

THEY LIE IN WAIT TO DECEIVE

by Robert L. & Rosemary Brown

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FAIR
PO Box 1277
Felton CA, 95018



THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM



OBJECTIVES

- To prove that there are two sides to the Book of Abraham controversy.
- To prove that the Book of Breathing text is **not** the source of the Book of Abraham.
- To direct the reader to scholarly publications explaining the truth of the Book of Abraham.
- To impress upon the reader the importance of prayer in the search for truth.

CHAPTER TEN

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

Dee Jay Nelson has lectured and published against the church and the Book of Abraham for more than 12 years. It should now be obvious, if it wasn't before, that there are two sides to every story. I hope you are wondering now what the Mormons have to say about the Book of Abraham.

THE LDS CHURCH IDENTIFIES THE JOSEPH SMITH POPYRI AS EGYPTIAN FUNERARY TEXTS

In less than one month after the LDS church acquired the Joseph Smith papyri, the first printed article appeared identifying them as Egyptian funerary texts.

The church was presented the Joseph Smith papyri as a gift by the Metropolitan Museum on November 27, 1967. The Improvement Era (an official publication of the LDS Church for subscribing members) of January, 1968, pp. 12 & 13, had an article by Jay M. Todd that explained how the church had acquired the papyri and identified them as funerary texts — NOT THE TEXT OF THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM. In this article it was mentioned that the papyri were:

“... Egyptian funerary texts, which were commonly buried with Egyptian mummies. Often, the funerary texts contained passages from the ‘BOOK OF THE DEAD’, a book that was to assist in the safe passage of the dead person to the spirit world.”

Consider how fast the church was to make this announcement:

November 27, 1967	Church receives papyri
December 10-11, 1967	Deadline to submit material for the Jan. issue.
December 26-31, 1967	January issue mailed to subscribers

Within approximately two weeks from when the papyri was received, photographs were taken and reproduced, the papyri was studied, and with very little time left Jay Todd wrote the article. It should be obvious that no time was wasted in getting the news to the members of the church and the public.

Dr. Klaus Baer of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, states in DIALOGUE 3, No. 3, Autumn, 1968, p. 110:

“The speed with which the photographs of the Joseph Smith Egyptian papyri were published once they came into the possession of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a gratifying contrast to the secrecy with which their previous custodians surrounded them.”

The previous custodians were non-Mormon.

ANTI-MORMON PROPAGANDA ACCUSES THE LDS CHURCH OF A “COVER UP”

The anti-Mormon writers (and lecturers) would like their readers (and listeners) to believe that the LDS church steadfastly maintains that these Joseph Smith papyri are the source of the Book of Abraham, and because they are really Egyptian funerary texts, the church is also involved in a “cover up” to keep its members from discovering the truth. Such a stand by the anti-Mormon element is devoid of truth (as usual) but makes such an exciting story that it keeps them in business! It is their “bread and butter”!

As an example, Dee Jay Nelson in his lecture on the Book of Abraham on February 22, 1980, in Mesa, Arizona, made the following statement:

“In the early days of January of 1968, I (Nelson) visited Dr. Hugh Nibley at Brigham Young University for the purpose of reviewing the papyri. In company with Dr. Nibley, I examined the colored reproductions of the papyri and was quick to notice that they were the ‘BOOK OF THE DEAD’. I mentioned my discovery to Dr. Nibley, and he agreed with me.”

When Nelson tells it, he tries to impress his audience by stating with fake surprise, “... and he agreed with me!” What Nelson was implying is that he was the first one to discover this, when in fact all he had to do was to read the January, 1968 issue of the Improvement Era and this would have been made known to him. Since the issue would have been received the last of December and prior to his visit with Nibley, that is probably where he got his information!

DR. NIBLEY GIVES NELSON AND OTHERS COPIES OF THE COLOR REPRODUCTIONS OF THE PAPYRI

When the LDS church received the papyri, it was put on display for all to see and color reproductions were given upon request. Scholars were also invited to translate it. Nelson tries to make a big issue out of Dr. Nibley having given him a copy of the reproductions as if he was the only one able to get such secret inside information!

