
THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM AND THE EGYPTIAN PROJECT

“A KNOWLEDGE OF HIDDEN LANGUAGES”

BRIAN M. HAUGLID

In Kirtland, Ohio, just a little over two weeks after Joseph Smith hired Warren Parrish as his scribe (October 29, 1835),¹ Joseph reportedly prophesied that Parrish “shall see . . . ancient records, and shall know of hid[d]en things, and shall be endowed with a knowledge of hid[d]en languages.”² These promises seem to have been realized not long after Joseph dictated to the scribe Parrish a translation of some ancient Egyptian papyri that had come into his hands three months earlier.³ This translation came to be known as the Book of Abraham, which first appeared serially under Joseph Smith’s direction in the Mormon periodical *Times and Seasons* in Nauvoo, Illinois, in March 1842. The Book of Abraham was later included in a larger compilation of Joseph’s revelatory materials titled the Pearl of Great Price, which has since become authoritative scripture for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

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Saints, alongside the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants.⁴

The prophetic promise to Parrish that he be “endowed with a knowledge of hid[d]en languages” not only foreshadowed his own immediate future but, more importantly, mirrored Joseph Smith’s deep longing for bringing forth ancient records as well. After all, as a translator, Joseph had already produced two texts, which he viewed to be of ancient origin: the Book of Mormon (1829) and the Book of Moses (1831). Additionally, from 1830 to 1833, he undertook a revision of the Bible, which can at least be considered a form of translation.⁵

From these earlier projects Joseph Smith likely developed an ostensible appetite in working with ancient languages, especially Egyptian, since the Egyptian connection can be traced to at least 1828 or 1829 when Joseph learned that the language of the Book of Mormon was a language referred to as Reformed Egyptian.⁶ Joseph Smith’s confidence may have increased when, in June 1828, he copied characters from the gold plates onto a sheet and instructed a friend to show them to a professional linguist for verification. According to the traditional Mormon account, the linguist, Charles Anthon, determined they were legitimate Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic characters.⁷ Interestingly, three separate accounts from Anthon himself tell of seeing the whole affair as a hoax to pressure Harris (not named in the accounts) to mortgage his farm to fund the printing of Joseph Smith’s book.⁸ Still, for Joseph, the Anthon episode represents a complete success that became interpreted as a fulfillment of Isaianic prophecy.⁹

Joseph’s future endeavors lend further credence to his fixation for ancient languages. For instance, in addition to his work with the Egyptian papyri, which lasted into the early Nauvoo period (1842), Joseph expended considerable effort in formally learning Hebrew under the tutelage of a professional Hebrew teacher during the first part of 1836.¹⁰ Notably, Joseph Smith’s focus on ancient languages

in some ways describes Joseph in a profane as well as a sacred sense; and at some point Joseph's fascination with languages becomes subsumed into a blurred bifurcation not easily, or at times even possibly, separable. This bifurcated ambiguity between the sacred and the profane seems to emerge in stark relief with Joseph's activities in working with the Egyptian papyri during the second half of 1835 in Kirtland, Ohio.

As early as July 1835, just a matter of days after Joseph Smith acquired the papyri, he pronounced that "one of the rolls [in his papyri collection] contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt."¹¹ As noted above, "the writings of Abraham" eventually became the Book of Abraham. However, around the same time that the translation of the Book of Abraham occurred (in the second half of 1835), another ad hoc project took place that produced innovative, perplexing, and ostensibly incomplete Egyptian alphabet and grammar documents. This Egyptian project has given rise to questions that generally focus on how much Joseph was involved in the project, and whether or not the Abraham translation and Egyptian projects somehow inform each other. If the Egyptian project can be considered separate from the translation project then the question remains as to what those involved in the Egyptian project were trying to do. The main task here is to ascertain relational connections between the Egyptian documents and the larger corpus, including the Abrahamic documents. Exploring points of contact between the documents should help to contextualize the Egyptian project within the larger framework.

In examining the documentary evidence related to the Abraham and Egyptian projects three main points emerge: (1) the language (Egyptian) project was likely going on before Joseph Smith acquired the Egyptian papyri; (2) the translation and language projects were occurring at roughly the same time, and (3) the Egyptian project evidences a serious attempt at unveiling the Egyptian language using

an imaginative, intricate system that connects the Egyptian alphabet documents to the grammar book and possibly the Abraham documents as well.

Introduction to the Abraham/ Egyptian Collection

As alluded to above, the corpus of documents in this collection¹² can be divided into two fairly distinct parts: (1) those papers that center primarily on the text of the Book of Abraham and (2) those that focus on alphabet and grammar material that the authors connected to the ancient Egyptian language. However, it should also be understood that the Abraham documents contain a certain amount of Egyptian material and the Egyptian papers include a certain amount of Abraham material. The table below shows that the Abraham documents consist of three 1835 manuscripts and one 1842 manuscript that contain roughly the same text from the Book of Abraham (Abraham 1:1–2:18), as well as the 1842 explanations to facsimiles 1 and 2 and one 1842 page that includes a few verses from Abraham 3.

Abraham Manuscripts

Name (Abbr.)	Date	Content	# of Pages	Scribe
Abraham 1 (Ab1)	Summer 1835	Abr. 1:1–3	1 (on p. 1 of Ab4)	W. W. Phelps
Abraham 2 (Ab2)	Late 1835	Abr. 1:4–2:6	2 (4 both sides)	Frederick G. Williams
Abraham 3 (Ab3)	Late 1835	Abr. 1:4–2:2	3 (6 both sides)	Warren Parrish
Abraham 4 (Ab4)	Late 1835	Abr. 1:4–2:18	5 (10 both sides, after Ab1)	Warren Parrish
Abraham 5 (Ab5)	Early 1842	Abr. 1:1–2:18	13	Willard Richards
Abraham 5a (Ab5a)	Early 1842	Fac. 1 Explanation	1 (on back of p. 2 of Ab5)	Willard Richards

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Abraham 6 (Ab6)	Early 1842	Fac. 2 Explanation	3	Willard Richards
Abraham 7 (Ab7)	Early 1842	Abr. 3:18b-26a	1 (2 both sides)	Willard Richards

Note that no manuscript evidence exists for certain parts of Abraham 3, all of Abraham 4 and 5, or the explanation to Facsimile 3.

The next table (below) shows the variety of manuscripts that make up the Egyptian portion of this collection.

Egyptian Manuscripts

Name (Abbr.)	Date	Content	# of Pages	Scribe
EAWP	Summer 1835	Egyptian Alphabet	4	W. W. Phelps
Eajs	Summer 1835	Egyptian Alphabet	4	Joseph Smith Oliver Cowdery
EAOc	Summer 1835	Egyptian Alphabet	4	Oliver Cowdery
ECWP	Summer 1835	Egyptian Counting	2	W. W. Phelps
GAEL	1835/36	Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language	34	W. W. Phelps Warren Parrish
Egyptian Notebook (EN1)	1835	Misc. Egyptian characters & notes	4	Frederick G. Williams Oliver Cowdery
Egyptian Notebook (EN2)	1835	Misc. Egyptian characters & notes	5	W. W. Phelps
Egyptian Hieratic (EH1)	1835	Egyptian hieratic	1	?
Egyptian Hieratic (EH2)	1835	Egyptian hieratic	1	?

As we shall see, the three Egyptian alphabet documents contain basically the same material while the rest of the Egyptian documents depart from the EA manuscripts, as well as each other, in various ways. It is also noteworthy that the EAJS contains the handwriting of Joseph Smith, something that occurs quite rarely, since Joseph's general practice was to hire professional scribes. This would seem to indicate that Joseph Smith had interest in and contributed to the Egyptian project, which is further reinforced in his journal entries for 1835. But Joseph's interest in the Egyptian project does not arise in a vacuum. In fact, the Mormon Egyptian focus fits well within the larger nineteenth-century context of Egyptomania.

