

TIMES AND SEASONS.

"Truth will prevail."

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A FAC-SIMILE FROM THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM.
NO. 1.



EXPLANATION OF THE ABOVE CUT.

- Fig. 1.—The Angel of the Lord.
2. Abraham, fastened upon an Altar.
3. The Idolatrous Priest of Elkenah attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice.
4. The Altar for sacrifice, by the Idolatrous Priests, standing before the Gods of Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmachrah, Korash, and Pharaoh.
5. The Idolatrous God of Elkenah.
6. The “ “ “ Libnah.
7. The “ “ “ Mahmachrah.
8. The “ “ “ Korash.
9. The “ “ “ Pharaoh.
10. Abraham in Egypt.
11. Designed to represent the pillars of Heaven, as understood by the Egyptians.
12. Raukeyang, signifying expanse, or the firmament, over our heads; but in this case, in relation to this subject, the Egyptians meant it to signify Shamau, to be high, or the heaven, or atmosphere.

Inasmuch as the Book of Abraham professes to be “a translation of . . . the writings of Abraham, while he was in Egypt,” we might ask whether the teachings given in the book converge with what we know about the intellectual, political, and religious climate of its purported historical setting.

“Thou Wast Chosen Before Thou Wast Born”: An Egyptian Context for the Election of Abraham

STEPHEN O. SMOOT

Stephen O. Smoot (smoot@cua.edu) is a doctoral student in Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literature at the Catholic University of America.

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Arguably the most important doctrinal contribution of the Book of Abraham is its teaching about the premortal existence of humankind. As John Gee has recognized, “The largest effect that the Book of Abraham has had on Latter-day Saint thought is its concept of the premortal existence and the purpose of life. Although other Latter-day Saint scriptures discuss the premortal existence, the Book of Abraham provides the clearest explanation of this key Latter-day Saint doctrine.”¹ The importance of the Book of Abraham’s teaching about the premortal existence is confirmed by surveying the LDS Scripture Citation Index, which reveals that General Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have cited the range of verses between Abraham 3:22–28 on dozens of occasions to support this Restoration teaching.²

While the Book of Abraham’s teachings are certainly theologically valuable for modern Latter-day Saints, they are tethered to a purported historical person living in a purported historical region of the world and a purported period of time: the patriarch Abraham living in the ancient Near East most likely sometime shortly after the turn of the second millennium BC (perhaps

during the nineteenth century BC).³ Inasmuch as the Book of Abraham professes to be “a translation of . . . the writings of Abraham, while he was in Egypt,”⁴ we might ask whether the teachings given in the book converge with what we know about the intellectual, political, and religious climate of its purported historical setting. While some of the Book of Abraham’s historical claims remain debated,⁵ in other ways we do find affirmative answers to the query posed above.⁶ In this paper I offer an additional example of how a teaching unique to the Book of Abraham—the description of the eponymous patriarch’s foreordination and divine election—finds a comfortable setting in the ancient world.

Abraham’s Vision of the Premortal Council

The Book of Abraham narrates how, after escaping the clutches of his murderous kinsmen and making a covenant with God (Abraham 1–2), Abraham was granted a revelation through the instrumentality of “the Urim and Thummim, which the Lord . . . had given unto [him]” (Abraham 3:1). The vision was comprised of two parts: first, a panorama of the heavens (verses 2–17),⁷ and second, a glimpse into the community of spirits (or “intelligences”) that were assembled in the divine council (verses 18–28).⁸ The pivot in the chapter occurs at verse 18 with what appears to be an instance of Egyptian paronomasia on “star” and “spirit,”⁹ which is what we might expect given that the express purpose of this revelation was to “show these things unto [Abraham] before [he went] into Egypt, that [he] may declare all these words” (verse 15) to the Egyptians.¹⁰ Thereafter the text narrates the following:

Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; and God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born. And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; and they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever. And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send

me. And the Lord said: I will send the first. And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him. (Abraham 3:22–28)¹¹

From this passage, we are informed that Abraham was foreordained as one of the "noble and great ones" to be a "ruler" on earth. This description acts as temporal break in the narrative, affirming what readers have already encountered in Abraham 2:6–11. Here we read that the Lord made a covenant with Abraham promising (1) to make him "a great nation," (2) to make his "name great among all nations," (3) to exalt him as "a blessing unto [his] seed after [him]," and (4) to furnish him with priesthood authority and power which would ensure that "all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal." In terms of narrative development, Abraham's vision of the premortal council in Abraham 3 functions to affirm the promises God made in his covenant with Abraham in Abraham 2, explaining why God singled him out specifically.

The detail of Abraham's foreordination further serves to legitimize Abraham's claims to authority in the face of would-be competitors, including the misguided Pharaoh, who sought to "imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations" with his own ersatz priesthood (Abraham 1:26–27). Unlike his father, who was "was led away by . . . idolatry" (verse 27), Abraham's election in the premortal council all but ensured the outcome of the patriarch becoming "a father of many nations, a prince of peace, . . . a rightful heir, [and] a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers" (verse 2), and delegitimized contenders like Pharaoh who could only "fain claim" to priesthood authority and rule (verse 27).

Since Abraham had been specifically instructed by God to "declare all these words" to the Egyptians (Abraham 3:15), it is reasonable to ask whether the ancient Egyptians ever countenanced notions of divine election or foreordination. Would Abraham's teachings on this matter have made any sense to an Egyptian audience? In fact, ample evidence survives attesting that the Egyptians considered their rulers to have been divinely foreordained to kingship.