Actually, Nelson was afforded the same courtesy that Dr. Nibley would have extended to this author or any other visitor that he might have had. There was nothing to hide or cover up because the papyri was on exhibit to the public.

IS THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM A CORRECT TRANSLATION OF JOSEPH SMITH PAPYRI X AND XI?

NO! The Book of Breathings is not the Book of Abraham! The following explanation is taken from Chapter 1 of Dr. Hugh Nibley's book, *THE MESSAGE OF THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPYRI, AN EGYPTIAN ENDOWMENT*, Deseret Book Company, 1976, by permission of Dr. Nibley. This author feels his explanation helps clarify the difference between the two records.

No, the Book of Breathings is not the Book of Abraham. Does it pretend to be? **No**, it was never put forward as such. The Facsimiles were published along with explanations of what they depicted, but at no time was any Egyptian text put forward as the original of the Book of Abraham.

Doesn't the text of the Book of Abraham appear in a number of manuscripts in columns running parallel with characters from the Book of Breathings? Yes, the brethren at Kirtland were invited to try their skill at translation; in 1835 the Prophet's associates, miffed by his superior knowledge and determined to show him up, made determined efforts to match up the finished text of the Book of Abraham with characters from the J.S. Papyrus No. XI; but they never got beyond the second line of characters — if they were really trying to translate, they soon demonstrated that it simply didn't work. When at that very time some turned savagely against Joseph Smith and told every scandalous thing they could invent about him, none of them ever made mention of his involvement in any of these frustrated exercises.¹

Whatever exercises, discreet or indiscreet, the brethren in Kirtland may have engaged in, the Prophet Joseph himself has supplied us with the most conclusive evidence that the manuscript today identified as the Book of Breathings, J.S. Papyri X and XI, was not in his opinion the source of the Book of Abraham. For he has furnished a clear and specific description of the latter: "The record of Abraham and Joseph, found with the mummies, is (1) beautifully written on papyrus, with black, and (2) a small part red, ink or paint, (3) in perfect preservation."² Consider these three points in order.

First, the Abraham document was beautifully written, and some of the surviving Joseph Smith papyri are indeed nicely and clearly written and accompanied by well-drawn vignettes. Such are fragments II through VIII as classified in the Improvement Era reproductions (February, 1968, pp. 40a-40g). If the Book of Breathing's text was the only manuscript Joseph possessed, it is just possible that the thrill of having such a treasure could have carried him away to the extent of regarding it as a thing of beauty. But he had a sizeable collection of handsome Egyptian documents compared with which the hastily written and clumsily retouched characters of the Breathing text, in their crowded and uneven lines, can by no stretch of the imagination be called beautifully written. Even the reserved Professor Wilson, while noting that some of the Joseph Smith Papyri were rather prettily written, comments on the coarse appearance of Nos. X and XI, the Book of Breathing's.³

In the second place, the text which Joseph Smith relates, directly or indirectly, to Abraham contained the rubrics or brief notations in red ink common to Egyptian manuscripts. He is plainly describing a real manuscript and a rather typical one; and since no one could read it, there is no reason why he should not have described it correctly. Hence the fact that there is not the slightest indication of rubrics in the J.S. Papyri X and XI — not so much as a speck of red ink, though such rubrics are common in the other Joseph Smith manuscripts — is alone enough to disqualify it as a candidate for the Abraham source. This is no mistake of preservation, moreover, for the longest of all Books of Breathing's, one closely associated, as we shall see, with this one, is also free of rubrics — apparently an intentional omission.⁴

