

Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints embraces the book of Abraham as scripture. This book, a record of the biblical prophet and patriarch Abraham, recounts how Abraham sought the blessings of the priesthood, rejected the idolatry of his father, covenanted with Jehovah, married Sarai, moved to Canaan and Egypt, and received knowledge about the Creation. The book of Abraham largely follows the biblical narrative but adds important information regarding Abraham's life and teachings.

The book of Abraham was first published in 1842 and was canonized as part of the Pearl of Great Price in 1880. The book originated with Egyptian papyri that Joseph Smith translated beginning in 1835. Many people saw the papyri, but no eyewitness account of the translation survives, making it impossible to reconstruct the process. Only small fragments of the long papyrus scrolls once in Joseph Smith's possession exist today. The relationship between those fragments and the text we have today is largely a matter of conjecture.

We do know some things about the translation process. The word *translation* typically assumes an expert knowledge of multiple languages. Joseph Smith claimed no expertise in any language. He readily acknowledged that he was one of the "weak things of the world," called to speak words sent "from heaven."¹ Speaking of the translation of the Book of Mormon, the Lord said, "You cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me."² The same principle can be applied to the book of Abraham. The Lord did not require Joseph Smith to have knowledge of Egyptian. By the gift and power of God, Joseph received knowledge about the life and teachings of Abraham.

On many particulars, the book of Abraham is consistent with historical knowledge about the ancient world.³ Some of this knowledge, which is discussed later in this essay, had not yet been discovered or was not well known in 1842. But even this evidence of ancient origins, substantial though it may be, cannot prove the truthfulness of the book of Abraham any more than archaeological evidence can prove the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt or the Resurrection of the Son of God. The book of Abraham's status as scripture ultimately rests on faith in the saving truths found within the book itself as witnessed by the Holy Ghost.

The Book of Abraham as Scripture

Thousands of years ago, the prophet Nephi learned that one purpose of the Book of Mormon was to "establish the truth" of the Bible.⁴ In a similar way, the book of Abraham supports, expands, and clarifies the biblical account of Abraham's life.

In the biblical account, God covenants with Abraham to "make of thee a great nation."⁵ The book of Abraham provides context for that covenant by showing that Abraham was a seeker of "great knowledge" and a "follower of righteousness" who chose the right path in spite of great

hardship. He rejected the wickedness of his father's household and spurned the idols of the surrounding culture, despite the threat of death.⁶

In the Bible, God's covenant with Abraham appears to begin during Abraham's life. According to the book of Abraham, the covenant began before the foundation of the earth and was passed down through Adam, Noah, and other prophets.⁷ Abraham thus takes his place in a long line of prophets and patriarchs whose mission is to preserve and extend God's covenant on earth. The heart of this covenant is the priesthood, through which "the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal" are conveyed.⁸

The book of Abraham clarifies several teachings that are obscure in the Bible. Life did not begin at birth, as is commonly believed. Prior to coming to earth, individuals existed as spirits. In a vision, Abraham saw that one of the spirits was "like unto God."⁹ This divine being, Jesus Christ, led other spirits in organizing the earth out of "materials" or preexisting matter, not ex nihilo or out of nothing, as many Christians later came to believe.¹⁰ Abraham further learned that mortal life was crucial to the plan of happiness God would provide for His children: "We will prove them herewith," God stated, "to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them," adding a promise to add glory forever upon the faithful.¹¹ Nowhere in the Bible is the purpose and potential of earth life stated so clearly as in the book of Abraham.

Origin of the Book of Abraham

The powerful truths found in the book of Abraham emerged from a set of unique historical events. In the summer of 1835, an entrepreneur named Michael Chandler arrived at Church headquarters in Kirtland, Ohio, with four mummies and multiple scrolls of papyrus.¹² Chandler found a ready audience. Due partly to the exploits of the French emperor Napoleon, the antiquities unearthed in the catacombs of Egypt had created a fascination across the Western world.¹³ Chandler capitalized on this interest by touring with ancient Egyptian artifacts and charging visitors a fee to see them.