Nineteenth-Century Egyptomania and the Joseph Smith Papyri

Following Napoleon's advance into Alexandria Egypt in 1798, a robust fascination with all things ancient Egypt became a hallmark of the first half of the nineteenth century in America. Artifacts increasingly began appearing in Europe and ultimately in the United States, which gave rise to a veritable Egyptomania in antebellum America. Much of that mania manifested itself in a related mummymania, which began as early as April 1823 with the arrival of the mummy known as Padihershaf.¹³ Throughout the nineteenth century, however, mummymania led to "scientific" cranial investigations and to questionable commercial practices such as using mummy dust as medicines, making mummy paint, mummy paper, and mummy rags.¹⁴ Egyptian iconography and discourse even facilitated "managing contemporary domestic conflicts arising from the politics of race and race-based slavery."¹⁵

A heightened interest in the Egyptian language also occurred with the rise of Egyptomania during the nineteenth century. Although Champollion had already decoded the Rosetta Stone by the early 1820s, his work was not fully known in America until the



A family visiting the sphinx at Giza, Egypt, 1924. This is just one of many examples of Egyptomania. Courtesy of the Wilbur A. Sawyer Papers.

second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁶ Thus, a lack of Egyptian linguistic science before the 1850s coupled with a fervent Egyptomania perpetuated an almost ignorant zeal among some early nineteenth-century Americans. As an example, many followed Athanasius Kircher's esoteric and imaginative *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*; some believed that ancient Egyptian contained remnants of the pure language of Adam.¹⁷ It was in this type of intellectual climate that Joseph Smith purchased four mummies and several rolls of papyri for \$2,400.¹⁸ from Michael Chandler, an antiquities dealer, who had arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, in late June 1835.¹⁹

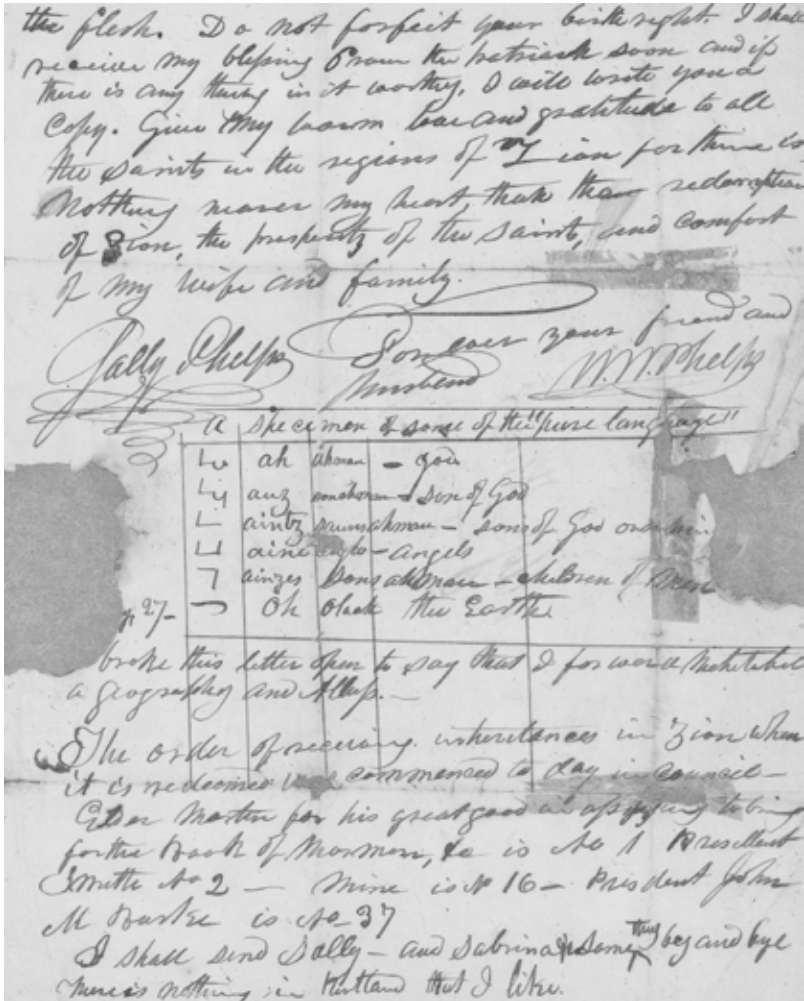
As to the provenance of the four mummies and papyri, they represent a portion of a larger cache of eleven mummies that the

Italian Antonio Lebolo discovered in a tomb in Thebes, Egypt, sometime between 1817 and 1822.²⁰ Sometime before his death in 1830, Lebolo arranged to have the artifacts shipped to the United States.²¹ The artifacts were then displayed up and down the eastern states for the next few years, but it is not known who precisely oversaw these exhibitions.²² Between the time the mummies were exhibited in the eastern states and then showed up in Kirtland with Chandler, seven of the eleven mummies had been sold.²³

Curiously, prior to purchasing the Egyptian papyri in 1835 Kirtland, Joseph Smith and others already seemed quite interested in ancient languages, particularly the pure language of Adam. From a document titled, “A Sample of pure Language given by Joseph the Seer as copied by Br Johnson,” which was probably drafted in Hiram, Ohio, in March 1832, we find a series of questions and answers concerning how the names of God, Christ, angels, the earth, and man would be pronounced in the pure Adamic language.²⁴

It seems that interest in a pure language was still present in the first half of 1835 as well. On the back of a letter, which W. W. Phelps wrote to his wife, Sally, dated May 26, 1835, Phelps added what he termed, “A Specimen of some of the ‘pure language.’” Beneath this title Phelps drew several columns placing characters in one column, terms in another, and explanations in a third.²⁵ Interestingly, as we shall see, this same lexicographical scheme continues into the more intense Egyptian program that emerges after the reception of the Egyptian papyri.

Two other considerations of Phelps’s May 1835 letter may evidence some kind of an ongoing Egyptian language project occurring before the arrival of the mummies and papyri in Kirtland. First, the three Egyptian alphabet documents (EA) employ the same characters as those found in the “Specimen” letter (albeit with different explanations) and, second, the first page and a half of the EA documents contain characters not associated with the papyri.²⁶ In fact, it



W. W. Phelps's letter to his wife, Sally, May 26, 1835. Courtesy of Church History Library, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

is quite apparent where the unrelated characters end and the papyri characters begin. This suggests that the production of at least the first part of the Egyptian alphabet documents predates the July 1835 arrival of the papyri.

Whether or not the Egyptian project began before or after the arrival of the papyri, it appears that Egyptomania and the arrival of the Egyptian papyri fueled, for Joseph Smith and others, both a secular study of the ancient Egyptian language and a revelatory pursuit concerning the writings of Abraham. These two interests may have somehow worked in tandem with each other in producing both the extant Egyptian and Abraham papers.

Joseph Smith's Journal Account of the Abraham and Egyptian Projects

In examining the historical evidence it becomes quite clear that the Abraham translation and Egyptian study projects took place roughly concurrently during the last half of 1835. It also seems clear that both projects can be directly connected to the Joseph Smith Papyri. What is not clear is how these two projects actually relate to each other, if they relate at all. Though none of the documented statements from Joseph Smith or his close associates indicate precisely what process was used to translate the Book of Abraham, we are given to know from Joseph's journal that the translation of the Book of Abraham coincides with the acquisition of the Egyptian papyri purchased from Michael Chandler. These journal entries also seem to support the notion that Joseph Smith and W. W. Phelps believed that the Book of Abraham was translated from the hieratic characters on the papyri.

