A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price: Part 8: Facsimile No. 1, by the Figures (Continued)

Author(s): Hugh Nibley
Source: Improvement Era, Vol. 72, No. 9 (September 1969), pp. 85–95
Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
**Facsimile No.1, by the Figures**

By Dr. Hugh Nibley

**Dick:** Why are the figures in Facsimile No. 1 numbered backwards?

**Mr. Jones:** Some people have objected to the numbering and have even seen in it evidence of fraud. But if you will look very closely you will see that the numbers are not written in ancient Egyptian at all, but in modern American. They have been put in purely for convenience in identifying the various figures under discussion. And just as those figures can be discussed in any order, so there is no mystic or symbolic significance whatever intended in the numbering. The first eight figures are numbered in a perfectly consistent order beginning at the top and reading from right to left. The animated figures naturally come first, being the actors of the play rather than mere properties—that is why the crocodile, No. 9, has precedence over the purely symbolic lotus, No. 10; and the "gates of heaven," being far more conspicuous and specific than the vague hatch-lines "signifying expanse" (Fig. 12), are given priority over them.

**Dick:** But why does the numbering of the four jars go from right to left?

**Mr. Jones:** The natural transition from Figure 4 is to the nearest jar, Figure 5. That, I think, is all there is to it. Actually, the canopic jars are numbered in the correct order of their importance, but that is probably a mere coincidence.

**Dick:** How about the next figure?

**Mr. Jones:** The jackal head, called here "the idolatrous god of Libnah." That is the most easily recognized of all the names.

**Jane:** Why is it so easy?

**Mr. Jones:** Because the name has actually turned up in the Egyptian records, and been obligingly transposed into good Canaanite by Professor Burchardt as plain and simple Libnah, designating an unknown geographical region. Also, however you look at it, it always means the same thing. Take the Semitic root l-b-n: what do Mount Lebanon (the snow-covered), Leban (which is Arabic for milk), and tebannah (which is Hebrew for moon) have in common?

**Dick:** That's easy. They are all white.

**Mr. Jones:** Shining white. And according to the Rabbis the name of Abraham's relative Laban means white-faced or blond—another indication of blondness in Abraham's family. And in the Indo-European family what do Alps, labors, Olympus, and all limpid and lambent things have in common? They too are shining white. The ending -ah would normally be the feminine ending designating a land or region "as the mother of its inhabitants," as the formula goes. Libnah would be the white land, and there were places in Palestine in Abraham's day called Libnah, "whiteness"; then too, Levi had a son Libni, whose name meant white.

**Dick:** So Joseph Smith could have got the name from the Bible and found out what it meant from a dictionary.

**Mr. Jones:** Indeed he could have, but does he ever make capital of the name? Does he ever connect it up with whiteness or anything else? Neither he or any of his contemporaries knew that the Egyptians always identified the jackal-god of Figure 6 with the White Land.

**Dick:** Did they?

**Mr. Jones:** Most certainly and emphatically. Our friend Anubis of the jackal's head at all times enjoyed two constantly recurring epithets.

**Jane:** What's an epithet?

**Mr. Jones:** It is a descriptive tag put to the name of some famous person or thing, like "Long-haired Achaeans," or "Honest Abe," or "Mack the Knife." An epithet is used so often and so automatically that it is practically part of the name—a sort of title. Well, from first to last Anubis always had two special epithets: he was "Lord of the White Land" and "Chief of the Westerners." If you will look at the chart you will notice that the jackal-headed jar also represents the West.

**Jane:** What is the White Land?

**Mr. Jones:** That is just what Professor Kees asked himself. He decided that "Lord of the White Land" (nb ta dij) is derived from the idea of "Lord of the shining, sanctified [prachtigen, heiligen] Land," that being a euphemism for the necropolis.

**Dick:** And everybody knows that the necropolis is in the West. That would make him Lord of the westerners!

**Jane:** But wasn't Upper Egypt, the Southern Kingdom, the land of the white crown and the white palace and the white mace, and all that?

**Mr. Jones:** There was a strong temptation once to locate the "White Land" of Anubis in Abydos, but Kees showed
that White Land does not necessarily refer to Upper Egypt, though he admitted that the meaning of the term remained obscure. But very early Brugsch noted that of the four canonical colors the official color of the West is, surprisingly, white—instead of a red sunset. On the other hand, the Libyans to the west of Egypt, noted for their white skin and blue eyes, were identified by Josephus with the Lebaphim, from a root lubh, meaning "shining," "flashing," Arabic lubhah, "a clear, white color, brightness of the complexion or color of the skin," according to Lane. But let's avoid too much playing around with words and sounds, which is altogether too easy, and settle for a few fairly certain points: (1) Libnah does mean White Land; (2) "the idolatrous god of Libnah" does have the mask of Anubis; (3) the jackal-headed canopic figure does stand for the West; (4) Anubis is the Lord of the West; (5) he is also "Lord of the White Land"; (6) white is the ritual color of the West. That's enough, without bringing in the white Libyans, to give you something to play with. It doesn't prove anything, except, perhaps, that Libnah is a very appropriate name to use if you want to divide up the world into four regions or races according to Egyptian practice.

Dick: But how about Mahmackrah? That's a beast of a different color.

Mr. Jones: But even more interesting because of its unusual name. Figure 7, "the idolatrous god of Mahmackrah," has an ape's head, though sometimes it is shown with the head of a bull or cow; the Egyptians placed it at the northern quarter of the horizon. What makes its name so intriguing is that it makes sense almost any way you divide it up. We must always bear in mind when confronted with the often exotic-looking foreign names that oc-
cur in the writings of Joseph Smith that it is the sound and not the sight of the name that is being conveyed. Baurak Ale and Shaumahyem are perfectly good Hebrew if you read them out loud; though they look absolutely outlandish, it would be hard to give a better rendering of the old sounds without the use of a phonetic alphabet. The names of our canopics are addressed to the ear and not the eye—that is why it is possible to fluctuate between Eikenah and Elkkenner, Korash and Koash. Mamackrah suggests all sorts of things to the ear, and it would take us a long time to ring all the possible combinations that Semitic and Indo-European dictionaries could give us on the syllables mah, mack, and rah, all of which are full of meaning in any language. What grabs me, for example, is the middle syllable, not plain "mack" but "mackr-" and of course the final -rah. What I hear is "Mackr-rah." That means a lot to me. 

