

present state of affairs, a reasoned (some say intellectual) approach to personal, Church, and social problems exists under a pale of suspicion. This shouldn't be so. All too often this has resulted in needlessly inflexible behavior when current problems cry for imagination. Sadly we are engulfed in an avalanche of Mormon lore somehow defined as doctrine.



## THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPYRI

*Benjamin Urrutia, p.i.t.a.p.*

*Why do the gentiles rage,  
And the people imagine a vain thing?  
(Psalm 2, verse 1)*

*The Summer and Fall issues of DIALOGUE (1968) contained certain articles on papyrus scrolls purchased by the Church from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in late 1967.*

*Some evidence has been advanced to show that "The Breathing Permit of Hór" (one of the scrolls, sometimes called "small sensen") was used by Joseph Smith in translating the Book of Abraham. Translations of this scroll by Egyptologists Richard Parker and Klaus Baer indicated that the "Breathing Permit" scroll was written about the time of Christ and that the message of this scroll is not that of the Book of Abraham; they are saying that if Joseph Smith thought that a correct translation of "Breathing Permit" was the Book of Abraham, he was mistaken.*

*Professor Hugh Nibley countered with several alternate hypotheses, including one to the effect that "Breathing Permit" was written in code, which code has not as yet been broken by the Egyptologists. What follows, by Benjamin Urrutia, is an argument in support of the "code" theory.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Of the subject of my study, only fragments and copies of fragments are left. These are "Joseph Smith's Egyptian Papyri" numbers 1, 10 and 11, and

the three Facsimiles of the Pearl of Great Price. But these are enough. I have glued them to a roll of paper 10x150 centimeters long (according to Doctor Baer's indications), and I have a pretty good idea of what PJS (as I shall call this document) must have looked like before it broke into pieces over a century ago.

In this essay my main objectives shall be to prove that the two titles that have been ascribed to PJS ("The Breathing Permit of Hôr" and "The Book of Abraham") are *both* correct, and that the two translations that have been offered of PJS (one covering almost all of the book, even the parts that now have been lost, the other barely a fifth of the papyrus) are *both* good and acceptable translations, each in its own way. (I have a few minor objectives too).

The reasons that make the scholars "rage" and "imagine a vain thing" are that: a) Joseph's translations of PJS is very different from their own; and b) the Book of Abraham is disproportionately long (136 very long verses) as contrasted to column I of PJS (less than 70 characters), the ground it covers.

These people obviously think they can have their cake and eat it, but they *can't* have it both ways.

### 1. A WORKING HYPOTHESIS: BA + X = PJS

Joseph Smith, the Prophet, is known to have made three translations of ancient records, in this order: 1) The Book of Mormon; 2) The Inspired Version of the Bible; 3) The Book of Abraham. Of these, the first is the only one that was completed, and the only one that was a "translation" in the sense of the word that is most commonly used and understood. The second was not a translation from the original Hebrew, but a correction of some (not all!) of the infinitude of errors in the King James Bible. And what was the nature of the translation of the Book of Abraham? It was quite different from either of the other two. To understand how it worked, we must learn something of the original and background of the book itself.

Abraham, who lived around two thousand years before Christ (the exact date is a matter of much controversy), was in Egypt at least once (Gen. 12 & 13). It was in this land that he wrote the book that bears his name. This document was brought back to Egypt by Abraham's grandson, Israel.

But when "there arose up a new king over Egypt who knew not Joseph" (Ex. 1:8), what became of the sacred book? Did this king, who had no respect for Israelite lives, have any respect for Israelite culture?

The best way to save the book would have been to camouflage it to look like an Egyptian document instead of a Semitic one. Most likely it was already written in Egyptian characters, but that wasn't enough.

An enterprising Hebrew, whom we shall call X, conceived a code in which every character of a Mizraite funerary inscription, with only a few minor (though significant) changes, was the equivalent of two verses, more or less, of the book he was trying to save, the original of which no longer exists. There even exists the possibility (it would be more farfetched, but also more logical) that X actually *created* "The Breathing Permit of Hôr" (BPH), to

suit his purposes, and later the Egyptians accepted it as sacred, without suspecting its origin. If this second hypothesis turned out to be true, then we would have BPH itself as what the Egyptologists used to believe the BA was: an imitation of the Book of the Dead by a non-Egyptian hand, and a forgery.

The algebraical equation at this section's heading is applicable to either variant of my hypothesis: the Book of Abraham plus X's manipulations equals the Papyrus Joseph Smith.

