

## Moses 1/Book of Abraham/Abraham 3 Podcast notes

### Moses 1

1. Timeframe of the revelation – Moses 1.1 – some state this is after Exodus 3, prior to his return to Egypt to liberate the Israelites. Moses 1.25-26 are yet in the future, and Moses 1.17 is in the past, hence the assumption of the timeline of these events.
2. The Name of God – Moses 1.3
  - a. Lord God
  - b. Lord God Almighty
  - c. Endless
3. Who is speaking to Moses?
  - a. “Thou are in the similitude of mine Only Begotten” – Moses 1.6
  - b. Moses “my son” – Moses 1.7, 40
  - c. Divine Investiture<sup>1</sup>
  - d. An invitation to “relax” and allow for nuance in the text
4. Moses 1 is all about identity
  - a. Who is Moses?
  - b. Who are we?
  - c. What does this teach us about God? Humanity? What are its implications?
5. No other Gods – Moses 1.6
  - a. What does this mean in an LDS context?
  - b. What did this mean to Joseph Smith in 1830?
  - c. How does this relate to Exodus 20.3: **לֹא יִהְיֶה-לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל-פְּנֵי** “You will have no other elohim above/before my face.”
  - d. How can we view this passage and how would it apply in our day?
6. Moses is left to himself... he realizes he is nothing – Moses 1.9-10
  - a. Richard Turley “man is everything” – what does this mean?<sup>2</sup>
  - b. Mosiah 4.5 “your own nothingness”
  - c. Alma 26.12 “as to my strength I am weak... I am nothing”
  - d. Helaman 12.7-8 “O how great is the nothingness of the children of men”
7. How the vision may have worked – spiritual sight – Moses 1.11
  - a. JSH 1.20, 42 – Joseph’s experiences early in his life
  - b. D&C 76.12 and Philo Dibble’s recollections<sup>3</sup>
  - c. 2 Corinthians 12.3 “whether in or out of the body I cannot tell”
  - d. [The Ascension of Isaiah 6.6-15](#)
8. The reality of Satan “The Accuser” – 10 verses are given to this subject – Moses 1.12-22
  - a. The Adversary אָשָׁט – the accuser, often used with the definite article – see Job 1.6-9
9. “This thing” is not had among the children of men – Moses 1. 23

<sup>1</sup> See: [Jesus Christ: Father by Divine Investiture of Authority](#)

<sup>2</sup> Philosophies abound which belittle man's position on this earth. In the account of Moses, even he thought after seeing the creations of God that man is nothing, but God made it clear to him that man is everything. *Ensign*, May 1998, 84.

<sup>3</sup> See D&C 137.1 “Whether in the body or out I cannot tell” under [D&C 137-138 Quotes and Notes](#)

- a. I interpret this to mean the understanding of the Devil was not seen anciently the way it was in Joseph Smith's day.<sup>4</sup>
  - b. President Kimball: "In these days of sophistication and error men depersonalize not only God but the devil. Under this concept Satan is a myth, useful for keeping people straight in less enlightened days but outmoded in our educated age. Nothing is further from reality. Satan is very much a personal, individual spirit being, but without a mortal body. His desires to seal each of us his are no less ardent in wickedness than our Father's are in righteousness to attract us to his own eternal kingdom." (Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 35.)
  - c. The Devil teaches that there is no hell and no devil – 2 Nephi 28:22
  - d. The first time Satan is mentioned in the Bible is in the book of Chronicles (see 1 Chronicles 21:1), and **his name appears in only thirteen verses in the Old Testament, ten of which are in the book of Job**. The devil or devils are mentioned only four times in the Old Testament. (See Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 32:17; 2 Chronicles 11:15; Psalm 106:37.) There are, however, numerous references to the devil or devils in the New Testament. The book of Genesis records that it was the **serpent** who tempted Adam and Eve. (See Genesis 3:1-2.) But **the account in Genesis does not identify the serpent as Satan**. Most biblical scholars have concluded from this and from the few references to Satan in the Old Testament that the Jewish people acquired the idea of Satan at a late date, probably during the Babylonian exile (609-539 B.C.). This view of the Bible indicates a belief in the evolution of religious ideas rather than in direct revelation from God.<sup>5</sup> I see this issue as one that is rather nuanced, and hopefully this year in the Old Testament I will be able to shed light on how LDS readers can read these passages regarding Satan and how he was understood in the context of the writers of these texts and how Nephi understood the term.
10. God comes back to Moses – Moses 1.25
- a. His message: "This is my work and my glory" – a purpose statement – Moses 1.39
  - b. Many heavens – Moses 1.37
  - c. "By the word of my power I created them, which is mine Only Begotten" – Moses 1.32
  - d. Secrecy! – Moses 1.42
    - i. Hugh Nibley has frequently emphasized the importance of secrecy in early Christianity, showing that there were **levels of esoteric and exoteric doctrine** and ritual in the structure of the New Testament church. A recent collection of essays entitled *Secrecy in Religions* has shown that secrecy is an important component in all religions. Speaking of Christianity specifically, Kees Bolle, writes, "It does not take much of an effort to find examples for the notion of secrecy in Christianity, and the examples do not occur on the fringes of the doctrine of God's revelation; **rather they point to the center**." Nibley's treatment of secrecy in early Christianity is valuable and persuasive.<sup>6</sup>
    - ii. Nibley gives more insight into the notion of secrecy: Part of the book's appeal is its necessary secrecy, "revealed to the Eons in the End-time." It is a secret, a

