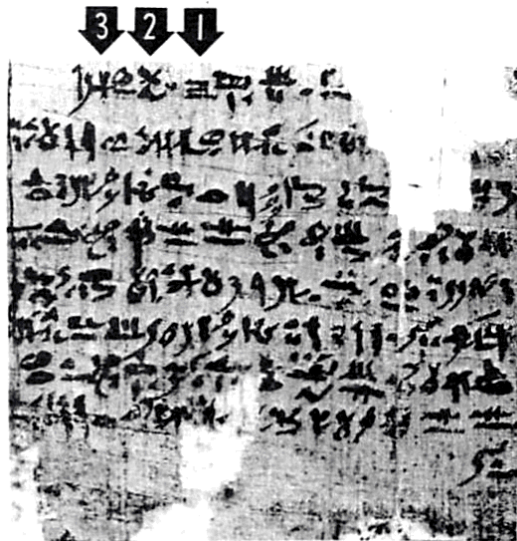
The identification of this fragment as the original from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham has been made possible by a comparison with *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*—a document published by Modern Microfilm Co. in 1966. Dr. James R. Clark, of the Brigham Young University, gives us this information:

... there are in existence today in the Church Historian's Office what seem to be two separate manuscripts of Joseph Smith's translations from the papyrus rolls, presumably in the hand writing of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. . . One manuscript is the Alphabet and Grammar. . . Within this Alphabet and Grammar there is a copy of the characters, together with their translation of Abraham 1:4-28 only. The second and separate of the two manuscripts contains none of the Alphabet and Grammar but is a manuscript of the text of the Book of Abraham as published in the first installment of the *Times and Seasons*, March 1, 1842. (*The Story of the Pearl of Great Price*, Salt Lake City, 1962, pp.172-173)

The Mormon leaders were either not aware of the fact that the gift of papyri included the fragment which was the basis for the text in the Book of Abraham, or they hoped no one else would notice it. The following statement appeared in the Mormon paper, *Deseret News*: "As far as has yet been determined, the papyri do not contain any of the original material translated as the Book of Abraham itself" (*Deseret News*, November 28, 1967).

The Mormon publication, *Improvement Era*, February, 1968, contains color photographs of the papyri. The fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham is found on page 41—the very last photograph. It is labeled: "XI. Small 'Sensen' text (unillustrated)."

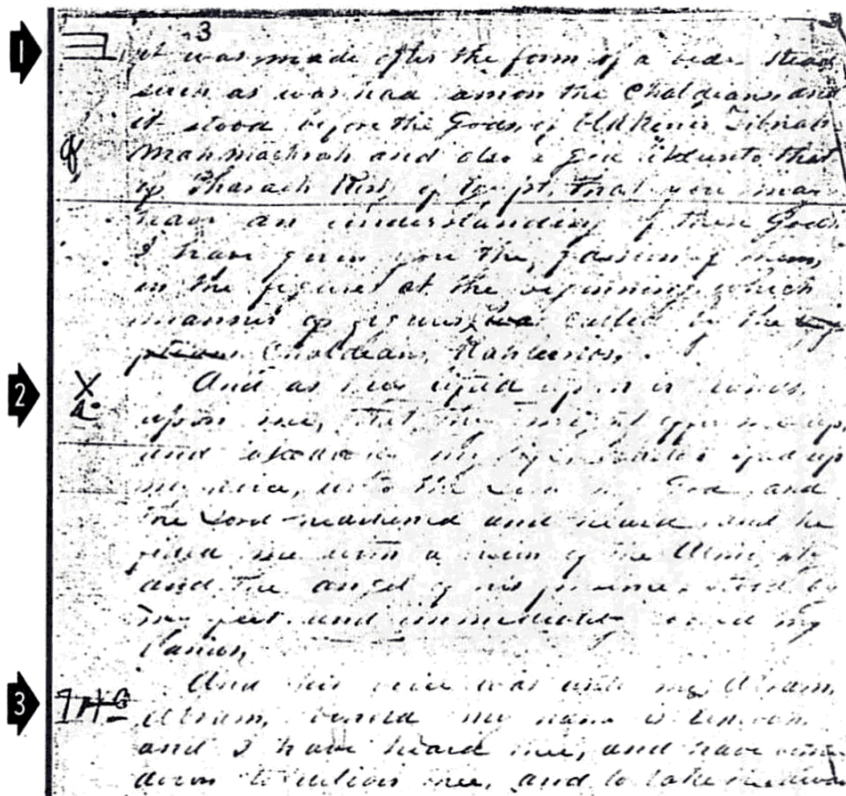
All of the first two rows of characters on the papyrus fragment can be found in the manuscript of the Book of Abraham that is published in *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*.



Above is a photograph of the right side of the original fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith was supposed to have translated the Book of Abraham.

To the right is a photograph of the original manuscript of the Book of Abraham as it appears in *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*.

We have numbered some of the characters on the first line of the fragment of papyrus so that the reader can compare them with the characters found in the handwritten manuscript.



In the center of this booklet the reader will find photographs of two pages of the Book of Abraham manuscript contained in *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*. The reader will probably be startled at the large number of English words which Joseph Smith translated from each Egyptian character. We will say more about this later.

As Dr. Clark indicated, there is another copy of the Book of Abraham manuscript in the Church Historian's Office. The Brigham Young University has photographs of this manuscript which Grant Heward was able to examine and copy by hand. This manuscript goes further than the one in the "Alphabet and Grammar." Mr. Heward has found that the characters on this manuscript continue in consecutive order into the fourth line of the papyrus. In the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, Issue No. 17, we stated that this would bring the text to Abraham 2:20 in the *Pearl of Great Price*. This was an error. A more careful check reveals that it brings the text to Abraham 2:18. This is very interesting because when Joseph Smith printed the first installment of the Book of Abraham in the *Times and Seasons* he ended it at this point. Since publishing the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, Issue No. 17, we have been able to examine photographs of this manuscript and can confirm Grant Heward's statements concerning it.