Jane: Why "mackr-", of all things?

Mr. Jones: Because it reminds me of an element occurring in some important Canaanite names. Mhr-Anat, for example, means "champion or upholder of the goddess Anat"; and Rameses II called himself "Mahr-B'l, meaning upholder of Baal, the Canaanite god. Mahr-Rah would be the champion or upholder of Rah, the Egyptian equivalent of Baal.

Dick: But this "mackr-" is spelled with a -ck- instead of an -h-.

Mr. Jones: The -h- in "mahr" belongs to the root, and must have a heavy sound in order not to be swallowed up by the following -r. You can see the shift between a -k- and a heavy -h- sound in our writing of Mi-cha-el, which the Jews wrote Mi-ka-el. Incidentally, the form of the name rather neatly parallels our Ma-mackr-rah. Mi-cha-el, like Mi-ca-iah (1 Kings 22),

The lion Nefertem guards Egypt's northeast frontier with his big knife and his lotus—the welcoming committee for those who came to Egypt from Abraham's Canaan. The lotus is the official symbol of the border control and of permission to enter the country.
"Our lion-couch papyrus is a political as well as religious document..."

means "Who is like God?" or "He who is like God." Ma- (written Mah- to lengthen the vowel according to the invariable practice in Mormon scriptures) is the exact Egyptian equivalent of the Hebrew Mi-, so that Ma-mackrah would mean "Who is the Upholder of Raḥ?" or the like—a very appropriate title for an idol whose worshipers were doing everything they could to equate and associate the gods of Canaan and Egypt. But here is another possibility. Among the "Old Canaanite Names" found in Egyptian is maqgar, plus a vowel ending, transposed into Canaanite as Maqd'araḥ, meaning "place of burning." Since Abraham was known anciently as "he who escaped the burning," Mah-mackrah could be the local deity of the place of sacrifice. Though "no precise geographical location is provided" for some of Abraham's most important experiences, a good deal is being written today (as we shall see) about his many confrontations with local gods in Canaan. Here is the idolatrous god of Beth-shan who is called Mkl-'a, "the great god." The first element in his name, Mkl-, is Canaanite, but the second, -a, is Egyptian; the first refers to the Canaanite god Mkl, whose name, according to L. H. Vincent, means "he who is able," "the Omnipotent," while the second is the Egyptian word for great—practically the same thing; so that the combination gives us a very powerful figure indeed—Mkl the Mighty, "the god of power." Incidentally, since Semitic -l- is regularly written as an -r- in the Egyptian renderings, the Egyptian form of this name would be Mrk'-a. Dick: And since ma- is Egyptian too, Mah-mack-rah would be the full name, I suppose. "Who is mighty like Re" or "How mighty is Raḥ" or something like that.

Mr. Jones: We must be careful not to go overboard—it is all too easy. But I do think it is in order to point out that the well-documented name Mkl-'a (Mkr-ah) exactly parallels El-kenah: in each case the name of a Canaanite god is followed by an Egyptian epithet meaning mighty. I can think of a better Egyptian name, though: Rank gives the name Mai-m-ṣāḥa as meaning "the Lion is ruler." On this pattern Mai-m-ṣāḥa would mean "the Lion is Akr the great," Akr being the earth-god as a lion. At any rate, we are free to guess as long as we don't preach.

Jane: But what's it got to do with an ape's head?

Mr. Jones: Don't you remember? The jar with the ape's head signifies north for the Egyptians—that is the purpose of this particular symbol. For the Egyptians, Palestine and Syria were the lands of the north. So now we have idols for the east, west, and north.

Dick: —so the only one left must belong to the south.

Mr. Jones: With a tip-off like that, we are naturally prejudiced, so we should proceed with care. Our last canopic, Figure 8, is the human-headed Imset, who in the Egyptian system stood for the south. All that remains to test in the Book of Abraham is his name, which is given as Korash or Koash.

Jane: Which is it?

Mr. Jones: The different spellings given to proper names in the Book of Abraham are plainly an effort to approximate their sounds. As might be expected, it is especially the -r- that causes trouble: Elkanaḥ appears as Ekkeneh, and Korash as Koash, also Jeršhon as Jurshon and Potphar as Potipher—your -r- is a great trouble-maker in ancient as well as in modern languages. If you ask me which of the forms is correct, I unhappily answer—they all are! Anybody who knows Arabic also knows that you can't insist dogmatically on one official pronunciation for any single word—and it has always been that way in the East. Here is an Egyptian-Canaanite deity whose name can be read as Qeset, Qeser, Qesh, Kouser, and Chýrysor—and that is typical. But what does Koash remind you of—a Bible land far to the south of everything?

Jane: The Land of Cush?

Mr. Jones: Of course. The most succinct essay on Cush is in the New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia (1966), p. 515, which defines Cush as "Region S of Egypt" (Nubia, Ethiopia) in Hebrew and other ancient languages. It extended "S from Elephantine and Syene (Aswan)." It has also been identified with southern Arabia and even India. The names of the four brothers, Mirzaim, Punt, Canaan, and Cush certainly remind us of the division of the world into four regions. There is still no agreement as to where the lands of Punt and Cush really were; but the queen of Punt, who had dealings with Queen Hatshepsut, certainly lived in the South.

Jane: Wasn't the Queen of Sheba the queen of the south, too?

Mr. Jones: These mysterious southern queens have caused considerable perplexity. Saba was on the other side of the Red Sea, the Arabian side, where some people put Cush. But however Sheba, Punt, Cush and Korash-Koash may be related, the one thing they have in common is that they are all in the deep south.

Dick: Including Korash?

Mr. Jones: Consider. The natives of Saba, way down there at the south end of Arabia, worshipped a goddess of the South; and where do you think they came from? Heliopolis!

Dick: We might have known.

Mr. Jones: In fact, she was simply a local form of the Egyptian lady Hathor, "the regent of Heliopolis," worshiped not only in Saba but also in Punt. But the interesting thing is that her worshippers were known as the people of Korash" and also as the Beni-Qananae or Sons of Canaan. Back home at Heliopolis the lady was known by the name of Wadjet, which was semiticized into Ozza, under which title she turns up as "one of the principal idols of the Qoreish" in Mecca.

Dick: Which puts her in the south again. But weren't the Qorash the tribe of Mohammed, and didn't they come much later?