Egyptian Beliefs on Foreordination and Divine Election

We begin with the venerable tale of Sinuhe, "widely considered the greatest of all Middle Kingdom literary compositions . . . [and] revered by the ancient Egyptians themselves."¹² Composed probably during the Twelfth Dynasty of

the Middle Kingdom (ca. 1985–1773 BC), the story recounts the adventures of the eponymous Egyptian servant to King Senwosret I (ca. 1956–1911 BC), who flees to Syria out of fear for his life after learning of the assassination of Senwosret's father and co-regent Amenemhat I (ca. 1985–1956 BC). After being rescued by the Asiatic king Ammunanshi, Sinuhe breaks his narrative with an extensive hymn of praise to Senwosret.¹³ “Men and women surpass exultation in him, now that he is king,” Sinuhe eulogizes. “He took possession [of kingship] in the egg [*m swḥt*]; his face was toward it from before he was born [*ḏr mst:f*].”¹⁴ Unlike Sinuhe's narrative, which is prose, this portion of the text is poetry, and is thus structured in parallelistic couplets not unlike later Semitic poetry. One of the couplets emphasizes that Senwosret took possession of kingship while yet “in the egg,” having been set on a trajectory towards kingship “before/since” (*ḏr*) he was even born.¹⁵ Indeed, the next couplet in the poem reinforces Senwosret's foreordination to kingship by affirming, “Those born with him are multiple, but he is a unique one of the god's giving.”¹⁶

This language of the destined monarch having been promised kingship while “in the egg” (*m swḥt*) appears in other texts from the Middle Kingdom onward. In the instructions for Merikare, a Middle Kingdom instructional or wisdom text, an unnamed father advises his son Merikare,¹⁷ who was a ruler of the First Intermediate Period (ca. 2160–2055 BC), on “how to be a good king, and to avoid evil deeds.”¹⁸ One section of the text includes a brief excursus on humankind's relationship to the divine, which includes the following lines:

Well-cared for are humans, the livestock of God. He made heaven and earth for their sake, he drove off the greediness of the water, he created the air of the heart so that their nostrils might live. They are his images who came forth from his body. He shines in heaven for their sake; he made for them plants and animals, fowl and fish, in order to nourish them. He slays his enemies, having punished his children because they intended to carry out rebellion. He creates daylight for their hearts and sails for them [in heaven] to see. He erected a shrine behind them, and when they weep he is listening. He created rulers for them in the egg [*ir-n:f sn ḥk3w m swḥt*], and commanders to command at the back of the vulnerable. He made magic for them as a weapon to repel fate, watching over them at night just as at day. He slew the cowardly in their midst, as a man strikes his son on account of his brother. God knows every name.¹⁹

Here—in what Assmann observes is imagery “strongly reminiscent of [the] biblical” conception of God²⁰—Merikare's father rhapsodizes on the sovereignty and beneficence of the unnamed solar deity over his mortal

creations. One of the ways in which this god manifests his care is by creating rulers (*ḥkꜣw*) "in the egg" (*m swꜥt*) who ideally bring order and stability in the world and protect the vulnerable. "This implies that god has, as it were, delegated the proper distribution of the good things of life created by him and the implementation of a just world order in human-social terms to the king and his officials."²¹

Then there is the passage from the so-called Berliner Lederhandschrift or Berlin Leather Manuscript (P. Berlin 3029), a small hieratic palimpsest of two columns that dates to the reign of the Eighteenth Dynasty king Amenhotep II (ca. 1427–1400 BC) but contains a purported building inscription for the temple of Atum in Heliopolis during the reign of Senwosret I. While many Egyptologists tend to simply assume the historicity of the Berlin Leather Manuscript with little or no comment,²² there yet remains no consensus concerning the dating of the inscription by scholars who have critically examined the matter. For reasons that are too complex to explain in this short treatment, I accept the historicity of the purported inscription, and thus view P. Berlin 3029 as a New Kingdom copy of a Twelfth Dynasty text, although readers should be aware that this remains contested.²³

Whether P. Berlin 3029 is a New Kingdom copy or a New Kingdom pseudepigraphon, what is clear is that Senwosret claims in the text that the god Horakhty (Horus-of-the-Two-Horizons) ordained him to "make monuments" and "establish lasting stelae" for the god, "in order to do what he had done and in order to carry out what he had commanded." He goes on to boast,

I shall act when he [Horakhty] has appointed me guardian of this land as he knows who would administer it for him, and when he properly handed over to me that which he protects and what the eye, in which he is, illuminates. I shall do the duty as that which he desires when I had acquired what he had decreed knowing (that) I am a king because of his being, a sovereign to whom [kingship] was not yet given. I took forcefully as a small child, I acted serene in the egg [*m swꜥt*], I administered as a young prince. He had made me richer than 2 possessors-of-income as a youth before the prepuce went off from me. He appointed me as a lord of subjects, who carried out the instructions to the society. He designated me an inmate of the palace as a youngster before I had emitted [semen] between my thighs.²⁴

Senwosret thus iterates that his ordination to kingship and his commission to carry out the designs of Horakhty were appointed before his actual ascendancy to the throne, emphasizing that even as a youth (before he had been circumcised and had entered puberty) "kingship [was] innate to him, while the sovereignty [was] still in the future."²⁵

The final bit of evidence from the Middle Kingdom worth examining comes from the Coffin Texts.²⁶ These texts are comprised of “religious spells or chapters inked or scratched onto the sides of more than two hundred Middle Kingdom coffins from various sites.” Most of these over one thousand spells “involve knowledge that the deceased should have about the afterlife,” including “hymns, prayers, descriptions of the afterlife, ascension texts,” and spells for transforming into various animals, for resurrection and deification, and other purposes.²⁷ Interspersed throughout the Coffin Texts is mention of the deified deceased or various deities inhabiting, issuing forth from, possessing, or being created in an egg [*swḥt*].²⁸ One spell in particular is worth noting as it likely provided mythological precedent for the ancient Egyptian belief that their kings were divinely foreordained to be rulers while “in the egg.”

Coffin Text Spell 148 narrates the conception, birth, and vindication of the god Horus. The first section of the text after the prescript is Isis’ announcement that she has conceived Horus by her brother Osiris.

[Osiris’] seed is within my womb, I have moulded the shape of the god within the egg [*m swḥt*] as my son who is at the head of the Ennead. What he [Horus] shall rule is this land, the heritage of his (grand-)father Geb, what he shall say is concerning his father, what he shall kill is Seth the enemy of his father Osiris. Come, you gods, protect him within my womb, for he is known in your hearts. He is your lord, this god who is in his egg [*imy swḥt-f*], blue-haired of form, lord of the gods, and great and beautiful are the vanes of the two blue plumes.²⁹

In this passage, Isis acknowledges her conception and foretells Horus’ triumph over his uncle Seth by avenging the death of his father Osiris and seizing kingship. The verbs in Isis’ prediction are future active participles (*sdm·ty·fy*),³⁰ making it clear that Isis was foretelling future actions which she knew her magically-conceived son would carry out.³¹ When he is finally born, Horus affirms, “I am Horus, born of Isis, whose protection was made within the egg [*m-ḥnw swḥt*],”³² referring to an earlier part of the narrative where the god Re-Atum assures Isis that his protection would cover her unborn child.