The reader will note that Joseph Smith used less than four lines from the papyrus to make 49 verses in the Book of Abraham. These 49 verses are composed of more than 2,000 English words! If Joseph Smith continued to translate the same number of English words to each Egyptian character in the chapters that followed, then the text for the entire Book of Abraham is probably contained on this one fragment of papyrus.

We have more information on this subject in an article published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1968, pp. 92-96.

Dr. Hugh Nibley, who at first felt that the papyri turned over to the Mormon Church did not contain the source of the text for the Book of Abraham, has now had to retreat from that position. He wrote the following for the *Improvement Era*:

... the presence on the scene of some of the original papyri, including those used by the Prophet in preparing the text of the Book of Abraham and the Facsimiles with their commentaries, has not raised a single new question, though, as we shall see, it has solved some old ones. (*Improvement Era*, May 1968, p. 54)

Dr. Nibley made this admission in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*:

But after all, what do the papyri tell us? That Joseph Smith had them, that he studied them, and that the smallest and most insignificant-looking of them is connected in some mysterious way to the *Pearl of Great Price*. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1968, p. 102)

At a meeting held at the University of Utah, Dr. Nibley stated:

Within a week of the publication of the papyri students began calling my attention, in fact, within a day or two, I think it was Witorf [?], called my attention to the fact that, the very definite fact that, one of the fragments seemed to supply all of

the symbols for the Book of Abraham. This was the little “Sensen” scroll. Here are the symbols. The symbols are arranged here, and the interpretation goes along here and this interpretation turns out to be the Book of Abraham. Well, what about that? Here is the little “Sensen,” because that name occurs frequently in it, the papyrus, in which a handful of Egyptian symbols was apparently expanded in translation to the whole Book of Abraham. This raises a lot of questions. It doesn’t answer any questions, unless we’re mind-readers. (Speech given by Hugh Nibley, University of Utah, on May 20, 1968)

Not About Abraham

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for March, 1968, we stated that Grant Heward felt the piece of papyrus Joseph Smith used as a basis for his Book of Abraham was in reality a part of the Egyptian “Book of Breathings.” E. A. Wallis Budge gives this information concerning the “Book of Breathings”:

The “Book of Breathings” is one of a number of short funeral works, like the “Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys” and “The Festival Songs of Isis and Nephthys.” Unlike the Chapters of the Book of the Dead, it was addressed to the deceased by the chief priest conducting the funeral service. . . . It seems as if the old Book of the Dead, with its lengthy Chapters and conflicting statements, had in the latest times become unacceptable to the Egyptians who lived under the rule of the Greeks and Romans; and, besides, it is tolerably certain that few people understood it. The “Book of Breathings” represents the attempt to include all essential elements of belief in a future life in a work shorter and more simple than the Book of the Dead. . . . The beautiful hymns and prayers found in the old texts are wanting in the “Book of Breathings,” and no reference whatever is made to the spiritual life of the beatified as described in the Pyramid Texts; in short, no passage which does not immediately conduce to the well-being of the natural body and soul, and assure the growth of the spiritual body from them, has any place in it. To give the work an enhanced value it was declared to be the production of Thoth, the scribe of the gods. (*The Book of the Dead, Facsimiles of the Papyri of Hunefer, Anhai, Kerāsher and Netchemet*, by E. A. Wallis Budge, London, England, 1899, p. 33)

That Grant Heward was right in identifying the “Sensen” text as the “Book of Breathings” has now been confirmed. Dee Jay Nelson, a Mormon philologist, who worked independently on the Joseph Smith papyri, came to exactly the same conclusion. He classifies the fragment which has been identified as the source of the Book of Abraham as part of the “Ter Papyrus,” and he makes this statement concerning the “Ter Papyrus”:

The Ter Papyrus is a copy of a work which was particularly popular in Ptolemaic and Roman times and was completely unknown before about 600 B.C. On the Ter Fragment No.1 the name of the work appears twice, in column 1, line 5 and in column 2, line 7. Its name again appears on Fragment No. 2 (the smaller of the two fragments) in column 1, line 4. In ancient times it was called the Shait en Sensen, or Book of Breathings. The essence of the religious philosophy behind its contents was the restoration of life and breath to the dead. (*The Joseph Smith Papyri—A Translation and Preliminary Survey of the Ta-shert-Min and Ter Papyri*, by Dee Jay Nelson, Salt Lake City, 1968, p. 36)

On pages 40 and 41 of the same book we find these statements:

This piece is clearly a part of the same papyrus as the other unillustrated fragment. It is a part of a Ptolemaic text known as the Shait en Sensen or Book of Breathings. This fact is established by the appearance of the name of the book in column 1, line 4. . . .

1. This papyrus is a traditional copy of the Shait en Sensen, Book of Breathings and is of a late origin. It most probably was written in the Ptolemaic Period (after 332 B.C.). Both fragments are damaged to the extent of at least half of their original area. (*The Joseph Smith Papyri*, pp. 40-41)

Two of the most prominent Egyptologists in the United States have also confirmed this identification. John A. Wilson, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago, made this statement:

Document D is a related mortuary text of late times, the so-called Book of the Breathings, in a hieratic hand coarser than that of Document B. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1968, p. 68)

Richard A. Parker also confirmed the fact that what Joseph Smith claimed was the Book of Abraham was in reality the Book of Breathings. The editors of *Dialogue* stated:

Richard A. Parker is the Wilbour Professor of Egyptology and Chairman of the Department of Egyptology at Brown University. His primary interest is in the later stages of Egyptian language and history. He remarks that the Book of Breathings is a late (Ptolemaic and Roman periods) and greatly reduced version of the Book of the Dead. No comprehensive study of it has yet been undertaken and no manuscript has yet been published adequately. He would provisionally date the two Book of Breathings fragments in the Church's possession to the last century before or the first century of the Christian era. . . . (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1968, p. 86)

The editors of *Dialogue* (a publication which is not controlled by the Mormon Church) persuaded Dr. Parker to translate "the important 'sensen' text." His translation reads as follows:

1. [. . .] this great pool of Khonsu
2. [Osiris Hor, justified], born of Taykhebyt, a man likewise.
3. After (his) two arms are [fast]ened to his breast, one wraps the Book of breathings, which is
4. with writing both inside and outside of it, with royal linen, it being placed (at) his left arm
5. near his heart, this having been done at his
6. wrapping and outside it. If this book be recited for him, then
7. he will breath like the soul[s of the gods] for ever and
8. ever. (*Dialogue*, Summer 1968, p. 98)

The reader will see that Richard Parker's translation bears no resemblance to Joseph Smith's purported translation of the same text. The Book of Abraham has been proven untrue because the original papyrus contains no reference to

Abraham or his religion. Dr. Parker translates only 83 English words from this text, whereas Joseph Smith's rendition contained thousands of words.