Mr. Jones: Well, A. B. Kamal believed that even the religion of the classical Qoreish was strongly influenced by Heliopolis. He sees a connection in the tradition that an ancestor of Mohammed "converted the tribe of Khazaa and the Himyarets [an early desert kingdom] to the worship of Sirius," which they called Sh'ri, the middle sound being something between a deep guttural and a cough. You may remember that Shagre-el, meaning "Sirius is god," was worshiped by the people who tried to sacrifice Abraham. As to the Qoreish coming later, the name is the diminutive of an older Korash; as you know, the Jews held the Persian Korash (Cyrus) in great esteem, but there was another, Kharush, a legendary king of Babylon, who destroyed Jerusalem: his name is interesting because it is the reverse of Korash, and means "big bad Korash." Finally, a tradition preserved by the Arabic writers designates by the name of Korash the father or grandfather of the very king who tried to put Abraham to death. The root k-r-sh can be tied to a great number of
meanings, but as a proper name it is peculiarly at home in the south and tied to the worship of the most important Egyptian goddess. Since the south is the only direction we have left, and the human-headed canopic jar does stand for the south, we may as well let it stand there for the present. Remember, the Four setting but raising questions, not shutting but opening doors. There are plenty of doors that need to be looked into.

Dick: But what about the next figure, number 9, “the idolatrous god of Pharaoh”? Doesn’t he sort of spoil the four brothers act?

Mr. Jones: On the contrary, he is indispensable to it. In the “quadrilateral” geographical patterns of the Egyptians, Maspero observed, “we find the four cardinal points who with the creator form the Four.” That is why the primal Ogdoad of Heliopolis, comprised of the four gods of the universe with the creator as an Ennead, an odd number—they have to have one president at their head, and he makes it nine. 214

Dick: Why do they have to have just one at their head?

Mr. Jones: Because he is the One in the Center, and the center, which is a perfect and invisible point and the pole of everything, can only be One. Professor Posener notes that to the four directions is added “the center of the earth, hry·ib·ta,” so that we sometimes read of the “five parts” of the world instead of four. 113 Seth’s has discussed the psychological reason for this: No matter where you are, there are always four main directions—from where? From you! You are the one in the middle, and the four directions exist only by virtue of your awareness. 246 Indeed, Friedrich Ratzel began his epoch-making geography with the statement, “Every man regards himself as the center-point of the universe around him.” The Egyptians were keenly aware of this. In the Salt Papyrus, for example, we see the four houses of the world, the four gates, and the four cardinal points all arranged around a fifth sign in the middle, the ankh sign of Life, signifying the presence in the center of the Hidden-One, Great-One, Unknown-One, Unseen-One, Amon the Father of All Life. 247 In the “Ideal House of Life,” according to the Egyptians, the four houses surround “the hidden one who rests within . . . the Great God . . . . It shall be very hidden, very large. It shall not be known, nor shall it be seen.” 215

Dick: What’s all about?

Mr. Jones: A basic reality of existence. The Four Sons of Horus, as you know, were the stars of the Big Dipper, pointed ever to the pole of the universe—the most important object in the cosmos. Yet there was nothing there! Jane: Why not?

Mr. Jones: Because in the days when the Egyptians first took their bearings on the universe there was no North Star such as we know it today—there was just the pole as far as mortal eye could see, and that just at the point where all things come together and around which all things move as around the throne of God. The idea of the complete absorption of the Four in the One is most often expressed by the symbol of the four-headed ram sitting in the middle of the cosmic circle (we will get to that when, if ever, we talk about Facsimile No. 2); the “four heads on a single neck” show that the Four by uniting create a perfect unity, a single individual to whom in turn they owe their own identity; they are thus the four great gods uniting to the One universe (the ram-headed god is always the Creator), and also to re-create Osiris by giving him eternal life. 249 They bring completion and perfection to the ba of Osiris when they meet together in their natures and their powers. 250 The idea is compellingly expressed in the pyramid and obelisk, which designate “dominion over the four quarters of the world and the zenith,” the zenith being the point on top at which four planes, lines, and solids all come to a single point. 251 Now to the Egyptians, who on earth is the One in the Center, in whom the life of the race is concentrated and by whom it is sustained? I will give you a hint: The sarcophagus of King Tutankhamon shows that Egyptian kings were buried in four coffins, one within the other. 252 Also, the Pharaoh sat on a fourfold throne, and the Pyramid Texts describe the Four Children of Geb having a feast while in their midst sits “the king on his throne, incorruptible, unspoiled, unassailable.” 215

Dick: What has this to do with the idolatrous god of Pharaoh?

Mr. Jones: As everyone knows, the Egyptians carried their cosmic imagery over into the affairs of earthly government—or vice versa. Whereas in Canaan, as Stadelmann has shown, there was “no fixed and established ‘Canaanite religion’” common to all the regions under Egypt, there was a single centralized Egyptian cult centering in Pharaoh. 134 The gods of Syria and Palestine are extremely hard to study, he says, because their relations to each other are “constantly changing from time to time and from place to place.” 215 and though we know of their existence, we know almost nothing about their cults. 256 The one thing that brings them together in a sort of order is “the domical position of the Egyptian King as overlord of the Syro-Palestinian area.” 217 And that is the situation we find in the explanation to Facsimile No. 1, where everything essentially comes under Pharaoh, and where “the idolatrous god of Pharaoh” (and we have seen that the crocodile was just that) takes his place among the Egyptian gods of Canaan. This is a reminder that our lion-couch papyrus is a political as well as a religious document, and indeed the ancients never separated the two departments, least of all the Egyptians. This point is brought home with great force if we closely examine the next figure in the papyrus, which is

Figure 10. Abraham in Egypt

Dick: If that’s Abraham, I’m Julius Caesar.

Mr. Jones: Hall Caesar! Haven’t you learned yet that the Egyptians have their own special ways of indicating things? Notice how this same design is identified in Figure 3 of Facsimile No. 3: “Signifies Abraham in Egypt.” It is not a portrait but a symbol, pure and simple. In all symbolism there are varying degrees of realistic representation, ranging from near portraits to pure abstraction. The Egyptian could give a reader a pretty good idea of a man on an altar; but how would he indicate a particular individual and no other on a particular altar in a particular country? For that he would either have to accompany his drawing by an explanatory text, as Abraham has done, or else show everything symbolically, which has been done in this case with considerable clarity and economy.