These artifacts had been uncovered by Antonio Lebolo, a former cavalryman in the Italian army. Lebolo, who oversaw some of the excavations for the consul general of France, pulled 11 mummies from a tomb not far from the ancient city of Thebes. Lebolo shipped the artifacts to Italy, and after his death, they ended up in New York. At some point the mummies and scrolls came into Chandler's possession.¹⁴

By the time the collection arrived in Kirtland, all but four mummies and several papyrus scrolls had already been sold. A group of Latter-day Saints in Kirtland purchased the remaining artifacts for the Church. After Joseph Smith examined the papyri and commenced "the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics," his history recounts, "much to our joy [we] found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham."¹⁵

Translation and the Book of Abraham

Joseph Smith worked on the translation of the book of Abraham during the summer and fall of 1835, by which time he completed at least the first chapter and part of the second chapter.¹⁶ His journal next speaks of translating the papyri in the spring of 1842, after the Saints had relocated to Nauvoo, Illinois. All five chapters of the book of Abraham, along with three illustrations (now known as facsimiles 1, 2, and 3), were published in the *Times and Seasons*, the Church's newspaper in Nauvoo, between March and May 1842.¹⁷

The book of Abraham was the last of Joseph Smith's translation efforts. In these inspired translations, Joseph Smith did not claim to know the ancient languages of the records he was translating. Much like the Book of Mormon, Joseph's translation of the book of Abraham was recorded in the language of the King James Bible. This was the idiom of scripture familiar to early Latter-day Saints, and its use was consistent with the Lord's pattern of revealing His truths "after the manner of their [His servants'] language, that they might come to understanding."¹⁸

Joseph's translations took a variety of forms. Some of his translations, like that of the Book of Mormon, utilized ancient documents in his possession. Other times, his translations were not based on any known physical records. Joseph's translation of portions of the Bible, for example, included restoration of original text, harmonization of contradictions within the Bible itself, and inspired commentary.¹⁹

Some evidence suggests that Joseph studied the characters on the Egyptian papyri and attempted to learn the Egyptian language. His history reports that, in July 1835, he was "continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients."²⁰ This "grammar," as it was called, consisted of columns of hieroglyphic characters followed by English translations recorded in a large notebook by Joseph's scribe, William W. Phelps. Another manuscript, written by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, has Egyptian characters followed by explanations.²¹

The relationship of these documents to the book of Abraham is not fully understood. Neither the rules nor the translations in the grammar book correspond to those recognized by Egyptologists today. Whatever the role of the grammar book, it appears that Joseph Smith began translating portions of the book of Abraham almost immediately after the purchase of the papyri.²² Phelps apparently viewed Joseph Smith as uniquely capable of understanding the Egyptian characters: "As no one could translate these writings," he told his wife, "they were presented to President Smith. He soon knew what they were."²³

The Papyri

After the Latter-day Saints left Nauvoo, the Egyptian artifacts remained behind. Joseph Smith's family sold the papyri and the mummies in 1856. The papyri were divided up and sold to various parties; historians believe that most were destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Ten papyrus fragments once in Joseph Smith's possession ended up in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.²⁴ In 1967, the museum transferred these fragments to the Church, which subsequently published them in the Church's magazine, the *Improvement Era*.²⁵

The discovery of the papyrus fragments renewed debate about Joseph Smith's translation. The fragments included one vignette, or illustration, that appears in the book of Abraham as facsimile 1. Long before the fragments were published by the Church, some Egyptologists had said that Joseph Smith's explanations of the various elements of these facsimiles did not match their own interpretations of these drawings. Joseph Smith had published the facsimiles as freestanding drawings, cut off from the hieroglyphs or hieratic characters that originally surrounded the vignettes. The discovery of the fragments meant that readers could now see the hieroglyphs and characters immediately surrounding the vignette that became facsimile 1.²⁶

None of the characters on the papyrus fragments mentioned Abraham's name or any of the events recorded in the book of Abraham. Latter-day Saint and non-Latter-day Saint Egyptologists agree that the characters on the fragments do not match the translation given in the book of Abraham, though there is not unanimity, even among non-Latter-day Saint scholars, about the proper interpretation of the vignettes on these fragments.²⁷ Scholars have identified the papyrus fragments as parts of standard funerary texts that were deposited with mummified bodies. These fragments date to between the third century B.C.E. and the first century C.E., long after Abraham lived.