According to the surviving documents, those most closely involved with the study of Egyptian and the coming forth of the Book of Abraham were Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, W. W. Phelps, Frederick G. Williams, Warren Parrish, and Willard Richards. All of these men were employed as scribes for Joseph Smith and all of them, except Oliver Cowdery, penned the extant Abraham documents; while only Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, W. W. Phelps, and Warren Parrish (who had limited involvement) wrote the surviving Egyptian documents. What follows is a brief review of Joseph

Smith's journal entries that demonstrate the contemporary nature of the two projects.

In the first journal entry, dated July 6–8, 1835, reference is made to an initial session to translate the Book of Abraham. This entry states that in company “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.”²⁷ Although this entry is not original to the 1835 journal of Joseph Smith (Willard Richards inserted the reminiscences of W. W. Phelps in Nauvoo in 1843), it seems clear (if this entry is correct) that this first translation session took place in early July 1835 and that Joseph Smith based his connecting Abraham to the two rolls on his “translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphs” taken from the papyri.²⁸ That is to say, Joseph initially made the connection between the papyri purchased from Chandler and the patriarch Abraham. From this point on, the journal also appears to couple the translation activity with the study of the Egyptian characters and hieroglyphs found on certain parts of the papyri.

A second entry attributed to July 17–31, 1835, reads, “The remainder of this month, I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients.”²⁹ This may suggest that the alphabet was first created and then used to help in translating the Book of Abraham. In other words, the Egyptian alphabet may have been used as some type of primer tool for translating the Book of Abraham.³⁰ Or, perhaps, an alphabet was drawn from the already extant Book of Abraham. This second possibility begs the question as to why one would attempt to create an Egyptian alphabet from a preexistent English text.

On September 11, 1835, W. W. Phelps wrote to his wife that “nothing has been doing in the translation of the Egyptian Record

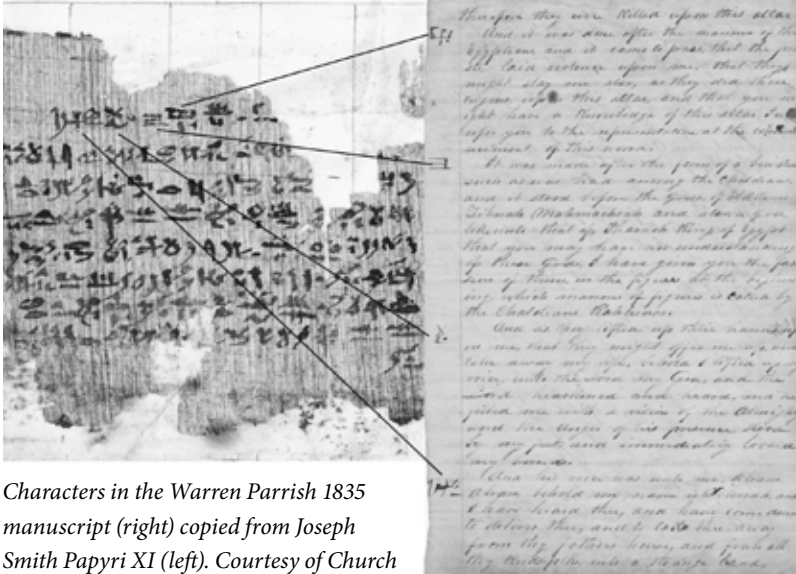
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for a long time, and probably will not for some time to come,”³¹ indicating that the translation work ceased as early as the end of July or sometime in August with Phelps having no idea as to when it would resume.³²

On October 1, 1835, Joseph Smith’s journal records, “This afternoon labored on the Egyptian alphabet, in company with brsr O[liver] Cowdery and W[illiam] W. Phelps: The system of astronomy was unfolded.”³³ It is difficult to determine precisely what this entry means, but since the entry appears within the context of the study of the Egyptian alphabet it seems unlikely that it refers to a specific translation session. More likely it has to do with Joseph and associates attaining some kind of (astronomical) epiphany through their study of the Egyptian alphabet and then recording their findings in the “Grammar and A[l]phabet of the Egyptian Language,” which later may have been expanded into the astronomical explanations for Facsimile 2 (especially figure 5).³⁴

The next direct reference to Joseph Smith translating the Book of Abraham dates to October 7, 1835, when Frederick G. Williams was working as Joseph Smith’s scribe: “This afternoon recommenced translating the ancient records.”³⁵ Then on October 29, 1835, Joseph Smith hired Warren Parrish as a scribe³⁶ and subsequently three and a half more days of translation sessions were recorded in the journals of Joseph Smith: November 19, “spent the day in translating the Egyptian records”; 20, “we spent the day in translating, and made rapid progress”; 24, “in the afternoon, we translated some of the Egyptian, records”; 25, “spent the day in translating.”³⁷ Note that two of these entries (19 and 24) specify translating from the “Egyptian records,” which presumably means the Egyptian papyri. None of these entries specifically mentions the Book of Abraham.

One more entry dated the day after the last translation session on November 26, 1835, refers to “transcribing Egyptian characters



Characters in the Warren Parrish 1835 manuscript (right) copied from Joseph Smith Papyri XI (left). Courtesy of Church History Library, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

from the papyrus.”³⁸ Unlike the word “translation,” “transcribing Egyptian characters” here denotes the copying of Egyptian characters from the papyri to paper. If this is the case, this entry may refer to the three 1835 Abraham manuscripts that have hieratic characters drawn from the first few lines of P. JS XI in the left margins opposite text from the Book of Abraham. These 1835 manuscripts (with one more from the Nauvoo period) roughly cover Abraham 1:1–2:18.

In sum, from the available historical evidence, it appears that Joseph Smith (and his associates) made a literal connection between the Egyptian papyri and the Book of Abraham by translating specific characters on the papyri to produce both the Egyptian and Abraham manuscripts. Work on both the Egyptian alphabet and the Book of Abraham appears to have been done incrementally, sporadically, and concurrently roughly from July through November 1835. Unfortunately, these journal entries cannot precisely answer how these projects related to each other beyond mere supposition.

The Three Egyptian Alphabet Documents

If any of the Egyptian documents were to be examined by a modern Egyptologist, they would more than likely be deemed gibberish. However, it must be understood that Joseph Smith and his associates took their language study quite seriously. That is to say, while approaching the Egyptian documents from a purely Egyptological standpoint yields minimal value, analyzing the systematic nature of the documents themselves can tell us something about those who created them. In doing so it becomes quite clear that Joseph Smith and W. W. Phelps, in particular, developed a complex, if not imaginative, system toward *their* apprehension of the Egyptian language.

In addition to examining the systems employed in these documents we will also need to address their chronological production and dependency. However, this is not a simple task. For example, in most cases W. W. Phelps's Egyptian Alphabet document (hereafter EAWP) and Oliver Cowdery's Egyptian Alphabet document (hereafter EAOC) seem to be revising Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet document (hereafter EAJS), but at other times the EAWP or EAOC evidence earlier readings than the EAJS. What this may indicate is that the Egyptian alphabet documents were created over a prolonged period of time and in multiple sessions. It could even be conjectured that one or two out of the three extant EA documents may rely on a nonextant EA document. However, in comparing and analyzing the three EA documents, the EAJS seems to be the primary document, at least in a few instances. What follows are select examples of this type of comparison and analysis (textual revisions, differences, and expansions emphasized)³⁹:

EAJS	<ho up hah>	crown of a princess or queen or Stands for queen
EAOC	Ho- oop -hah	Crown of a pri[n]cess, or queen, or signifies queen.