Dick: I don’t see it—Abraham in Egypt?

Mr. Jones: Of course you don’t. Even an Egyptian would not see it unless he had been initiated into the elements of the symbolism involved, but I think most Egyptians would get the point of the lotus. When the Egyptologists of 1912 explained that the odd things called “Abraham in Egypt” were merely “an offering table covered with lotus flowers,” they considered their job done—as if that explained everything. 256

Dick: As if Joseph Smith couldn’t recognize the flowers too.

Jane: He said it was a symbol, didn’t he?

Mr. Jones: The experts who brushed the thing aside so easily seem to have been completely unaware of the vast richness and variety of the lotus symbol in Egypt. No subject has been the
object of more study and publication since 1912 than the meaning of the lotus to the Egyptians, and the very latest study, that of Peter Munro, concludes with the declaration that the many identifications of the lotus with this and that "are still imperfectly and only tentatively understood," and that we do not yet know how or where the lotus came to be associated with so many different ideas and individuals in the Egyptian mind. Our job is to find out, if we can, what the particular lotus design in Facsimile I and 3 represents, and it is not going to be easy. Dr. Spalding's informants were also apparently unaware that Professor Jequier had at the time just made a special study of Egyptian lotus symbolism and declared of this particular lotus arrangement: "Nobody . . . has given a satisfactory explanation of this type of monument." 164 The work still remains to be done, but at least we can find out what possible interpretations of the symbol an Egyptian would find acceptable.

To begin with, in both Papyrus No. I and Facsimile No. 3 we see an open lotus with buds above and below it arching over a small stand with a fat little pitcher on it. In Papyrus No. I the stand is flanked by two thin jars which are missing in Facsimile No. 3, and since the two drawings are given the identical interpretation, our attention is drawn to what they have in common—the lotus and the buds. Now this lotus combination is common enough in coronation and court scenes, but look around you at the other walls—what do you see?

Jane: Lotuses everywhere!

Mr. Jones: So conspicuous, in fact, that Professor Rochemonteix concluded that the lotus must somehow express the basic idea of the Osiris cult as celebrated at this place. 165 He even goes so far as to declare that "the lotus and the papyrus are the emblems par excellence of Egyptian religion, exactly as the crescent is for the Moslems, and the cross for the Christians," the symbolism being by no means confined to funerary situations. 166

Dick: Lotus and papyrus?

Mr. Jones: The exact identification of these flowers has been the subject of endless discussion. Some have maintained that the papyrus of Upper Egypt is a lotus and the lotus of Lower Egypt a papyrus, some that both flowers are lotuses, others that both are papyruses—and this confusion seems to go right back to the Egyptian artists themselves who "constantly and deliberately interchanged lotus and papyrus." 167 But whatever their botanical classification may be, these two flowers enjoy a position of unique importance in Egypt, especially the lotus, which turns up everywhere in Egyptian art.

Jane: Then it's just a decoration.

Mr. Jones: Far from it! Though some scholars have insisted that "there is no serious religious or symbolic significance... no rebus or code, in the use of the lotus in decoration," the same authorities admit that apparently decorative use of the lotus may often conceal a sort of hieroglyphic code. 168 "If we know the value of these symbols," wrote De Rochemonteix long ago, "these ideograms, we can discover the dogmatic sense pursued by the designer... his piling up of emblems in which at first sight simply astonished us." 169 Thus the lotus-and-stand combination in the tomb of Seti I "has adapted itself completely to the pattern of written symbols," as if it was trying to tell us something, 170 and the same design in tombs of the Pyramid Age may "represent the titles of the dead written in a specialized way," according to J.F.S. Edwards. 171

Dick: So our lotus and stand may be trying to tell us something special after all.

Mr. Jones: It is the monopoly of a particular lotus that makes one suspicious. If all the Egyptians cared about was their decorative effect, what about all the other equally beautiful flowers they ignore? How is it that hieroglyphic flowers are almost exclusively lotuses? 172 That only the blue and white lotuses are represented, though the rosy lotus was more decorative and more popular 173 That the lotuses, instead of being depicted in the free-and-easy manner of the Egyptian artists, are almost always drawn after "a very rigid pattern" 174 That other plants never appear to compete with the lotus in heraldic contexts? 175

Jane: What are heraldic contexts?

Mr. Jones: When the lotus appears as somebody's coat of arms. "The lotus is the flower of Egypt par excellence," wrote A. Grenfell; "also it is the symbol of Lower Egypt... the lotus is the typical 'arms' of Egypt." 176 On the other hand, in the earliest times it would seem that the lotus stood for Upper Egypt and the papyrus for Lower Egypt, 177 though Maspero and A. Moret held that the plants were both lotuses. 178

Dick: So the lotus can stand for both the land of Egypt and dead people.

Mr. Jones: That isn't even the beginning of it. We seem to have a whole language of the lotus. Recently Professors Morenz and Schubert wrote a book about it, and concluded that the various interpretations of the Egyptian lotus are in a state of hopeless confusion today. 179 And still more recently Professor Anthes has made a whole list of unanswered questions about the lotus. 180 It is easy and pleasant to speculate, and there can be no doubt that there is something very fundamental about the lotus. It is easy to see why, for example, the lotus and papyrus always stood for Egypt in the minds of the people, since "lotus and papyrus were essential constituents of this unchanging significant 'landscape of the first time,'" as H. Frankfort puts it. 181 And because the lotus growing wild "afforded ordinary food for the poor," it represents the prodigal life-giving abundance of the land. 182 Also, the first life that appeared from the primordial waters of chaos was the lotus, emerging pure and white at Heliopolis out of the primordial ooze of the "First land." 183 That is why at On the lotus went by the special name of Nefertem, the god "who represents the universe, who was before life existed and who will be when life has vanished..." as Anthes puts it. 184 It is the lotus that holds the secret of life springing up spontaneously, apparently out of nothing; during the long ages of desolation when only the empty waters existed, the seed of life slept in the lotus, ready to come forth on the First Day. "With-in the lotus was Re," the sun, waiting to be born as Khepri, according to a hymn from Edfu: "The Sleeper shall awake when the light comes forth from it..." 185 Hence the idea that all life finds earnest of the resurrection in the miracle of the lotus. 186 The king is described in the Pyramid Texts as being "in the lotus" at the moment he awakes from the sleep of death. 187 As Anthes puts it, "the lotus at Re's nose gives him life for his daily journey; this refers to the first day of the Primal Time, when the Primal Lotus gave the sun the power to live and create." 188 You can readily see why the lotus gets a big play in funerary scenes.

