



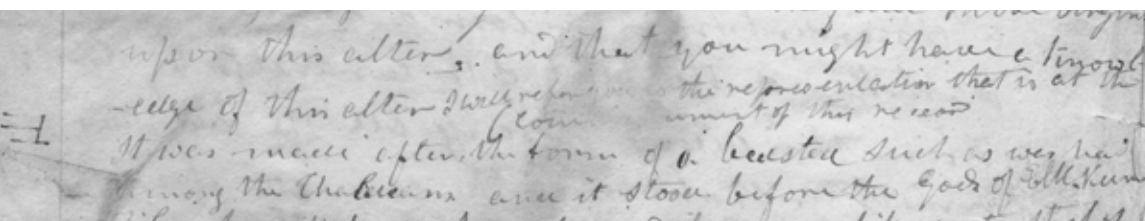
CHAPTER 14

The Facsimiles

THE FACSIMILES FROM THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM and their interpretation have sparked considerable discussion. We may divide these into discussions over the copying and interpretation of the facsimiles.

COPYING THE FACSIMILES

Since the papyri come from the Ptolemaic period, about 1,500 years after Abraham, the style of the pictures will not have been the same style as was current in Abraham's day. Abraham may not have included any illustrations in his original account. The references to the facsimiles within the text of the Book of Abraham seem to have been nineteenth-century editorial insertions. The earliest manuscript we have shows that the phrase "I will refer you to the representation that is at the commencement of this record" from Abraham 1:12 was