Third, "the record of Abraham and Joseph" was in a state of "perfect preservation", while our Book of Breathing's is the most badly damaged of all the papyri. That it was already damaged in Joseph Smith's day is indicated by a number of things. For example, four large pieces are missing; they are not parts destroyed by the process of minute and gradual flaking which is still going on, and which leave marks on the glue of the mounting paper but chunks containing sizeable portions of several times each, such as could have broken off only before the document was mounted. If they had broken off after the mounting, why were not the precious pieces returned to their proper place? Instead of that, they were used to fill in gaps in another damaged papyrus, J.S. No. IV, three of them being glued in upside down! Obviously they were not recognized as parts of our Breathing text. Yet the paper on which the latter was mounted bears the handwriting of Joseph Smith, and the drawings, maps, and texts on the back of the mounting papers of all the papyri surviving

clearly indicates that the work was done in Kirtland, where Wilford Woodruff reports in 1836 the papyri were on display in the temple as its greatest treasure. How could anyone fail to identify the four broken-off pieces unless they were already broken off and jumbled up at the time the document was found? The damage could have been done during Chandler's frantic search for "diamonds or valuable metal" in the New York Customs House. A study of the mounted manuscripts shows that there are places where bits of papyrus fibers have flaked off, leaving either filaments of fiber or the imprint of such in the glue, while there are other gaps in the manuscript where the backing paper has always been blank, with no papyrus glued to it, showing that these parts of the text were missing at the time of mounting.

When in 1835 the brethren made attempts to "translate" the first two lines in terms of the Book of Abraham (if that is what they were doing), they had the characters copied out for them by a single scribe in a bold and rather skillful hand, thus sparing wear and tear on the original; it is significant that when this scribe comes to those places in the manuscript which are today a blank, he also leaves a blank in his copy which has been filled out by another hand with thin and awkward characters which are far too many for the spaces indicated and definitely the wrong characters. This is another indication that the text was damaged from the first. Indeed, unlike the other Joseph Smith papyri, this one contains clumsy ancient retouching over places where the papyrus fiber flaked off centuries ago. **In short, if there is any of the papyri which is not in a state of "perfect preservation," the Book of Breathings is it.**

Then too, it is significant that Joseph Smith in his description of the Abraham text fails to mention what would have been the most striking thing about it had it been the same as the Book of Breathings, namely, the full-page drawing immediately adjoining the text. Since this is an illustration to the Book of Abraham, it has naturally been assumed that the text that follows the drawing could only be that of Abraham — even the brethren at Kirtland assumed that. But that fails to take into account the common Egyptian practice in matching texts in general and with Book of Breathing texts in particular. In his edition of the Book of Breathings Pap. Louvre N. 3279, J.C. Goyon warns the student that the vignettes that accompany the text "have often only a very remote connection with the substance (le développement) of the writing."⁵ For example, Tableau ii of this Breathings text actually belongs "to the illustrations of the Chapters of the Gates of

Hades, in the Book of the Dead,” and it is only “as an exception” that “the title of the text (under Tableau iv) corresponds to the drawing that adorns it ...”⁶

Following a well-known Egyptian practice (most conspicuous in the *Amduat*), our Book of Abraham twice refers its reader back to an illustration of some ritual object it is talking about. When we read, “and that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record” (Abr. 1:12), or, “That you may have an understanding of these gods, I have given you the fashion of them in figures at the beginning” (1:14), the language clearly implies that the reader does not have the picture before him, but must be referred back to “the commencement of this record,” to “the figures at the beginning.” The Abraham text may have belonged on the same roll as the Book of Breathings and Facsimile No. 1, or have been placed differently in the original document by Abraham, but if so, it must be sought in the section that has obviously been cut off from the Book of Breathings.

For a demonstration of the strange practice of putting the illustrations to one story with the text of another, we need look no further than the Joseph Smith Book of Breathings itself, **where the scene depicted so vividly in the Facsimile is nowhere mentioned in the text that immediately follows.** Only by matching up the fibers of the writing and the drawing is it possible to show that the two presentations, which at first glance have nothing to do with each other, were actually side by side on the same strip of papyrus.

Since Joseph Smith actually possessed quite a number of perfectly preserved, beautifully written Egyptian manuscripts adorned with rubrics, there is no reason to doubt that he was describing such a document as the source of “the record of Abraham and Joseph.” **And there can be no doubt whatever that the manuscript he was describing was and is an entirely different one from that badly written, poorly preserved little text, entirely devoid of rubrics, which is today identified as the Book of Breathings.** One cannot insist too strongly on this point, since it is precisely the endlessly repeated claim that the Book of Breathings has been “identified as the very source of the Book of Abraham” on which the critics of Joseph Smith have rested their whole case, oblivious to the howling absurdity of insisting that the book was produced in a manner in which, as they tirelessly demonstrate, no book could possibly be produced, ever!