What does all of this have to do with Egyptian kingship? As has long been recognized, the mortal Egyptian king was considered something like the earthly avatar of the celestial falcon Horus.³³ From the earliest periods of Egyptian history, there was a strong association between the institution of kingship and Horus.³⁴ Indeed, Horus was “the first known national god, the god of kingship.”³⁵ This might well explain why ancient Egyptian kings—like Horus in the myth preserved in Coffin Text Spell 148 who was “destined to

be king from the moment of conception"³⁶—were proclaimed to have been divinely elected to possess kingship while yet "in the egg"; that is, before their birth.

So far, the evidence examined has been from the Middle Kingdom. We began with a discussion of this evidence both because of its chronological priority and because this evidence is closest to the likely time of Abraham. Moving forward chronologically into the New Kingdom (ca. 1550–1069 BC), we discover that the concept of the king having been divinely begotten or foreordained persisted throughout succeeding pharaonic dynasties. Perhaps the most notable (and extravagant) example of this type of royal bombast comes from the Eighteenth Dynasty queen Hatshepsut (ca. 1473–1458 BC), who, as immortalized in the middle colonnade of the northern wall of her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri,³⁷ proclaimed herself the literal offspring of the god Amun and thereby destined to kingship. The account begins, fittingly, in a "council of the gods"³⁸ (twelve, to be precise, not including Amun³⁹). "This council of the gods seems to have been called together to receive an important announcement" from Amun,⁴⁰ who declares that he has proactively "united the Two Lands for her [Hatshepsut] in peace" (*sm3·n·[i] n·s t3wy m htp*) and has given her "all lands and all foreign countries" (*t3w nb[w] h3swt nb[t]*).⁴¹ "The whole scene is an introduction to what is to follow"; that is, "the birth of the queen, her education and her coronation, all which events have been agreed upon and prepared in an assembly of the gods."⁴²

After impregnating Hatshepsut's mother Ahmose and promising that the royal issue "will exert with might her royal power over the whole land,"⁴³ Amun then summons the craftsman god Khnum and instructs him to shape her body and her *Ka* (or double) on a potter's wheel.⁴⁴ This he does, fashioning (*kd*) her and promising that she will "appear on the throne of Horus like Re" (*h'it hr st Hr mi R'*) endowed with "all life and dominion, all stability, all joy . . . all health, all lands . . . all foreign countries, all people . . . and all peace" (*nh w3s nb ddt nbt 3wt-ib nbt . . . snb nb t3w nbw . . . h3swt nbt rhyt nbt . . . htp nbt*).⁴⁵ Thereafter Hatshepsut is born and presented to Amun,⁴⁶ who declares her "the daughter of [his] body" (*s3t nt ht*) who has rightfully taken her place on the throne "like Re" (*mi R'*).⁴⁷ This sequence narrating and depicting Hatshepsut's divine election and birth then ends with additional gods such as Thoth and Anubis verifying and repeating the

earlier proclamations of Amun and Khnum with similar or identical language encountered in earlier scenes.⁴⁸

“Undoubtedly,” concludes James Henry Breasted, “this tale of Hatshepsut’s divine paternity, *designing her before her birth for the throne*, was intended by her supporters to enforce her claims to the kingship.”⁴⁹ The last standing obelisk of the four erected by Hatshepsut at the temple of Amun at Karnak reinforces this reading of the divine birth sequence just examined.⁵⁰ “In the inscriptions the Queen makes several emphatic points: Her devotion to her divine father Amun and to her earthly father Thutmose I . . . [and] the theme of her right to the throne, an ever present concern in her inscriptions: her father Amun had destined her to be king.”⁵¹ As read in the base inscription of the obelisk, Hatshepsut is lauded as

the daughter of Amun-Re, his beloved, his sole one who came forth from him, shining image of the Lord of All, whose goodness was fashioned by the souls of Heliopolis, who seizes the Two Lands like her maker, whom he brought into existence to wear his diadems, whose forms are like Khepri, whose appearances are like Horakhty, a pure egg, a glorious seed, whom the two who are great in magic [Isis and Nephthys] nursed, whom Amun himself caused to appear on the throne of southern Heliopolis [Thebes], whom he elected [*stp*] to be guardian of Egypt, to be a protector of nobles and commoners. Horus, champion of her father, eldest daughter of Kamutef, whom Re begot to have glorious offspring to himself on earth for the benefit of humankind.⁵²

Like the purpose of her divine birth scene at Deir el-Bahri, the intent of this propaganda is unmistakable. “On the ideological level she claimed to be not only the favorite daughter of her charismatic father, Thutmose I, but also the physical daughter of Amun-Re. In doing this she took up an old tradition . . . [of] claiming divine origin from the god Re himself”⁵³ and thereby legitimacy as king.⁵⁴

At least two sources from the reign of the famed Nineteenth Dynasty king Ramesses II (ca. 1279–1213 BC) describe him as having been predestined to inherit the throne from his father Seti I (ca. 1294–1279 BC). The first is the so-called Great Dedicatory Stela at the temple of Seti I at Abydos. “I came forth from Re, while (as) you say, it was Menmare [Seti I] who brought me up,” Ramesses clarifies to his council in this inscription. “The Lord of All himself magnified me, while I was a child, until I became ruler. He assigned me the land while I was (yet) in the egg [*m swht*].”⁵⁵ The second instance of Ramesses claiming this honor for himself occurs in the Quban Stela, where this time Ramesses’ council says of their king, “There is no foreign country

that you have not trodden. Every matter has passed through your ears (ever) since you have governed this land. You took decisions [lit. 'you made plans'; *ir-n-k shrw*] while in the egg [*m swht*] in your role of child of the Heir Apparent. The affairs of the Two Lands were told to you while you were yet a youth wearing the (side)lock."⁵⁶