EAWP	Ho- oop -hah	Crown of a princes, or signifies Queen.
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Both the EAWP and EAOE offer a slightly variant spelling of the transliterated term in changing “up” to “oop.” Both also replace the term “Stands for” in the EAJE with “signifies.” This change is subtle but it could be argued that “Stands for” could be taken too literally, while the term “signifies” allows for more flexibility for symbolic interpretation. In this sense both the EAWP and EAOE could be viewed as revising the reading in the EAJE. However, EAWP also represents the shortest reading of the three, which could suggest that EAJE and EAOE are revising EAWP.

EAJE	tone tahe or th tohe ton-es	beneath or under water
EAWP	Tus , toan, take to,e or tou-es-	beneath, <u>below</u> , under, water
EAOE	Toan, Tah-e Tae Tah-e- Ta-e, or Tus	or water.

This example evidences an expansion in the EAWP upon the EAJE but the EAOE appears not to be related to either, especially in the orthography of the name of the character, which varies from both the EAJE and EAWP. It could be that the EAOE relies on a different manuscript in this case.

EAJE	Iota tou-es Zip-Zip	the land of Egypt first seen under <water>
EAWP	Iota tou-es Zipzi	Egypt. The land first seen, <u>by a woman</u> , under water
EAOE	Iota-Tou-es-Zip-zi.	The land of Egypt first <u>discovered</u> under <water <u>by a woman</u> .>

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The EAWP and EAOC significantly expand the text in identifying that it was a woman who first saw or discovered Egypt under water. The EAJS reading is unclear. The EAOC also develops the thought further than the EAWP by indicating that the woman “discovered” Egypt instead of “seeing” it. In this instance, the EAOC appears to represent the furthest development of the three EA documents.

EAJS	ho-ee oop- phare hah pha-e	government power or Kingdom
EAWP	Ho-e-ooop hah-Pha-e—	<u>Reign</u> , government, <power> <u>right, kingdom</u>
EAOC	Ho-e-ooop-hah-pha-e.	Reign, government, power, <u>kingdom, or dominion.</u>

Here both the EAWP and EAOC elaborate further on the EAJS providing additional meanings that are not inherent in the EAJS. Note also that both the EAWP and EAOC employ different terms from each other (“right” vs. “dominion”).

EAJS	<u>zool</u> Eh	<u>Signifys</u> to be in any as light in th[tear in page]
EAWP	Zub-eh—	To be in—as light in the earth
EAOC	Zub- zool eh	To be in, <u>or be within</u> —as light in the earth.

It appears here that both the EAWP and EAOC are trying to make sense of this difficult reading in the EAJS. We can assume that the last part of the EAJS entry has likely broken off and probably originally read “th[e earth].” However, the phrase “to be in any” does not make sense, so both the EAWP and EAOC have deleted “any,” and focused on the notion of an inner light. EAOC has also (again)

provided more textual development (“or be within”) even beyond the EAWP. Note also that both the EAWP and EAOC provide variants to the EAJS transliteration of the character, but the EAOC has integrated both the EAJS and the EAWP versions into its transliteration.

EAJS	Alchobeth Alchibeth ministers of God under or the less	
EAWP	Alchibeth	Ministers of God, than less than high priests—
EAOC	Alchobeth Alchibeth	Ministers of God, <u>less, or</u> <u>under the high priests</u>

To make more sense of the difficult reading in the EAJS, both the EAWP and EAOC have indicated what the “ministers of God” are less than, which in this case are the high priests. Again, the EAOC has developed the thought further by taking the EAWP “high priest,” replacing “than” (EAWP) with “the,” and then taking the EAJS “under” to make clear that “less” does not mean less important but instead refers to being subject to a higher authority.

EAJS	Bethcha	an other place of residence or an <a> more fruitful Garden or larger place of hapiness greater hapiness 5 times
EAWP	Beth ka	<u>Another</u> place of Residence, <5 times <u>as</u> <u>great</u> > more <u>spacious</u> , & larger < <u>than</u> <u>the first</u> >
EAOC	Beth-Ka	<u>A</u> garden, <u>valley or plain</u> , larger, more <u>spacious</u> , <u>more pleasing</u> , <u>more beauti-</u> <u>ful</u> —place of <u>more complete</u> happiness, <u>peace & rest</u> < <u>for man</u> .>

Here the EAOC lacks the reference to “5 times” while the EAWP seeks to clarify that it refers to being five times greater than the first degree. The EAWP lacks the reference to a garden and happiness

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but modifies “Another place of Residence” as being “spacious.” The EAWP has also corrected the more difficult EAJ’s reading of “another” to read “Another.” Again the EAOC has expanded the text to clarify that the garden (valley or plain) and happiness are interconnected in both size and quality. Note the shift from a “ch” in the EAJ’s transliteration to the “k” in both the EAWP and EAOC.

EAJ’S	Bethche	the third place 5 times Bethcha
EAWP	Beth ke	The third place <u>of Residence</u> <5 times <u>as great as the</u> <u>last</u> > still greater &c
EAOC	Beth-Kee	A Third <u>garden, or place</u> <u>of residence still more spa-</u> <u>cious, beautiful and pleas-</u> <u>ing increasing in greatness</u> <u>five degrees</u> <or being five times <u>as large as</u> Beth-Ka.>

This seems a fairly good example of the progression of one textual reading to the next with further improvements and clarifications. The EAWP clarifies “the third place” as a residence and then makes clearer that this character is five times greater than the last character. In a similar manner as the last character the EAOC establishes that this character represents a garden or residence that is five times larger than the last (character) with five times the quality and enjoyment. Note again the shift from a “ch” in the EAJ’s transliteration to the “k” in both the EAWP and EAOC.

One other example that can be cited is the title of the second page of the EAJ’s, which reads, “Egyptian alphabet first degree second part.” The EAJ’s longer, clumsy title is shortened in the EAOC to, “second order continued” while the EAWP has no title at all.⁴⁰

Many of the foregoing examples could point to the EAJ’s as the primary document, but there are enough counter examples to bolster

the primacy of the EAWP or the EAOC as well. This fact leads to asking an entirely different set of questions than those dealing with the primacy and dependence of the three EA documents.

In most cases, copies of an original are faithful to the exemplar manuscript. Yet, with the three EA documents this is not the case. We have seen in the above examples that the three manuscripts differ in their use of synonyms. Why is this so? It seems odd that if there was one original that there could be two or three variant synonyms. It could be that the use of one synonym over another is replacing a more obscure word. Yet, the synonyms used in the three manuscripts do not appear to be obscure words in 1835 or now. Consider the words “stand for” something or “signify” something. Both seem quite clear in meaning.⁴¹

Perhaps these differences in terminology in the three EA documents suggest that the authors were composing or editing their own text. Commenting on these documents, Hugh Nibley has written, “It would seem that Joseph Smith is working with the brethren, but they are doing a lot of things on their own. What strikes one first of all is the overpowering predominance of one hand and mind in the work—those of Phelps.”⁴² However, this does not explain the existence of the EAJ, the usual scribal deferential relationship to Joseph, nor the stark similarities between the three EA manuscripts.

Another question has to do with whether Joseph Smith dictated the writing of the Egyptian alphabet to Phelps and Cowdery or if the copying was primarily oral and simultaneous.⁴³ If Joseph dictated the Egyptian alphabet, why is there an EAJ document? Did he dictate to his scribes and write down his dictation? In every other dictation scenario we have no document in the handwriting of Joseph that he had dictated.

