

The Abrahamic Material

Quotations from Original Journals and Printed Sources

July 6, 1835

Chandler in Kirtland--Egyptian mummies

On the 3rd of July, Michael H. Chandler came to Kirtland to exhibit some Egyptian mummies. There were four human figures, together with some two or more rolls of papyrus covered with hieroglyphic figures and devices. As Mr. Chandler had been told I could translate them, he brought me some of the characters, and I gave him the interpretation, and like a gentleman, he gave me the following certificate:

Kirtland, July 6, 1835.

This is to make known to all who may be desirous, concerning the knowledge of Mr. Joseph Smith, Jun., in deciphering the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic characters in my possession, which I have, in many eminent cities, showed to the most learned; and, from the information that I could ever learn, or meet with, I find that of Mr. Joseph Smith, Jun., to correspond in the most minute matter.

Michael Chandler

Traveling with, and proprietor of,  
Egyptian Mummies.

(H.C. II:235)

Oliver Cowdery, second elder in the Church, and Joseph Smith's scribe during most of the Book of Mormon translation and then assisting with the Abrahamic translation expressed his high regard for the Egyptian records calling them "an inestimable acquisition to our present scriptures."

". . .When the translation of these valuable documents will be completed, I am unable to say; neither can I give you a probable idea how large volumes they will make; but judging from their size, and the comprehensiveness of the language, one might reasonably expect to see a sufficient to develop much upon the mighty acts of the ancient men of God, and of his dealing with the children of men when they saw him face to face. Be there little or much, it must be an inestimable acquisition to our present scriptures, fulfilling, in a small degree, the word of the prophet: For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

P. S. You will have understood from the foregoing, that eleven Mummies were taken from the catacomb, at the time of which I have been speaking, and nothing definite having been said as to their disposal, I may, with propriety add a few words. Seven of the said eleven were purchased by gentlemen for private museums, previous to Mr. Chandler's visit to this place, with a small quantity of papyrus, similar, (as he says,) to the astronomical representation, contained with the present two rolls, of which I previously spoke, and the remaining four by gentlemen resident here.

Though the Mummies themselves are a curiosity, and an astonishment, well calculated to arouse the mind to a reflection of past ages, when men strove, as at this day, to immortalize their names, though in another manner, yet I do not consider them of much value compared with those records which were deposited with them.

If Providence permits, I will, ere long, write you again upon the propriety of looking for additions to our present scriptures, according to their own literal reading."<sup>23</sup>

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MESSENGER & ADVOCATE  
VOL II #3 PP. 236-237  
Dec 1835

The public mind has been excited of late, by reports which have been circulated concerning certain Egyptian mummies and ancient records, which were purchased by certain gentlemen of Kirtland, last July. It has been said that the purchasers of these antiquities pretend they have the bodies of Abraham, Abimelech, (the king of the Philistines,) Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, &c., &c., for the purpose of attracting the attention of the multitude, and gulling the vulgar; which is utterly false. Who these ancient inhabitants of Egypt were, I do not at present say. Abraham was buried on his own possession "in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron, the son of Zohah, the Hittite, which is before Mamre," which he purchased of the sons of Heth. Abimelech lived in the same country, and for aught we know, died there; and the children of Israel carried Joseph's bones from Egypt, when they went out under Moses; consequently, these could not have been found in Egypt, in the nineteenth century. The record of Abraham and Joseph, found with the mummies, is beautifully written on papyrus, with black, and a small part red, ink or paint, in perfect preservation. The characters are such as you find upon the coffins of mummies—hieroglyphics, etc.; with many characters of letters like the present (though probably not quite so square) form of the Hebrew without points. The records were obtained from one of the catacombs in Egypt, near the place where once stood the renowned city of Thebes, by the celebrated French traveler, Antonio Sebolo, in the year 1831. He procured license from Mehemet Ali, then Viceroy of Egypt, under the protection of Chevalier Drovetti, the French Consul, in the year 1828, and employed four hundred and thirty-three men, four months and two days (if I understand correctly)—Egyptian or Turkish soldiers, at from four to six cents per diem, each man. He entered the catacomb June 7, 1831, and obtained eleven mummies. There were several hun-

An Account  
of the Book  
of Abraham.

dred mummies in the same catacomb; about one hundred embalmed after the first order, and placed in niches, and two or three hundred after the second and third orders, and laid upon the floor or bottom of the grand cavity. The two last orders of embalmed were so decayed, that they could not be removed, and only eleven of the first, found in the niches. On his way from Alexandria to Paris, he put in at Trieste, and, after ten days' illness, expired. This was in the year 1832. Previous to his decease, he made a will of the whole, to Mr. Michael H. Chandler, (then in Philadelphia, Pa.,) his nephew, whom he supposed to be in Ireland. Accordingly, the whole were sent to Dublin, and Mr. Chandler's friends ordered them to New York, where they were received at the Custom House, in the winter or spring of 1833. In April, of the same year, Mr. Chandler paid the duties and took possession of his mummies. Up to this time, they had not been taken out of the coffins, nor the coffins opened. On opening the coffins, he discovered that in connection with two of the bodies, was something rolled up with the same kind of linen, saturated with the same bitumen, which, when examined, proved to be two rolls of papyrus, previously mentioned. Two or three other small pieces of papyrus, with astronomical calculations, epitaphs, &c., were found with others of the mummies. When Mr. Chandler discovered that there was something with the mummies, he supposed or hoped it might be some diamonds or valuable metal, and was no little chagrined when he saw his disappointment. "He was immediately told, while yet in the custom house, that there was no man in that city who could translate his roll: but was referred, by the same gentleman, (a stranger,) to Mr. Joseph Smith, Jun., who, continued he, possesses some kind of power or gifts, by which he had previously translated similar characters." I was then unknown to Mr. Chandler, neither did he know that such a book or work as the record of the Nephites, had been brought before

the public. From New York, he took his collection on to Philadelphia, where he obtained the certificate of the learned,\* and from thence came on to Kirtland, as before related, in July. Thus I have given a brief history of the manner in which the writings of the fathers, Abraham