Dr. Hugh Nibley had a copy of Richard Parker's translation before it appeared in *Dialogue*, and in a speech delivered May 20, 1968, he stated:

. . . Professor Parker has translated that controversial little thing called the "Sensen" papyrus, the little section, that text that matches up with some of the Book of Abraham. (Speech by Hugh Nibley, University of Utah, May 20, 1968)

Strange as it may seem, Dr. Nibley admits that Richard Parker is "the best man in America" for this particular text, and that he did a "nice" job:

. . . here is Parker's translation of the "Sensen" papyrus. . . . Parker being the best man in America for this particular period and style of writing. And Parker agreed to do it and he's done it. So it's nice . . . it will be available within a month, I'm sure, in the next issue of the *Dialogue*. (Speech by Hugh Nibley, University of Utah, May 20, 1968)

It is now becoming rather obvious that Dr. Nibley is unprepared to deal with the problems related to the translation of the Book of Abraham, and that he has no real answers to give his people. In an article published in *Dialogue*, he stated:

Since the Sen-Sen business makes very little sense to anybody, while the Book of Abraham makes very good sense, one might suppose that Smith could have produced the latter without any reference to the former—that he could have written the Book of Abraham more easily, in fact, without having to bother himself with those meaningless squiggles. But if the Sen-Sen symbols are expendable, why does he use them at all? His only purpose would have been to impress others, but he keeps the whole operation strictly to himself and never circulates the Sen-Sen papyrus as he did the Facsimiles. And why on earth would he fasten on this particularly ugly little piece and completely bypass the whole collection of handsome illustrated documents at his disposal? Did he really think he was translating? If so he was acting in good faith. But was he really translating? If so, it was by a process which quite escapes the understanding of the specialists and lies in the realm of the imponderable.

No one has begun to look into the Sen-Sen problem seriously. . . .

Today nobody claims that Joseph Smith got his information through ordinary scholarly channels. In that case one wonders how any amount of checking along ordinary scholarly channels is going to get us very far. (*Dialogue*, Summer 1968, p. 101)

When Dr. Nibley spoke at the University of Utah, May 20, 1968, he admitted that if Joseph Smith was "really translating the papyri" he did it in a way that is unknown to Egyptologists:

By what process could the Book of Abraham have been squeezed out of a few dozen brief signs? Nobody has told us yet. Was Joseph Smith really translating the papyri? If so, it was not in any way known to Egyptology. Was he then merely pretending to translate them? But he never really put these symbols forth as

his source. He published the facsimiles, but these always remained among his private papers. These were not for circulation. He's not pretending to be doing anything here. He's not seeking to impress anyone at all. Nobody knew about this little work he was carrying on. He never published them as he did the facsimiles. Did he really need these symbols? This is a funny thing. Are they actually the source upon which he depended? Well, if he really depended on them, he must really have been translating them. But, you say, he couldn't possibly have been translating. Could he have used this as a source at all? These questions arise. If he was merely faking, of course, pretending to be translating them, well, he wouldn't need the Egyptian text at all. Yet he used one, and he used it secretly. Why would he secretly make use of a text he didn't need at all? This was just a nuisance, really, all these symbols. Let's just forget about them, and just write the story. Why did he need to tie up with these, and how does he tie up? Why does he ignore the wealth of handsome illustrated texts at his disposal to concentrate only on the shortest and ugliest and most poorly written of the lot? Why did he choose just this particular one when he had all these beautiful manuscripts. And they were all [just as ?] meaningless to everybody. Why would he do that? Well, all sorts of questions arise.

In the same speech Dr. Nibley even claimed that the "Sensen" text might have a second meaning, unknown to Egyptologists:

... you very often have texts of double meaning. . . . it's quite possible, say, that this "Sensen" papyrus, telling a straight forward innocent little story or something like that, should contain also a totally different text concealed within it . . . they [the Egyptians] know what they're doing, but we don't. We don't have the key.

In the same meeting Dr. Nibley was asked "if the key to this concentrated language is not had by the Egyptologists, do we have any hope of having the Book of Abraham ever translated?" Dr. Nibley replied:

I don't know. That's an interesting thing. We don't know what may turn up in another manuscript, or something like that.

A False Translation

More than fifty years ago Dr. Samuel A. B. Mercer, a noted Egyptologist, made this statement concerning Joseph Smith's work in the Egyptian language:

All the scholars came to the same conclusion, viz: that Smith could not possibly correctly translate any Egyptian text, as his interpretation of the facsimiles shows. Any pupil of mine who would show such absolute ignorance of Egyptian as Smith does, could not possibly expect to get more than zero in an examination in Egyptology.

The science of Egyptology is well established as any one knows who is acquainted with the great *Grammar* of Erman a 3rd Ed. of which appeared in 1911.

I speak as a linguist when I say that if Smith knew Egyptian and correctly interpreted the facsimiles which you submitted to me, then I don't know a word of Egyptian, and Erman's *Grammar* is a fake, and all modern Egyptologists are deceived. (*Improvement Era*, Vol. 16, p. 615)

The more that we study Joseph Smith's translations the more convinced we become that Dr. Mercer was right. Dr. Mercer made his judgement only on the basis of Joseph Smith's work on the Facsimiles which are included in the Book of Abraham, but now we have the original papyrus from which Joseph Smith was supposed to have translated the text of the Book of Abraham. We also have the original handwritten manuscript which shows the characters Joseph Smith used to make different portions of the Book of Abraham. We now have everything necessary to test Joseph Smith's ability as a translator of ancient Egyptian writings.