If the three EA documents represent primarily oral copying, this could explain why there are variants in the synonyms between the manuscripts. We do know that the three documents were likely

produced around the same time, if not simultaneously. This seems clear from the historical record noted above, especially the journal entries recorded in October through November of 1835. If this is the case, perhaps the three EA manuscripts are nothing more than the individual notes of Joseph Smith, W. W. Phelps, and Oliver Cowdery, created during a brainstorming session.

The Technical Relationship between the Egyptian Alphabet and the GAEL

Whatever the precise origin and purpose of the Egyptian documents, it is clear that there exists a technical relationship between the three alphabet manuscripts and the “Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language,” or GAEL. Although written primarily in Phelps’s handwriting, the GAEL is intricately derived from the EA documents. The technical relationship between the EA manuscripts and the GAEL assist us in affirming that the former predates the latter.

It is interesting that the bridge from the EA to the GAEL can be found in the EAJS, which is the only EA document that provides (see EAJS, 4) the following paragraph under the heading “fifth part of the first degree”:

In the **first degree** Ah-broam—signifies The father of the faithful, the first right, the elders **second/ degree**—same sound—A follower of righteousness—**Third degree**—same sound—One who possesses great/ Knowledge—**Fourth degree**—same sound—A follower of righteousness, a possessor of greater of Knowledge. / **Fifth degree**—Ah-bra-oam. The father of many nations, a prince of peace, one who keeps the command/ ments of God, a patriarch, a rightful heir, a high priest [emphasis mine].⁴⁴

Note that the EAJS is the only EA document of the three that lays out a scheme for five degrees. Interestingly, this EAJS entry appears fully incorporated into the GAEL and has been used in expanding the scheme of five degrees.

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A ^o F	When this character has a horizontal line under it it reduces it into the fourth degree consequent by it has but four connecting parts of speech.
6 F	When it has two horizontal lines, it is reduced into the third degree and has but three connecting parts of speech, and when it has three horizontal lines, it is reduced into the second degree and has but two connecting parts of speech.
7 F	
8	
8	As 8 shows the character depicted.
9	
9	• 1 Both mean first assistance, a fruitful place, &c.
9	1 Both place of happiness, purity, help & rest
	• 1 Both - see, saw seeing or having seen
	1 Zuh-zool-oo - The first born, or the first man or father of fathers.
	• Ki ^{the compound of it} see ^{the compound of it} saw - seeing or having seen
	✓ Ki The same as both
	✓ Both The same as Zuh-zool-oo
*	1 Both the greatest place of happiness extending beyond any thing This should be inserted between both and Zuh-zool-oo
3	Ah brah-oo - a father of many nations a prince of peace, one who keeps the commandments of God. A patriarch a mighty king, a high priest

Page from the Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language (GAEL). Ah brah-oo is located at the bottom of the page. Written in the hand of W. W. Phelps, circa 1835-36. Courtesy of Church History Library, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

1st Degree (GAEL, 20) Ah-brah broam—The Father of the faithful. The first right—The elder

2nd Degree (GAEL, 16) Ah-brah broam- Ah broam—a follower of righteous ness

3rd Degree (GAEL, 13) Ah-broam one who possesses great knowledge

4th Degree (GAEL, 9) Ahbroam: a follower of righteousness a possessor of greater knowledge—

5th Degree (GAEL, 2) Ah brah – oam—a father of many nations a prince of peace, one who keeps the commandments of God. A patriarch a rightful heir, a highpriest

From the above, it can be seen that the five degrees noted in the EAJS have been incorporated into the GAEL. In fact, the first twenty-one pages of the GAEL seem to focus on expanding the EA first degree to a five-degree system, which appears to add more meaning as the degrees increase. Note the following two examples:

EAJS	pha-e	the first man or one who has Kingly power or K[ing]
EAWP	Pha-e	The first man, or one who has Kingly power, or king
EAOC	Pha-e	The first man, or one who has kingly power, or [king?]
GAEL (21)	Ph<h>-eh-	The first man.—Adam, first father [1st part, 1st degree]
GAEL (17)	Phah=eh	Kingly power=or king [1st part, 2nd degree]
GAEL (13)	Phah=eh.	Kingly <power> or first king [1st part, 3rd degree]
GAEL (9)	Phah=eh	Kingly power coming from some other Kingly power [1st part, 4th degree]

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GAEL (3)	<u>Phah eh.</u>	The first man, or Adam coming from Adam. Keys or right over Patriarchal right by appointment. [1st part, 5th degree]
EAJS	ho-ee-ooop	young unmarried man a pri[n]cess
EAWP	Ho=e=ooop	A young unmarried man—a prince.
EAOE	Ho=e-ooop	A young unmarried man, a prince.
GAEL (21)	Ho e ooop	A young unmarried man; a prince [1st part, 1st degree]
GAEL (17)	Ho e ooop	A virtuous prince [1st part, 2nd degree]
GAEL (13)	Ho e ooop	A prince of the line of the Pharaohs [1st part, 3rd degree]
GAEL (9)	Ho e-ooop	a prince of the royal blood [1st part, 4th degree]
GAEL (4)	Ho-e-ooop	A prince of the royal blood a true descendant from Ham, the son of Noah, and inheritor of the Kingly blessings from under the hand of Noah, but not according to the priestly blessing, because of the transgressions of Ham, which blessing fell upon Shem from under the hand of Noah [1st part, 5th degree]

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The second part of the GAEL (pp. 23–34) builds a five-degree scheme based on the EA 2nd part, 1st degree, which introduces a unique change from the system based on the EA 1st part, 1st degree that we previously discussed. To illustrate this new modification we will examine the first five terms in the EAJS 2nd part, 1st degree with the same term from the GAEL:

EAJS	Ahmeos	god without begining or end to
EAWP	Ah me os	God without beginning or end
EAOOC	Ah-me-os	God, without beginning or end
GAEL (33)	Ahme-os-	God without beginnig or end [2nd part, 1st degree]
EAJS	Aleph	in the beginning with God the Son or
EAWP	Aleph	In the beginning with God the Son or first born
EAOOC	Aleph	In the beginning with God, the Savior.
GAEL (31)	Aleph,	In the beginning with God, the son, or first born [2nd part, 2nd degree]
EAJS	Albeth	Angels or disimbodied spirits {or} Saints
EAWP	Albeth	Angels or disembodied spirits or saints.
EAOOC	Albeth	Angels or disembodied spirits, or saints or men after they are raised from the de[a]d
GAEL (29)	Albeth,	Angels or disembodied spirit or saints [2nd part, 3rd degree]

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EAJS	Alcat[b?]eth	Angels in an unalte{a[r]}able immortal <state>
EAWP	Alkabeth	Angels in an unalterable state, men after they are raise <from the dead>
EAOB	Alkabeth	Angels in an unalte{a[r]}able immortal <state>
GAEL (27)	alkabeth,	angels in an unalterable and immortal State; men after they are raised from the dead, and translated unalterable state. [2nd part, 4th degree]
EAJS	Achibeth Achebeth	ministers of god high preasts <Kings>
EAWP	Alchebeth	Ministers of God, high priests, Kings
EAOB	Alchebeth	Ministers of God, high priests, Kings.
GAEL (23)	Alkebeth,	ministers of God, high priests, kings [2nd part, 5th degree]