<sup>4</sup> Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth*, Princeton University Press, 1987.

<sup>5</sup> H. Donl Peterson, *Pearl of Great Price: A History and Commentary*.

<sup>6</sup> Nibley, *Mormonism in Early Christianity*, foreword.

**special writing, only for the initiates.** "It is given to you to write it down," says the Lord to John, "and it must be put in a safe place.' Then he said to me, 'Cursed shall be whoever gives it away as a gift or in return for food, drink, clothing, or anything of that nature.'" Then he handed the *mysterion* to John and immediately vanished. Such writings as are made known are carefully rationed: "Some things thou shalt publish, and some thou shalt deliver in secret to the wise"; or, in another Ezra text, "These words shalt thou publish openly, but those thou shalt hide," twenty-four books being published and seventy withheld. **The tradition of secrecy begins with Enoch:** When Enoch found the Book of Adam and read it, "he knew that the human race would not be able to receive it. So he hid it again, and it remained hidden until Noah." **But the practice began with Adam, who received a golden book from Michael and "hid it in the crevice of a rock."** The Torah itself was buried when Israel sinned, to be dug up in later times. The Copper Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls shows us how in times of dire peril all those sacred things that had been dedicated, including the holy writings, were buried for safety, a practice clearly set forth in the Book of Mormon. (Helaman 13:18-20.) From early Babylonian sources comes the report of Berossus, that Kronus ordered Xisuthros (Noah) "to inscribe in writing the beginning, middle, and end of everything, and to bury the records in the city of Sippar," to be exhumed after the Flood.<sup>7</sup>

### The Book of Abraham – History, criticisms, and responses

1. Provenance of the text of the JSP
  - a. Antonio Lebolo plundered several tombs in Thebes in southern Egypt. Among the things he kept were 11 mummies. These mummies later came into the care of Michael Chandler, who brought them to Kirtland.
  - b. We paid \$2400 and bought the mummies and texts in July 1835. The Church purchased four mummies and five papyrus documents including two or more rolls.<sup>8</sup>
2. July and Oct-Nov 1835 Joseph works on the text to translate Abraham.
  - a. Joseph left to visit the Saints in Michigan in August 1835.
  - b. The book of Abraham was first published in 1842 and was canonized as part of the Pearl of Great Price in 1880. The book originated with Egyptian papyri that Joseph Smith translated beginning in 1835.<sup>9</sup>
3. Method of translation
  - a. Despite much speculation, the process Joseph Smith used to translate the Book of Abraham is unknown.<sup>10</sup> We have no record of Joseph Smith himself discussing his

<sup>7</sup> Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, part 2: A strange thing in the land: The return of the book of Enoch. See also: 4 Ezra 14.45-46; 4 Ezra 14.6, 46.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Smith, prophet of the church, examined the several papyrus rolls and, after commencing "the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics," said that "one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt, etc." In early July of 1835, Joseph Coe, Simeon Andrews, Joseph Smith, and others paid Chandler \$2400 for four mummies and at least five papyrus documents, including two or more rolls. John Gee, [A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri, Maxwell Institute Publications, 2000](#), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> [Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham, Gospel Topics.](#)