Of course, the fragments do not have to be as old as Abraham for the book of Abraham and its illustrations to be authentic. Ancient records are often transmitted as copies or as copies of copies. The record of Abraham could have been edited or redacted by later writers much as the Book of Mormon prophet-historians Mormon and Moroni revised the writings of earlier peoples.²⁸ Moreover, documents initially composed for one context can be repackaged for another context or purpose.²⁹ Illustrations once connected with Abraham could have either drifted or been dislodged from their original context and reinterpreted hundreds of years later in terms of burial practices in a later period of Egyptian history. The opposite could also be true: illustrations with no clear connection to Abraham anciently could, by revelation, shed light on the life and teachings of this prophetic figure.

Some have assumed that the hieroglyphs adjacent to and surrounding facsimile 1 must be a source for the text of the book of Abraham. But this claim rests on the assumption that a vignette and its adjacent text must be associated in meaning. In fact, it was not uncommon for ancient Egyptian vignettes to be placed some distance from their associated commentary.³⁰

Neither the Lord nor Joseph Smith explained the process of translation of the book of Abraham, but some insight can be gained from the Lord's instructions to Joseph regarding translation. In April 1829, Joseph received a revelation for Oliver Cowdery that taught that both intellectual work and revelation were essential to translating sacred records. It was necessary to "study it out in your mind" and then seek spiritual confirmation. Records indicate that Joseph and others studied the papyri and that close observers also believed that the translation came by revelation. As John Whitmer observed, "Joseph the Seer saw these Record[s] and by the revelation of Jesus Christ could translate these records."³¹

It is likely futile to assess Joseph's ability to translate papyri when we now have only a fraction of the papyri he had in his possession. Eyewitnesses spoke of "a long roll" or multiple "rolls" of papyrus.³² Since only fragments survive, it is likely that much of the papyri accessible to Joseph when he translated the book of Abraham is not among these fragments. The loss of a significant

portion of the papyri means the relationship of the papyri to the published text cannot be settled conclusively by reference to the papyri.

Alternatively, Joseph's study of the papyri may have led to a revelation about key events and teachings in the life of Abraham, much as he had earlier received a revelation about the life of Moses while studying the Bible. This view assumes a broader definition of the words *translator* and *translation*.³³ According to this view, Joseph's translation was not a literal rendering of the papyri as a conventional translation would be. Rather, the physical artifacts provided an occasion for meditation, reflection, and revelation. They catalyzed a process whereby God gave to Joseph Smith a revelation about the life of Abraham, even if that revelation did not directly correlate to the characters on the papyri.³⁴

The Book of Abraham and the Ancient World

A careful study of the book of Abraham provides a better measure of the book's merits than any hypothesis that treats the text as a conventional translation. Evidence suggests that elements of the book of Abraham fit comfortably in the ancient world and supports the claim that the book of Abraham is an authentic record.

The book of Abraham speaks disapprovingly of human sacrifice offered on an altar in Chaldea. Some victims were placed on the altar as sacrifices because they rejected the idols worshipped by their leaders.³⁵ Recent scholarship has found instances of such punishment dating to Abraham's time. People who challenged the standing religious order, either in Egypt or in the regions over which it had influence (such as Canaan), could and did suffer execution for their offenses.³⁶ The conflict over the religion of Pharaoh, as described in Abraham 1:11–12, is an example of punishment now known to have been meted out during the Abrahamic era.

The book of Abraham contains other details that are consistent with modern discoveries about the ancient world. The book speaks of "the plain of Olishem," a name not mentioned in the Bible. An ancient inscription, not discovered and translated until the 20th century, mentions a town called "Ulisum," located in northwestern Syria.³⁷ Further, Abraham 3:22–23 is written in a poetic structure more characteristic of Near Eastern languages than early American writing style.³⁸

Joseph Smith's explanations of the facsimiles of the book of Abraham contain additional earmarks of the ancient world. Facsimile 1 and Abraham 1:17 mention the idolatrous god Elkenah. This deity is not mentioned in the Bible, yet modern scholars have identified it as being among the gods worshipped by ancient Mesopotamians.³⁹ Joseph Smith represented the four figures in figure 6 of facsimile 2 as "this earth in its four quarters." A similar interpretation has been argued by scholars who study identical figures in other ancient Egyptian texts.⁴⁰ Facsimile 1 contains a crocodile deity swimming in what Joseph Smith called "the firmament over our heads." This interpretation makes sense in light of scholarship that identifies Egyptian conceptions of heaven with "a heavenly ocean."⁴¹