The most startling thing about Joseph Smith's purported translation is that he made so many English words out of such a small number of Egyptian characters. The reader can see this for himself by looking at the two photographs from the handwritten manuscript which we have included in the center [pages 12 and 13] of this pamphlet. In looking over the characters which appear in the handwritten manuscript we find that in one instance one set of characters makes 71 words in English, another set makes 121, another set makes 177, and still another set makes 234 words. One simple looking character makes 76 words in the Book of Abraham. Below is a photograph of this character set to the side of the words it makes in the Book of Abraham 1:13 and 14.








13. It was made after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans,* and it stood before the gods of Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and also a god like unto that of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.*

14. That you may have an understanding of these gods, I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning, which manner of the figures is called by the Chaldeans Rahleenos, which signifies hieroglyphica.

Notice that the Egyptian character is not much more complex than our letter *E*, yet it makes 76 words in English. These 76 words are composed of 334 letters. Now, is it really possible to imagine that one character (almost as simple as the English letter *E*) could be translated to make 76 words containing 334 letters? Dr. Nibley states that a person "does not have to be a meteorologist to report that the sky is clear or that it is snowing." We feel that this is true, and we also believe that a person does not have to be an Egyptologist to know that it would be impossible to translate thousands of words from a few Egyptian characters. Just common sense should tell a person that this would be absolutely impossible. Grant Heward wrote a paper in which he made these statements:

Let's start with an illustration. Supposing someone showed you a round black dot on a piece of paper and said that it was writing. That it told the story of "Little Red Riding Hood"; the whole story—Little Red Riding Hood, her mother, her grandmother, the wolf, the woodcutter, the forest, the basket of cookies and all—everything! The whole story was there! Could a single round dot carry that much meaning? Wouldn't you have to already know the story and the dot simply be a reminder? Each thought requires at least one mark to express it. Other wise, the thought isn't written. Any writing must contain enough symbols to reveal the meaning of each and every thought. Writing must be able to bring forth the meaning of a story one hasn't heard before. . . .

No one need understand Egyptian, however, to realize something is wrong with Joseph's translations. Apply the "little-black-dot" method to the translated material found in the Grammar. (It's part of the Book of Abraham included in the *Pearl of Great Price*.) If you're willing to allow honesty and truth to determine the results instead of your own personal desires and fears, you will find you run out of Egyptian marks long before you run out of English thoughts. Take for example . In Egyptian, this could be no more than a single Egyptian word. However, we will number the strokes and divide up the character thus:  Giving more than the benefit of the doubt, we will assign thoughts to the dissected strokes. Of course, it is too much to hope this character could carry the meaning of even one-half of the first line, let alone the remaining lines. 1. It, 2. was made, 3. after--.

Mr. Heward distributed his paper at the April 1967 Conference of the Mormon Church. For this "offense" he found himself in trouble with the Church. On June 21, 1967, he was excommunicated from the Mormon Church.

Dr. Hugh Nibley made this statement concerning Mr. Heward's paper:

The attempt to give one's own interpretation to picture writing is hard to resist. At the general conference in April 1967, for example, somebody circulated a mimeographed document bearing the frank and forthright title, "Why Would Anyone Want to Fight the Truth?" The "truth" in this case consisted of the author's common-sense observations on the nature of Egyptian, such as, that an Egyptian symbol written with four elements "could be no more than a single Egyptian word." But ancient languages have a way of ignoring our modern common-sense rules; the Egyptian in particular had an incurable weakness for abbreviations, omissions, transpositions, puns, and cryptograms, and their writings are full of signs which, even when we know their meaning (which is by no means always the case), require at least a sentence or two to explain them. Anyone is free to guess at the meaning of any Egyptian phrase, and one of the most picturesque aspects of the discipline is a process that never ceases, day and night, year in and year out, by which Egyptologists are constantly altering and improving on each other's translations. But one is not free to present his interpretation as "The Truth," and then ask in hurt and accusing tones, "Why Would Anyone Want to Fight the Truth?" (*Improvement Era*, February, 1968, pp. 14-15)

Although the Egyptians did use some abbreviations, we do not know of any case where one Egyptian word could be expanded to make 76 English words. Now that we have the original papyrus that Joseph Smith used as a basis for his Book of Abraham, the meaning of the character Dr. Nibley chooses to argue about is clear. It means "water" and in hieroglyphic writing is as follows:



In hieratic writing the Egyptians did not take the time to make the lines wavy. Sometimes the lines curved down at the end of the stroke so that the character had the appearance of a backwards E.



15) That order established by the fathers in the just generations, in the days of the just patriarchal reign, even in the day of Adam, and also Noah his father, ~~and also Noah his father~~ who blessed him, with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessing of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to his iniquity.

At. Now Pharaoh king of that lineage, & when he could not have the right of priesthood, nor of the kingdom, the Pharaohs, would give a claim to him, that they were his sons, therefore, my father was led away, by their covetousness, but I stood enduringly ready to vindicate the church, & seeing that I was my eyes to the captivity of the ancient, & the records have been in my hands, & I saw & saw unto his present time.

296 Now after the priest of Chaldeans was written that he did there come a judgment upon the things which were spoken unto me, concerning the land of Chaldeans, that there should be a famine in the land, and accordingly a famine prevailed throughout all the land of Chaldeans, and my father was sore afflicted, because of the famine, and he repented of the evil which he had determined against me, to take away my life, but the records of the fathers, & the patriarchs, concerning the right of priesthood, the Lord my God, preserved in mine own hand, therefore a knowledge of the beginning of creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as it was made known

A photograph of a page of the original handwritten manuscript of the Book of Abraham. Notice the large number of English words that were derived from each group of Egyptian characters.

Therefore a knowledge of the beginning of creation
 and also of the planets, and of the stars, will lead
 man's vision into the farther, haired light even
 unto this day.