\* The account here given of how the Prophet came into possession of the writings of Abraham, and of Joseph, the son of Jacob, was adapted from an article in the *Messenger and Advocate*, (Volume II, Number 3, pages 233, 236, bearing date of December, 1835) signed by Oliver Cowdery. The article is addressed to William Frye, Esq., of Gilead, Calhoun County, Ill. The certificate of the "learned" referred to, is in the body of the article. It seems that Michael H. Chandler, the owner of the Egyptian mummies and the papyrus, exhibited his treasures in Philadelphia, and, while there, obtained the following opinion of several prominent doctors:

"Having examined with considerable attention and deep interest, a number of mummies from the Catacombs, near Thebes, in Egypt, and now exhibiting in the Arcade, we beg leave to recommend them to the observation of the curious inquirer on subjects of a period so long elapsed; probably not less than three thousand years ago. The features of some of these mummies are in perfect expression. The papyrus covered with black or red ink, or paint, in excellent preservation, are very interesting. The undersigned, unsolicited by any person connected by interest with this exhibition, have voluntarily set their names hereunto, for the simple purpose of calling the attention of the public to an interesting collection, not sufficiently known in this city."

JOHN REDMAN OCNE, M. D.,  
 RICHARD HARLAN, M. D.,  
 J. PANCOAST, M. D.,  
 WILLIAM P. C. BARTON, M. D.,  
 E. F. RIVINUS, M. D.,  
 SAMUEL G. MORGAN, M. D.

"I concur in the above sentiments, concerning the collection of mummies in the Philadelphia Arcade, and consider them highly deserving the attention of the curious.

"W. E. HORNER, M. D."

Another paragraph in the article explains how it came about that Mr. Chandler gave the Prophet a certificate, concerning his belief in the Prophet's ability to decipher the Egyptian hieroglyphics of the papyrus—which certificate will be found at page 235, of this volume, under the date of the purchase of the mummies and papyrus by certain persons in Kirtland. From the paragraph referred to, it appears that on the morning that Mr. Chandler first presented his papyrus to the Prophet Joseph Smith, he was shown by the latter, a number of characters which had been copied from the Nephite plates, and found that there were some points of resemblance between some of the Nephite characters and some of the characters on the Egyptian papyrus. Mr. Chandler then asked the Prophet's opinion concerning the antiquity of the Egyptian papyrus, and also requested him to give a translation of the characters. The Prophet gave Mr. Chandler a translation of some few of the Egyptian characters, which agreed with the interpretation given by learned men in other cities, where the mummies and papyrus had been exhibited, whereupon Mr. Chandler gave the Prophet a certificate, stating that fact.

and Joseph, have been preserved, and how I came in possession of the same—a correct translation of which I shall give in its proper place.

To show the spirit of the public journals, such as the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier*, *New York Daily Advertiser*, *Sunday Morning News*, and the press generally, the past year, towards me and the cause of God, which I have fearlessly espoused, I quote the following, as a specimen of the whole, from M. M. Noah's *New York Evening Star*:

Tone of the  
American  
Press Toward  
the Prophet.

HEATHEN TEMPLE ON LAKE ERIE.

That bold-faced imposter, Joe Smith, of Gold Bible and Mormon memory, has caused his poor fanatic followers to erect on the shores of Lake Erie, near Painesville, Ohio, a stone building, 58 by 78 feet, with dormer windows, denominating the same "The Temple of the Lord." We should think this work of iniquity extorted out of the pockets of his dupes, as it reflects its shadows over the blue Lake, would make the waters crimson with shame at the prostitution of its beautiful banks to such unhallowed purposes.

Thus much from M. M. Noah, a Jew, who had used all the influence in his power, to dupe his fellow Jews, and make them believe that the New Jerusalem for them, was to be built on Grand Island, whose banks are surrounded by the waters of the same Lake Erie. The Lord reward him according to his deeds.

but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me was taught by the precept of men; therefore behold, I will again do a marvellous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."\*

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS  
MILLENNIAL STAR,

EDITED AND PUBLISHED BY P. P. PRATT AND T. WARD,

36, CHAPEL STREET, LIVERPOOL.

JULY, 1842.

VOL. III.

No. 3.

COVENANT WITH THEM, ...  
unto them continually more of his will, in order that they may do it, and live by every word that proceedeth out of his mouth. We congratulate the Saints of the Last Days on their inestimable privileges in having raised up unto them a servant of the Lord, like unto Moses, to guide his people and make known unto them the purposes of the Most High.