The book of Abraham is consistent with various details found in nonbiblical stories about Abraham that circulated in the ancient world around the time the papyri were likely created. In the book of Abraham, God teaches Abraham about the sun, the moon, and the stars. "I show

these things unto thee before ye go into Egypt,” the Lord says, “that ye may declare all these words.”⁴² Ancient texts repeatedly refer to Abraham instructing the Egyptians in knowledge of the heavens. For example, Eupolemus, who lived under Egyptian rule in the second century B.C.E., wrote that Abraham taught astronomy and other sciences to the Egyptian priests.⁴³ A third-century papyrus from an Egyptian temple library connects Abraham with an illustration similar to facsimile 1 in the book of Abraham.⁴⁴ A later Egyptian text, discovered in the 20th century, tells how the Pharaoh tried to sacrifice Abraham, only to be foiled when Abraham was delivered by an angel. Later, according to this text, Abraham taught members of the Pharaoh’s court through astronomy.⁴⁵ All these details are found in the book of Abraham.

Other details in the book of Abraham are found in ancient traditions located across the Near East. These include Terah, Abraham’s father, being an idolator; a famine striking Abraham’s homeland; Abraham’s familiarity with Egyptian idols; and Abraham’s being younger than 75 years old when he left Haran, as the biblical account states. Some of these extrabiblical elements were available in apocryphal books or biblical commentaries in Joseph Smith’s lifetime, but others were confined to nonbiblical traditions inaccessible or unknown to 19th-century Americans.⁴⁶

Conclusion

The veracity and value of the book of Abraham cannot be settled by scholarly debate concerning the book’s translation and historicity. The book’s status as scripture lies in the eternal truths it teaches and the powerful spirit it conveys. The book of Abraham imparts profound truths about the nature of God, His relationship to us as His children, and the purpose of this mortal life. The truth of the book of Abraham is ultimately found through careful study of its teachings, sincere prayer, and the confirmation of the Spirit.

The Church acknowledges the contribution of scholars to the historical content presented in this article; their work is used with permission.

1. Doctrine and Covenants 1:17, 19, 24.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 9:9.
3. See, for example, Daniel C. Peterson, “News from Antiquity,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1994, and John Gee, “Research and Perspectives: Abraham in Ancient Egyptian Texts,” *Ensign*, July 1992.
4. 1 Nephi 13:40. See also Mormon 7:8–9.
5. Genesis 12:2.
6. Abraham 1:1–2, 5–12.
7. Abraham 1:2–3, 19.

8. Abraham 2:11. See also Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–21.
9. Abraham 3:24.
10. Abraham 3:24; 4:1, 12, 14–16.
11. Abraham 3:25–26.
12. Joseph Smith History, 1838–1856, vol. B-1, 596, available at josephsmithpapers.org.
13. See S. J. Wolfe with Robert Singerman, *Mummies in Nineteenth Century America: Ancient Egyptians as Artifacts* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009); and John T. Irwin, *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).
14. The most extensive treatment of Lebolo and his excavations, though dated in some particulars, is H. Donl Peterson, *The Story of the Book of Abraham: Mummies, Manuscripts, and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 36–85. On the whereabouts of the mummies after they arrived in the United States, see Brian L. Smith interview by Philip R. Webb, “Mystery of the Mummies: An Update on the Joseph Smith Collection,” *Religious Studies Center Newsletter* 20, no. 2 (2005): 1–5.
15. Joseph Smith History, 1838–1856, vol. B-1, 596, available at josephsmithpapers.org.
16. Brian M. Hauglid, *A Textual History of the Book of Abraham: Manuscripts and Editions* (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute, 2010), 6, 84, 110.
17. Joseph Smith, Journal, March 8–9, 1842, available at josephsmithpapers.org; “A Fac-Simile from the Book of Abraham” and “A Translation,” *Times and Seasons*, Mar. 1, 1842, 703–6, available at josephsmithpapers.org; “The Book of Abraham,” *Times and Seasons*, Mar. 15, 1842, 719–22, available at josephsmithpapers.org; and “A Fac-Simile from the Book of Abraham” and “Explanation of Cut on First Page,” *Times and Seasons*, May 16, 1842, 783–84.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 1:24.
19. Robert J. Matthews, “A Plainer Translation”: *Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1985), 253. In Joseph Smith’s day, the word *translate* could mean “to interpret; to render into another language.” The word *interpret* could mean “to explain the meaning of words to a person who does not understand them,” or “to explain or unfold the meaning of predictions, vision, dreams or enigmas; to expound and lay open what is concealed from the understanding.” (Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* [New York: S. Converse, 1828], s.v. “Translate,” “Interpret.”)
20. Joseph Smith History, 1838–1856, vol. B-1, 597, available at josephsmithpapers.org.
21. Transcriptions and digital images of these manuscripts, known collectively as the “Kirtland Egyptian Papers,” can be found at “Book of Abraham and Egyptian Material,” josephsmithpapers.org.