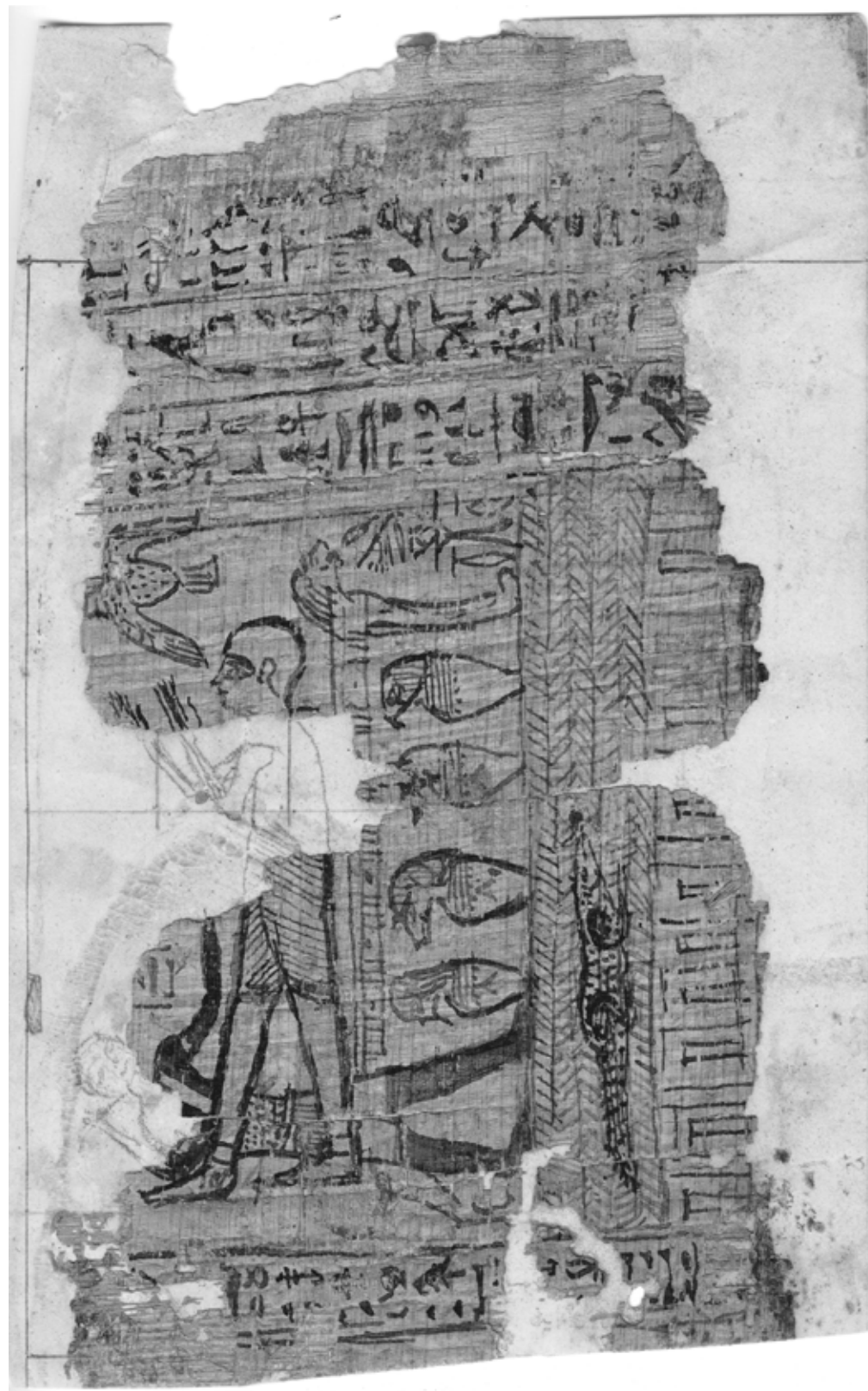


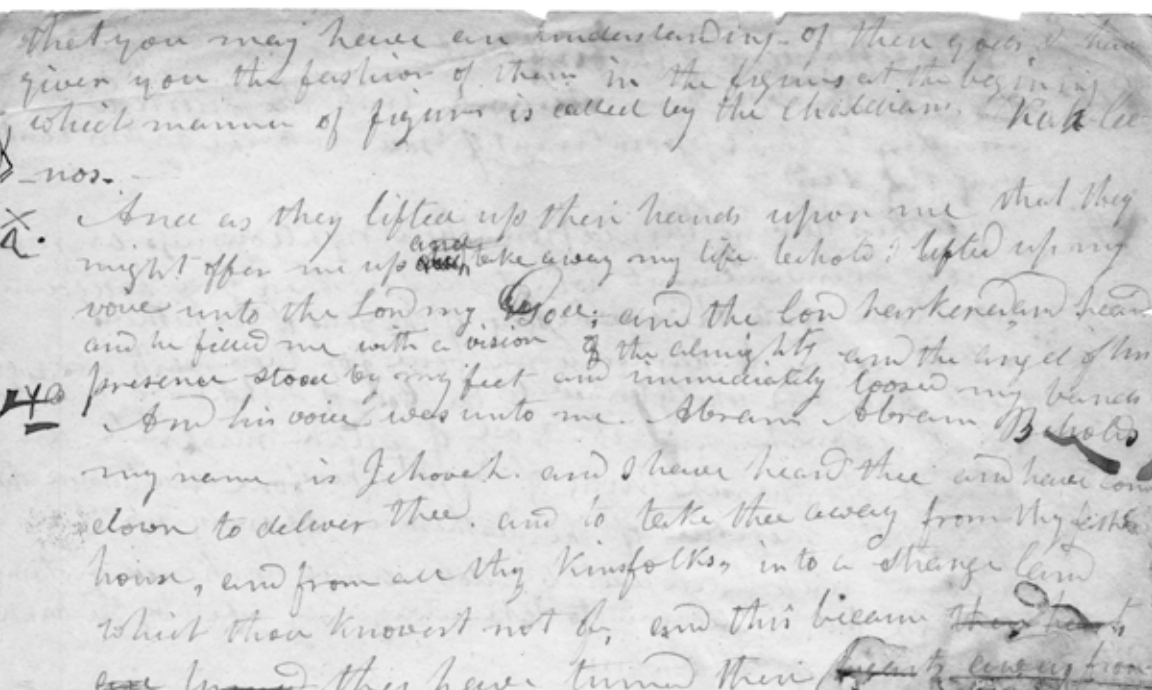
THE EARLIEST MANUSCRIPT OF ABRAHAM 1:12, IN THE HANDWRITING OF FREDRICK G. WILLIAMS (CHURCH HISTORY LIBRARY MS 1294, FOLDER 2). THE REFERENCE TO THE FACSIMILE HAS BEEN INSERTED BETWEEN THE LINES OF TEXT. © INTELLECTUAL RESERVE, INC.

squished in two lines of smaller handwriting in the space at the end of the paragraph between Abraham 1:12 and 1:13. Similarly, Abraham 1:14 was added in a smaller hand squeezed into the margin at the top of the page, above the header, ignoring the ruled left margin. The Book of Abraham actually reads smoothly without these additions. Thus, these statements in the text seem to be nineteenth-century additions approved by, if not made by, Joseph Smith.