Jane: Like lilies today.

Mr. Jones: Botanically the Egyptian lotus was a real lily. 189 And since Re and the king and Osiris were restored by the power of the lotus, so it was believed that everybody might enjoy the same privilege. 190 But the funeral lotus is only part of the picture. In the
The latest lotus study, Peter Munro shows how the lotus being identified with Re is also the highest god, Atum-Re at Heliopolis; and how as the Father of the living king he must also be Osiris; and how as a living king he must also be Horus; and how father and son and Re-Harachte "fuse in the composite form of Nefertem." This Nefertem, as Mr. Jones, points out, is the key to the whole business; a lot of studies have been written about him, one emphasizing one aspect of his nature and another another. Nefertem is the king at Heliopolis, represented as a lotus and embodied as a lion.

Dick: Lotus and lion? Mr. Jones: You will notice that the guardian lion with the big knife always has a huge lotus on his head or behind his back—we shall soon see why. As Nefertem, the king comes down from heaven to rule among men, bearing the lotus scepter that gives him all power on earth and below earth. But it is important to note that his lotus power is limited to his earthly kingdom alone—Nefertem is "the representative of purely earthly Kingship," as Antius puts it. The Pharaoh sits on a throne on which the intertwined lotus and papyrus shows his rule over the Two Lands, their stems also binding Asiatic and African prisoners back to back, showing that foreign lands are also brought under the beneficent sway of Pharaoh. On the same throne designs you will see the king himself depicted as a lion treading on his foreign enemies. The lotus and lion are constantly found together in such contexts because they perform the same two functions, one protective, the other aggressive.

Mr. Jones: Lotusues attack people.

Mr. Jones: Yes, but first of all they protect them. The gift of a lotus is often accompanied by the hieroglyphic symbols for protection. In the broadest sense Nefertem, the lotus-lion, protects the individual against anyone who might do him harm. That is why the lotus-sign was put by the Egyptians on everything they wanted to protect—on utensils, clothes, houses, their dresses, furniture, chairs, boats, fans, while in the tomb of the dead the lotus-sign was used "as a talisman assuring ... an effective protection against its enemies." The power of the lotus, though formidable, is ever benign and protective in nature, as might be expected from its life-giving power.

Dick: But you said it was aggressive.

Mr. Jones: Whenever you see a big lion with a knife, you can be almost sure of seeing a huge lotus on its head or back. The connection is explained by their common home in the marshes of the northeastern frontier of Egypt, where they both guarded the land against marauding Asiatics of the desert. The lion Nefertem and his companion, or double Myesis, both "worshipped in a lotus-flower," were at home on the extreme northeastern borderlands, the home of Sopdu, right up against Asia. You will recall that the great fortress there was called the Dwelling of the Lion, and stood amidst the shallow lotus-filled lakes that along with the crocodiles and the lions of the surrounding deserts effectively discouraged unauthorized entry and exit. Right down to the time of the Caesars it was one of the main duties of Pharaoh to protect this all-important gateway, and it was the custom to "venerate the protector of this frontier of the land." At nearby Heliopolis the king himself was Nefertem, both lotus and lion, "the guardian;" not only does the sight of him make the mountains [that is, the Asiatics] to flee," wrote Naville, "but he is the protector of the other divinities." His speciality is terrifying would-be invaders from the East, in which capacity he is also identified with the other lion-god Myesis, who also wears the lotus. An inscription tells how Horus himself turns into a lion to drive the enemies of Egypt out of Heliopolis and back to the lion-house on the border. Seth, the archtype of the wicked rebel and invader from the north and east, is stopped cold at the border by the lotus "Nefertem, who emerged from the primordial waters ... who turned back Seth, who opposed the foreign countries when the heaven was overcast and the earth wrapped in mist."

Dick: I can understand why a lion would chase strangers, but why a lotus?

Mr. Jones: Professor Kees found that odd too, and suggested that it might be because a lotus stem will cut the fingers of anybody who tries to pull it up. But whatever the reason for it, this hostility brings the lotus, according to him, into a "syncretistic relationship to the guardian deities of the eastern Delta [Sopdu], who make him too a frontier guard." It is obvious that the lotus is more "symbolic" than the fierce lion, but it plays an equally conspicuous role in the guarding of the northeastern frontier. To the people in the hungry lands to the east, Egypt was something special: it was their last chance when they were starving, but while they were there they hated the place and yearned to get back to their old bang-up life in the desert. They were a dangerous lot, and the Egyptian records show that they were carefully checked at the border and that their every move was watched while they were in Egypt. E. A. Speiser has spoken of a "societal curtain that separated Egypt and Mesopotamia, call it the lotus curtain, if you will"—he too perceived the symbol of the lotus.

Dick: But why did the Egyptians let the Asiatics in at all? Couldn't they keep them out?

Mr. Jones: They not only didn't keep them out—they actually offered them protection. Therein I think we can see the unique greatness of Egypt. Only recently Professor Montet pointed out that the Egyptians, contrary to what we have been taught to think, were really great travelers and, what is even more surprising, that the two main duties of Pharaoh were (1) to keep the movements of the Asiatics into and within Egypt under strict control, and (2) to protect Egyptian travelers, missionaries, merchants, and artisans abroad. Now the concern for the helpless in a strange place is the special concern of Nefertem: in funerary reliefs the dead, newly arrived in the Netherworld, are drawn without arms, to show their condition of utter helplessness in a strange and frightening world. While they are in that condition, Nefertem comes to their rescue, puts his arms around them, and finally gives them a new set of arms, saying, "There now, you have become whole and complete, now you have your arms!" meaning, as Professor Naville put it, that the dead person "is now a complete person who has been entirely reconstituted. He lacked arms, but the gods of the East have given him
Jane: Who are the gods of the East?
Mr. Jones: None other than the two lions Nefertem and Myesis, with their huge lotus-crowns. The concern for strangers is very significant, for in many scenes and inscriptions the lotus stands for both guest and host. The lotus-god Harotmus is called “a guest in Denderah”[209] and if you were invited to a party in Egypt, especially at the royal palace, etiquette would require you to bring a lotus with you and present it to your host. There is a regular formula for “coming with a bouquet of Amon, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands in Karnak, after doing all that is commanded,” and a proper way to address one’s host: “To thy Ka, happy king, Lord of the Two Lands, whom Re loves, a bouquet of thy father Amon. Mayest thou remain on the throne of the living Horus like Re forever.”[210] This is plainly a New Year’s gift for the throne, which seems to have been the origin of the idea—remember that the lotus represents the birth of everything at the cosmic New Year. Another formula is, “Coming in peace with a bouquet of Amon with the compliments of his beloved son,” this being followed not by the name of Horus, as you might expect, but by the name of the donor.[210] When the king appears in a reception on the throne, people bring him their Amon-bouquets with wishes for “a happy life-time in the royal dwelling.”[211] It was a birthday as well as a New Year’s gift.

