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 One of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri.

The Prophet Joseph Smith examined the writings found with the mummies and discovered knowledge of the true God among . . .

NESIKHONSU'S BURIAL SCROLLS

by Carma de Jong Anderson*

Princess Nesikhonsu¹ lies dying. But she smiles with the serenity of righteous royalty. She has been "true," "faithful," and will surely be declared "blessed" at her elegant funeral; and Khonsu, the moon god, will accept her! Much money has been expended to have copies made of priestly scrolls, and her beautiful name is written all through the temple rites and personal history to be included in her coffin. She is satisfied, for every effort has been made to prepare her for a glorious new life as an "Osiris."²

Heat of day floats through the latticed window, and the bright light is painful to her faded eyes. She closes them in peace, certain that her body will be guarded by the priests through all future time.

It was fortunate that Nesikhonsu did not know the future. Her sumptuous little tomb had hardly achieved a respectable layer of dust when marauders began their usual desecration near her in the Valley of the Kings. Priests came secretly and hurriedly moved only the essential contents of her mummy in its wooden coffin to the catacombs of Thebes, where professional grave robbers could not harm her body. Abandoned for the plunderers were all her heavy treasure: jewels, carvings, and gold. Only

(For Course 7, lesson of August 11, "The Pearl of Great Price is a Record"; for Course 9, lesson of August 18, "Joseph Smith—The Great Latter-day Prophet"; for Course 11, lesson of August 18, "Israel and Idol Worship"; for Course 19, lesson of July 21, "Latter-day Saint Contributions to Scripture"; and of general interest.)
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¹Princess Nesikhonsu. Freely adapted for this article from the longer name, something like *Nesikhonsu*, translated from Egyptian hieroglyphics. This was on the fragment of hieratic papyrus belonging to Joseph Smith, which was found in Salt Lake City (see "Fragment Found in Salt Lake City," part of the article "Prolegomena To Any Study of the Book of Abraham," by Hugh Nibley; BYU Studies, Vol. VIII, No. 2, page 171). According to Dr. Nibley, the princess' actual given name was *Nesikhonsu*; she was a *Nesikhonsu*. Her mummy was one of the four acquired by Joseph Smith in 1835 for the ritual scrolls found with the remains. These scrolls contained documents from which the Prophet translated much of the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price.
²Like all mummies, Nesikhonsu was also given the name "Osiris," after the great savior-god Osiris. This signified that she, too, would be resurrected as a god.

THE INSTRUCTOR
 See: Asmikhonsu
 Mus. Egypt. Louv. Nibley

the scrolls in the ritual wrappings of her arms went with her. Deep underground through secret tunnels they carried Nesikhonsu and hid her dried remains with hundreds of other mummies stacked up along the darkened passageways.

Ages later,³ when grave robbers discovered the catacombs, the Princess and ten other mummies went traveling over Europe, then to America to make money for sideshows and unfeeling men. Even Joseph Smith, who took Nesikhonsu, didn't want the mummy, but she brought to him and to the modern world a miraculous treasure. Among the scrolls wrapped in her resin-soaked burial linens she carried the words of the *true God*, as revealed to Abraham (the honored guest of Pharaoh) and to Joseph, Abraham's great-grandson (a ruler in Egypt).

By the time of Egypt's Nineteenth Dynasty, about 1300 B.C., there was considerable literary ignorance among the Pharaohs and their families. After the Twenty-first Dynasty they rarely could read the documents for burial, or anything else! The priests simply prescribed what should be included in a sarcophagus, and then the royal person's name was inserted in appropriate places throughout the texts and pictures (which at times were not related to each other). If the royal name was too long for the allotted space, it was simply shortened, or if too short, it was lengthened by complimentary additives.

Scribes were paid large sums of money to make copies of scrolls owned by the priests, and often garbled them with mixed-up stories, wrong sequences, even totally backward renderings, for they knew that royalty would never be the wiser! Dr. Hugh Nibley⁴ maintains, however, that the scribe who copied Nesikhonsu's scrolls (those just given to the Church by the Metropolitan Museum)⁵ evidently knew very well what he was copying, though they were prepared hundreds of years after the time when Abraham first wrote his original records.

Papyrus was used in Egypt for scroll paper since at least 3000 B.C. Later it was in common use by the Greeks and all the civilized people around the

³The Nesikhonsu scrolls were probably copies made of copies, and were buried at ~~least 1000 years after~~ ~~the originals~~ were written. They are estimated to have been buried about 980-945 B.C. They were unearthed, along with the mummies, in the early nineteenth century, by Antonio Lebolo, an Italian adventurer, and later sold to an uncle of Mr. Chandler. They were willed to Mr. Chandler, who brought them to Joseph Smith.

⁴Hugh W. Nibley is a professor of history and religion at Brigham Young University. Professor Nibley gave much of the information in this article by interview.

⁵Dr. Aziz S. Atiya, retired director of the University of Utah Middle East Center, discovered some of the scrolls translated by Joseph Smith (others had been destroyed), along with a personal history of the princess in hieratic script and material from the Book of the Dead, which was commonly included in Egyptian sarcophagi. These documents were lying in a back room of the Metropolitan Museum. Although not a Mormon himself, Dr. Atiya was elated with his find, notified museum authorities, and was told by museum director Dr. Thomas F. F. Hoving that they would be made available to the Church at no charge. President N. Eldon Tanner accepted the manuscripts on November 27, 1967. They are now being studied at BYU.