But once BA was rendered into code, what chance was there of ever decoding it again? X being dead, the secret was lost, and not a convention of all the world's cryptographers could find it again. The book was in all appearance, *and even in reality*, "The Breathing Permit of Hôr." What was there to be done? What was the key to the lost code? The answer: the Urim and Thummim:

And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goes in before the LORD; and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the LORD continually. (Ex. 28:30; read the whole chapter)

When Moses left Egypt, he took a copy of the BPH with him. Since he had the Urim and Thummim, the Book of Abraham was brought to light a second time. (It must have helped Moses in the writing of his own books). The third time was when Joseph, also using the Urim and Thummim, found once more the clue to the Book of Abraham.

But what reason have I to make all these fanciful theories? Two very good reasons: those two differences that cause so much raging and imagining of vain things, although they happily cancel each other. (That is the difference between Joseph's and the Egyptologists' translation of the same document, and the difference between the number of Egyptian characters and the number of English words. This we shall examine in detail after we take care of a few lesser problems).

Of course, the papyrus we have is not the original, but a late copy of Saitic times. Mormon and Gentile agree on this.

## 2. FAC. 1, ORIG, FAC. 1, AND SIMILAR PROBLEMS

(Fac. 1 is my abbreviation for Facsimile Number One. Orig. Fac. 1 means the original Facsimile Number One. Similarly Fac. 2 and Orig. Fac. 2 represent Facsimile Number Two and its original, Fac. 2 and Orig. Fac. 3 are Facsimile Number Three and its original.)

The scholarly view is that when Joseph acquired his scrolls, they were scrolls no more, but had already been fragmented and pasted on maps of the Kirtland area. Furthermore, the cut-in-half papyri had already suffered this operation, and the portions that have fallen off from the paper had already done so.

Against these speculations Doctor Hugh Nibley puts up the following facts:

. . . the papyri were in beautiful condition when Joseph Smith got them, and . . . one of them when unrolled on the floor extended through two rooms of the Mansion House. Those we have today are mounted on paper showing maps of the Kirtland area . . . [which] suggests that the mounting took place only after the Kirtland period, when all thought of returning to Kirtland was given up and the precious maps had become wastepaper.

(*Dialogue*, Summer 1968, pp. 101-2)

The clumsy "penciled restoration" that Professor Parker rightly condemns . . . can hardly have been the work of a Mormon hand, since it differs completely from the official copy of the papyrus that was circulated in many thousands of copies both during and after the lifetime of Joseph Smith. . . . And since this is the *only* attempt to indicate the missing parts, it would seem clear that the parts were not missing when the Mormons still had the thing in their possession. This is borne out by the clear traces left behind in the dried glue by those parts of the papyrus that crumbled away after it was mounted; they show that at the time of the mounting there was room in the papyrus for the complete head and hand of the priest. It is interesting that no attempt was made to sketch in the bird's head, and also that there are no traces on the mounting paper of the head's having been broken off after the mounting. This would indicate that the "penciled restoration" of the more recently missing parts, being an attempt to supply what had been destroyed after the mounting, and also being done by a person unfamiliar with the facsimiles and certainly . . . with the original, belongs to the "post-Mormon" career of the papyrus. It must not be forgotten that the papyri have been in non-Mormon hands for 111 years.

(*The Improvement Era*, September 1968, p. 72 & fn. 32)

From these two related statements by Dr. Nibley, and the article by Dr. Baer, we can dare to make the following assumptions:

1) The scrolls were still scrolls (and well-preserved, too) when they were first acquired by Joseph.

2) The fragmenting and pasting on paper came much later.

3) Even later was the cutting by half of number III (now IIIA and IIIB) and Orig. Fac. 1-XI. This was probably done to get a better price on their sale to the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. Dr. Baer has proven beyond shadow of doubt that Orig. Fac. 1 and XI were originally one fragment.

4) Also of late date was the falling off of those fragments that have left their remains on the glue marks behind. Most of these were restored, but in the wrong places.

5) Besides PJS, the original collection also included the BD of the female musician of Amon-Re Neferirub and the BD of the lady Taimin Mutninesikhonsu, which we shall not discuss because they have no connection either with BA or BPH, except for the misplaced fragments IVa, IVb, IVc, and IVd.

6) PJS, when whole, included Orig. Fac. 1-XI, Orig. Fac. 2 no. X, column v (now lost), and Orig. Fac. 3. It measured around 10x150 centimeters.

Of course, it was read from right to left. All Egyptologists know this, and Joseph Smith knew it. For this he certainly deserves credit.

Now we shall pass to study column i of PJS, and how the original compares with its two different but correct translations.