We have much pleasure this month in

\* Old translation.

being able to give an illustration and extract from the BOOK OF ABRAHAM; a book of higher antiquity than any portion of the bible. Singular is the providence by which this ancient record fell into the hands of the servant of the Lord, JOSEPH SMITH. A gentleman, travelling in Egypt, made a selection of several mummies, of the best kind of embalming, and of course in the best state of preservation; on his way to England he died, bequeathing them to a gentleman of the name of CHANDLER. They arrived in the Thames, but it was found the gentleman was in America, they were then forwarded to New York and advertised, when Mr. CHANDLER came forward and claimed them. One of the mummies, on being unrolled, had underneath the cloths in which it was wrapped, lying upon the breast, a roll of papyrus, in an excellent state of preservation, written in Egyptian character, and illustrated in the manner of our engraving, which is a copy from a portion of it. The mummies, together with the record, have been exhibited, generally, through the States, previous to their falling into our hands. Mr. CHANDLER was, of course, anxious to find some one who could interpret or translate this valuable relic of antiquity, and, we believe, on one occasion, met with an individual who was enabled to decipher a small portion, or, at least, to give an opinion of what he supposed its meaning to be. He every where heard mention of JOSEPH SMITH and the Book of Mormon, but so generally associated with something slanderous, that he could scarcely think seriously of applying to him. But at length, however, he called upon Mr. SMITH, to inquire if he had a power by which he could translate the ancient Egyptian. Mr. SMITH replied that he had, when Mr. CHANDLER presented the fragment which had been partially interpreted. Mr. SMITH retired into his translating room, and presently returned with a written translation in English, of



the fragment, confirming the supposed meaning ascribed to it by the gentleman to whom it had been previously presented. An event, of a nature so extraordinary, was of course soon noised abroad, when a number of gentlemen in the neighbourhood, not connected with the Saints, united together, and, purchasing the record together with some or all of the mummies, made Mr. SMITH a present of them. The record is now in course of translation by the means of the Urim and Thummim, and proves to be a record written partly by the father of the faithful, Abraham, and finished by Joseph when in Egypt. After his death, it is supposed they were preserved in the family of the Pharaohs and afterwards hid up with the embalmed body of the female with whom they were found.

Thus it is, indeed, true, that the ways of the Lord are not as man's ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. Here, then, is another subject for the Gentile world to stumble at, and for which to persecute the Saints, not knowing that there is nothing hidden but what shall be brought to light, and nothing secret but what shall be discovered. Let us have no revelations is the popular cry of the day; any one's creed but God's. How true were the words of Jesus, "because I come unto you in my father's name ye will not receive me; if another should come in his own name, him ye will receive."

The language of the present generation is, we can believe in the marvellous works of God in former ages, but not now; how will they be confounded as the mighty purposes of Jehovah roll on unfolding mystery after mystery to his people, while his judgments are pouring out upon the ungodly and the unbelieving.

Let the Saints be faithful and watchful, and be ready to receive all things that God shall be pleased to communicate for their well-being in these the last days; bearing in mind that his great and

finishing work, his gathering of the Saints together into one, in order to establish his kingdom, the dominion of which shall be universal, and all powers become subject unto it, will require revelations peculiar to itself, such as were never communicated at any former period of time. Now is the day of the trial of our faith, the day of warfare and of strife against the powers of darkness; but anon shall be the day of triumph, blessed shall they be who endure unto the end, and overcome, and swell the song of victory, for they shall have power over the nations to rule them with a rod of iron, and they shall have given unto them the morning star.

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#### Items of News.

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We rejoice to say, that in the midst of all the slander and calumny that the powers of evil combined can possibly heap upon the cause of God, the work is still rolling on very satisfactorily. In Liverpool, the weekly addition averages from eight to ten, with an increasing and attentive congregation.

From elder Cuerden of Bradford, we have received intelligence that the number of members had increased to fifty-four, with the expectation of confirming some fifteen more the following week. Indeed, in every neighbourhood from which we have received intelligence, the work is steadily onward, and we trust that the additions that are made in these days of trial and persecution, may be mostly permanent; for they must be determined and faithful men that steadily count the cost, and confess not only that Jesus has come in the flesh, but that he has renewed his covenant, and that his religion is a religion of revelation; not ushering his followers into eternity, with "shadows, clouds and darkness resting upon it," but bringing "life and immortality to light," for which the gospel was originally designed, and opening a glorious vista into the future, by which the people of God can attain unto the knowledge of things to come.

Let the Saints rejoice in their high and holy privileges, for "God hath spoken good concerning Israel, and the time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, is come."

Mr. J. J. Chandler, who exhibited them in different parts of the Union, and sold them to us in Kirtland Ohio. The above is a copy of the original placards published by Mr. Chandler, whilst they were yet in his possession.

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### EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES.

These Mummies, with seven others, were taken from the Catacombs of Egypt, near where the ancient, and we may say, almost unparalleled city of Thebes once stood, by the celebrated French traveller Antonio Lebolo; at a great expense, under the protection of the French Consul, by consent of Mehemet Ali, the Viceroy of Egypt. It is to be noticed that several hundred Mummies, differently embalmed were found in the same catacomb, but only the eleven in a state to be removed. The seven have been sold to gentlemen for private museums, and in consequence are kept from the eye of the public.— They have been exhibited in Philadelphia and Baltimore, to crowded audiences; in the latter place, although only engaged for two weeks, the exhibition was prolonged to five weeks, with attraction. Of all the relics of the ancient world that time has left, the Mummy is the most interesting. It is a well known fact, recorded in both sacred and profane history that men were embalmed, which science has attracted the learned for ages. All other antiquities are but the work of man, but Mummies present us with the men themselves—they are the personages, preserved in human form, for the gaze and attraction of people who are occupying down the stream of time centuries from those—they have certainly been

## TIMES AND SEASONS.

"Truth will prevail."

[Whole No. 45.]

Vol. III. No. 9.] CITY OF CLEVELAND, WED. MARCH, 1. 1852.

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conspicuous actors in those mighty scenes of which the history of Egypt is full. An hundred generations have passed away, and new empires have begun since this flesh was animated—since these eyes were bright, and this tongue was eloquent, and the heart beat within this breast. These strangers illustrious from their antiquity, may have lived in the days of Jacob, Moses, or David, and of course some thousand years have elapsed since these bodies were animated with the breath of life! History records the fact, that the higher class concealed their knowledge from the lower, in figures and hieroglyphic characters—A few of those, upon papyrus, used by the Egyptians for writing, will be exhibited with the Mummies.