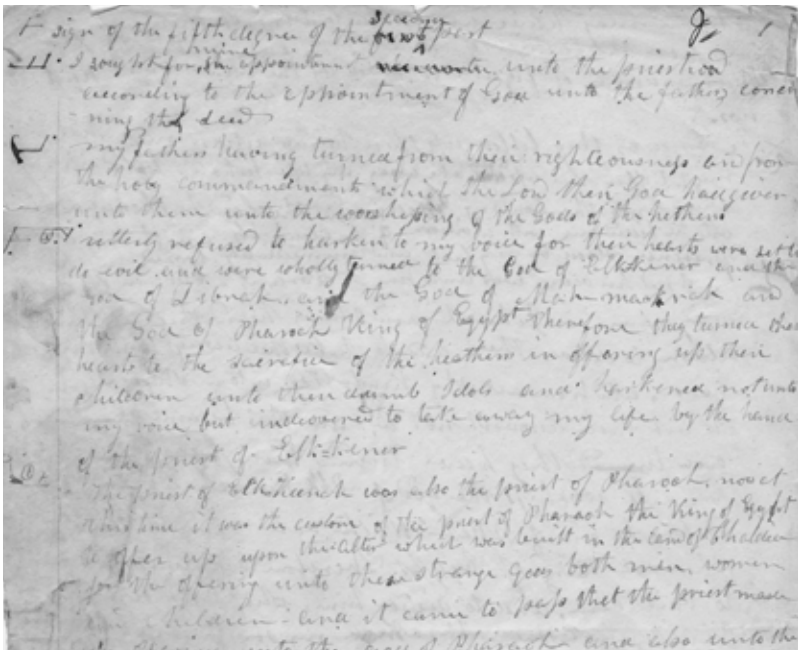
Note that in the GAEL, Ahmaros, which was originally in the 2nd part, 1st degree in the EAJS stays that way in the GAEL. But Aleph, which was also in the 2nd part, 1st degree now becomes 2nd part, 2nd degree in the GAEL. Albeth becomes 2nd part, 3rd degree, Alkabeth becomes 2nd part, 4th degree, and Alkebeth becomes 2nd part, 5th degree.

The five-degree system of the final seven terms in the GAEL, which begins with Jah-ni-hah, reverts back to the scheme used in the EA 1st part, 1st degree for the rest of the entries (i.e. Jah-oh-eh, Floees, Flos-isis, Kli-flos-isis, Veh-kli-flos-isis, and Kolob).

In sum, there seems to be an established internal relationship between the EA documents and the GAEL in which the GAEL

develops and expands a five-degree system first introduced in the EAJ. This five-degree scheme appears to employ a method in which the meaning of characters, words, or sentences expands by degrees from the first to the fifth degree. Thus, we have two systems employed linking the EA documents to the GAEL: (1) one term expanded into five degrees and (2) five different consecutive terms expanded into five degrees.

As noted earlier, two of the three 1835 Abraham documents have the phrase, “sign of the fifth degree of the ~~first~~ <second> part” written at the top of the first page. This seems to be the only real connection to the five-degree scheme discussed in pages 23–34 of the GAEL, which has a 2nd part, 5th degree that allows for the larger



Frederick G. Williams’s manuscript, 1835. The phrase “sign of the fifth degree of the ~~first~~ <second> part” can be found at the top of the page. Courtesy of Church History Library, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

increase of text. This could also explain why there is an unusually large amount of text opposite the characters on the three 1835 Abraham manuscripts. However, the characters have no lines above them, which, according to the GAEL should be present to increase the signification. This could suggest, again, that the Egyptian project and the translation project were done in tandem with each other and that the Egyptian project evolved into something quite different than the Abraham translation project.

Beyond their limited connection to the Egyptian documents, some of the Abraham manuscripts have a more intimate relation to each other. This can readily be seen by the fact that the four Abraham documents (Ab2, Ab3, Ab4, Ab5) cover roughly the same block of text in the Book of Abraham (Abraham 1:1–2:18).

In reviewing the extant evidence related to the Abraham and Egyptian projects, it seems proper to make a few observations and at least some tentative conclusions. As to Joseph Smith's involvement, his journal entries and the manuscript evidence make it quite clear that, at least during the last half of 1835, he was quite involved in the projects.

We can also see from the evidence that Joseph's interest in ancient languages stems from his earlier work with the Book of Mormon, the Book of Moses, and his translation of the Bible. In particular, Joseph seems to have developed a substantial interest in the pure language of Adam,⁴⁵ which may have prompted an ongoing language project that became reenergized with the arrival of the Egyptian papyri and evolved into a more devoted Egyptian project.

The language project also coincided with Joseph Smith's efforts to translate the papyri to produce the Book of Abraham. Whether the Egyptian language project was some kind of study aid for the translation project cannot be definitively ascertained. But it appears from the 1835 journal entries that the two projects were roughly contemporary with each other, which denotes some kind of relationship

between the two projects. Although at this point the precise relationship may presently elude scholars, in my view, separating them too rigidly would likely do violence to ever reaching a better understanding of the historical context.

The surviving 1835 Egyptian alphabet and grammar documents may not offer much in the way of furthering our knowledge of Egyptology, but they do evince a quite serious and even carefully considered system of language study that becomes at once both innovative and interesting. This can be seen in the way that the three Egyptian alphabet documents are assiduously connected to the larger grammar book.

The Egyptian documents also seem to evidence two variant approaches with the arrival of the papyri operating as the *terminus pro quem* of the earlier method. In the former methodology, seen in the 1831 “pure language” document and in Phelps’s May 1835 letter, definitions and sounds seem to be produced first and then are matched to characters later. Perhaps it was believed that Joseph received the definitions and sounds through revelation and then in some kind of language study attempted to match the revealed information to actual characters. However, after the appearance of the papyri, when foreign characters were more readily available, there seems to have been an effort to draw from the characters first and create the definitions and sounds later. This appears to have been less successful and may explain why the Egyptian alphabet documents were eventually abandoned for the grammar book. In essence, putting the characters first did not work as well as putting the definitions and sounds first.⁴⁶ Although some of these observations and conclusions are more supportable or tentative than others, these documents are fascinating and will likely continue to prompt more study of Joseph Smith and others from the last half of 1835. Certainly this time period evinces a complex array of factors relating to Joseph’s interest in translating and learning ancient languages. It highlights a culture out of which this Egyptian interest

was ultimately fueled, and it brings to the foreground a crucial effort to receive knowledge concerning hidden languages.

Notes

1. The entry for October 29, 1835, reads: “Br Parish commenced writing for me at \$15.00 p[e]r month I paid him \$16.00 in advance out of the committee Store Br Parrish agrees to board himself, for which I agree to (allow him) four Dollars more p[e]r. month making \$19.00” (Spelling and punctuation retained from original). Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals*, Volume 1: 1832–1839, vol. 1 of the *Journals* series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2008), 76 (hereafter *JSP*, J1). Parrish (1803–77) was baptized into the Mormon Church in 1833, became part of the higher ecclesiastical hierarchical inner circle (Seventy), but later became disenfranchised with Joseph Smith’s financial ventures associated with the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society, a self-styled Mormon currency bank. This may have been at least partly due to Parrish’s perhaps unrealistic expectation that Joseph Smith, as a prophet, would not lead the bank to failure. According to Wilford Woodruff in January 1837, “President Joseph Smith jr declare in the presence of F Williams. D Whitmer. S. Smith. W. Parrish. & others in the Deposit Office that he had received that morning the Word of the Lord upon the subject of the Kirtland Safety Society he was alone in a room by himself & he had not ownly the voice of the spirit upon the subject but even an audable voice He did not tell us at that time what the LORD said upon the subject but remarked that if we would give heed to the commandments the Lord had given this morning all would be well. May the Lord bless Brother Joseph with all the Saints & support the above named institution & Protect it so that every weapon formed against it may be broaken & come to nought whie the Kirtland Safety Society shall become the greatest of all institutions on EARTH” (Spelling and punctuation retained from original). Dean C. Jessee, “The Kirtland Diary of Wilford Woodruff,” *BYU Studies* 12, no. 4 (Summer 1972): 381. For an excellent analysis of the