### 3. CHAPTER ONE

(The Egyptian characters are here taken from column i of papyrus XI, which includes all the "super-cryptograms" for the Book of Abraham from I:4 to the end.) Verses 1 to 3 are cryptographed in the hieroglyphics around Orig. Fac. 1. The rest of the Book of Abraham is hidden beneath column I of the hieratic texts. The first (that is, rightmost) sign Baer interprets as a corner of "they shall":

X meant it to mean "sign of the fifth degree of the second part," whatever *that* means. Maybe that column I is the "second part," while Orig. Fac. I is the first part.

The next few characters are missing. In the Egyptian they meant "convey Osiris"; in the X system they symbolized verses 4 to 7, except the last ten words, which correspond to the next sign:

"Inside of; in," according to the Egyptian. Corresponds to "the priest of Elkenah (Duwamutef\*) was also the priest of Pharaoh," plus verses 8, 9, 10.

Egyptian definite article. Verse 11 minus last ten words.

First half of "pool." And it was done after the manner of the Egyptians," plus verse 12.

Second half of "pool." Verses 13 and 14, except "which signifies hieroglyphics," a commentary by the English translator.

"Great. Verse 15. (Both meanings are correct).

"Khons." Verses 16 to 19. Incidentally, "Abram" was used by Joseph instead of the "Abraham" of modern editions. Here ends the first line of column I.

Line 2 begins (at the rightmost extremity) with a character that Baer transliterates as Osiris' name. It symbolizes verses 20, 21 and 22.

Abraham 1:23-24. Baer claims this is "incorrectly restored" (we are here dealing with a missing portion of the papyrus). He would place the sign for "Hôr" instead. Likewise, he would write in "justified" in the remaining space (where Smith has *two* characters, corresponding to 25-26 and 27-28.) We won't make an issue out of this. If Joseph has a different restoration, it is because he wishes to come closer to the original intentions of X rather than those of the late Egyptian copyists.

Egyptian "born to." BA from "Now after the priest of Elkenah (Duwamutef) was smitten that he died" . . . to "have I kept even unto this day."

\*Like the Greek-Roman gods, these deities had two sets of names: one Egyptian, one Semitic.

Ti (means "the") — first part of a name. BA: "and I shall endeavor to write some of these things upon this record, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me."

Here ends chapter One of BA. The 1½ lines of text in Egyptian read: "They shall [convey Osiris] inside the Pool Great [of] Khons. Osiris [Hôr justified] born to Ti." . . .

#### 4. CHAPTER TWO

—Khebyt ("dancer"). With this character Tikhebyt's name is concluded. Comprises the whole of verse 1 and almost all of verse 2, save the last six words:

Baer: "sign indicating a woman's name." Smith: "who was the daughter of Haran." Here BPH and BA come surprisingly close, closer than anywhere else.

"Justified." Symbolizes verses 3, 4, 5. Unfortunately, this is as far as Baer goes in providing a character-by-character translation. The rest of column I: ". . . after his arms have been . . . ed on his heart and the BP (which \* made and has writing on its inside and outside) has been wrapped in royal linen and placed under his left arm near his heart, the rest of his mummy-bandages should be wrapped over it. The man for whom this book has been copied will breathe forever and ever as the bas of the gods do."

Thus the Egyptian. What about the Semitic? Well, the rest of Column I is the clue to the rest of the Book of Abraham. By now it should be clear that "the Egyptian characters cannot conceivably have enough information channels (component parts) to convey the amount of material translated from them." (*Dialogue*, Summer 1968, p. 95). Admirably well put! From this it should also be clear that this "translation" was not a translation in the usual sense of the word (as that of the Inspired Version was not, either), and that no man, no matter how wise or imaginative, could have done it by any normal means. How then, did Joseph do it? "How did Joseph Smith translate? Well, Wilford Woodruff said he translated with the Urim and Thummim. Parley P. Pratt said he translated with the Urim and Thummim. Orson Pratt said he translated with the Urim and Thummim. He translated with a divine instrument. That was the only way he could have done it" (James R. Clark in proceeding of Brigham Young University's "Pearl of Great Price Conference," December 10, 1960). Therefore, my friends, cease raging, cease imagining vain things. Joseph was a prophet, not a linguist. Dr. Baer is a linguist, not a prophet. Each of these men did what he could do, and admirably well, but he could not have done the same kind of translation the other did (even from the same document). But this does not subtract in the least from Baer's "The Breathing Permit of Hôr" or from Smith's "The Book of Abraham" as valuable and useful documents."

\*This sentence should have a subject, but there is none. Other MSS omit the whole of it. This certainly is an extraordinary papyrus!