Having examined with considerable attention and deep interest, a number of Mummies from the catacombs, near Thebes, in Egypt, and now exhibited in the Arcade, we beg leave to recommend them to the observation of the curious inquirer on subjects of a period so long elapsed; probably not less than three thousand year ago. The features of some of these Mummies are in perfect expression.— The papyrus, covered with black or red ink, or paint, in excellent preservation, are very interesting. The undersigned, unsolicited by any person connected by interest with this exhibition, have voluntarily set their names hereunto, for the simple purpose of calling the attention of the public to an interesting collection, not sufficiently known in this city.

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SAMUEL G. MORGAN, M. D.

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We have in our possession the four mummies referred to. They together with the records, were purchased of a Mr. Chandler who exhibited them in different parts of the Union, and sold them to us in Kirtland Ohio. The above is a copy of the original placards published by Mr. Chandler, whilst they were yet in his possession.

DISPLAYED IN FILE.  
APRIL 3 - JUNE 3,  
1833

4  
61 ARTICLES

U.S. Gazette  
Published by Joseph R. Chandler  
Philadelphia--Wednesday, April 3, 1833  
Page 3

#### EGYPTIAN MUMMIES

The largest collection of EGYPTIAN MUMMIES ever exhibited in this city, is now to be seen at the Masonic Hall, in Chesnut Street above Seventh.

They were found in the vicinity of Thebes, by the celebrated traveler Antonio Lebolo and Chevalier Drovetti, General Consul of France in Egypt.

Some writings on Papyrus (sic) found with the Mummies, can also be seen, and will afford, no doubt, much satisfaction to Amateurs of Antiquities.

Admittance 25 cents, children half price. Open from 9 A.M. till 2 P.M., and from 3 P.M. to 6.

Ap 3 - d3W

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The above article ran April 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 23. Not located on April 13, 16, and 22. There was no paper published on Sunday, so April 7, 14, and 21 are eliminated.

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Union and Dispatch Lines,  
 the fine brig ADA, Hallet, master. For  
 freight or passage apply on board at Bowly's  
 wharf, or to CLARK & KELLOGG.

of Damagable DRY GO  
 DAMAGED BURL  
 only concern

**MUMMIES (6) IN BALTIMORE**  
**AMERICAN & COMMERCIAL DAILY**  
**ADVERTISER - BALTIMORE JULY 22, 18**

This Afternoon at 3 o'clock  
 Burling, partially damaged.  
 Baltimore. - Super blue, brown, Oxford, cadet, black  
 and gold mixed Batineas.  
 Cloths - Superfine, blue, blk, medley and mixed  
 Cloths.  
 Flannels, Ac - White flannels, shirtings fancy plate  
 and black and white prints, bleached muslins, corded  
 cambrics, cambric muslins, mitts, blown and checked  
 drillings, book muslins, webb and net suspenders,  
 fastings, carpeting, white cotton homery, cords,  
 beaver-teen, printed, muslins, black bombazines, cot-  
 ton tapes imbleskin, domotts, Canton flannels, Ital-  
 ian lustrings, goat's hair cambrics, Bunyn's patent  
 thread fancy, check muslins, mixed cashmeres, fana,  
 flushings, porter sheetings, Berkley cravats, mull mus-  
 lins, cravat, lawns.  
 W. HENRY & CO.

Thomas  
 126 lbs. SUGAR  
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**TRUST**  
**BY VIRTUE** of a  
 Court sitting as  
 Trustee, we  
 Exchange, on THIS  
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**BY VIRTUE** of a  
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- FOR SALE FREIGHT OR CHARTER,  
 The good schooner PACIFIC, four years  
 old, burthen 500 bbls. well found and in  
 good repair, as having just been overhauled.  
 She will be sold a bargain or receive freight or a  
 charter on reasonable terms. Apply to Capt. Sagar,
- July 22, 1833 Editorial and Ad
  - 23--Baltimore Museum
  - 25--Baltimore Museum
  - 26--Baltimore Museum
  - 27--Baltimore Museum
  - No Sunday Edition
  - 29--Nothing
  - 30--Baltimore Museum
  - 31--Nothing
  - August
  - Thursday--1--Baltimore Museum
  - Friday--2--Baltimore Museum
  - Saturday--3--Baltimore Museum
  - Monday--5--Baltimore Museum
  - Tuesday--6--Nothing
  - Wednesday--7--Baltimore Museum
  - Thursday--8--Nothing
  - Friday--9--Baltimore Museum

**BALTIMORE MUSEUM.**

The citizens are respectfully informed that this  
 splendid establishment was re-opened on the  
 Fourth of July, for the reception of visitors. As re-  
 spects its arrangement and spacious apartments it is  
 not surpassed by any in the United States.

The Promenades are large and airy, and cannot  
 but be pleasing to visitors. In addition thereto there  
 has been erected at great expence over the whole build-  
 ing a Promenade superior to any in America, it be-  
 ing pleasant, cool and airy in the warmest nights, and  
 affords the best view of the City that possibly can be  
 had. Citizens and Strangers will be much pleased by  
 visiting it at all times.