Dick: But why should anybody have to give lotuses to the king if they belonged to his father Amon in the first place?

Mr. Jones: No idea was more familiar to the ancients than the pious truism that the god who receives the gifts of the earth as offerings is after all the real source of those same offerings. An inscription has the king bring a lotus to Horus, “who himself arose from the lotus,”[212] and Ramesside steles show people bringing lotuses to a queen who is already holding a lotus and stands completely decked and surrounded with lotuses.[212]

Jane: But would you have to bring a lotus to the party—couldn’t you bring something else?

Mr. Jones: No—it is always a lotus, and that shows clearly that it is a ritual and symbolic thing. Naturally the people who got invited to court, high nobility and officials for the most part, vied with each other in the splendor of their offerings and flattersies, until in the 18th Dynasty the Amon-bouquets finally got too big to handle.[213] But no matter how showy and vulgar they got, the bouquets always had a lotus as the centerpiece. An inscription in the Tomb of Amenemhab says of a lotus-bearer, “He comes as one welcome, bringing the life [?] of Amon,” to which his host replies, “To thy person the symbol of life [?] of Amon, who is pleased with thee, who loves thee and admits thee.”[211] Here the word for “admit” is swah-hik, meaning to make a place for a person, like the Arabic Marhaban—welcome to the party!

Dick: So the lotus is really a sort of ticket then?

Mr. Jones: Yes, like the tesserae hospitales of the Greeks and Romans. Every guest brings a token for his host and receives one in return—often the identical gift.[210] Thus the Egyptian brought a lotus to Pharaoh as a sign of submission and love, which lotus he professed to have received from the king’s father Amon, the giver of all blessings, including life itself.[212] All were expected to bring such a gift “coming in peace to that place where the king is.”[212] With the expansion of empire, Amon became the god of all the lands under Egyptian sway, and the Egyptian lotus is as conspicuous in throne scenes from Palestine and Syria as it is in Egypt itself. Indeed, the object of Morenz’s and Schubert’s cooperative study is to trace the spread- ing of the royal lotus motif from Egypt all over the Old World. Among the Joseph Smith Papyrus is one very fine picture of the four Sons of Horus, the canopic figures, standing on an enormous lotus before the king on his throne.[213] Here the lotus represents all the regions of the earth brought under the sway of Egypt.[219]

Dick: So Abraham would have known all about the lotus in Palestine.

Mr. Jones: And so would everybody else. On scarabs of the First Intermediate period (to which Abraham is commonly assigned) we see the non- Egyptian Harthor, the type of the lady Quidshu, the hierodule and hostess to all the world, bearing the lotus as her special insignia.[220] Later she is represented standing on a lion with a bunch of lotuses in her hand;[222] she rides her lion when she visits Min (Amon) in Egypt too, and she wears the Hathor wig, but for all that, according to Stadelmann, she is still “a Near Eastern and unegyptian” figure.[222] But we also have the hospitable lotus- queen in Egypt; the cow-head of the lady Hathor is always seen emerging from a lotus stand of capital,[223] and people who brought lotuses to the party would describe them as gathered by the queen’s own hand in her own garden.[224]

Jane: Some nerve!

Mr. Jones: Not at all—just giving honor where honor was due. In the Temple of Seti I the king himself is greeted by a lady wearing a magnificent lotus crown who identifies herself as the hostess when she halls his majesty with “Welcome! Welcome!”[225] In putting their arms around the arm- less and defenseless stranger, the Egyptian lotus-lions of the East were, according to Professor Naville, simply performing the office of the Lady, “the Protectress.”[226] I think it is significant that we find the same sort of lotus-hostess in archaic Greece as well as in Palestine: “It was said of the lotus-crowned goddess of the Corinthian mysteries... Her service is perfect freedom, and, indeed, her habit [was]... always to grant or withhold her favors according as her guests... came to her with exactly the right gifts in their hands—gifts of their own choice, not of her dictation.”[227] Thus Robert Graves reports, and we can guess what gift would most please “the lotus-crowned goddess”! As a token of admission, the lotus is a sort of certificate, without which no one is admitted to “the region of truth.”[228]

Dick: I suppose that everything you have said has some sort of reference to Abraham, but it would sure help if you would sort of pull things together for us.

Mr. Jones: I’ll try, but we still have nothing to work with but a lot of loose ends, or rather “an inextricable tangle” (ein verworrner Knobel), as Professor Morenz puts it.[229] And Dr. Anthes has concluded that such fundamental questions as whether the Primal Lotus was a prehistoric idea, whether it originated with Nefertem, how it was related to the sun, in what form the sun originally emerged from the lotus, etc., are “insoluble.”[230] But still the very richness and variety of Egyptian lotus symbolism gives us hope—since we are not closing but opening doors. We must realize, as Morenz reminds us, that nothing expresses more completely than the lotus “the astonishingly extensive possibility of association of ideas which the Egyptian possessed.”[231] So nothing could be more rash or foolish than to insist that a lotus in a particular picture cannot possibly be one thing because it happens to symbolize something else.

Now of one thing there is no doubt at all, and that is that the lotus is the symbol of the land of Egypt, in particular Lower Egypt, where Abraham was visiting. Also, the lotus is the embodiment of Pharaoh as the ruling power of Egypt, a beneficent and hospitable power. Characteristic of the
lotus is that it is most at home in situations of hospitality, where it represents both the host and the guest. In both capacities it can represent individuals, including foreigners in Egypt—a wall painting from an 18th Dynasty tomb shows a Syrian bringing a magnificent lotus offering to Pharaoh, just as any good Egyptian would. According to Joseph Smith, the lotus in Figure 10 represents two entities and specifies their relationship: It is “Abraham in Egypt,” Abraham as guest, and Egypt as host. We can refine the image by bringing in a good deal of interesting and relevant data—the special function of the lotus in protecting strangers, the lotus as the stamp of official protection and safe conduct (a sort of visa, as it were), the lotus as the mark of the frontier control station through which Abraham would have to pass (that customs house is the scene of an important Abraham legend), the oddity of the lotus in this particular scene.