Mediterranean, but only in North Africa were the air and earth dry enough to preserve it for millennia. Through slow, laborious processes the papyrus reeds, from three to 10 feet long, were gathered from swampy areas near rivers and were split to remove the pith. This soft interior of the reeds was cut into thin strips and laid out horizontally. Then another layer of strips was pressed crosswise on top of them, with glue made from wheat or from the muddy, gelatinous water of the Nile. This made a strong, bendable paper out of an inexpensive material. By gluing individual sheets together, long scrolls could be made. According to Kenyon, some Egyptian liturgical scrolls that still exist are 50 feet long; some have reached 133 feet.

Papyrus would take paint or ink very well; this was applied with a pointed reed dipped in a little water pot and then into a hard cake of colored powder. A scribe often used a most convenient arrangement of his equipment to accompany the Pharaoh, priest, or businessman who dictated to him. This was a palette containing red and black color, which hung on the right side of his chest and was attached to a cord around his neck, with a tiny water pot and writing reed which hung on the left side of his chest. (See picture in box.)

Red and black inks alone were employed, which produced on a document almost a "visual stereo" effect. The *rubrics*, or red writings, were commentaries and instructions, and the *medew netcher* [Egyptian: *mdw ntr*] were the holy words written in black.

Hieroglyphic picture writing was so difficult to master, even for Egyptians, that customarily only the priests tried it. They and their scribes found it necessary to "write" the pictures much faster, so a less elaborate form was developed. This hieratic (holy writing) often became virtually unreadable, like the impatient handwriting of many a scholar today!

Numerous factories of papyri supplied a huge publishing house in Egypt. Priests were trained in this "House of Life" in all forms of science and art, and they produced research and commentary prolifically. Enormous knowledge of mathematics and physical laws was possessed by Egyptian scholars, and according to ancient tradition some of it was acquired from Abraham, who learned it from the greatest teacher—the Lord. (See Abraham 1:31; 3.)

Abraham's relatives did not welcome his preaching about the true God, Jehovah. They followed the Egyptian religion of idolatry which covered the land of Ur, and evidently they arranged to have Abraham killed by the common practice of human sacri-

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NESIKHONSU'S BURIAL SCROLLS (Concluded from preceding page.)

fi. But Jehovah (the Spirit of Jesus Christ) came personally to save the prophet's life in response to his prayers for help. The Lord shattered the altar and idols set up and killed the wicked priest of Elkenah, causing even far-away Pharaoh to mourn at the setback his false religion had met in Chaldea.

The Book of Abraham provides us with an intimate view of an enthusiastic personality whose life history has appeal for all of us. Abraham greatly enlarged his capacities and understanding through the Lord's personal tutoring (see Abraham 3), and he received the holy priesthood because he had desired and sought it. The Lord gave him advanced knowledge of physics and astronomy, which the Egyptians immediately recognized as the greatest power in the world. They coveted Abraham's priesthood, for they had mimicked it in their religion since the earliest days when Ham's descendants first settled Egypt (see Abraham 1:23:26); but Abraham was not allowed to share the priesthood with them.

In addition to the ancient records of the creation originating with Noah and Adam, the "patriarchs," Abraham possessed the Urim and Thummim. (See Abraham 3:1.) His writings expose valuable doc-

trines. In the revelations to Abraham himself we see the panorama of the war in heaven and the rebellion of Lucifer; the choice of our Savior and the plan of glory for those who obey the gospel; the premortal existence of all our spirits and the natural gradation of our abilities; and the appointment of our prophets in councils before this world existed. We see better the purpose of the earth's creation through our eternal progress, and we glimpse the magnitude of God's innumerable creations and his carefully governed systems of stars. All this information is contained in only five tiny chapters of scripture, a miracle of condensation!

With the mummies secured by the Church in 1835 were some Arabic fragments, Nesikhonsu's hieratic documents, and the copies of precious writings from Joseph and Abraham, which were only partially translated by Joseph Smith from hieroglyphics. That one of the three drawings in the Pearl of Great Price (Abraham's escape from sacrifice) should come back into the hands of the Church in such an unexpected manner gives hope that other fragments of the scrolls once held by Joseph Smith will also come to light.

Library File Reference: PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

HIEROGLYPHIC



ji *Cobra means to say the words or to be recited.*

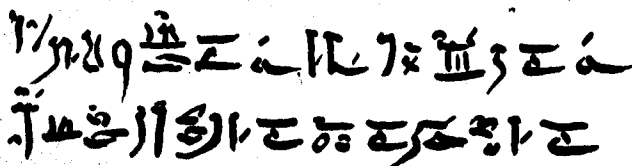


ir *Means to do.*
 st *Means the seat; when put below the eye symbol it makes the eye mean the god Osiris, who was the Egyptian Savior with power for his own and everyone's resurrection.*



sesh *Means to write; this scribe's equipment shows in detail the ink palette, water pot, and reed holder, with cord to hang around the scribe's neck.*

HIERATIC



These are two lines taken at random from Nesikhonsu's burial document, showing the faster form of writing in pictures.



Drawing of head of a princess, painted limestone, XVIII Dynasty, Amarna, approximately 1340 B. C., now in the Louvre. Note the typical symbol of royalty, the hank of hair bound on the side.