It could very easily have been the language in these texts and others like them⁵⁷ which inspired the author of the "pseudepigraphic tale" preserved in the Bentresh Stela.⁵⁸ "Set . . . during the illustrious reign of Rameses II,"⁵⁹ this late account of the possession of the princess Bentresh by an evil spirit (an *Akh*) includes these opening lines of praise for Rameses: "The Good God, Son of Amon, Offspring of Horachty, the effective seed of the Lord of the Universe, whom Kamutef has begotten, the King of the Black Land, the ruler of the Red Land, the sovereign of the Red Land, who came forth from the womb with victories foretold for him [*pr m ht sr n-f nhwt*], for whom heroism was decreed in the egg [*m swht*]."⁶⁰ Not to be outdone by his august predecessor, the Twentieth Dynasty ruler Ramesses III (ca. 1184–1153 BC), in his Double Stela at Karnak, is likewise depicted as praying to "his father Amen-Re, King of the Gods, Lord of heaven, Ruler of Thebes" thus: "I am your son. I came forth from you; you assigned me to be King while I was (yet) in the egg [*m swht*], while no other hand was with me except you(rs). I rely on your mighty utterance, and I am filled with your counsels, in performing benefactions for you with loving heart."⁶¹

Rounding out our overview are two instances of the king assuming divine foreordination from texts dating to the Third Intermediate Period (ca. 1069–715 BC). The Kushite king Piye (or Pianchi), founder of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty (ca. 747–715 BC), commissioned at least two stelae that overtly speak of his divine election. The first, Gebel Barkal Stela No. 26, contains a speech by the god Amon to Piye (identified as the deity's son) that includes these lines:

I said concerning you (while you were) in the body of your mother, that you would be the ruler of Egypt. I recognized you in the semen when you were in the egg [*m swht*], that you would be lord of what I have made. Receive for yourself the double diadem, which Re made manifest on the goodly first occasion. A father benefits his son. I am the one who has decreed (the kingship) for you. Who will share with you? I am the lord of heaven. What I have given to Re, he has given to his children among the gods as well as (among) men. I am the one who gives to you the duty. Who will share it with you? There is no one who can decree another king. I am the one who appoints a king as I please.⁶²

The second, Piye's celebrated Victory Stela, is "a unique work of royal historical propaganda."⁶³ The lengthy inscription is a sustained *apologia* for "the legitimacy of Piye's rule," which the king sought to establish "not merely by expressions of divine approval, royal victory, and obsequious flattery but by conscious attempts to present the Nubian ruler as truly Egyptian."⁶⁴ This Piye accomplished by stereotyping "his Libyan opponents [as] debased and unclean outsiders who sport feathers, eat fish, and are uncircumcised."⁶⁵ The text begins with the standard dating and titulary formula for royal stelae and then immediately portrays Piye decreeing, "I am the king, the representation of god, the living image of Atum, who issued from the womb marked as ruler (*hk3*), who is feared by those greater than he, [whose father] knew and whose mother perceived even in the egg [*m swht*] that he would be ruler (*hk3*), the Good God, beloved of the gods, the son of Re, who acts with his two arms."⁶⁶ Like Abraham several centuries before him, here Piye negates his opponents' pretensions by proclaiming that he was the one foreordained to be a "ruler" (*hk3*).

From the evidence discussed above it is quite apparent that throughout the course of pharaonic Egypt, royal propaganda and other sources portrayed the monarch as having been in some sense foreordained to their royal station. Although this rhetoric was clearly just one means to legitimate the king's rule,⁶⁷ what is not always clear is whether this election was thought to have taken place before the king was even physically born or when he was a young child. Egyptologists are split on how precisely to make sense of the imagery of the king being elected while "in the egg." Antonio Loprieno, Matthias Müller, and Sami Uljas, appealing to the Ramesside evidence, understand the idiom "in the egg" as indicating "still unborn."⁶⁸ James Hoch similarly reads a line from the Dialogue Between a Man and His Soul ("I am sorry for her offspring who were crushed in the egg [*m swht*] and who saw the face of the Crocodile before they had (even) lived.") as evidence that the idea of being "in the egg" must be referring to a prenatal state.⁶⁹ In his translation of Coffin Text Spell 148, O'Connell renders *m swht* as "within the ovary" and "in [the] seed-stage," which, while certainly a modernized translation attempting to conform to current anatomical nomenclature, makes arguable sense in the context of the passage.⁷⁰

On the other hand, Hans Goedicke, Richard Parkinson, and James Allen argue that the language of the king being elected "in the egg" is hyperbole for "earliest infancy" or "extreme youth."⁷¹ In some instances, such as that from

Piye's victory stela, the language must surely be speaking of election while in the womb: "I [Amun] recognized you [Piye] in the semen [*m mwy*] when you were in the egg [*m swht*]." To suggest this line is referring to postnatal infancy strains credulity. But other instances of this rhetoric, such as the example from the Berlin Leather Manuscript ("I took forcefully as a small child, I acted serene in the egg [*m swht*], I administered as a young prince."), might indeed be read as referring to early adolescence. Whether it occurred before or after his physical birth, the fact remains that the king was thought to have been destined for the throne; he "inherited [his royal privilege] 'in the egg,' because he was 'the son of the Sun [Re], of his belly,'" and so, accordingly, the "king was born, not created by enthronement."⁷²

This imagery of the king being elected "in the egg," and otherwise being the divine offspring "of the body" of this or that deity, is perhaps more comprehensible when considered in light of Egyptian mythology. Arielle P. Kozloff has ingeniously theorized that the king "being in the egg" may be reference to any number of known divine avian manifestations in ancient Egyptian religion. This includes the goose ("great cackler") Geb, the falcon Horus, the duck Re, the vulture Mut, and the sky goddess Nut ("a beautifully gowned young woman with long feathered wings"⁷³), all of whom have close associations with the king or kingship in general. "Pharaohs traditionally considered their destinies to have been ordained before they were born, in other words, when they were still 'in the egg,'" Kozloff summarizes. "Surely, 'the egg' was not the human mother's actual ovum, but instead, the ancient Egyptians must have had in mind a symbolic egg produced by a bird of some religious significance."⁷⁴ The specific egg in question "that became pharaoh may have been that of [such religiously significant birds as] a goose or a kite or a falcon or a duck or a vulture, depending on one's geographic location and the identities of the local deities."⁷⁵ While I would not entirely rule out the possibility that the king being "in the egg" might have had a biological connotation in the minds of some ancient Egyptians, Kozloff's argument is persuasive, and in fact makes great sense of why this otherwise strange metaphor may have carried such popular currency in royal inscriptions.⁷⁶