22. Joseph Smith History, 1838–1856, vol. B-1, 596, available at josephsmithpapers.org.
23. W. W. Phelps to Sally Phelps, July 19–20, 1835, in Bruce A. Van Orden, “Writing to Zion: The William W. Phelps Kirtland Letters (1835–1836),” *BYU Studies* 33, no. 3 (1993): 555, available at byustudies.byu.edu.
24. John Gee, *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2000), 2. The fragments are known to have been part of the papyri owned by the Church because they were mounted on paper with early Mormon records, which conforms to contemporary descriptions of the display of the papyri.
25. Jay M. Todd, “New Light on Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Papyri,” *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1968, 40–41. Another fragment was located in the Church Historian’s Office around the same time as the Metropolitan discovery, making 11 fragments in all.
26. Michael D. Rhodes, “Why Doesn’t the Translation of the Egyptian Papyri found in 1967 Match the Text of the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price?” *Ensign*, July 1988, 51–53.
27. Kerry Muhlestein, “Egyptian Papyri and the Book of Abraham: A Faithful, Egyptological Point of View,” and Brian M. Hauglid, “Thoughts on the Book of Abraham,” both in *No Weapon Shall Prosper: New Light on Sensitive Issues*, ed. Robert L. Millet (Provo and Salt Lake City, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, and Deseret Book, 2011), 217–58. On the lack of unanimity among Egyptologists, see, for example, John Gee, “A Method for Studying the Facsimiles,” *FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007): 348–51; and Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, 2d. ed. (Provo and Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2005), 51–53. For translation of and commentary on the fragments, see Michael D. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead Belonging to Tschemmin and Neferirnub: A Translation and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute, 2010); Michael D. Rhodes, *The Hor Book of Breathings: A Translation and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002); and Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 34–50.
28. Joseph Smith, or perhaps a colleague, introduced the published translation by saying that the records were “written by his [Abraham’s] own hand, upon papyrus.” The phrase can be understood to mean that Abraham is the author and not the literal copyist. Hugh Nibley and Michael Rhodes, *One Eternal Round* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2010), 20–22; Michael D. Rhodes, “Teaching the Book of Abraham Facsimiles,” *Religious Educator* 4, no. 2 (2003): 117–18.
29. Kevin L. Barney, “The Facsimiles and Semitic Adaptation of Existing Sources,” in John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid, eds., *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2005), 107–30.