- failure of the Kirtland Safety Society see, Mark Lyman Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of the Joseph Smith Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009), 391–548. Parrish left the Mormon Church in 1838, became a Baptist preacher, and died in Emporia, Kansas, January 3, 1877.
2. *JSP*, J1:99–100.
 3. Parrish reported scribing the Book of Abraham for Joseph Smith February 5, 1838: “I have set by his side and penned down the translation of the Egyptian Hieroglyphicks as he claimed to receive it by direct inspiration of Heaven.” *Painesville Republican*, Vol. II. No. 14–15, Thursday, February 15, 1838. The Egyptian papyri along with four mummies was sold to Joseph Smith for the large sum of \$2,400 by one Michael Chandler, likely an opportunist and promoter, who had somehow heard that Joseph had translating abilities. See, Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling: A Cultural Biography of Mormonism’s Founder* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 285–86. For a more detailed account papyri acquisition, see H. Donl Peterson, *The Story of the Book of Abraham: Mummies, Manuscripts, and Mormonism* (Springville, UT: CFI, 2008), 1–8.
 4. The Pearl of Great Price was canonized in 1880. Unfortunately, the brief summative introduction above does not do justice to the complex history surrounding the Book of Abraham and the Pearl of Great Price. Therefore, for those desiring a general historical survey, see H. Donl Peterson, *The Pearl of Great Price: A History and Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987). Those desiring to learn more particulars about the historical origins of the Book of Abraham should know that this text has raised some difficult questions for some Mormons. Chief among them is the question of whether or not Joseph Smith could actually translate the ancient Egyptian language. This question emerged more prominently in 1967 when the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City returned eleven fragments of the Egyptian Papyri (that had once belonged to Joseph Smith) to the Church. For the traditional historical account of events leading up to the 1967 acquisition of the papyri, see Jay M. Todd, *The Saga of the Book of Abraham* (Salt Lake City: Deseret

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Book, 1969), 333–88. See also some important corrections to this account by John Gee in “Some Puzzles from the Joseph Smith Papyri,” *FARMS Review* 20, no. 1 (2008): 115–16. Upon examination it was determined that the papyri itself does not translate to the Book of Abraham (although one papyri fragment with a vignette does match one of the three illustrations, facsimiles, that accompany the Book of Abraham). To further complicate the issue, several of the surviving 1835 manuscripts contain characters from the newly acquired papyri in the left-margin with accompanying text from the Book of Abraham to its right, suggesting some kind of translation activity. Much ink has been spilled trying to either indict Joseph as a pious fraud or an outright deceiver, or to defend him as a bona fide prophet of God. For a general review of the arguments critical of Joseph, see Charles M. Larson, *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Grand Rapids, MI: Institute for Religious Research, 1992). For a non-LDS Egyptology scholar’s perspective of the papyri, see Robert K. Ritner, *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition* (Salt Lake City: The Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2011). For a review of the arguments in defense of Joseph, see John Gee, *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), and Gee’s response to Larson, “A Tragedy of Errors,” *FARMS Review* 4, no. 1 (1992): 93–119.

5. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 131.
6. This notion likely came from Joseph Smith’s translation activity with the Book of Mormon (1828–29) in which the text denotes “the language of the Egyptians” (1 Nephi 1:2; Mosiah 1:4) and “Reformed Egyptian” (Mormon 9:32).
7. Joseph Smith—History 1:63–65 in the Pearl of Great Price. Anthon’s initial positive assessment was certified in writing. But when Anthon learned that the characters came from golden plates that Joseph purportedly received from an angel, and that part of the plates could not be opened, Anthon retracted his support and tore up the written certificate.
8. Erin B. Jennings, “Charles Anthon—The Man Behind the Letters,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 32, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2012): 171–87.
9. Mormons now traditionally believe that Charles Anthon fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah 29: 11–12, which stipulated that the learned would not be able

- to read a sealed book. Joseph Smith's account reportedly has Anthon say, "I cannot read a sealed book." See also Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 64–66.
10. See Louis C. Zucker, "Joseph Smith as a Student of Hebrew," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1968): 41–55. As mentioned, Joseph's interest and experience concerning ancient languages primarily involved translation projects such as the Book of Mormon, Book of Moses, and the Book of Abraham. However, these projects greatly heightened Joseph's translating reputation for both good and ill. While Mormons looked upon these texts as sacred evidence of Joseph's prophetic ability, others were more suspicious. By the early 1840s in Nauvoo, Illinois, at least two traps were set to test Joseph's translation abilities. The first occurred in April (19th) 1842, when one Henry Caswall, an Anglican reverend, presented a Greek Psalter to Joseph and asked him to translate it. According to Caswall, with a large group of onlooking Mormons in the room, Joseph Smith said the characters were Egyptian. After Joseph's hasty exit, Caswall proceeded to inform the remaining Mormons that he (Caswall) knew the text was most certainly Greek and admonished them to see Joseph as a fraud and return to the Catholic faith. See Henry Caswall, *The City of the Mormons, or, Three Days at Nauvoo* (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1842), 35–37, 43. Almost exactly a year later, Joseph Smith was presented with six small bell-shaped plates that had been found in Kinderhook, Illinois. These plates contained engraved characters, which Joseph was invited to translate. Joseph Smith's journal indicates that he may have attempted to translate one of the plates. See Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 5:372. However, it later turned out the whole affair was a hoax. See Stanley B. Kimball, "Kinderhook Plates Brought to Joseph Smith Appear to Be a Nineteenth-Century Hoax," *Ensign*, August 1981, 66–74. Neither trap appears to have had any real staying power during the Nauvoo period, which may indicate that there was more to these incidences than what is currently known.
 11. Smith, *History of the Church* 2:236. This entry is not original to the 1835 journal of Joseph Smith under this date. W. W. Phelps likely inserted it when

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he edited the history in 1843. As far as the Book of Joseph, one other mention of it occurs in the Mormon periodical *Messenger and Advocate* vol. 2 (December 1835). Here Oliver Cowdery says, “The inner end of the same roll (Joseph’s record,) presents a representation of the judgment” (2:236). His further description identifies some of the figures in the scene as Jesus Christ, the twelve tribes of Israel, and even Michael the Archangel. Interestingly, Nauvoo Mormons provided Caswall, with a somewhat similar description when he viewed this same piece of papyri in 1842. See Caswall, *The City of the Mormons, or, Three Days at Nauvoo*, 23. These descriptions correspond to one of the eleven fragments of papyri (Joseph Smith Papyri III) returned to the Mormon Church in 1967, which has been found to be a vignette of the Book of the Dead chapter 125, the Egyptian judgment scene of the weighing of the heart. See Robert K. Ritner, *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition*, 205–7.

12. Commonly known as the “Kirtland Egyptian Papers.” Although most of the documents date to 1835–36 Kirtland, Ohio, several others date to 1842, Nauvoo, Illinois.
13. S. J. Wolfe, *Mummies in Nineteenth Century America* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2009), 7–34.
14. Wolfe, *Mummies in Nineteenth Century America*, 141, 173–200.
15. Scott Trafton, *Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth-Century American Egyptomania* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 7.
16. For more about Champollion, see the chapter by John Gee herein.
17. See Samuel Morris Brown, “Joseph (Smith) in Egypt: Babel, Hieroglyphs, and the Pure Language of Eden,” *Church History* 78, no. 1 (March 2009): 36–40. Brown deftly demonstrates a wider nineteenth century context to Joseph Smith’s interest in connecting ancient Egyptian with the pure language of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Except for a general acceptance of an early nineteenth century interest in pure language, the treatment here does not engage Brown since he does not deal with the systematic relationship between the documents or explore how the Abraham translation and Egyptian projects may relate to each other.