Dick: Odd is right. The welcome guest is being murdered.

Mr. Jones: All the more welcome for that. Remember, it was considered the highest honor to substitute for the Pharaoh in any operation. Incidentally, the little spouted jug on the tall stand is, according to S. Schott, an ointment jar for the use of honored guests. You must admit this is a strange place to find one, and I can't think of a better explanation than the one given. But along with all the details, there is a broader symbolism to the lotus that I think would have been widely recognized almost anywhere in the ancient world; it is the subject of Morena's and Schubert's fascinating little book—the wandering of the lotus. Those two scholars have combined their formidable specialties to show how the lotus symbol spread from Egypt throughout the Old World. In one important context the lotus marks the trail of the righteous man, the messenger of truth, bearing his light into dark and dangerous places: the lotus was identified with Hercules as the wandering benefactor of mankind, the perennial stranger and guest; it sprang up in the footsteps of the Bodhisattva when he went forth to bring light into a benighted world, the “God of Wisdom” held the lotus in his hand as he rode on his lion into China to take the shining truth to the ends of the earth.

Jane: Lotus and lion again!

Mr. Jones: Which is certainly a broad hint as to the Egyptian origin of the business. But let me ask you, who is the archetype of the righteous man, the bearer of revelation and preacher of righteousness, the courageous stranger in alien and hostile countries and courts? Who but Abraham the Wanderer? In the very early Judeo-Christian Hymns of Thomas the righteous man in the world is compared with a king's son spending a dangerous sojourn in “the Land of Egypt,” following the ancient and established prototype of ‘Abraham in Egypt.’ Abraham is qualified if anyone is for that distinguished company of wandering inspired teachers whose symbol is the lotus, and so I don't know just how surprised we should be to find a nineteenth-century prophet designating the lotus as the symbol of “Abraham in Egypt.”

Dick: Here are some more fancy abstractions.—

_Fascimile No. 1, Figure 11. Designed to represent the pillars of heaven, as understood by the Egyptians._

**Mr. Jones:** How could anyone possibly make it clearer that this is supposed to be not a picture but a representation, with a meaning ascribed arbitrarily and culturally? Long ago Deveria condoms Joseph Smith for giving any interpretation at all to the pillars, which he calls a “characteristic ornament in Egyptian art, having no known significance.”

Dick: “Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.”

Jane: Hamlet.

Dick: No, Gertrude. When will they learn?

**Mr. Jones:** If we want to know whether Professor Deveria really saw everything, we've got to do a little seeing ourselves. Let's find out how this particular ornament is used by the Egyptians.

Dick: What an ornament!

**Mr. Jones:** I'm afraid the successive engravers of Fascimile No. 1 have done us all a disservice by turning the “gates of heaven” into a meaningless and unyieldable jumble of vertical lines arbitrarily and irregularly connected by crude horizontal strokes. But the original papyrus is a different story: it shows us ten clearly drawn gates or a series of pylons. If we are looking for parallels, we don't have to go far—Egyptian art is full of them. The characteristic of the earliest royal tombs is the decoration of their outer surfaces with what is called the “palace façade” style of recessed paneling—a long line of imitation doors flanked by square pillars. The structure is abundantly illustrated on the earliest seals, showing the elaborate palace-gate or “serekh” designs.

Jane: What's a serekh?

**Mr. Jones:** The picture of the entrance to a tomb or palace—a rectangular door flanked by massive supports sometimes extended into towers on each side, usually with a big hawk perched right above the gate between the pillars. H. Balcz has collected over a dozen different types for comparison; to him the structure suggests a fortress—“Wohrba.” But he has no doubt that the central panel is always a door. The label ‘shektau, “Gate of the Two Lands,” shows that the door was identified with the palace gate, though high officials were sometimes allowed by special courtesy to employ the motif in their own tombs. The same design was employed in the tomb of the palace in the palace, especially in the earliest dynasties, and Balcz maintains that the false door of an Old Kingdom tomb was really a niche “to which the significance of a passage for the dead was attributed.” The earliest steles, which were certainly not houses, also have the same false door and panel design, which is also repeated on the sides of wooden coffins, where we find the same vertical lines with empty spaces in between, designated by the experts as “pillars” with “false doors” between them. And the same motif is used to decorate the sides of boxes and chests designed to hold any precious objects.

Dick: Is the idea always the same?

**Mr. Jones:** We cannot say until we know what the idea was. Professor Balcz reaches the sensible conclusion that the false door on funerary objects must represent “a passage for the dead.” But a much later study concludes that we still do not understand the undoubtedly religious significance of “such a curious architectural phenomenon.” While some maintained that the peculiar structure of the palace façade was the result of building in brick, others held that the design was imported into both Egypt and Mesopotamia from northern Syria, where they built in wood. And while some suggested that all the vertical rills were for drainage, others pointed out that there was no need for drainage in Upper Egypt, and that the pylons and
pills must therefore have a special significance.\textsuperscript{215} This is indicated by the fact that Mesopotamia had such peculiar pillars. One of them, which closely resembles the Egyptian structures of the Thinite and Predynastic periods, is employed only in temples.\textsuperscript{245} Surveying the phenomenon throughout the whole ancient East, Stuart Piggott writes: “an essential part of the temple decor was an elaborate system of niches and alcoves, which appears to have been a mark of religious as opposed to secular architecture.”\textsuperscript{250} In Egypt whether the false door of the palace facade is “the gate of the house of the dead,” as Balz calls it, or the door of the divine residence, as Borchardt called it, is always a passage-way into another world, a sacred ceremonial gate of heaven or the underworld.\textsuperscript{251}

**Dick:** And what about the pillars?

**Mr. Jones:** They make the gates, of course. The Egyptians, like other people, talk of the four pillars of heaven;\textsuperscript{252} but also of one world pillar, like the ancient German Irmuls,\textsuperscript{253} and of two, as in an inscription from the Temple of Hathor at Philae that says, “... even as the heaven is fixed upon its two pillars. ...”\textsuperscript{254} That is, there is no fixed number for the pillars of heaven—sometimes the four are increased to many more.\textsuperscript{255} Indeed, the ceiling of an Egyptian temple represents the sky, and the columns supporting it, no matter how many, stand for the pillars of heaven.\textsuperscript{256} Here the coffin of Prince Min-Khaf of the 4th Dynasty has pillars of heaven all around it; on each side there are “eight vertical columns on the panels that frame the seven false doors”; in this as in a coffin from a neighboring tomb, the number of gates seems to be determined by the space at the artist’s disposal.\textsuperscript{257} If I were to choose a significant number for the gates, I think I would pick some multiple of five.