The Foreordination of Abraham as Anti-Egyptian Polemic

With the preceding in mind we can propose a reading of the Book of Abraham's teachings on premortal election that situates the record in the ancient world. Abraham begins his account by noting that he was in competition with

Pharaoh over priestly and kingly legitimacy (Abraham 1:25–27).⁷⁷ The first rhetorical move on Abraham's part to delegitimize his opponent was to narrate how he was miraculously saved from an attempt made on his life by one of Pharaoh's priests (Abraham 1:12–20). Concluding this dramatic encounter is the detail that "the Lord broke down the altar of Elkenah, and of the gods of the land, and utterly destroyed them," and for good measure "smote the priest that he died," thus punctuating the humiliation of Abraham's enemies with an overt polemic against the efficacy of their gods and ritual specialists (verse 20).

More than simply an act of divine vandalism, the destruction of the altar and these images would have left an impression on Abraham's defeated foes. Images in ancient Egypt "provid[ed] a point of contact with the represented entity [such as a god], so the very existence of a representation ensured that entity's perpetuation. By contrast, the destruction of a figure or text might entail far more than a simple erasure, but rather an ultimate death. Killing the image killed equally its referent."⁷⁸ In fact, "examples of image destruction with political import occur throughout Egyptian history,"⁷⁹ and the persistence of iconoclastic urges in ancient Egypt offers us an important glimpse into "the Egyptian philosophical understanding of the universe and its potential manipulation."⁸⁰ By beginning his record with a brazen account of the desecration of the sacred images and ritual equipment of Pharaoh's false priesthood, Abraham was essentially committing deicide against the impotent gods of his enemies.

The second polemical wave crests in the subsequent chapter, which describes God's covenant with Abraham (Abraham 2:6–11). Not only does the Lord promise Abraham that he would be made "a great nation" through his obedience to the covenant (verse 9), but also that God would "curse them that curse [Abraham]," which would naturally include those who had just sought to exterminate him (verse 11). This is reinforced by the fact that immediately after rescuing Abraham, God disclosed his intent to bless Abraham with a covenant relationship. With obvious covenantal language the Lord declared, "Behold, I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee. As it was with Noah so shall it be with thee; but through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever, for I am thy God" (Abraham 1:18–19; cf. Genesis 9:8–9). Little wonder that

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Facsimile number 3 from the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price

Abraham's immediate reaction upon ratifying this covenant was to marvel at the Lord's ability to deliver his servants from the hands of their enemies (Abraham 2:12–13).

The final polemical act of delegitimizing his enemies was Abraham's inclusion of his vision of the premortal council wherein it was revealed that it was he who was foreordained to be a ruler, not his Egyptian rivals. This otherwise simple narrative decision projected the counterfeit nature of Pharaoh's claims onto a cosmic level that reached into eternities past, as it were. Pharaoh was not divinely elected to be king "in the egg," nor was he the son of any false god, as Egyptian royal ideology propagandized, but rather it was Abraham who was destined for greatness. Even the specific adjectives used in the text to describe Abraham and other choice spirits ("noble" and "great") may reflect a deliberate attempt at destabilizing the pretensions of the patriarch's enemies, given the persistent Egyptian rhetorical habit of ascribing the adjectives "noble" (*špsy/šps*)⁸¹ and "great" (*ʿ3*)⁸² to both deities and royalty.⁸³

This naturally raises questions about the intended audience of the Book of Abraham.⁸⁴ Who, precisely, was Abraham writing to? Pharaoh himself? The Egyptian population more broadly? Abraham's covenant descendants?

Abraham's latter-day readers? Unfortunately, the extant text does not specify, and so we are only able to speculate. The number of glosses (e.g. Abraham 1:14, 20, 23; 3:13) that appear throughout the text would seem to suggest "that Abraham was addressing an audience unfamiliar with basic characteristics of Egyptian culture."⁸⁵ On the other hand, the informative passage at Abraham 3:15 indicates that Abraham was meant to declare "all these words" when he eventually arrived in Egypt. The immediate context of this verse appears to indicate that "all these words" Abraham was meant to communicate to the Egyptians was the astronomy depicted in Abraham 3 (cf. Facsimile 3). However, it would not be too much of a stretch to broaden this to the rest of Abraham's narrative, including the important teachings about God's covenant in Abraham 2:6–11. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable to assume that Abraham's writings, including its anti-Egyptian polemical elements, would have been meaningful to his descendants over the centuries as they were transmitted from generation to generation. This must necessarily remain speculative, however, as the Book of Abraham ends abruptly in the middle of Adam naming the animals in the Garden of Eden, the Prophet Joseph Smith sadly not having furnished any additional translated or revealed material before his death in 1844 that might help further clarify this point.⁸⁶

Conclusion

This treatment has offered a historically plausible ancient Egyptian setting for the Book of Abraham's teachings on foreordination and divine election. The text's exposition on this doctrine is situated in Abraham's larger autobiographical narrative that, on one level, is a sustained polemic against his Egyptian adversaries. That the text so effectively renders this polemic in a manner that subtly plays off of attested Egyptian terminology and concepts and seems to preserve a genuine reflection of its purported intellectual-historical environment strengthens the proposition that it is an authentic product of that environment and not a later imitation.