<sup>10</sup> John Gee, [An Introduction to the Book of Abraham](#), RSC/BYU Deseret Book, 2017, p. 15.

methods of translation. Warren Parrish, one of the scribes involved in the translation during late 1835, gave this description, “I have set [sic] by his side and penned down the translation of the Egyptian Hieroglyphicks [sic] as he claimed to receive it by direct inspiration of Heaven.”<sup>11</sup>

- b. Translation methods
  - i. Early BOM translation: interpreters
  - ii. Later (after Sep. 22, 1828) he uses a seer stone
  - iii. Later Joseph needs no objects by which to practice seership. During his Bible translation of 1830-33 he generally does not use either original language manuscripts nor seeric devices.
- c. Was this a direct translation from the rolls? Was this received by direct revelation? Warren Parrish quote gives this as a possible “direct revelation” translation, but my take is that Joseph Smith is translating this text with his prophetic ability. (See Warren Parrish quotation above). Gee gives this take on the translation process: “So, given Joseph Smith’s development as a translator and the historical time period when the translation of the Book of Abraham occurred, we would expect that Joseph Smith would translate simply by receiving inspiration- without the Urim and Thummim- and dictating the translation to a scribe, covering between one and seventeen pages at a time. Use of a grammar and a dictionary seems to have been foreign to his methods until after he studied Hebrew in 1836. What little we know of the translation of the Book of Abraham seems to fit this pattern.”<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. Joseph gets Hebrew grammar books from Oliver

- a. The first time Joseph uses grammar books or dictionaries is in late 1835 and 1836, after much of his work on Abraham is completed.<sup>13</sup>
- b. After receiving these grammar books, Joseph begins studying Hebrew under the direction of Joshua Seixas.
- c. The argument that Joseph is working through the JSP in 1835 with knowledge of Hebrew seems unfounded. Joshua Seixas does come to Kirtland to teach Hebrew to the Saints in early 1836, in the busy months prior to the Kirtland temple dedication. Matt Grey contends that Joseph’s understanding of Hebrew influenced his work in the translation of Abraham 4.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Warren Parrish, letter to the editor, *Painesville Republican*, 15 February 1838, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Gee, *Introduction*, p. 22.

<sup>13</sup> Gee, *An Introduction*, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> [Matt Grey interview, LDS Perspectives, August 23, 2017](#), emphasis added. He states:

I think the most profound impact that his Hebrew studies had on the translation of Abraham was in the Abrahamic creation account in Abraham Chapters 4 and 5. Joseph knew before studying Hebrew that the Book of Abraham would contain creation material. In **early 1842, when he revisited** — or at least **finalized** — the Abrahamic creation account, it seems that he drew heavily upon the King James Version of Genesis 1–2. Then at key moments, he altered the KJV wording and added insights he received in his Hebrew class, such as the plurality of Gods as a reflection of his translation of the Hebrew word “*elohim*.” All throughout the Abraham creation story, instead of using the traditional God created or God said, Joseph translated these passages as they the *Gods created* or they *the Gods said*. I think that’s a really important example of Joseph Smith’s Hebrew insights informing his translation. Another example is in his use of the Hebrew word “*bara*,” which traditionally is