ME And I shall endeavor to write some of these things,
 upon this occasion, for the benefit of my posterity,
 that shall come after me.

SVL: And the Lord God caused there to appear in vision
 of his servant the man Haran, my father's name,
 and my father got leave in the land of Chaldeans
 the Chaldeans, and it came to pass that he
 took service to worship false gods, and my father took
 heed not to wife.


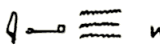

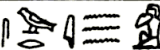
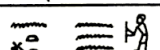
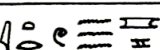
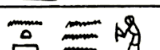
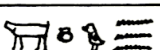
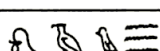
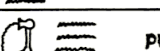
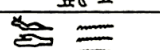

2
SVL: And the Lord God caused there to appear in vision
 of his servant the man Haran, my father's name,
 and my father got leave in the land of Chaldeans
 the Chaldeans, and it came to pass that he
 took service to worship false gods, and my father took
 heed not to wife.

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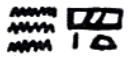
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 and my father got leave in the land of Chaldeans
 the Chaldeans, and it came to pass that he
 took service to worship false gods, and my father took
 heed not to wife.

A photograph of a page of the original handwritten manuscript of the Book of Abraham. Notice the large number of English words that were derived from each group of Egyptian characters.

While this character means water when it stands alone, it can also be used as a “generic determinative.” This means that in many cases it is used as only a part of one word. Its presence helped the Egyptians to know that the words it appeared in had some relationship to water. Below are some examples—written from left to right.

 DROWN	 WASH
 FLOOD	 DRINK
 IRRIGATE	 RIVER
 BESPRINKLE	 BROOK
 WAVE	 PURE
 SWEAT	 THIRST

In the fragment of papyrus Joseph Smith used for his “Book of Abraham” this character is only a part of an Egyptian word which means “pool” or “lake.” This word is written as follows:



Thus we see that Joseph Smith translated 76 words out of an Egyptian character which is only a part of one word. The other part of the word was used to make 59 additional words (*Pearl of Great Price*, Book of Abraham, 1:11-12). This makes a total of 135 English words from just one Egyptian word!

In another case Joseph Smith translated 177 words from just one Egyptian word. Below is a photograph of this word (as it appears in the handwritten manuscript) and the words Joseph Smith was supposed to have translated from it. The words are taken from the *Pearl of Great Price*, Book of Abraham 1:16-19.



16. And his voice was unto me: Abraham, Abraham, behold, my name is Jehovah,* and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee, and to take thee away from thy father's house, and from all thy kins-folk, into a strange land which thou knowest not of:[†]

17. And this because they have turned their hearts away from me, to worship the god[‡] of Elkenah, and the god of Libnah, and the god of Mahmeckrah, and the god of Korash, and the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; there-

fore I have come down to visit them, and to destroy him who hath lifted up his hand against thee, Abraham, my son, to take away thy life.^{‡‡}

18. 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.^{‡‡}

19. 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.

The Egyptian word which Joseph Smith pretended to translate 177 word from is “Khonsu”—the name of an Egyptian moon-god. The fact that Joseph Smith would make 177 English words from one Egyptian word is absolutely astounding! It shows very clearly that he did not understand the Egyptian language and that the Book of Abraham is a work of his own imagination.

In an article which was published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, we stated:

... the small piece of papyrus pictured in illustration No. 1 appears to be the whole Book of Abraham!

This evidence raises several problems. One is that the Egyptian characters cannot conceivably have enough information channels (component parts) to convey the amount of material translated from them. Another is that the papyrus fragment in question dates from long after Abraham's time, much nearer, in fact, to the time of Christ. But most important, the Egyptian has been translated, and it has no recognizable connection with the subject matter of the Book of Abraham. The February, 1968, *Improvement Era* identifies the fragment as a small, unillustrated "Sensen" text. Sensen means "breathings," and the papyrus fragment has been identified by reputable Egyptologists as a portion of the "Book of Breathings," a funerary text of the late Egyptian period. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer, 1968, pp. 95-96)

Dr. Nibley made a rebuttal to this article. In this rebuttal he stated:

Take the Sen-Sen papyrus itself, for instance. Messrs Heward and Tanner raise three objections to it while completely overlooking their significance. The first is the comical disproportion between the Egyptian symbols and the English text which they suppose to be derived from them. They have left the phenomenon completely unexplained. The second is that the papyrus is too late to belong to Abraham, but we have already shown that the expression "by his own Hand" was understood to mean that Abraham and no other wrote the book, and cannot serve as a criterion for dating the papyrus . . . (*Dialogue*, Summer, 1968, p. 103)

On page 101 of the same article, Dr. Nibley states:

Those who insist that "the Egyptian characters cannot conceivably have enough information . . . to convey the amount of material translated from them," are the very parties who do conceive of just that, and insist that Joseph Smith actually did derive all that stuff from them. They can't have it both ways.

We feel that Dr. Nibley is trying to transfer his own problem onto us. We did not mean to imply that Joseph Smith actually translated any of the characters. Our contention is that he only pretended to translate the characters on the "Sensen" papyrus, and that the text of the Book of Abraham is a work of his own imagination. How could we make our position clearer?

Dr. Nibley admits that the papyri do not date back to Abraham:

... we have learned that the papyri are of relatively late date—but the Mormons have always known that . . . (*Dialogue*, Summer, 1968, p. 105)

In the *Improvement Era*, Dr. Nibley wrote:

The commonest objection to the authenticity of the Facsimiles is that they are of too late a date to have been drawn by Abraham. But Joseph Smith never claimed that they were autographic manuscripts or that they dated from the time of Abraham. (*Improvement Era*, February, 1968, p. 20)

Dr. Nibley is certainly wrong about this matter. Joseph Smith did claim that they were autographic manuscripts. In the introduction to the Book of Abraham we read this statement: "A Translation of some ancient Records, . . . The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand upon papyrus" (*Pearl of Great Price*, p. 29).