While Latter-day Saints affirm the eternal significance of scriptural teachings as a matter of faith and theological application, at the same time we can appreciate that many doctrines may arise or be given temporally bounded articulation in response to the particular intellectual or spiritual conditions of the world at the time in which they were presented. But rather than undermining its integrity as inspired scripture, situating the

Book of Abraham's teachings in their ancient historical setting serves modern readers well by affording them depth and context that might otherwise go unappreciated.⁸⁷

Notes

1. John Gee, *An Introduction to the Book of Abraham* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2017), 166. See also Gee's overall discussion of the Book of Abraham's impact on Latter-day Saint doctrine on pp. 121–27, 163–73.
2. See the results under "Citation Index → The Book of Abraham → 3" at <http://scriptures.byu.edu/>. The same is true of institutional Church curriculum. *Old Testament: Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 5–8; *Gospel Principles* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011), 9–12; *Old Testament Seminary Teacher Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2015), 74–76; *The Pearl of Great Price Teacher Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2017), 66–71; *Doctrinal Mastery: Core Document* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), 9.
3. On the dating of Abraham, see Gee, *An Introduction to the Book of Abraham*, 97–105.
4. "Book of Abraham," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1841): 704, online at <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-abraham-and-facsimiles-1-march-16-may-1842/1>.
5. For instance, the issue of the location of Abraham's homeland remains open to debate. See the discussion in Stephen O. Smoot, "In the Land of the Chaldeans': The Search for Abraham's Homeland Revisited," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2017): 7–37.
6. See, for instance, 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), 63–98; John Gee, William J. Hamblin, and Daniel C. Peterson, "And I Saw the Stars': The Book of Abraham and Ancient Geocentric Astronomy," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 1–16; Kerry Muhlestein and John Gee, "An Egyptian Context for the Sacrifice of Abraham," *Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 2, no. 2 (2011): 70–77; Stephen O. Smoot "Council, Chaos, and Creation in the Book of Abraham," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 22, no. 2 (2013): 28–39; John Gee, "Abraham and Idrimi," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 22, no. 1 (2013): 34–39; Gee, *An Introduction to the Book of Abraham*, 107–20, 129–42.
7. See Gee, Hamblin, and Peterson, "And I Saw the Stars," 1–16; Gee, *An Introduction to the Book of Abraham*, 115–20. Various models for the Book of Abraham's cosmology have been proposed with their respective strengths, but I am personally satisfied that the argument for a geocentric cosmos in the Book of Abraham is overall the most compelling. For these alternative models, see Michael D. Rhodes and J. Ward Moody, "Astronomy and Creation in the Book of Abraham," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, 17–36;

Kerry Muhlestein, "Encircling Astronomy and the Egyptians: An Approach to Abraham 3," *Religious Educator* 10, no. 1 (2009): 33–50.

8. On the divine council in the Book of Abraham see Smoot "Council, Chaos, and Creation in the Book of Abraham," 28–39.

9. Gee, *An Introduction to the Book of Abraham*, 117. "The conversation between Abraham and the Lord shifts from a discussion of heavenly bodies to spiritual beings. This reflects a play on words that Egyptians often use between a star (*ach*) and a spirit (*ich*). The shift is done by means of a comparison: 'Now, if there be two things, one above the other, and the moon be above the earth, then it may be that a planet or a star may exist above it; . . . as, also, if there be two spirits, and one shall be more intelligent than the other' (Abraham 3:17–18). In an Egyptian context, the play on words would strengthen the parallel." Note that Gee is using the Coptic spelling of these words since they are easier to read and pronounce for the general audience to which he is writing. Compare Silvia Zago, "Classifying the Duat: Tracing the Conceptualization of the Afterlife between Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts," *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache* 145, no. 2 (2018): 212.

10. This event is missing from the narrative but pictorially illustrated in Facsimile 3 of the Book of Abraham.

11. There are no significant textual variants in this range of verses that affect the meaning of the passage. See Robin Scott Jensen and Brian M. Hauglid, eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers, Revelations and Translations, Volume 4: Book of Abraham and Related Manuscripts* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian's Press, 2018), 319, also online at <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-abraham-and-facsimiles-1-march-16-may-1842/6>.

12. James P. Allen, *Middle Egyptian Literature: Eight Literary Works of the Middle Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 55.

13. "As a literary composition, the Story of Sinuhe falls into the Middle Kingdom genre of works extolling the king and urging loyalty to him." Allen, *Middle Egyptian Literature*, 56.

14. Allen, *Middle Egyptian Literature*, 87. For the transliteration of the Egyptian in this paper, I have followed the Anglo-American system utilized by James Hoch, *Middle Egyptian Grammar* (Mississauga, ON: Benben Publications, 1997).

15. The Egyptian preposition *dr* can mean both "before" and "since" depending on the context. In this instance Allen reads it as "before." See the grammatical notes in Allen, *Middle Egyptian Literature*, 87.

16. Allen, *Middle Egyptian Literature*, 87.

17. "Merykara is the name of a king of the Ninth or Tenth Dynasty, the line or lines of kings who ruled northern Egypt during a period of division, the First Intermediate Period (about 2150–2025 BC). Perhaps this setting would have allowed a Middle Kingdom author greater freedom in describing the limits of royal authority, than might have been possible in referring to kings of a unified Egypt; the Teaching for King Merykara is effectively a treatise on kingship, in which both good and evil aspects of government and military conflict are described." Stephen Quirke, *Egyptian Literature 1800 BC: Questions and Readings* (London: Golden House Publications, 2004), 112.

18. Quirke, *Egyptian Literature 1800 BC*, 112.

19. Translation mine. For the hieroglyphic text, see Wolfgang Helck, *Die Lehre für König Merikare*, *Kleine ägyptische Texte* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1977), 83–87.

20. Jan Assmann, "Monotheism and Polytheism," in *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide*, ed. Sarah Iles Johnston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 22.

Assmann, "Monotheism and Polytheism," 22–24, makes a compelling case for this text reflecting a "monotheism of perspective," and so renders the indefinite *ntr* as "God," a convention that strikes me as wholly appropriate in this context, and so I have followed suit.

21. Jan Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom: Re, Amun and the Crisis of Polytheism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 205.

22. See, for instance, Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: Volume I: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 115; Barry J. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 158; Colleen Manassa, *Imaging the Past: Historical Fiction in New Kingdom Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 157n70.

23. For different views, compare Philippe Derchain, "Les Débuts de L'Histoire [Rouleau de Cuir Berlin 3029]," *Revue D'Égyptologie* 43 (1992): 35–47; Aldo Piccato, "The Berlin Leather Roll and the Egyptian Sense of History," *Lingua Aegyptia: Journal of Egyptian Language Studies* 5 (1997): 137–59; Andréas Stauder, *Linguistic Dating of Middle Egyptian Literary Texts*, *Lingua Aegyptia Studia Monographica* 12 (Hamburg: Widmaier Verlag, 2013), 249–257.