30. Henk Milde, “Vignetten-Forschung,” in Burkhard Backes and others, eds., *Tötenbuch-Forschungen* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 221–31; Holger Kockelmann, *Untersuchungen zu den späten Tötenbuch-Handschriften auf Mumienbinden* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008), 2:212–14; Valérie Angenot, “Discordance entre texte et image. Deux exemples de l’Ancien et du Nouvel Empires,” *GöttingerMiscellen* 187 (2002): 11–21.
31. John Whitmer, History, 1831–ca. 1837, 76, in Karen Lynn Davidson, Richard L. Jensen, and David J. Whittaker, eds., *Histories, Volume 2: Assigned Historical Writings, 1831–1847*, vol. 2 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2012), 86. “I have set by his side and penned down the translation of the Egyptian Hieroglyphicks as he claimed to receive it by direct inspiration of Heaven,” wrote Warren Parrish, Joseph Smith’s scribe. (Warren Parrish, Feb. 5, 1838, Letter to the editor, *Painesville Republican*, Feb. 15, 1838, [3].)
32. Hauglid, *Textual History of the Book of Abraham*, 213–14, 222.
33. “Joseph Smith as Translator,” in Richard Lyman Bushman, *Believing History: Latter-day Saint Essays*, ed. Reid L. Neilson and Jed Woodworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 233–47; Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 51–59. See also footnote 19.
34. By analogy, the Bible seems to have been a frequent catalyst for Joseph Smith’s revelations about God’s dealings with His ancient covenant people. Joseph’s study of the book of Genesis, for example, prompted revelations about the lives and teachings of Adam, Eve, Moses, and Enoch, found today in the book of Moses.
35. Abraham 1:8, 10–11. Most scholars today locate “Chaldea” (or Ur) in southern Mesopotamia, removed from the area of Egyptian influence, but cogent arguments have been made for a northern location, within the realm of Egyptian influence. (Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Where Was Ur of the Chaldees?” in H. Donl Peterson and Charles D. Tate Jr., eds., *The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God* [Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1989], 119–36; and Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 84–85, 234–36.)
36. Kerry Muhlestein, *Violence in the Service of Order: The Religious Framework for Sanctioned Killing in Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, U.K.: Archaeopress, 2001), 37–44, 92–101; Kerry Muhlestein, “Royal Executions: Evidence Bearing on the Subject of Sanctioned Killing in the Middle Kingdom,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 51, no. 2 (2008): 181–208; Anthony Leahy, “Death by Fire in Ancient Egypt,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 27, no. 2 (1984): 199–206; Harco Willems, “Crime, Cult and Capital Punishment (Mo’alla Inscription 8),” *Journal of Egyptian Archeology* 76 (1990): 27–54.
37. Abraham 1:10; John Gee, “Has Olishem Been Discovered?” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scriptures* 22, no. 2 (2013): 104–7, available at maxwellinstitute.byu.edu.

38. Julie M. Smith, "A Note on Chiasmus in Abraham 3:22–23," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 8 (2014): 187–90, available at mormoninterpreter.com; Boyd F. Edwards and W. Farrell Edwards, "When Are Chiasms Admissible as Evidence?" *BYU Studies* 49, no. 4 (2010): 131–54, available at byustudies.byu.edu.
39. Kevin L. Barney, "On Elkenah as Canaanite El," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 19, no. 1 (2010): 22–35, available at maxwellinstitute.byu.edu; John Gee and Stephen D. Ricks, "Historical Plausibility: The Historicity of the Book of Abraham as a Case Study," in *Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scriptures*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2001), 75.
40. Maarten J. Raven, "Egyptian Concepts of the Orientation of the Human Body," in *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Egyptologists* (2007), 2:1569–70.
41. Erik Hornung, "Himmelsvorstellungen," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, 7 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977–1989), 2:1216. For these and other examples, see Peterson, "News from Antiquity"; Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Abraham* (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2009), 115–78; Nibley and Rhodes, *One Eternal Round*, 236–45; John Gee, "A New Look at the Conception of the Human Being in Ancient Egypt," in *Being in Ancient Egypt: Thoughts on Agency, Materiality and Cognition*, ed. Rune Nyord and Annette Kjølbj (Oxford, U.K.: Archaeopress, 2009), 6–7, 12–13.
42. Abraham 3:2–15.
43. Excerpts from Eupolemus, in John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham, Studies in the Book of Abraham*, ed. John Gee, vol. 1 (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2001), 8–9. For other references to Abraham teaching astronomy, see, for example, Tvedtnes, Hauglid, and Gee, *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham*, 7, 35–43.
44. Excerpts from P. Leiden I 384 (*PGM XII*), in Tvedtnes, Hauglid, and Gee, *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham*, 501–2, 523.
45. John Gee, "An Egyptian View of Abraham," in Andrew C. Skinner, D. Morgan Davis, and Carl Griffin, eds., *Bountiful Harvest: Essays in Honor of S. Kent Brown* (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute, 2011), 137–56.
46. See E. Douglas Clark, review of Michael E. Stone, *Armenian Apocrypha Relating to Abraham* (2012), in *BYU Studies Quarterly* 53:2 (2014): 173–79; Tvedtnes, Hauglid, and Gee, *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham*; Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2000), 1–73. Some of these extrabiblical elements were available to Joseph Smith through the books of Jasher and Josephus. Joseph Smith was aware of these books, but it is unknown whether he utilized them.