Some evidence indicates that the papyri containing the facsimiles of the Book of Abraham were already damaged when Joseph Smith obtained them. The original of Facsimile 1 is now in bad condition with many missing areas, and much debate has focused on guessing how much of the damage occurred after Joseph Smith owned the papyrus. A sketch of Facsimile 2 made in 1842, possibly by Willard Richards, shows damaged areas of that facsimile that Reuben Hedlock filled in for the publication; the original is now missing. Facsimile 3 was apparently destroyed in the Chicago Fire but seems to have been largely intact when Joseph Smith had it.

RIGHT: JOSEPH SMITH PAPYRUS I. THE DAMAGED AREAS OF THE PAPER HAVE CAUSED SPECULATION ABOUT THE AREAS THAT HAVE BEEN RESTORED IN FACSIMILE 1. © INTELLECTUAL RESERVE, INC.





THE EARLIEST MANUSCRIPT OF ABRAHAM 1:14. THE REFERENCE TO THE FACSIMILE HAS BEEN ADDED IN THE TOP MARGIN OF THE MANUSCRIPT. © INTELLECTUAL RESERVE, INC.

The original facsimiles were engraved to size by Reuben Hedlock in 1842. Issues concerning the accuracy of both the artwork and the copying are routinely clouded by shifting the responsibility of the artwork from the engraver, Reuben Hedlock, to Joseph Smith, without adducing any evidence to identify a particular individual responsible for the restorations. Comparison of the remaining portions of Joseph Smith Papyrus I with the original publication of Facsimile 1 shows that Hedlock produced a careful, faithful—though not entirely photographically accurate—copy of the papyrus that, in the first publi-

cation, preserved the exact size of the originals. Later versions of the facsimiles were not as carefully copied as Hedlock's. The most inaccurate versions of the facsimiles were originally published in the 1907 edition of the Pearl of Great Price and perpetuated until the 1981 edition, which returned to Hedlock's engravings. Unfortunately, many publications by Egyptologists, contrary to their normal epigraphic standards, continue to use the 1907 edition of the facsimiles instead of the 1842 or 1981 editions. Almost all subsequent publications have changed the size of the originals.

INTERPRETING THE FACSIMILES

It has been constant practice to compare and contrast Joseph Smith's explanations of the facsimiles with those of modern Egyptologists. Joseph Smith's "explanations" found on the adjoining pages in the Pearl of Great Price are short statements that serve as a key to identifying the figures. The use of the facsimiles as illustrations of the Book of Abraham is dependent on the text of the Book of Abraham. Only Facsimile 1 corresponds with the published text of the Book of Abraham; the other facsimiles correspond to portions of the Book of Abraham that were not published. Interpretations of the facsimiles by most Egyptologists begin with the assumption that the facsimiles are standard illustrations for funerary texts. (Egyptologists describe any text found buried with someone as *funerary* whether or not the text was originally intended to be connected with a burial.) These interpretations are often hampered by the lack of good recent studies on the class of illustrations to which the various facsimiles belong. Comparisons between Joseph Smith's explanations and those of the ancient Egyptians have inherent problems: (1) We only know what Joseph Smith called the figures in the facsimiles, but we do not have

corresponding portions of the Book of Abraham that would tell the story portrayed in two of the facsimiles. (2) The ancient Egyptian interpretation of figures does not necessarily match those of modern scholars. In comparing Joseph Smith's understanding of the facsimiles with ancient Egyptian understanding of the facsimiles, we are comparing two unknowns. While some studies by Latter-day Saints have been overeager to find similarities between Joseph Smith's explanations of various figures and those of Egyptologists, studies by critics have generally been unwilling to grant that Joseph Smith could have gotten anything correct, even by coincidence. Additionally, most studies of the facsimiles (whether looking at Joseph Smith's or ancient Egyptian interpretations) have suffered from merely identifying the parts without exploring how those parts interact to form a whole.

Facsimiles 1 and 3 come from the same papyrus, while Facsimile 2 comes from a different document. Therefore, either

- one of the facsimiles did not accompany the text it is associated with,
- two of the facsimiles did not accompany the text they are associated with, or
- none of the facsimiles accompanied the text they are associated with.

So one cannot assume that the facsimiles accompanied the text that they were associated with on the papyrus.

It would be impossible to briefly summarize the debate on the facsimiles, particularly the debates on the individual figures. Here we will look at the overall interpretation and not the individual figures.



Facsimile 1, 1842. COURTESY OF LDS.ORG.

FACSIMILE 1

The picture for Facsimile 1 comes from Joseph Smith Papyrus I, which was positioned next to a copy of the Document of Breathings Made by Isis. But Facsimile 1 does not belong to that text, because the Document of Breathings Made by Isis makes no reference to the picture, and no other manuscript of the Document of Breathings Made by Isis has this illustration. Furthermore, Egyptologists disagree about what the illustration depicts. There are three main opinions.