Dr. Nibley would have us believe that Joseph Smith claimed that the papyri were only copies and not the originals. Josiah Quincy, however, claimed that Joseph Smith told him the following:

"That is the handwriting of Abraham, the Father of the Faithful," said the prophet. "This is the autograph of Moses, and these lines were written by his brother Aaron." (*Figures of the Past*, as quoted in *Among the Mormons*, pp. 136-137)

In 1840 Joseph Smith was quoted as making this statement:

"These ancient records," said he, "throw great light on the subject of Christianity. . . . I will show you how I interpret certain parts. There," said he, pointing to a particular character, "that is the signature of the patriarch Abraham." (*Quincy Wig*, October 17, 1840, p. 1, as quoted in *Ancient Records Testify in Papyrus and Stone*, by Sidney B. Sperry, p. 52)

It should be rather obvious that Dr. Nibley is trying to bring the Church's position into line with the opinions expressed by Egyptologists. This reconciliation, however, is impossible.

The Moment of Truth

At the first of this booklet we quoted Dr. Nibley as saying: ". . . a few faded and tattered little scraps of papyrus may serve to remind the Latter-day Saints of how sadly they have neglected serious education, . . . Not only has our image suffered by such tragic neglect, but now in the moment of truth the Mormons have to face the world unprepared, after having been given a hundred year's fair warning." It appears to us that Dr. Nibley himself is unprepared and that he has no real answers to give his people. We have shown that the original papyrus fragment Joseph Smith used as the basis for the Book of Abraham has been identified and that this fragment is in reality a part of the Egyptian "Book of Breathings." It has been translated, and we find that it contains nothing concerning Abraham or his religion, and that it cannot be used to support the anti-Negro doctrine. Truly, this is the moment of truth for the Mormon people.

Stewart L. Udall, who is Secretary of the Interior, has made this statement concerning the anti-Negro doctrine: "We Mormons cannot escape persistent, painful inquiries into the sources and grounds of this belief. . . . This issue must be resolved. . . . It must be resolved because we are wrong and it is past the time when we should have seen the right. A failure to act here is sure to demean our faith, damage the minds and morals of our youth, and undermine the integrity of our Christian ethic." (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer, 1967, pp. 5-6)

Stewart L. Udall's words might be applied with equal force to the Book of Abraham, which is the real source of the anti-Negro doctrine.

Appendix

Grant Heward Finds the Key

As early as March, 1968, we were able to announce that “Mr. Heward has carefully examined the piece of papyrus that has been identified as the source of the Book of Abraham, and he feels it is probably a part of the Egyptian “Book of Breathings” (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, March, 1968, p. 2). Some of the world’s greatest Egyptologists have now confirmed this identification. Even Dr. Nibley seems willing to concede:

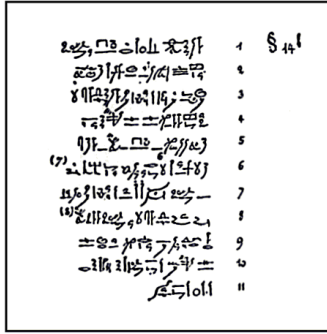
It has long been known that the characters “interpreted” by Joseph Smith in his Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar are treated by him as super-cryptograms; and now it is apparent that the source of those characters is the unillustrated fragment on which the word Sen-sen appears repeatedly. This identifies it as possibly belonging to those writings known as *The Book of Breathings*, though that in turn is merely “compilations and excerpts from older funerary spells and burial formulas.” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring, 1968, p. 249)

After Mr. Heward identified this fragment as a part of the “Book of Breathings,” he began to translate some of the words found in the text. Because of the poor handwriting this was a difficult task. We tried to find the exact location of the text in the Papyrus of Kerasher, but we were unsuccessful. Although Dr. Nibley has had photographs of the Mormon Papyri since 1966 (See *Salt Lake City Messenger*, April, 1968), he was unable to find the location of the text. He states:

This particular excerpt, if it is such, has still not been located among known versions of the mysterious book. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring, 1968, p. 249)

After quoting some of Dee Jay Nelson’s “preliminary” work on this fragment of papyrus, Dr. Nibley states: “And that is the story—still a lock without a key” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring, 1968, p. 249).

Fortunately, the key to this story has now been found. It was not long after Grant Heward started working on this text that he was able to identify enough of the words that we began to get some idea of what the story was about. A man who was familiar with Mr. Heward’s work, found a rendition of a text which contained words similar to the ones Mr. Heward had translated from the Mormon Papyrus. Encouraged by this find, Mr. Heward went to the Brigham Young University Library and found a facsimile of a text which closely resembles the Book of Abraham fragment. He found this text in *Bibliothèque Égyptologique publiée sous la Direction de G. Maspero*, Vol. 17, Plate XI. Below is a photograph of this facsimile.



After examining this text we were confident that Mr. Heward had found the key to the Book of Abraham fragment. We worked with Mr. Heward and prepared an article which we submitted to *Dialogue*. In this article we stated:

We are now aware of a similar papyrus located in the Museum of the Louvre in Paris. It is registered under the No. 3284. . . . Anyone familiar with hieratic—i.e., cursive Egyptian writing—will immediately recognize that the Book of Abraham Papyrus and Papyrus No. 3284 are versions of the same basic text. We would like to include a translation of Papyrus No. 3284. This translation was made by M. J. de Horrack.

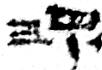
He is towed (like) Osiris into the Great Pool of Khons. When he has retaken possession of his heart, the Book of Respirations is concealed in (the coffin). It is (covered) with writing upon Suten, both inside and outside (and) placed underneath his left arm, evenly with his heart; . . .

When the Book has been made for him then he breathes with the souls of the gods for ever and ever.

The similarities between this text and the one Joseph Smith used as the basis for the Book of Abraham are too numerous to be explained away. (There are, of course, differences in the two texts. The most outstanding being in the second line of the Mormon document, where we read something like this: “born to that Benu Bird.”)

The following are a list of similarities between the two versions. The Egyptian words as they appear in the Mormon Papyrus will follow each parallel.