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE THREE FACSIMILES IN THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM?

The biggest role of the prophet Joseph Smith was to restore to the earth truths that were lost through the apostasy. It is a known truth that the Lord reveals line upon line, precept upon precept, and we are fed milk before meat so that we may understand Him and His ways. (Isaiah 28:10, I Cor. 3:2) It is this author's firm conviction that this process, from the simple to the complex, helps us to understand the higher knowledge.

It is interesting that Joseph Smith was exposed to an ancient Egyptian endowment through facsimiles #1, #2, and #3, and the Book of Abraham **before** the complete temple endowment was restored. (Smith, HISTORY OF THE CHURCH, vol. 2:236 — Papyri was obtained in **July, 1835**. The Book of Abraham was published in **March of 1842** — vol. 4:520. The complete endowment ceremony in this dispensation was first introduced in **May, 1842** — Vol. 5:2 ftnt.) The 'BOOK OF THE DEAD' was a vehicle by which many lost truths were revealed to the Prophet.

This author owns and operates two clothing stores, and the editor is a Business teacher at a local college. Although we know that the Book of Abraham is true, our qualifications are hardly adequate to prepare a scholarly treatise for you on Egyptology and the Book of Abraham. May we, therefore, recommend the following list of books as a few of those available that will enlighten the reader on the subject of the Book of Abraham. Any LDS bookstore can assist you in locating them:

1. **ABRAHAM IN EGYPT**, by Dr. Hugh Nibley, Published by Deseret Book, 1981. Dr. Nibley has spent 3 years gathering research for this book. It discusses, among other things, facsimiles #2 and #3. Dr. Nibley says that so much material has been discovered and translated lately that it is hard to stay current. This book contains the latest information for the serious student of the Book of Abraham.
2. **THE FIRM FOUNDATION OF MORMONISM**, by Kirk Holland Vestal and Arthur Wallace, Ph.D. Published by LL Company, 1647 Manning Avenue, Los Angeles, CA, 90024, (213) 474-5185. It contains, among other things — The Book of Abraham, the Book of the Dead Papyrus, and the meaning of the temple; Archaeology and the Book of Mormon; Hebrew Prophecies of the work of Joseph Smith; The Prophecies of Joseph Smith; The 75-day translation of the Book of Mormon; The development of scripture and the Doctrine and Covenants; The Primitive Christian Church and the Restored Church of

Jesus Christ; The language of the Book of Mormon, chiasmus, Hebrew, idioms, "And it came to pass", Reformed Egyptian.

3. "Improvement Era" articles from January 1968 — June 1970. (Dr. Nibley has written a long series of articles on the Book of Abraham. The first part answers the critics of the Book of Abraham, and the second part deals with Facsimile #1.)
4. THE MESSAGE OF THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPYRI, AN EGYPTIAN ENDOWMENT, by Dr. Hugh Nibley, Published by Deseret Book Company, 1975.
5. BYU STUDIES, by Michael D. Rhodes, Vol. 17, Spring 1977, #3, p. 259 — 274. (It includes the translation and commentary of the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus.)

These books are scholarly books and are well referenced. Scholars do not seem to write in easy, novel form. Therefore, the price for finding out the truth about the Book of Abraham may be to read and study these books more than once.

TO THE NON-MORMON INVESTIGATOR

Do you think you can find out the truth about the Mormon church by asking people like Dee Jay Nelson or Jerald and Sandra Tanner? Of course not!