Some say that it represents a scene of the god Anubis embalming a mummy even though it contains a number of unusual elements like the crocodile and the bird. The section of the embalming ritual that brings in Anubis contains passages that talk about how a goddess “will prevail over those who have plotted against you. She will direct the blast of the flame at those who have rebelled against you. She will burn the corpses of your enemies,”¹ and another “will reduce your enemies to ashes with her flame.”²

Others say that it represents a scene from the Khoiak festival, an Egyptian festival coinciding with the winter solstice, the end of the annual flooding of the Nile, and the beginning of the time for planting crops. Representations of the Khoiak festival are also missing a number of the elements of Facsimile 1, including the crocodile and the bird.³ The Khoiak festival scene is accompanied by an inscription that mentions “the strong one who subjugated the evil doer. He will not exist, nor will his name exist, since you will destroy his town, cast down the wall of his house, and everyone who is in it will be set on fire; you will demolish his district; you will stab his confederates, his flesh being ashes, the evil conspirator consigned to the slaughterhouse so that he will no longer exist.”⁴ This appears to be a reference to the imitation sacrifice of enemies that occurs during the festival.

A fragmentary Egyptian text displays a scene similar to Facsimile 1 and writes the name of Abraham under it. The text is a love

1. Embalming Ritual 6/3–4, in Mark Smith, *Traversing Eternity: Texts for the Afterlife from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 234.

2. Embalming Ritual 6/13, in Smith, *Traversing Eternity*, 235.

3. One representation does contain the bird but is missing the standing figure, the figures under the bed, and the crocodile.

4. Dendara X 31, 41; see also John Gee, “Execration Rituals in Various Temples,” in *Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Interconnections between Temples* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 73–79.



A SKETCH SHOWING SURVIVING PORTIONS OF THE HYPOCEPHALUS OF SESONCHIS. REUBEN HEDLOCK FILLED IN PORTIONS IN HIS CUT FOR FACSIMILE 2. © INTELLECTUAL RESERVE, INC.

charm, and the instructions say that the picture and the inscription go together. Oddly enough, Egyptian love charms were based on earlier ritual representations of human sacrifice. The thought was that if the person with whom an individual was infatuated did not fall in love with the individual, then the object of infatuation would suffer the tortures involved in human sacrifice.

Thus, ancient Egyptians connected scenes like Facsimile 1 with both human sacrifice and Abraham.

FACSIMILE 2

This facsimile has attracted much attention because of its round shape and complicated Greek name, *hypocephalus*. Because the text of the Book of Abraham that explains the figures was never published, no one is quite certain what the explanations refer to, or how to understand the picture, other than that it has something to do with astronomy. Similar problems are also encountered in explanations by Egyptologists. Egyptologists have typically translated the instructions as “placing a fire under the head of a mummy” instead of “placing a lamp at the head of a spirit,” and they argue that the purpose was to give warmth to the dead. But the text says that “if you place this god at the neck of the king when he is on earth it will be like a fire in front of his enemies on earth. If you place it at his neck after he is dead, he will be a god in the next life and will not be held back at any gate of the next life.”⁵ The Egyptian instructions contain a pun, since both the word for *lamp* (*hēbs*) and *spirit* (*ich*) are also used for stars.

One hypocephalus associates itself with “the pupil of the wedjat-eye,”⁶ which another Egyptian text uses as a synonym of Abraham.⁷

Thus, with Facsimile 2, there is also an ancient Egyptian connection with both astronomy and Abraham.

5. Book of the Dead 162, in Zaki Allam, *Papyrus Berlin 3031 Totentexte der 21. Dynastie mit und ohne Parallelen* (PhD diss. Rheinisch Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn, 1992), 21.

6. Musée Hungros des Beaux-Arts inv. L.009, in Edith Varga, “Le fragment d’un hypocéphale égyptien,” *Bulletin du Musée Hungrois des Beaux-Arts* 31 (1968): 15; Turin 2323; BM EA 8445.

7. P. Mag. 8/8, in F. Ll. Griffith and Herbert Thopson, *The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden* (London: H. Grevel, 1904-9), 2, plate VIII.



Facsimile 3. COURTESY OF LDS.ORG.

FACSIMILE 3

Facsimile 3 is often called a presentation scene. Parallel scenes on Egyptian temples are explicitly labeled as initiations. Known initiation rituals from Greco-Roman Egypt include instruction in astronomy as part of the initiation.⁸ Parallel scenes on grave stele usually included a formula about living in the presence of Osiris that in later times replaces the Egyptian god Osiris with Abraham.