24. Hans Goedicke, "The Berlin Leather Roll (P Berlin 3029)," in *Festschrift zum 150 Jährigen Bestehen des Berliner Ägyptischen Museums* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1974), 87. See the hieroglyphic text prepared by Adrian de Buck, "The Building Inscription of the Berlin Leather Roll," *Studia Aegyptiaca I*, *Analecta Orientalia* 17 (1938): 48–57.

25. Goedicke, "The Berlin Leather Roll (P Berlin 3029)," 93. Compare de Buck, "The Building Inscription of the Berlin Leather Roll," 54.

26. Material found in the Coffin Texts have been identified "on papyri, in tombs, and on mummy masks, canopic chests, biers, statues, and stelae" in addition to coffins. Content from the Coffin Texts is also shared in the earlier Pyramid Texts and the later Book of Going Forth by Day (the Book of the Dead). Leonard H. Lesko, "Coffin Texts," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Donald B. Redford (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 287.

27. Lesko, "Coffin Texts," 287–88.

28. See Adrian de Buck, *The Egyptian Coffin Texts*, 7 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1835–1961), I 167f, 176k, 182g; II 3f, 33c, 36c, 44d, 212b, 214b, 216b, 217g, 225b, 254c, 254e; III 13a, 156b, 200a, 207c, 207h, 208e, 210c; IV 53i, 63r, 181g, 292/293b, 292b/407, 292b/413; V 337d; VI 135g, 200j, 267g, 270n, 309l, 315g, 321j, 321p, 321u, 323g, 331p, 343n, 378h; VII 21m, 1110, 147a, 198c, 198f, 238c, 310b, 460e, 510f. My thanks to John Gee for helpfully compiling these references for me.

29. Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts: Volume I, Spells 1–354* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1973), 125; for the hieroglyphic text of this lengthy spell, see de Buck, *The Egyptian Coffin Texts*, II 210–226 (II 211–215 for the quoted portion).

30. Hoch, *Middle Egyptian Grammar*, §125.

31. This is captured effectively in the translations of Mordechai Gilula, "Coffin Texts Spell 148," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 57 (1971): 14nn5–8, and Robert H. O'Connell "The Emergence of Horus: An Analysis of Coffin Text Spell 148," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 69 (1983): 73.

32. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, 126.

33. Geraldine Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 143. "Each king of Egypt was acclaimed as a 'living Horus.'"

34. Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 201–2.
35. Edmund S. Meltzer, “Horus,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 2:119.
36. Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology*, 145.
37. Betsy M. Bryan, “The 18th Dynasty Before the Amarna Period,” in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Ian Shaw (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 241–42. Dieter Arnold, “The Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri,” in *Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh*, ed. Catharine H. Roehrig (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 135–140.
38. James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1906), 2:78; cf. Edouard Naville, *The Temple of Deir el Bahari, Part II, Plates XXV–LV: The Ebony Shrine. Northern Half of the Middle Platform* (London: The Egypt Exploration Fund, 1897), Pl. XLVI, who likewise designates this scene “council of the gods before Amon.”
39. Namely, Osiris, Isis, Horsaïs, Nephthys, Anubis, Hathor, Montu, Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, and Nut. Naville, *The Temple of Deir el Bahari, Part II*, Pl. XLVI.
40. Naville, *The Temple of Deir el Bahari, Part II*, 13.
41. Naville, *The Temple of Deir el Bahari, Part II*, Pl. XLVI.
42. Naville, *The Temple of Deir el Bahari, Part II*, 14.
43. Naville, *The Temple of Deir el Bahari, Part II*, 14.
44. Naville, *The Temple of Deir el Bahari, Part II*, 14.
45. Naville, *The Temple of Deir el Bahari, Part II*, Pl. XLVIII.
46. Naville, *The Temple of Deir el Bahari, Part II*, 16–17.
47. Naville, *The Temple of Deir el Bahari, Part II*, Pl. LII.
48. Naville, *The Temple of Deir el Bahari, Part II*, Pls. LIV, LV
49. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 2:77–78; emphasis added.
50. Graciela N. Gestoso Singer, “The Obelisks of Hatshepsut: Legitimacy and Propaganda,” *Göttinger Miszellen* 207 (2005): 37–47, esp. 38–39.
51. Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 2:25.
52. Translation mine. For the hieroglyphic text, see Kurt Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie, Zweiter Band* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906), 361–62. Compare Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 2:26; Singer, “The Obelisks of Hatshepsut,” 42–43.
53. Singer, “The Obelisks of Hatshepsut” 46.
54. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 2:28; Singer, “The Obelisks of Hatshepsut,” 45.
55. Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Rameside Inscriptions: Translated and Annotated, Translations Volume II: Rameses II, Royal Inscriptions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 167. Hieroglyphic text in Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Rameside Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976), 2:327.
56. Kitchen, *Rameside Inscriptions*, 191; Kitchen, *Rameside Inscriptions*, 2:356.
57. E.g., Peter J. Brand, Rosa Erika Feleg, and William J. Murnane, eds., *The Great Hypostyle Hall in the Temple of Amun at Karnak, Volume 1, Part 2: Translation and Commentary* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2018), 82, 184.
58. Robert K. Ritner, “The Bentresh Stela (Louvre C 284),” in *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*, ed. William Kelly Simpson, 3rd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 361.