5. Late 1841 this was put out in three installments and published in England.
6. We don't have all of what Joseph Smith translated.
7. Abraham was published this in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842.
8. Franklin D. Richards has this published as the Pearl of Great Price in 1851.
9. PoGP was canonized in 1879-1880.
10. This (Abraham 3.19-28) contains the best account of the Pre-Earth Life.
11. It is not until 1880 that the Church gets the account of the PEL from PFGP
12. So the Church knew that Joseph taught about the pre-earth life, but did not have the text of Abraham generally until canonization took place.
13. Emma sells the mummies after Lucy Mack Smith dies to Abel Coombs – cover provenance from Gee, p. 2.
  - a. **Provenance** Coombs split up the papyri. Some he sold to St. Louis Museum, including 2 of the rolls and 2 of the mummies, and some of the mounted fragments he kept. The St. Louis museum sold the rolls and mummies to the Wood Museum in Chicago. The Wood Museum burned down in the Chicago Fire of 1871, and presumably the papyri and mummies were destroyed with it. The mounted fragments passed from Abel Coombs to the hands of Edward and Alice Heusser. In 1918 Alice Heusser offered the papyri to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. At the time, the museum was not interested. In 1947 Ludlow Bull, the associate curator of the Department of Egyptian Art, purchased the papyri for the Metropolitan Museum from Edward Heusser. On 27 November 1967 the Metropolitan Museum presented the fragments of the papyri to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Church published the papyri two months later in the *Improvement Era*; 10 the current numbering system of the papyri derives from this publication. To the disappointment of many, while these remaining fragments contained the original drawing for Facsimile 1, they were not the portion of the papyri that contained the text of the Book of Abraham.<sup>15</sup>
14. We have the fragments, we DO NOT have the rolls
15. Why is the Book of Abraham **not on the papyri** discovered from the Metropolitan Museum of Art?
  - a. **The Missing Papyrus Theory**
    - i. The simple answer to this question is that we do not have the missing document, as it was destroyed in the Chicago Fire of 1871.<sup>16</sup> Gee has determined that as much as 41 feet of the JSP are missing. The main argument put forth by Tanner in 1967 that JSP is not the Book of Abraham needs to be dealt with by understanding that the fragments from the Metropolitan Museum of Art were not part of the scrolls that made up the Book of Abraham. The pieces recovered in 1967 are part of a text known as **“The Book of Breathings,”**

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translated simply as “to create.” But Joseph, using a more obscure meaning of the word “*bara*,” decided instead to translate that word with the idea of forming pre-existing materials. Therefore, **in the Abraham creation account there is a plurality of Gods forming pre-existing materials**, rather than the traditional notion of God creating the heavens and the earth. In these instances **we see Joseph’s Hebrew studies impacting his work as a translator in the Book of Abraham.**

<sup>15</sup> Gee, *A Guide*, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> See: [The Missing Papyrus Theory](#), Feb. 22, 2017.

a text which was believed by those who wrote them in Egypt to be essential for the deceased to traverse the expanse in the afterlife and enter into their resurrected state. **Hugh Nibley addresses this type of text** in his book *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*. Addressing the function of these texts, Nibley writes: "They were temple texts used in the performance of ordinances, "an inventory of the holiest mysteries," the saving ordinances, which were "carried out or witnessed" by both the living and the dead."<sup>17</sup> He further explains that "The way of the soul in the other world corresponds to the steps in an earthly initiation through which the hierophant had to pass in the temple during the years of his training." "How can a mortuary ritual be an initiatory ritual?" asks Professor Brandon, and assures us in reply that "the paradox disappears on analysis," since "a mortuary ritual may serve to initiate ... into a new form of life." In fact, **an Egyptian word for burial (*bs*) means "to initiate one into the mysteries."** As his ultimate objective, **the dead requests "permission to enter into the Holy of Holies of the Temple of Heliopolis,"** on the grounds that as an "Elder" he has been initiated into the deepest secrets of the Temple.<sup>18</sup>

#### b. The Revealed Text/Catalyst Theory

- i. This theory leaves open the possibility that the Book of Abraham *was not* on the papyri; he received the text by revelation, with the papyri acting as a catalyst. This is a possibility because Joseph used the word "translation" to mean several things, including the process of receiving pure revelation. (Joseph Smith's revelations call his revision of the Bible a "translation" ([D&C 73:4](#); [76:15](#); [90:13](#); [94:10](#); [124:89](#)), even though he didn't use any Hebrew or Greek manuscripts. Also, [D&C 7](#): is a revealed translation of a lost record written by the Apostle John.)<sup>19</sup>

#### c. The Jewish Redaction Theory

- i. Some people assume that if the documents [JSP] are funerary they cannot contain anything else. **Some Book of the Dead papyri, however, do contain other texts. Just because the preserved sections of the Joseph Smith Papyri are funerary in nature does not mean that they could not have had other texts, either on the verso or on missing sections of the rolls.**<sup>20</sup> Jews in antiquity repackaged, or recontextualized stories and motifs from neighboring cultures, using them for their own theological purposes. The story of the rich man and Lazarus is an example of a recontextualized Egyptian story that was recontextualized and told by Jesus to his Jewish hearers, conveying a theological message.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, Deseret Book, 2005, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13-14, emphasis added.

<sup>19</sup> [The Catalyst Theory](#), February 22, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> John Gee, "Eyewitness, Hearsay, and Physical Evidence of the Joseph Smith Papyri," *The Disciple As Witness: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, eds., Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo: FARMS, 2000). See: [The Jewish Redaction Theory](#), February, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> [Egyptian Stories Recontextualized in Scripture](#), March 2018.