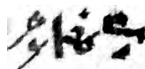
1. In both cases the Egyptian word meaning “pool” or “lake” appears in the first part of the text. We find it in line one of Joseph Smith’s Papyrus and at the beginning of line two in Papyrus No. 3284.



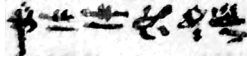
2. On the same line in both texts we find the Egyptian word “Khons.” This is the name of the Egyptian moon-god.



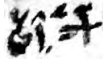
3. On line three of both texts we find the words meaning “his heart.”



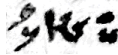
4. On the fourth line of both texts we find the words meaning “Book of Breathings.” (In the translation of Papyrus No. 3284 the Egyptian word “sensen” is rendered “Respirations.” It should be obvious to the reader, however, that this means the same as the word “Breathings.”)



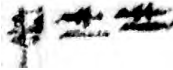
5. On line six of Papyrus No. 3284 we find the word which M. J. de Horrack transliterates “Suten.” This same word appears on line five of the Mormon Papyrus. When this word is translated it means “royal linen.”



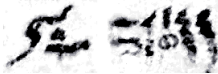
6. On line six of the Mormon Papyrus we find the words “his heart.” These same words are found in line seven of Papyrus No. 3284.



7. The word “breathes” is found on line eight of the Mormon Papyrus. This same word appears on lines nine and ten of Papyrus 3284.



8. On line eleven of Papyrus 3284 we find the words “forever and ever.” These same words appear in lines eight and nine of the Mormon Papyrus.



We could furnish more parallels, but these should be sufficient to convince the reader that the Book of Abraham is in reality an appendage to the Egyptian “Book of Breathings.”

We mailed this material to *Dialogue* on April 15, 1968. Instead of using this material, the Editors of *Dialogue* decided to get Richard Parker, a noted Egyptologist, to make a detailed translation of the “Sensen” fragment. We felt that this was a very good idea, since we were not able to furnish an actual translation of the entire text. But, be this as it may, we had prepared our article prior to the time Richard Parker translated the “Sensen” fragment. We feel that Dr. Parker’s translation confirms the fact that Grant Heward knows something about the Egyptian language, and that he does not need pictures to guide him, as Dr. Nibley has implied.

Before beginning our parallels we stated that in the second line of the Mormon Papyrus “we read something like this: ‘born to that Benu Bird.’” Dr. Parker, however, rendered it this way: “born of Taykhebyt.” Dr. Parker is no doubt correct in rendering this as a name.

In our first parallel we stated that on line one of the Mormon Papyrus we find the Egyptian word “meaning ‘pool’ or ‘lake.’” Richard Parker also finds this word. He renders it “pool.”

In parallel no. 2 we stated that in line one “we find the Egyptian word ‘Khons.’” Richard Parker renders this name “Khonsu.” Either spelling is acceptable. This is the name of an Egyptian moon-god. (See *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*, E. A. Wallis Budge, Vol. 1, p. 553)

In parallel no. 3 we stated that the words meaning “his heart” are found in line 3. Mr. Parker renders these words “his breast.” The Egyptian word for “heart” is the same word meaning “breast.” The context would determine which word should be used.

In parallel no. 4 we stated that we found the words “Book of Breathings” in the fourth line. Richard Parker likewise finds the words “Book of Breathings.”

In parallel no. 5 we stated that the word “Suten” appeared on line five of the Mormon Papyrus. We explained that when this word is “translated it means ‘royal linen.’” Dr. Parker also uses the words “royal linen.”

In parallel no. 6 we said that the words “his heart” are found on line six of the Mormon Papyrus. Richard Parker also used the words “his heart.”

In parallel no. 7 we stated that the word “breathes” is found in line eight of the Mormon Papyrus. Richard Parker renders it “breath.” The Egyptian word “Sensen” can mean either breath or breathes depending on the context in which it appears.

In parallel no. 8 we claimed that we found the words meaning “forever and ever.” Richard Parker also used these words.

In looking over our work we find fourteen words which are exactly the same as those used by Richard Parker, and there are one or two others that are very close. Mr. Heward had also identified a number of other words which we did not include in this study. We feel that this is an amazing demonstration of Grant Heward’s ability.

Mr. Heward has also done some work on the dating of the “Sensen” papyrus by comparing it with other samples of hieratic writing. He told us some time ago that he felt that it was a very late text and probably was not written until about the time of Christ or even later.

Richard Parker’s work with this text seems to confirm the work of Mr. Heward. According to the Editors of *Dialogue*, Mr. Parker stated that he “would provisionally date the two Book of Breathings fragments in the Church’s possession to the last century before or the first century of the Christian era . . .” (*Dialogue*, Summer, 1968, p. 86). This would mean that the text which Joseph Smith called the “Book of Abraham” was not written until almost 2000 years after Abraham’s time!

From the information which we have presented it should be obvious that the key to the “Sensen” fragment has been located, and that the story has nothing to do with Abraham or his religion.

A False Balance

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for March 1968, we included a rendition by Grant Heward of a small portion of the Joseph Smith Papyri. Dr. Hugh Nibley made this criticism of Mr. Heward’s work:

The publishers of the news sheet were kind enough to provide the reader with a demonstration of their Egyptology at work, in the form of a transcription and translation by a Mr. Heward of a section of one of the LDS papyri. The picture of a swallow on the fragment makes it possible for even the rankest amateur like this writer to spot at once the corresponding passage in Budge’s much-published translation as Chapter 86 of the Book of the Dead. The student who takes the pains to compare Budge’s translation of Ani, Mr. Heward’s purported translation of the

LDS fragment, and the LDS fragment itself will soon discover that Mr. H. is not translating the LDS fragment at all, but simply paraphrasing Budge. The papyrus of Ani and the LDS fragment are much alike, but they are far from identical, and whenever the two differ it is the text of Budge that Mr. H. translates, in the language of Budge, and not the LDS manuscript, which he claims to be reading. Space will not allow here the presentation of the many passages in the translation in which this is glaringly apparent. (*Improvement Era*, April, 1968, p. 65)

