

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPYRI: A PRELIMINARY REPORT

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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; his translation of one of these fragments, the important "sensen" text, begins on page 98.

Photo (1). This is a well-known scene from the Osiris mysteries, with Anubis, the jackal-headed god, on the left ministering to the dead Osiris on the bier. The pencilled(?) restoration is incorrect. Anubis should be jackal-headed. The left arm of Osiris is in reality lying at his side under him. The apparent upper hand is part of the wing of a second bird which is hovering over the erect phallus of Osiris (now broken away). The second bird is Isis

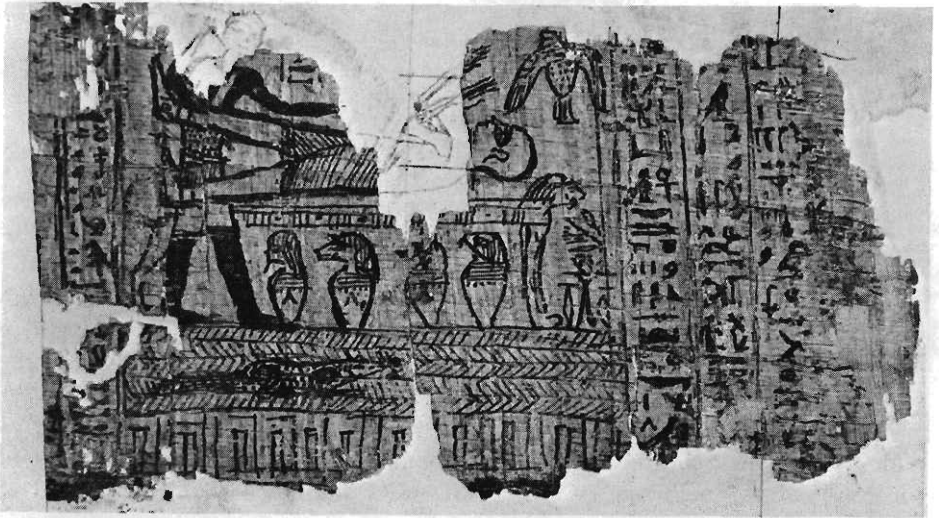


PHOTO 1

and she is magically impregnated by the dead Osiris and then later gives birth to Horus who avenges his father and takes over his inheritance. The complete bird represents Nephthys, sister to Osiris and Isis. Beneath the bier are the four canopic jars with heads representative of the four sons of Horus, human-headed Imseti, baboon-headed Hapy, jackal-headed Duamutef and falcon-headed Kebehsenuf. The hieroglyphs refer to burial, etc., but I have found no exact parallel in the time at my disposal and the poor photography precludes easy reading of the whole. I see no obvious personal name.

(2 to 9). These are all fragments of the Book of the Dead belonging to the woman Ta-cherit-Min, daughter of Neskhnons. Some of the fragments actually join and could be so mounted when the papyrus is prepared properly. The order of the photographs is as follows:

(7). Right fragment has the vignettes and parts of Spells 53 and 54 of the Book of the Dead. The left fragment has parts of the vignettes and Spells 63 and 65. The titles are 53, Spell for not eating dung or drinking urine in the god's domain; 54, Spell for giving breath to a man in the god's domain; 63, Spell for drinking water and not becoming parched by fire; 65, Spell for going forth by day and overcoming one's enemies.

(9). Right column, an unidentified spell. Left column, upper vignette for Spells 67 and 70, lower for Spell 72. 67, Spell for going out; 70, Another spell; 72, Spell for going forth by day and opening the underworld of the west.

(2). Either fits under (9). or joins at the side since the top continues Spell 72. Then follow Spells 74, 75, 76 and 77 with vignettes. 74, Spell for opening the feet and ascending from the earth; 75, Spell for going to Heliopolis and taking a seat there; 76, Spell for assuming any form one wishes; 77, Spell for assuming the form of a falcon of gold.