- ii. The scrolls, or fragments that we have today, are not dated to Abraham's day, rather from around the 200's BCE. Remember that copies of copies could have (and were) made anciently and this is how texts were circulated in antiquity.
  - iii. How did this text end up in Thebes? Was this even possible? There were Jews in Egypt in the second century. They even built temples, for example, the temple in Elephantine was operational at this time (cite the source).
  - iv. Were texts circulated in 200's BCE in Jewish circles? Yes, the Jews even constructed a temple in Leontopolis between 181-170 BCE.<sup>22</sup> The Jews also constructed a temple in Egypt at Elephantine around 600 BCE, which was destroyed in 410 BCE.<sup>23</sup>
- d. The Inspired Pseudepigraphon Theory
- i. Perhaps the writings of Abraham could be understood, not as a description of what Abraham literally wrote, but instead as a description of what Abraham would have written if given the chance. In producing this inspired pseudepigraphon, Joseph Smith was the revelatory conduit for this scriptural text. In terms of genre, this, in some ways, places the Book of Abraham among the many other pseudepigraphal sources in the biblical canon.<sup>24</sup>

19. Does evidence exist that this stuff is happening in 1900 BCE?

20. Time periods to know in talking about this text: 19th century, 200 BCE, 1900 BCE

21. Doctrines that are Key: a) Pre-Earth Life, b) The Council of the Gods/Heavenly Council, c) Obedience, d) Covenants, e) Creation account, f) Abraham and the key to priesthood [stripped from much of the Genesis narrative].

### A Look at the text of Abraham 3

1. Abraham had the Urim and Thummim
2. The great star is Kolob – Abraham 3.3
  - a. "Kolob" may be related to *qalb*: Joseph Smith says that this is "Kolob, signifying the first creation, nearest to the celestial, or the residence of God." To the ancient Egyptians, this was symbolic of God, endowed with the primeval creative force, seated at the center of the universe. The name Kolob is right at home in this context. The word most likely derives from the common Semitic root \*QLB, which has the basic meaning of "heart, center, middle." In fact, the Arabic form of this word, *qalb*, forms part of the Arabic names of several of the brightest stars in the sky including Antares, Regulus, and Canopus.<sup>25</sup>
3. The reckoning of the times increases until "thou come nigh unto Kolob" – Abr. 3.9
4. Abraham spoke with God "face to face" – Abr. 3.11

<sup>22</sup> Gee, *A Guide*, p. 26.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Rosenberg, *The Jewish Temple at Elephantine*, *Near Eastern Archaeology*, March, 2004, Vol. 67, No. 1, p. 4-13.

<sup>24</sup> [Inspired Pseudepigraphon](#), February, 2017. See: [Layers of Pseudepigraphy- Authorship Issues in the Epistles, November 2019](#). See also: David Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament*, p. 172-173.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Dennis Rhodes, [The Book of Abraham: Divinely Inspired Scripture](#), *Farms Review of Books*, Vol. 4, 1992.

5. God put his hands on Abraham's eyes – Abr. 3.12
6. Abraham sees the stars
  - a. Shineah
  - b. Kokob
    - i. Kokab = "star" in Hebrew. כּוֹכַב.<sup>26</sup>
  - c. Olea
    - i. Olea, a name for "moon," may be a variant for the Hebrew word for moon, *yau-ra-akh* יָרֵחַ.<sup>27</sup>
  - d. Kokaubeam
    - i. This is just "kokab" in the plural in Hebrew: כּוֹכָבִים
7. Kolob is the greatest of all the stars – Abr. 3.16
8. The transition verse, going from stars to humans "as also" – Abr. 3.18
9. These spirits are "gnolaum," eternal – עולם pronounced "olam" today.<sup>28</sup>
10. The Lord is the most intelligent of all of these spirits – Abr. 3.19
  - a. He is more intelligent than all the spirits combined!<sup>29</sup>
11. Pre-earth doctrine – Abr. 3.22-28

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<sup>26</sup> [Strong's H3556](#).

<sup>27</sup> See: [Strong's H3394](#).

<sup>28</sup> See: [Strong's H5769](#).

<sup>29</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, Ensign, November, 1981, p. 8.