P. S: The citizens are respectfully informed, that  
 the Manager has received from the vicinity of Thebes  
 that celebrated city of Ancient Egypt, six strangers  
 illustrious from their antiquity, count probably an ex-  
 istence at least 1,000 years anterior to the advent of  
 our blessed Saviour, and contemporaries, if so, of the  
 first Sovereigns of Israel, viz Saul and David; they  
 are by no means insignificant aspirants to public pa-  
 tronage, in the present day, in a country then unknown,  
 and whose transatlantic ancestors were at that period  
 wrapt in the gloom of Idolatry and Paganism.


What singular and interesting points of history  
 could they not unfold, connected with these early pe-  
 riods of the world, were the vital spark, so long at  
 rest, permitted to re-uscitate their lumbering remains.  
 But surely none could view these truly singular rem-  
 nants of AULD LANG SYNE, without being car-  
 ried retrospectively to those far distant periods of  
 Antiquity.

N. B. Mr. Murray's much admired band is engaged  
 for every evening during the week.

The manager respectfully informs the citizens, stran-  
 gers and his friends that come when they may he ex-  
 pects always to be prepared with some novelty to please  
 them. Exertions will not cease or expence be spared  
 to make it a pleasing and fashionable place of resort.  
 J. E. WALKER, Manager

Proprietor of the Baltimore  
 Museum by Mr. SCOTT, every evening com-  
 mencing at early candle light. This celebrated young  
 talented artist, executed a spirited and striking like-  
 ness by a mere glance of the face, aided by no other  
 instrument than a pair of common scissors. Those  
 who wish to encourage American talent, and one pos-  
 sessing so peculiar an art, would do well to avail  
 themselves of the present opportunity, as Mr. S's stay  
 in this city is limited. Mr. S. has adopted the plan  
 of waiting upon families at their places of residence,  
 where the likenesses of the infirm, aged and infants,  
 are successfully taken. Busts at 25 cts. or two for  
 the same individual, 37 1/2 cts.

**TURTLE SOUP, TURTLE SOUP!**  
 Just received from Nassau a  
 superior lot of TURTLES.  
 Those who are fond of this great  
 luxury are requested to call and  
 view them in their element.  
 There will be one dressed  
 Soup THIS DAY at 11 o'clock  
 at B. ALDEN'S Baltimore Tavern, Water street,  
 fourth door west of Marsh Market, where families  
 can be supplied, as usual, at 25 cents per quart.  
 Those who wish it in its purity are requested to send



## EGYPTIAN MUMMIES

Our limited room will not at present permit an extended description of these remarkable post humous travelers who are now in this village; but we cannot forbear calling upon those of our citizens who have not seen these ancient specimens of humanity, to visit them before they are removed, which we understand will be in 3 or 4 days. The exhibitor permits as free an examination of them as is consistent with their preservation. Specimens of the ancient method of writing on papyrus, found with the mummies, as also shown by Mr. Chandler, whose intelligent conversation adds much to the interest of the exhibition.

The collection is offered for sale by the proprietor.

Cleveland Advertiser  
Thurs. March 26, 1835  
on original - can't xerox  
(too brittle)  
Western Reserve Historical  
Society, Cleveland

Another Humbug.-- We are credibly informed that the Mormons have purchased, of Mr. Chandler, three of the Mummies which he recently exhibited in this village; and that the prophet Joe has ascertained, by examining the papyrus through his spectacles, that they are the bodies of Joseph, (the son of Abraham,) and King Abimeleck and his daughter. With this shallow and contemptible story, Williams has commenced traveling about the country, and will no doubt gull multitudes into a belief of its truth. Surely one half of the world are fools.

The Cleveland Whig  
August 5, 1835, page 1  
(Western Reserve Library)

*Manuscript from which the Prophet Joseph Smith obtained Facsimile 1, part of the Book of Abraham, is included in this valuable find.*

## Egyptian Papyri Rediscovered

*By Jay M. Todd  
Editorial Associate*

● Perhaps no discovery in recent memory is expected to arouse as much widespread interest in the restored gospel as is the recent discovery of some Egyptian papyri, one of which is known to have been used by the Prophet Joseph Smith in producing the Book of Abraham.

The papyri, long thought to have been burned in the Chicago fire of 1871, were presented to the Church on November 27, 1967, in New York City by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, more than a year after Dr. Aziz S. Atiya, former director of the University of Utah's Middle East Center, had made his startling discovery while browsing through the New York museum's papyri collection.

Included in the collection of 11 man-

uscripts is one identified as the original document from which Joseph Smith obtained Facsimile 1, which prefaces the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price. Accompanying the manuscripts was a letter dated May 26, 1856, signed by both Emma Smith Bidamon, widow of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and their son, Joseph Smith, attesting that the papyri had been the property of the Prophet.

Some of the pieces of papyrus apparently include conventional hieroglyphics (sacred inscriptions, resembling picture-drawing) and hieratic (a cursive shorthand version of hieroglyphics) Egyptian funerary texts, which were commonly buried with Egyptian mummies. Often the funerary texts contained passages from the



*Photo by H. H. Ship*



Dr. Aziz Atiya examines manuscripts in the room in which he found the papyri and document signed by Emma Smith.



Dr. Aziz Atiya, Dr. Joseph Noble, Dr. Thomas P. F. Hoving, President Tanner compare Facsimile No. 1 with original.

"Book of the Dead," a book that was to assist in the safe passage of the dead person into the spirit world. It is not known at this time whether the ten other pieces of papyri have a direct connection with the Book of Abraham.

It was also discovered that on the backing of three of the manuscripts (the backing was pasted to the fragile manuscripts, apparently by the Prophet Joseph, to give them firm support) are some jottings, hand-drawn maps, and apparent notations of townships, all thought to be in the Prophet Joseph Smith's handwriting. Their importance or relevance has not yet been ascertained but will be of intense interest to Latter-day Saint historians.