**Dick:** Why of five?

**Mr. Jones:** Well, in the coffin of Prince Min-Khaf there are 25 gates or niches; here in a lion-couch scene from Abydos there are five serekh gates under the couch;\textsuperscript{258} and again in our old familiar tomb of Seti I we see the god Shu holding five such gates between the arms of his Ka.\textsuperscript{259} In another lion-couch scene, from the tomb of Puy-em-re, are ten such gates, and also a chest on a lion-couch under which are nine or ten “gates.”\textsuperscript{260} Here in a later scene are three serekh patterns supported by 15 such gates.\textsuperscript{261} All multiples of five, you see.

**Dick:** That may be all right for the later period. But in the good old days when recessed paneling was in its glory, there was a distant preference for multiples of 12 gates—a cosmic number that strongly supports the heavenly nature of the pylons.

**Mr. Jones (miffed):** What makes you say that?

**Dick:** I bought Professor Emery’s paperback on Archaic Egypt at the entrance of the museum, and I too have been counting doors or windows. Of the 18 archaic tombs depicted in the hook, nine have 24 niches each and one has 12,\textsuperscript{262} and one and possibly another has six.\textsuperscript{263} Mr. Jones: And what about the arches?

**Dick:** Some of them are multiples of ten, I’ll admit. One has ten doors, if you count the hall-doors, and there are two with 30 panels and one with 40.\textsuperscript{264} Interestingly enough, of all the tombs there are only two that do not have pylons that are multiples of 10 or 12, and they have 38 and 22 doors.\textsuperscript{265}

(To be continued)

**FOOTNOTES**


\textsuperscript{215} Egyptian and Semitic names for Lebanon are discussed by S. Konowalow, in Ann. Soc., Vol. 17 (1917), pp. 261-64.

\textsuperscript{216} B. New Kingdom, its, p. 81.

\textsuperscript{217} Num. 33:26, Josh. 10:29-32, 99; 12:15, 21:13; 2 Kgs. 12:12-21; 20:11; 1 Chr. 6:17; 1 Chron. 6:20, etc.


\textsuperscript{219} H. Brugsch, Geographie der Nachbarländer Aegyptens (Leipzig, 1858), pp. 90-9.

\textsuperscript{220} Hornemann, in Pauly-Wissowa, Realencyclo.-Kaeser, 13, 1150ff.


\textsuperscript{224} C. de Wit, in Chron. d’Egypte, 32:31; E. A. W. Budge, Papyri of Am. I, 240. At night they join in a continuous procession, by day the ram-headed god united them for the same purpose, S. Hanam, Solar Gods of Khafra (Cairo: Govt. Press, 1946), p. 117, fig. 580.

\textsuperscript{225} Since ba means “ram” as well as “soul,” the ram was the normal expression of the idea, de Wit, op. cit., p. 30, G. Thausing, in Mitt. d. dt. Inst. zu Kairo, Vol. 8 (1939), pp. 50, 54, 56; de Wit, op. cit., p. 131.

\textsuperscript{226} Sir L. C. S. Harrison, The Gods of the Egyptians (London, 1930), p. 25, the 4 stars of the Dipper, the 4 glorious Abuk spirits, the 4 guardian stars of the Underworld, the 4 celestial elements, and the 4 divine couples that make up the nine.


\textsuperscript{228} Finklaff, Shrines of Tutankhamun, pp. 41, 21.

\textsuperscript{229} Pyramid Texts, Nos. 576: 1510, 1515. One came to Heliopolis “to be guarded, resurrected, deified, to behold the god face to face,” G. Maspero, in Bibl. Egypt., Vol. 1, p. 176; 207, and Coffin Texts, No. 124, 125 “I have come as your fourth... . . to see Thm, the fifth of the stars of Suahu (Qurum);” P. E. Newberry, No. 264; “Tenen has summoned them, and each of the gods tenen, ta, tenen, tenen, to come and tell their names to Re and Horus,” cf. P. T. 193.

\textsuperscript{230} A. Stadelmann, op. cit., p. 24.

\textsuperscript{231} Ibid., p. 140.


\textsuperscript{233} Munro, in Aeg. Zeichr., Vol. 95 (1968), p. 40.


(from which we quote), both minimize the importance of symbolism, though the latter, p. 235, admits that the lotus is almost never used as a fish. W. Keesing, op. cit., p. 154, suggests that since there it is no decorative or symbolic feature of the monopoly plant, and papirus, it still has a meaning which escapes us.

36. A. Moret, op. cit., p. 151.
41. Keener, Der Goetterglaube im alten Aegypten, p. 85.
42. A. Granet, in Rec. Trév., Vol. 32, p. 100.
44. W. de Rochemont, in Rev. de l'Egypte Ancien, Vol. 2 (1915), p. 165; J. Capart, in Chron. d'Eg., Vol. 32 (1957), p. 229-31, says the southern plant can be "a lilliputian plant, or a palm, or sometimes a lotus."

49. W. de Rochemont, op. cit., p. 166.
52. W. de Rochemont, in Chron. d'Eg., Vol. 18 (1921), pp. 60-61.
53. W. de Rochemont, op. cit., p. 166.
55. W. de Rochemont, op. cit., p. 166.
56. W. de Rochemont, op. cit., p. 166.
57. W. de Rochemont, op. cit., p. 166.
61. W. de Rochemont, op. cit., p. 166.
63. W. de Rochemont, op. cit., p. 166.
65. W. de Rochemont, op. cit., p. 166.
69. W. de Rochemont, op. cit., p. 166.
70. W. de Rochemont, op. cit., p. 166.