59. Ritner, "The Bentresh Stela," 361.
60. Ritner, "The Bentresh Stela," 363; hieroglyphic text in Kitchen, *Rameside Inscriptions*, 2:284.
61. Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Rameside Inscriptions: Translated and Annotated, Translations: Volume 5, Setnakht, Ramesses III, and Contemporaries* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 202. Hieroglyphic text in Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Rameside Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), 5:239.
62. Robert K. Ritner, *The Libyan Anarchy: Inscriptions from Egypt's Third Intermediate Period*, Writings from the Ancient World 21 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 462–63.
63. Ritner, *The Libyan Anarchy*, 466.
64. Ritner, *The Libyan Anarchy*, 466.
65. Ritner, *The Libyan Anarchy*, 466.
66. Ritner, *The Libyan Anarchy*, 477–78.
67. Gay Robins, "Legitimation," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 2:288.
68. Antonio Loprieno, Matthias Müller, and Sami Uljas, *Non-Verbal Predication in Ancient Egyptian* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), 109.
69. Hoch, *Middle Egyptian Grammar*, 176, reads "crushed in the egg" as "killed as unborn children."
70. O'Connell "The Emergence of Horus," 73, 75.
71. Goedicke, "The Berlin Leather Roll (P Berlin 3029)," 93; Richard B. Parkinson, *The Tale of Sinuhe and Other Ancient Egyptian Poems, 1940–1640 BC* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 45n22; James P. Allen, *The Debate Between a Man and His Soul: A Masterpiece of Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 75.
72. Bill Manley, "Ruler Cult, Pharaonic Egypt," in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall et al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2013), 5975.
73. Arielle P. Kozloff, "Pharaoh Was a Good Egg, But Whose Egg Was He?," in *Between Heaven and Earth: Birds in Ancient Egypt*, ed. Rozenn Bailleul-LeSuer, Oriental Institute Museum Publications 35 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2012), 59–64, quote at 63.
74. Kozloff, "Pharaoh Was a Good Egg, But Whose Egg Was He?," 59.
75. Kozloff, "Pharaoh Was a Good Egg, But Whose Egg Was He?," 64.
76. The Egyptian imagery of the king being ordained "in the egg" echoes biblical language of premortal divine election (e.g., Jeremiah 1:4–5). Although not within the scope of this paper, an area of potentially worthwhile investigation would be to compare the Egyptian imagery with biblical imagery that speaks of election "in the womb" or "from the womb." See the insightful discussion in Dana M. Pike, "Formed in and Called from the Womb," in *To Seek the Law of the Lord: Essays in Honor of John W. Welch*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson and Daniel C. Peterson (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation, 2017), 317–31.
77. The temporal sequence of these verses is curious, since, notwithstanding the Egyptian cultural and religious presence in the area (Abraham 1:9, 11), Abraham was living in Ur of the Chaldeans, not Egypt, in the opening of the Book of Abraham and heretofore had no contact with Pharaoh himself, only a member of his syncretic priesthood (verses 1, 7–8). This might suggest that the Book of Abraham was written well after the events described in the text once Abraham had time to reflect on the overall significance of his ministry and his encounter with Pharaoh in Egypt as depicted in Facsimile 3.

78. Robert K. Ritner, "Killing the Image, Killing the Essence: The Destruction of Text and Figures in Ancient Egyptian Thought, Ritual, and 'Ritualized History,'" in *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond*, ed. Natalie Naomi May, Oriental Institute Seminars 8 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 395.

79. Ritner, "Killing the Image, Killing the Essence," 397.

80. Ritner, "Killing the Image, Killing the Essence," 399.

81. Adolf Erman and Hermann Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958), 4:452.6–7; Raymond Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1962), 464–65, citing Eighteenth Dynasty examples. For a few Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period examples, see Auguste Mariette, *Abydos: Description des Fouilles Exécutées sur l'Emplacement de Cette Ville* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1880), II, pl. 30, line 38; Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies Chiefly of the Middle Kingdom: A Study and an Anthology*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 84 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1988), 67, 73, 91; CT 75 (§§340a); CT 148 (§216c), CT 261 (§387a), CT 310 (§IV, 66), CT 321 (§IV, 146), CT 419 (§V, 256), CT 485 (§VI, 62), CT 697 (§VI, 331). Of particular interest for the Book of Abraham is the mention of *3ḥw spss* ("noble spirits") in CT 557 (§VI, 159). Members of Egyptian royalty with the element *šps* in their name or titulary include Shepsekaf (Horus: *šps ḥt*; Two Ladies: *šps <m> nbty*; Throne: *šps k3:f*) in the Fourth Dynasty, Ini II (Throne: *mry šps R^c*) in the Thirteenth Dynasty, Hatshepsut (Birth: *ḥnmt Tmn ḥṯ spswt*) in the Eighteenth Dynasty, and Tefnakht (Throne: *šps R^c*) in the Twenty-fourth Dynasty. See Ronald Leprohon, *The Great Name: Ancient Egyptian Royal Titulary* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 37, 72, 98, 158.

82. The epithet *nṯr ʕ3* ("the great god") is ubiquitous in all epochs of ancient Egypt. For just a few Middle Kingdom examples, see CT 19, CT 29 (§L 81), CT 335 (§214), CT 474 (§18). For a Middle Kingdom instance of this epithet being used for the king, see Allen, *Middle Egyptian Literature* 62, 127. See additionally Leprohon, *The Great Name*, 192–94, for the instances of the ʕ3 element in the names of multiple monarchs.

83. See further Dagmar Budde, "Epithets, Divine," in the *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, ed. Willeke Wendrich (2011), esp. 4, online at <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9ct397mm>.

84. The question of the intended audience of the Book of Abraham has been explored in Eric Jay Olson, "For Whom Did Abraham Write the Book of Abraham?" *Ensign*, June 1982, 35–36. Gee, *An Introduction to the Book of Abraham*, 130, sees the Creation account in the Book of Abraham intended for an Egyptian audience.

85. Olson, "For Whom Did Abraham Write the Book of Abraham?," 35.

86. An unpublished editorial dated circa March 1, 1842 signaled the Prophet's desire to "contin[u]e to translate & publish [the Book of Abraham] as fast as possible till the whole is completed." "Editorial, circa 1 March 1842, Draft," online at <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/editorial-circa-1-march-1842-draft/1>. Some months later another notice in the *Times and Seasons* promised forthcoming Book of Abraham material which never saw the light of day. "Notice," *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 6 (1 February 1843): 94.

87. For further exploration, see Dana M. Pike, "Before Jeremiah Was: Divine Election in the Ancient Near East," in *A Witness for the Restoration: Essays in Honor of Robert J.*

Matthews, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Andrew C. Skinner (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2007), 33–59; Terryl Givens, *When Souls Had Wings: Pre-Mortal Existence in Western Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 9–20, 215–16.