Thus, Facsimile 3 also has an ancient Egyptian connection between both teaching astronomy and Abraham.

8. Joachim F. Quack, *Einführung in die altägyptische Literaturgeschichte III: Die demotische und gräko-ägyptische Literatur*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2009), 160–61, 163, 165.

Abraham's teaching of astronomy to the Egyptians is known from ancient accounts. These accounts may preserve ancient memories of the Book of Abraham.

FURTHER READING

THE FACSIMILES IN GENERAL

Barney, Kevin L. "The Facsimiles and Semitic Adaption of Existing Sources." In *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, edited by John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid, 107–30. Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005. The article points to known cases where Jewish authors adapted Egyptian iconography and scenes to a Jewish point of view and argues that the facsimiles from the Book of Abraham are another example of that phenomenon. From that perspective, it does not matter how ancient Egyptians or modern Egyptologists interpret the scene, since such will not reflect ancient Jewish interpretations of the same scenes.

Gee, John. "A Method for Studying the Facsimiles." *FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007): 347–53. This article, a review of another book on the facsimiles, outlines a method for understanding the facsimiles from an ancient Egyptian point of view. It also discusses how identifications of figures by Egyptologists do not match each other or the ancient Egyptian interpretations and certainly not Joseph Smith's. Identification of figures, however, is not the same as understanding or interpreting those identifications.

FACSIMILE 1

Gee, John. "Execration Rituals in Various Temples." In *Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Interconnections between Temples*, edited by Monika Dolińska and Horst Beinlich, 67–80. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010. Many Egyptologists argue that the clos-

est parallels to Facsimile 1 are scenes from the roof chapels of the Dendara temple. This article shows that the inscriptions that accompany such scenes point to human sacrifice, and it looks at examples of mock human sacrifice that appear in various temples. The article is somewhat technical in nature and assumes a reading knowledge of Egyptian.

———. "Glossed Over: Ancient Egyptian Interpretations of their Religion." In *Evolving Egypt: Innovation, Appropriation, and Reinterpretation in Ancient Egypt*, edited by Kerry Muhlestein and John Gee, 69–74. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2012. This article looks at some ancient Egyptian understandings of their own religion provided in their own glosses to religious texts. Some of the glosses discussed are relevant to Facsimile 1.

Nibley, Hugh. *An Approach to the Book of Abraham*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009. This is a collection of much of Hugh Nibley's early work on the Book of Abraham. Much of it deals with Facsimile 1.

FACSIMILE 2

Gee, John. "Non-Round Hypocephali." In *Aegyptus et Pannonia III*, edited by Hedvig Györy, 41–58. Budapest: MEBT-ÓEB Comité de l'Égypte Ancienne de l'Association Amicale Hongroise-Égyptienne, 2006. This article expands the classification of hypocephali and notes the existence of a number of them that are not round.

———. "Towards an Interpretation of Hypocephali." In *Le lotus qui sort du terre": Mélanges offerts à Edith Varga*, 325–334. Budapest: Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts, 2001. This article looks at hypocephali, the class of documents to which Facsimile 2 belongs. It proposes a typology for classifying them and explores a methodology by which one might understand them.

Nibley, Hugh W., and Michael D. Rhodes. *One Eternal Round*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010. This book is Hugh Nibley's attempt to understand Facsimile 2. The manuscript was edited and brought into a coherent form by Michael Rhodes after Nibley's death.

Rhodes, Michael D. "A Translation and Commentary of the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus." *BYU Studies* 17, no. 3 (1977): 259–74. This is the first translation of the Egyptian text of Facsimile 2.

———. "The Joseph Smith Hypocephalus . . . Seventeen Years Later." Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994. This is a revision and updating of the author's earlier work on Facsimile 2.

FACSIMILE 3

Gee, John. "Facsimile 3 and Book of the Dead 125." In *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, edited by John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid, 95–105. Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005. This is a preliminary study showing what Facsimile 3 is not; specifically, Facsimile 3 is not a depiction of a judgment scene from Book of the Dead 125.

———. "A New Look at the 'nh p3 by Formula." In *Actes du IXe Congrès international des études démotiques*, edited by Ghislaine Widmer et Didier Devauchelle, 133–44. Cairo: Institut Français Archéologie Orientale, 2009. This article explores the formula that often accompanies scenes parallel to Facsimile 3. It also discusses some of the implications of that formula and how it helps to understand the scene.