Throughout this book, we have presented the false credentials of Dee Jay Nelson. At this time, we would like to impress the reader that the main issue is not that Nelson does not have legitimate degrees, is not a famous Egyptologist, and has done few, if any, of the things he has claimed. **The important issue is that Nelson felt he needed those impressive credentials in order to successfully attack the origins and beliefs of the LDS Church. Nelson knows that the statements of an authority are usually accepted without question — a status he needed and desired to serve his purposes.** Such deception, including also omissions of key words in quotations, deliberate misinterpretations, quoting statements out of context and then explaining them to fit their own biases, false genealogies (often claiming to be a descendant of a famous church leader), are only a few of the favorite techniques used by anti-Mormon propagandists. Rather than try to explain why they feel these techniques are more desirable and effective than the simple truth, let us simply remind the reader that **Satan, the devil, is the father of all lies!**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Mormons, has missionaries all over the world who sacrifice 1 1/2 years of their time and their own money, to be able to teach you the gospel they know to be true. There is no obligation. They will not run down your own religion or anyone else's. They would

teach you the gospel and ask you to rely on prayer to find out if the things they present are true. Among the scriptures they will quote are:

“But, behold I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right” (Doctrine & Covenants 9:8; compare Luke 24:13-32).

“And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Book of Mormon, Moroni 10:4).

The true church, in addition to relying on prayer, should bless the lives of its members. In Matthew 7:20 our Savior tells us how we can recognize those who have the truth — “By their fruits ye shall know them.” Your family relationships should be stronger and better; you should be happier and healthier; your talents and abilities should increase; and, you should experience more peace and contentment. These are the fruits of truth! The fruits of the LDS Church are known to the world. A typical article discussing these fruits is in FAMILY CIRCLE magazine, Jan. 1976, pp. 78-82. It can be read in the appendix on pp. 229-232. The article sums it all up by saying, “**They must be doing something right!**”

Do you want to know the truth? Are you willing to pray and ask your Heavenly Father to manifest the truth to you? Why not try it? Look first in your telephone directory under CHURCHES, CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS. Any telephone number listed can direct you to the missionaries. Or, you may write directly to this author and your request will be directed to the closest mission office:

Robert L. Brown
P.O. Box 2671
Mesa, Arizona 85204

IN SUMMARY . . .

The Book of Breathings was identified as a funerary text, and **not** the Book of Abraham, in the January issue of The Improvement Era, 1968, an official publication of the LDS church for subscribing members. Dr. Klaus Baer, of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, commented on the speed with which the papyri went public after its possession by the LDS church in DIALOGUE 3, No. 3, Autumn, 1968, p. 110, saying that it was a gratifying contrast to the secrecy

with which their previous custodians surrounded them.

The Book of Breathings is not the source of the Book of Abraham. Beginning with the much-asked question, What do the Joseph Smith Papyri actually say?, we should ask, Do we really know what the ancients were talking about? Could it be that there was something to their mysteries after all?

There are a growing number of scholars who are paying increasing attention to rites of initiation in Egypt and elsewhere — and consequently treats the Joseph Smith Book of Breathings as a handbook or notebook used by an ancient initiate in the temple. To the faithful Latter-day Saint, familiar with the present-day temple ceremony, these finds of ancient documents are proving to be exciting to say the least.

Is the Book of Abraham true? Is Joseph Smith a true prophet of God called in this last dispensation to restore many truths which were lost down through the ages of apostasy? Would you believe an answer from your Father in Heaven? This is the test by which the LDS church stands — and it is the results of this test which makes this church the fastest growing and most dynamic church in America today (much to the chagrin of anti-Mormon propagandists). But remember, one must first study — then pray!

FOOTNOTES

¹Discussed by H. Nibley, in *BYU STUDIES*, II (1971): pp. 359-91.

²DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF THE CHURCH (DHC), 2:348.

³J.A. Wilson, in *DIALOGUE*, III 2:68, it being written “in a hieratic hand coarser than that of Document B” (a Book of the Dead ms.)

⁴B.H. Stricker, *O.M.R.O.*, 31:48. J.C. Goyon finds the presence of rubrics in the Breathing Pap. Louvre 3279 “surprising” (Goyon, p. 3).

⁵J.C. Goyon; *Le Papyrus du Louvre N. 3279* (Cairo: Inst. Français d’ Archeol. Or., 1966), pp. 2, 6.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 3, 7.