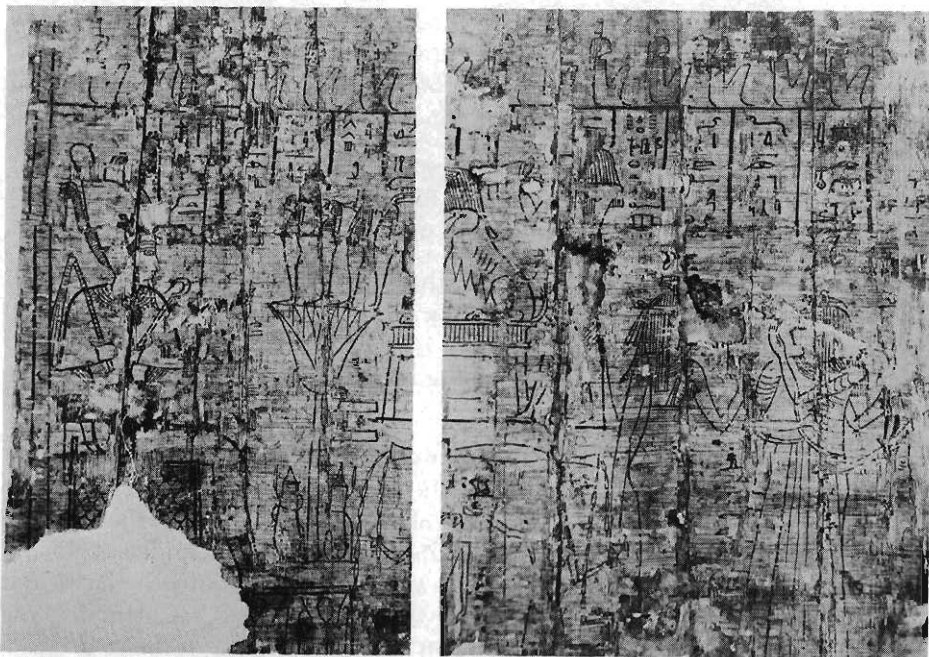
(4). This joins directly to (2) and I would judge was once cut off rather than broken away. The base line under the legged serpent in the top vignette points to the fourth line above the base of the swallow. The papyrus in (4) needs arrangement at the top. There is the end of an unidentified spell and then Spells 86, 87, 88 and 89 with vignettes, the middle of which is for 87 and 88. 86, Spell for assuming the form of a swallow; 87, Spell for assuming the form of a son of earth (a snake); 88, Spell for assuming the form of a crocodile; 89, Spell for causing that a man's soul attach itself to his corpse in the god's domain.

(3). This joins directly to (4). The baseline under the middle vignette of (2) points to the line immediately above the lower vignette on the right in (3). The upper part of (3) is badly arranged. Some fragments are upside down, and the middle needs to be straightened as well. On the right the top vignette is for either Spell 91 or 92. The middle is for Spell 100 and the lower for 101. 91, Spell for not letting a man's soul be confined in the god's domain; 100, Spell for making content the soul of a blessed one and causing that he ascend to the bark of Re and his retinue; 101, Spell for protecting the bark of Re. On the left at top Spell 103 and then vignettes for Spells 104, 105 and 106. 103, Spell for opening beside Hathor; 104, Spell for sitting among the great gods; 105, Spell for making a man's spirit content in the god's domain; 106, Spell for giving offerings in Memphis.

(8). This is part of the vignette of Spell 110, portraying the deceased in the other world.

(5 and 6). These join directly and together compose the well-known Spell 125 judgment scene. Osiris is on the left. The four sons of Horus stand

on the lotus before him. Behind him is the Devourer who eats the condemned hearts. Below is the scales on which the heart of the deceased is weighed against the feather of truth. Behind the Devourer is Thoth who records the verdict, and on the right Ma'at, goddess of truth, leads in the deceased. Above is a row of assessors.



PHOTOS 5 AND 6

The titles I have quoted above are without strict regard to the preserved writing.

The papyri need to be carefully cleaned and straightened and then re-photographed with care to illuminate the under side somewhat to eliminate all shadows in cracks and breaks, which can frequently look just like writing.

A TENTATIVE APPROACH TO THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

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During the 1830's John Whitmer wrote, in connection with the ancient Egyptian records purchased by the church in July 1835 from Michael H. Chandler,