The collection of manuscripts was presented to President N. Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency by Thomas P. G. Hoving, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in an impressive ceremony held in the New York museum and attended by worldwide news agencies. After being displayed in the Church offices in Salt Lake

City, the manuscripts were turned over to Dr. Hugh Nibley, scholar, linguist at Brigham Young University, and contributing editor of *The Improvement Era*, for further research and study.

The story of the unusual manner in which the Prophet Joseph Smith obtained the original papyri and four Egyptian mummies has been told often and is full of adventure and fascination. But of equal interest is the story of Dr. Aziz S. Atiya's discovery of the papyri in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is best told in his own words:

"I was writing a book at the time, one that I had started while a professor of world Christianity and eastern Christianity, and I went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art looking for documents, papyri, pictures, and illustrations to serve the book. It must have been in the early spring of 1966. I really forget the date. My book was ready for the press, and I was looking for supplementary material.

"While I was in one of the dim rooms where everything was brought to me, something caught my eye, and I asked one of the assistants to take me behind the bars into the storehouse of documents so that I could look some more. While there I found a file with these documents. I at once recognized the picture part of it. When I saw this picture, I knew that it had appeared in the Pearl of Great Price. I knew the general format of the picture. This kind of picture one can find generally on other papyri, but this particular one has special peculiarities. For instance, the head had fallen off, and I could see that the papyrus was stuck on paper, nineteenth century paper. The head was completed in pencil, apparently by Joseph Smith, who must have had it when that part fell off. He apparently drew the head in his own hand on the supplementary paper. Also, the hands of the mummy, raised as they are, and the leg, raised as it is—usually the mummies lie straight forward—are

very peculiar. This papyrus is Egyptian, true enough, but what it stands for, I really don't know.

"Now when I saw this, I began to search further. I saw more pieces of papyri stacked together and suspected that Providence had assisted. Another document was found with these documents, signed by Joseph Smith's wife, his son, and someone else, testifying that these papyri were treasured and owned by Joseph Smith.

"In 1918 a Mrs. Heusser came to the museum and informed the officials that she had some papyrus, but an understanding was not reached until 1947. They were then acquired by the museum, and then the museum changed curators of Egyptian antiquities and the whole subject was forgotten.

"When I saw these documents, I really was taken back. I know the Mormon community, what it stands for, its scripture, etc., and I said at once that these documents don't belong here. They belong to the Mormon Church. Well, of course, the people in the museum are good friends of mine, and I tried to tempt them into ceding the documents to the Church. I informed my good friend Taza Peirce, who is executive secretary of the Salt Lake Council for International Visitors, and we discussed the manner in which I should acquaint the Mormon community of the find. She suggested I see President Tanner, and she was the intermediary who arranged and attended our first two meetings. Thereafter, I met directly with President Tanner, who had said the Church was very, very interested and would do anything or pay any price for them. Since that time, we worked quietly on the possibility of their transference to the Church.

"In these kinds of things, I never push. I take my time. With some kindly persuasions and discussions, the museum ultimately put a memorandum on the subject to the board of trustees of the museum. This took a long time to come to that step. The Board discussed the matter at very great length, greater length than you might think, and in the end they thought that since the museum had papyri of this nature in plenty, why should they keep these documents from the Church?

"When their generous decision was made, it was telephoned to me by the curator, and he wrote to me also. Then we had a lull in the situation, because

the curator had to go to Egypt for a month in order to arrange final steps for the transference to the Metropolitan Museum of another treasure, in which I also had a hand. It concerns a great temple that is being presented by the Egyptian government to the American nation in recognition of the contributions America has made toward the salvage of the Abyssinian monuments.

"When the curator came back, he reported very nicely about the subject and said, 'The decision has been taken; your Mormon friends are going to get these papyri. So, you go to your friends and the President of the Church and make the necessary arrangements for a ceremony.'

"Of course, President Tanner was just as excited as I was. He reported to President McKay, who was very enthusiastic about the project also. We then decided the way in which the ceremony would be conducted.

"I felt very honored and very, very pleased to be in the center of the picture with such a distinguished person as President Tanner and Mr. Thomas P. G. Hoving, who is director of the museum. He's a very important man, as is his assistant and vice director, Dr. Joseph Noble. He's a very fine man. All of them were there, and to my surprise I found that the papyri were prepared in a very fine box for safekeeping.

"But during the morning of that day I made it a point to go in at an early hour, long before the meeting of these magnates, in order to make sure that the papyri were there—not only the papyri, because what is of importance is the document that accompanied the papyri. It was a faded thing, in nineteenth century hand. I found that the museum had photographed it. Well, of course, they had tried to photograph it before, but it wouldn't show because it was very faded blue paper. Now they used infra-red and ultra-violet photography to get the text out, so that now the photograph is very much better than the original.

"I was enchanted about the discovery of the papyri, which had been in the hands of Joseph Smith, but the discoveries were not ended there. On the morning of handing over the papyri, I began looking them up and down, up and down, and lo! I found on the back of the paper on which the papyri were glued writings and maps and an enumeration of townships and material of the highest value to Mor-

mon history, made, I think, by Joseph Smith's own hand. Three of the backs were full of notes and maps, which have to be studied by the specialists. I am not a specialist of that, but I have an eye for original documents, and these papyri documents are not fakes; they are original Egyptian papyri of a pre-Christian era. They could be from 3000 B.C. to 300 B.C.—over 300 B.C., at any rate. That is my estimate. The era will have to be decided by the specialists.