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for April, 1968, we stated: “We feel that if Dr. Nibley is going to make such a serious charge he should furnish his own translation of the fragment and point out the places where Grant Heward is in error.” Instead of making a translation, Dr. Nibley points out six places where he believes Mr. Heward has followed Budge’s translation rather than the LDS fragment. (See *Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring, 1968, p. 246.) Dr. Nibley states that Mr. Heward’s work is “an example of pitfalls to be avoided.” While we must admit that Mr. Heward has made some mistakes (in a few cases he has evidently added some words which did not belong in the LDS fragment), he never claimed that his rendition was perfect. In fact, he called it a “rough” rendition. He freely admitted that his “English rendering was guided by the translations made of the two papyri” which he used for comparison (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, March, 1968, p. 4). While it is true that Mr. Heward made some mistakes, he has given us a good idea what the papyri are about, and this is far more than Dr. Nibley was willing to do.

A qualified Egyptologist who examined Mr. Heward’s work made this comment concerning it: “Mr. Heward is doing some remarkable researches concerning the Book of Abraham and the newly disclosed papyri. I have not met him but what little I have seen of his work leads me to believe that he is a brilliant young man. . . . I have critically examined a small part of Mr. Heward’s work (that part which has been published) and find it correct. His abilities are all the more remarkable because he is a self-taught philologist” (Letter dated April 15, 1968).

Dr. Nibley is extremely critical of Mr. Heward’s work. On page 246 of his article in the *Brigham Young University Studies*, Dr. Nibley states:

Again we read identical translations in Budge (line 6) and Heward: “I am like Horus, the governor of the boat,” whereas the LDS papyrus reads, “Horus is in charge of the sacred bark”; in Budge’s text a simple ideogram has been taken to indicate *dpt*, “boat” as well it might; but in the LDS Papyrus the name of the boat is written out—it is the sacred *Wia*-bark—and the subject of the sentence is not “I” but “Horus.”

While Dr. Nibley is probably correct in stating that “the subject of the sentence is not ‘I’ but ‘Horus,’” his point concerning the boat amounts to nothing but quibbling. Allen Gardiner gives this definition of the word “Wia”: “ship, bark, particularly divine ship” (*Egyptian Grammar*, Third Edition, p. 37). In *Egyptian Language — Easy Lessons in Egyptian Hieroglyphics*, page 36, E. A. Wallis Budge defines it merely as “a boat.” In his dictionary Budge defines it as: “ship, boat” (*An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*, Vol. 1, p. 152 A).

Thus, it appears that Dr. Nibley is making a point out of nothing. He claims that the passage must be rendered “Horus is in charge of the sacred bark,” and that Grant Heward is wrong in stating that Horus is the “governor of the boat.” Dee

Jay Nelson, however, did not think it was necessary to include the word “sacred.” He rendered the passage: “Horus is the helmsman in the boat” (*The Joseph Smith Papyri*, p. 16). John A. Wilson, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago, renders it: “Horus is the controller of barques” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer, 1968, p. 79).

Although Mr. Heward may have followed Budge into a few errors, Dr. Nibley’s accusation that “wherever” the LDS fragment and the papyrus of Ani differ Mr. Heward follows “the text of Budge” is certainly an exaggeration. If Mr. Heward had only followed the text given by Budge he would not have been aware of the fact that there are two persons mentioned in the first part of the spell. E. A. Wallis Budge gives this rendering of the first part of the chapter as it appears in the papyrus of Ani:

The Osiris Ani, whose word is truth, saith: — I am a swallow, [I am] a swallow.’
(*The Book of the Dead, The Hieroglyphic Transcript of the Papyrus of ANI, the Translation into English and An Introduction* by E. A. Wallis Budge, New York, 1960, p. 521)

Grant Heward, however, renders the first part of the LDS fragment as follows:

The Osiris daughter Min, justified, born to Neshonsu, justified, says: I am a swallow, I am a swallow. (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, Issue No. 17, p. 4)

Dee Jay Nelson—who we must remember did his work independent of Grant Heward—gives this rendering to the LDS fragment:

To be said by Osiris Ta-shert-Min, who is true of word, daughter of Nes-Khensu, who is true of word.
I am a swallow, I am a swallow. (*The Joseph Smith Papyri*, p. 16)

In Budge’s translation of the Papyrus of Ani, he renders one portion like this:

Hail, O ye gods whose odour is sweet. Hail, O ye gods whose odour is sweet.
Hail, Flame, who comest forth from the horizon. (*The Book of the Dead*, by E. A. Wallis Budge, p. 521)

Notice that Budge repeats the words, “Hail, O ye gods whose odour is sweet.” Mr. Heward’s rendition of the LDS fragment, however, does not repeat these words:

Hail, gods with sweet aroma. (Hail) flame, that comes out of the horizon. (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, Issue No. 17, p. 4)

The fact that Mr. Heward was right in leaving out these words is confirmed by the work of both John A. Wilson and Dee Jay Nelson. Mr. Nelson’s translation reads:

Hail god whose perfume is sweet to smell and who is a flame which reacheth to heaven. (*The Joseph Smith Papyri*, p. 16)

John A. Wilson renders this part as follows:

O gods, how sweet is the fragrance [of you, the fire] which went up from the horizon. (*Dialogue*, Summer 1968, p. 79)

It seems very strange to us that Dr. Nibley can be so critical of Grant Heward's work when he is willing to go to any length to defend the "Book of Abraham." Although Mr. Heward made a few errors, his work is basically correct. Joseph Smith, on the other hand, did not understand a word of Egyptian, and his translation is completely false.

Dr. Nibley goes to great lengths to cover up the fact that the Book of Abraham is a false translation. He even goes so far as to say that the Egyptian characters may have a second meaning unknown to the Egyptologists. Then he turns right around and attacks Mr. Heward for making a few minor mistakes. Dr. Nibley might do well to consider the following proverb:

Divers weights are an abomination unto the Lord;
and a false balance is not good.
(Proverbs 20:23)