18. H. Donl Peterson, *The Story of the Book of Abraham: Mummies, Manuscripts, and Mormonism* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2008), 5–6. With inflation (as of 2013) this purchase would now be worth over \$53,000.
19. According to Peterson, “Michael H. Chandler had the eleven mummies in his possession in Philadelphia and was displaying them by April 3, 1833,” *The Story of the Book of Abraham*, 84. Peterson is here following a late 1835 letter (printed in the *Messenger and Advocate* [vol. 2, no. 3, 234–37]) in which Oliver Cowdery wrote to William Frye that Lebolo willed his collection to his nephew Chandler, who supposedly took possession of the Egyptian artifacts in Philadelphia in 1833. However, Peterson was never able to make a family connection between Lebolo and Chandler or find any evidence to place Chandler in Philadelphia. Brian Smith notes that he visited and searched hotel registries from Philadelphia to Pittsburg and retraced his “tracks back to Baltimore, Harrisburg, Lancaster, and Philadelphia and tried to find any evidence that Chandler was staying in any hotels in those cities. I could not find him anywhere. This has led me to wonder if Chandler was the person initially in charge of the display. If he owned the collection, why don’t we find him mentioned in any of the registries, newspaper ads, or articles about the mummies? We do not find evidence of his presence until Cleveland (and Kirtland), Ohio, in 1835.” “Mysteries of the Mummies: An Update on the Joseph Smith Collection,” interview with Brian L. Smith by Philip R. Webb, *Religious Studies Center Newsletter* 20, no. 2 (2006): 3.
20. Peterson, *The Story of the Book of Abraham*, 45.
21. Peterson, *The Story of the Book of Abraham*, 78–79.
22. Brian L. Smith, “Mysteries of the Mummies: An Update on the Joseph Smith Collection,” 3. Peterson, *The Story of the Book of Abraham*, 86–89.
23. Peterson believed that “five of the original mummies were sold in Philadelphia and Baltimore areas within the first four months after Chandler obtained them. Between September 1833, when he left Harrisburg, and February 1835, he sold two others, for that is the number he had when we next pick up his trail in Hudson, Ohio.” *The Story of the Book of Abraham*, 91. Although Chandler cannot be connected to the exhibitions in any of the eastern states, Brian Smith

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- still agrees that by the time the mummies reach Baltimore on July 20, 1833 “there were six mummies left in the collection.” Joseph Smith then locates another exhibition of the mummies in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on September 9, 1833, and yet another during October and November 1833, in Pittsburgh. At the end of 1835 and the beginning of 1834, the mummies were displayed in the Western Museum in Cincinnati and then in the Louisville Museum in Kentucky on January 10, 1834. It appears that two of the six mummies stayed behind in Kentucky having been sold to Junius Brutus Booth (father to John Wilkes Booth). The final four mummies were displayed in New Orleans April–May 1834. The whereabouts of the mummies from May 1834 until February 1835 (Ohio) remains unknown at present. For more details, see Brian L. Smith, “Mysteries of the Mummies: An Update on the Joseph Smith Collection,” 2–4.
24. For the full document, see “Sample of Pure Language,” ca. March 1832 in *Revelation Book 1*, 144; Church History Library. Some of these names can still be found in the Doctrine & Covenants. See D&C 78:20 and 95:17.
 25. W. W. Phelps to Sally Phelps, May 26, 1835, Church History Library.
 26. The source for characters on the first page of the EA documents is unknown. However, some of the characters on the second page are composite glyphs that when put together match characters from the papyri. The characters that follow the composite characters can be readily identified on the papyri.
 27. *History of the Church* 2:236. W. W. Phelps wrote this entry sometime in 1843 Nauvoo when he assisted Willard Richards in writing the *Manuscript History of the Church*, which was later imported into the *History of the Church*. For this entry, see *History*, 1838–1856, volume B-1 (September 1, 1834–November 2, 1838), 596. <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-b-1-1-september-1834-2-november-1838?locale=eng&p=50>.
 28. John Whitmer said, “Joseph the Seer saw these record[s] and by the revelation of Jesus Christ could translate these records.” See Bruce N. Westergren, ed., *From Historian to Dissident: The Book of John Whitmer* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 167. John Gee argues that the entire Book of Abraham was likely translated in July 1835. See Gee, *Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 4.

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29. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:238. W. W. Phelps also wrote this entry sometime in 1843 Nauvoo while assisting Willard Richards in writing the *Manuscript History of the Church*, which was later imported into the *History of the Church*. See *History*, 1838–1856, volume B-1 (September 1, 1834–November 2, 1838), 597, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-b-1-1-september-1834-2-november-1838?locale=eng&p=51>.
30. Quoting Lucy Mack Smith, Richard Bushman notes, “Joseph Smith was instructed ‘to take off a facsimile of the characters composing tthe alphabet which were called reformed egyptian Alphabetically and send them to all the learned men that he could find and ask them for the translation of the same.’” Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 64.
31. Bruce Van Orden, “Writing to Zion: The William W. Phelps Kirtland Letters (1835–1836),” *BYU Studies* 33, no. 3 (1993): 15. See also Brian M. Hauglid, *A Textual History of the Book of Abraham* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2010), 214.
32. Translation arguably took place at least by September 1835, since Oliver Cowdery used clear phraseology from Abraham 1:2 when he entered a December 18, 1833, patriarchal blessing in September 1835. “We diligently sought for the right of the fathers and the authority of the Holy Priesthood, and the power to administer the same; for we desired to be followers of righteousness and the possessors of greater knowledge, even the knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.” Patriarchal Blessings Book 1:15, Church History Library.
33. *JSP*, J1:67.
34. *JSP*, J1:67n47. See also John Gee, “Eyewitness, Hearsay, and Physical Evidence,” in *The Disciple as Witness: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 199.
35. *JSP*, J1:71.
36. *JSP*, J1:76.

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37. *JSP*, J1:107, 109, and 110, for the respective entries. Since Phelps inserted his entry about the July 1835 translation session in Nauvoo, November 19, 1835, represents the first translation day in the journal of Joseph Smith.
38. *JSP*, J1:1:110.
39. An exhaustive comparison and analysis of this phenomenon will be included in a forthcoming volume I am co-authoring with Robin Jensen.
40. This adds additional weight to the overall argument in favor of the primacy of the EAJS document. See Smith, “The Dependence of Abraham 1:1–3 on the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 29 (2009): 45.
41. Or whether something is “first seen” or “first discovered.”
42. Hugh W. Nibley, “The Meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers,” in *An Approach to the Book of Abraham* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2010), 557ff.
43. Christopher C. Smith argued Joseph Smith simultaneously dictated the Egyptian alphabet to Phelps and Cowdery, who (citing Nibley) wrote some of the orally dictated words differently. See “The Dependence of Abraham 1:1–3 on the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar,” 40.
44. This paragraph is in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery.
45. Joseph Smith may have also viewed the pursuit of the pure language as an attempt to repair the broken language of the Egyptians. See, Philip L. Barlow, “To Mend a Fractured Reality,” *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 33.
46. This could also explain why there are some words, parts, and degrees in the later pages of the Egyptian alphabet documents with no definitions or sounds.