"I know the kind of ink the Egyptians used and the difference between the genuine and the fake. Papyrus writings were usually placed with the mummy—papyri of many kinds—but essentially the "Book of the Dead," which would give the mummy safe passage to the world beyond. The papyri were sometimes colored. You find papyri like this with blue, gold, and red colors. This was not out of the ordinary. With regard to the ink used, it was generally made of soot and glue, and that is why it was eternal. I think these scrolls are written in that kind of ink. Usually the priests did the writing—they were most skilled. They used reed pens, and had to sharpen the reed and split it in the middle.

"The Egyptians had the papyrus plant, and they used to split it into thin layers and put the layers criss-cross on one another, pound them with a wooden hammer, and then glue them together. They cut them to suit the purposes of the documents they wanted to write. Usually long strips were used to make scrolls, and this one was made in that fashion.

"In order to protect the papyrus, which becomes brittle with age—for instance, the head of the person fell off simply because the papyrus was brittle—Joseph Smith probably thought that the best thing for its protection was to glue it on paper. When I first discovered these documents, I was so excited about the Egyptian writings that I did not look on the back of the paper, but when I returned to the museum, I noticed the writings on the back by Joseph Smith. These writings may not turn out to be of very great importance; however, any footnote one can get in the restoration of Mormon history is valuable.

"The exciting part, which has proved beyond doubt that this was the papyri that was in Joseph Smith's hand, was established by that document signed



by his widow. When I saw that, I had it transcribed and a copy type-written to show to President Tanner.

"Do you know that this discovery appeared in the Egyptian press on the day following the ceremony? On the first page of the most important paper! You would be surprised at the attention that was given to this discovery, and apparently the Egyptians were very pleased about the revealing of these documents. I consider it a great honor to have been able to make this discovery. Great discoveries are always accidental, and this one was as accidental as any discovery I have made—and probably more exciting than all of them. It was an honor to have been able to persuade such an august body as the Metropolitan Museum to present it to another body as august as the Mormon Church. I feel flattered to have been able to do what I did."

The fact that Dr. Atiya made the discovery and so energetically attests to the manuscript's authenticity as that which Joseph Smith used in part in the translation of the Book of Abraham is of no little importance. Dr. Atiya is a world-recognized scholar and researcher of Egyptian and Arabic manuscripts. He was instrumental in building the University of Utah's Middle East Library to what has been called "perhaps the finest in its field in America." (The library, named for Dr. Atiya, was previously regarded as one of the five finest in the U.S.) He is one of three Distinguished Professors at the university. He is well-regarded for his lectures and writings while at the universities of Michigan, Columbia, Princeton, Liverpool, London, Bonn, Zurich, Cairo, and Alexandria. He is the author of approximately 20 volumes and about 50 monograph articles.

But of lasting importance are his writings on the Crusades of the Middle Ages and his studies and writings of his own Orthodox Coptic religion. He is also the founder of the Institute of Coptic Studies in Cairo. In essence, he is a well-recognized fellow among the worldwide community of scholars.

It could as well be said of Dr. Atiya's discovery as that which Parley P. Pratt said of Joseph's reception of Egyptian mummies and papyrus in the first place: "Singular is the providence by which this ancient record fell into the hands of the servant of the Lord, Joseph Smith."

Indeed, the story of how Joseph

Smith received the papyri is very fascinating, one seemingly filled with providential direction. Some of the details are still clouded, although new research each year seems to divulge additional bits of information, but the principle points of the episode are in general agreement: Napoleon's 1798-99 conquest of Egypt turned the world's attention toward the land of pharaohs, and Egypt was soon overrun with both scientific expeditions and robbers of catacombs and ancient burial sites. One of those early adventurers interested in Egyptian antiquities was a Piedmontese named Antonio Lebolo, who worked as an agent for one of the powerful antiquity barons of the day, Bernardino Drovetti. While in Egypt during what now appears to be at least as early as 1817, Lebolo obtained a license to enter the catacombs in Thebes, Egypt. He discovered a pit tomb near a place called Gurneh, near Thebes, and found many mummies therein. He turned the best of them over to Drovetti but managed to keep some for himself. He later left Egypt en route to France via Trieste with some mummies, 11 of which eventually reached America.

While on the island of Trieste he became ill and died. This is believed to have been in 1823. It has long been presumed that the mummies Joseph Smith eventually received were from Lebolo's find, and that Lebolo willed them to Michael H. Chandler, who has been presumed to have been Lebolo's nephew. But some present-day scholars question Chandler's relationship to Lebolo. As early as 1885 N. L. Nelson, in an address at Brigham Young Academy at Provo, said that Chandler received the mummies from an "English Minister Plenipotentiary." Such a person might have been Henry Salt, a famous representative of the crown in Egypt, who died in 1827. At any event, Chandler apparently was thought to be in Ireland, and the mummies were apparently sent to Ireland via London. Chandler's friends redirected the mummies to America, where Chandler was living in Philadelphia. The mummies eventually arrived at the New York City custom-house.

Scholars have observed that it seems nothing short of miraculous that the mummies and their important records should have safely navigated through the rough waters of antiquity barons, catacomb plunderers, dishonest and rival agents in search of mummies, to

eventually find safe port in the New York harbor.

In April 1833 Michael H. Chandler paid the customs duties, took possession of the 11 mummies, and opened them. He was disappointed in not finding jewels or something of great monetary value, but he did find several rolls of papyrus. Providence seemingly once more entered the story, for while yet in the custom-house, Chandler was informed that there was no man in the city who could translate the scrolls, "but was referred, by the same gentleman (a stranger), to Mr. Joseph Smith, Jr., who, continued he, possesses some kind of power or gifts, by which he had previously translated similar characters."

It was more than two years later, on July 3, 1835, that Chandler met the Prophet Joseph. During those years Chandler had exhibited for a nominal charge the mummies and even sold seven of them to private museums.

According to James R. Clark, a persistent and intelligent student of the history of our Pearl of Great Price, apparently a Benjamin Bullock of Moiric, New York, a nonmember but a relative of Heber C. Kimball, had heard of Joseph Smith, and when Bullock met Chandler, he offered to take him more than 250 miles by wagon to Kirtland, Ohio, to meet the Prophet.

(An interesting sidelight is that as a result of Bullock's visit to Kirtland, he returned to his home greatly impressed with Joseph Smith. He took with him a copy of the Book of Mormon. After he and his wife read it, they moved west to be with the Church.)

When they reached Kirtland, Mr. Chandler asked the Prophet Joseph if he had the power to translate the scrolls, and Joseph replied that he had. The Prophet records that he gave Chandler an interpretation of some of the material on the scrolls.

Mr. Chandler was so impressed that he wrote a certificate testifying of Joseph Smith's "deciphering the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic characters" "to correspond in the most minute matters" with that which Chandler had learned from "the most learned."

The Prophet records in his *Documentary History of the Church* (Vol. 2, page 236): "Soon after this, some of the Saints at Kirtland purchased

the mummies and papyrus, a description of which will appear hereafter, and with W. W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery as scribes, I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt, etc.—a more full account of which will appear in its place, as I proceed to examine or unfold them.”

Concerning the four mummies, the Prophet generally admitted that he did not know who the mummies were, although some secondary sources later reported that the Prophet identified them as a pharaoh, a queen, a princess, and a slave. The rolls of papyrus are known to have been with one of the female mummies. Concerning the rolls, it has been surmised that apparently they were original records or copies of original records made by Abraham and his grandson Joseph, and written upon by succeeding record keepers and pharaohs over several thousand years' duration.

The result is well-known to Latter-day Saints. The Prophet interpreted some of the writings on the scrolls, and this interpretation and facsimiles 1, 2, and 3 make up our present Book of Abraham. Some present-day scholars think that part of the papyri that Joseph had in his possession contained an actual primer in the Egyptian alphabet and grammar previously prepared by its ancient authors for the benefit of future translators. It is also known that the Prophet promised “further extracts from the Book of Abraham” than those writings that we already have, but martyrdom cut short his publication of new materials. (John Taylor, *Times and Seasons*, Feb. 1843.)

At any rate, after the martyrdom of the Prophet, the mummies and manuscripts were turned over to Joseph's mother, Lucy Mack Smith. At her death in May 1855, the mummies and manuscripts were kept by Emma Smith Bidamon, with whom Lucy Mack Smith lived the two years previous to her death. Emma Smith Bidamon was the Prophet's widow and had since married L. C. Bidamon. Shortly after one year of holding the mummies and manuscripts, Emma sold them to a Mr. A. Coombs.

It was this letter of sales to Mr. A. Coombs, signed by Emma Smith Bidamon and dated May 26, 1856, in addition to the 11 pieces of papyri, that was found by Dr. Atiya. The letter

reads: “This certifies that we have sold to Mr. A. Coombs four Egyptian Mummies with the records of them. This mummies were obtained from the catacoms of Egypt sixty feet below the surface of the Earth, by the antiquarian society of Paris & forwarded to New York & purchased by the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith at the price of twenty four hundred dollars in the year eighteen hundred thirty five they were highly prized by Mr. Smith on account of the importance which attached to the record which were accidentally found enclosed in the breast of one of the Mummies. From translations by Mr. Smith of the Records, these Mummies were found to be the family of Pharo King of Egypt, they were kept exclusively by Mr. Smith until his death & since by the Mother of Mr. Smith notwithstanding we have had repeated offers to purchase which have invariably been refused until her death which occurred on the fourteenth day of May last.” Signed: “L. C. Bidamon, Emma Bidamon, Joseph Smith [her son]. Nauvoo, Hancock Co. Ill, May 26.”

The next account of the mummies appears in the 1859 “St. Louis Museum Catalogue” and then in the 1863 “Chicago Museum Catalogue,” page 42, in which are described two mummies that were “kept by the Prophet's mother until his death, when the heirs sold them, and were shortly after purchased for the Museum.”

A great fire destroyed much of Chicago in 1871, and it had been presumed

that the mummies and manuscripts were burned in that fire, even though the 1856, 1859, and 1863 catalogues do not give any information about the two other mummies or the manuscripts. Information on the two other mummies and the rest of the papyri manuscripts used by the Prophet may yet come forth in some future day.

The collection recently found by Dr. Atiya first came to the attention of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1918. Apparently Mr. A. Coombs had not disposed of all his purchases made from Emma Smith Bidamon, because in 1918 a Mrs. Alice C. Heusser of Brooklyn, New York, took the recently discovered papyri and document signed by Emma Smith to the Metropolitan Museum for evaluation. Mrs. Heusser was a daughter of the housekeeper of Mr. A. Coombs. But the museum did not buy the collection of papyri until Edward Heusser, husband of Alice, finally sold them to the museum in 1947. The papyri have been in the museum's files since that time.

Thus, the stage was set for the remarkable discovery of Dr. Atiya. These pieces of papyrus, only part of the ones Joseph Smith had in his possession, are now back in the hands of the Church. They are a remarkably powerful and tangible testimony to the truthfulness of the Prophet's clear and simply told story that he had in his hands some original papyri documents, some of which he used in producing the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price. ○

The official presentation ceremonies in New York in which President Tanner accepted papyri from Dr. Thomas P. F. Hoving.

