

The ANTHON TRANSCRIPT

An Evidence of the Truth of the Prophet's Account of the Origin of the Book of Mormon

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III. THE CORROBORATIVE EVIDENCES OF THE SERABIT INSCRIPTIONS, THE PLATES OF DARIUS, AND THE INSCRIPTIONS OF BYBLOS

THE Book of Mormon repeatedly refers to the existence and contents of certain brass plates containing the engraved record of the Books of Moses, and the history of Israel down to the times of the nineteenth king of Judah.¹ These, like the subsequent plates engraved by Nephi and his descendants were in a variant form of Egyptian script.² It is probable that the engravings were alike in form in both sets of plates.³

The nature of that script, and its kinship to Egyptian, have been set forth pictorially in the preceding articles.⁴

There remain for demonstration three propositions: That records were in fact engraved in ancient times upon metal plates; that so engraved they could endure the rigors of the passage of centuries and still be legible; and lastly, that there is a kinship between the written Hebrew and Egyptian languages, traceable, at least as far back as the time of Moses.

There was in use in ancient Israel a kind of brass more valuable than gold.⁵ It was an alloy of copper and gold, so brilliant in lustre that it was commonly used for mirrors and carried about by Israelitish women even in the days of the Exodus.⁶ By requisitioning these mirrors Moses furnished the tabernacle with its laver.⁷ Their use continued even down to the days of Paul, as the familiar expression, "For now we see through a glass darkly,"⁸ and other instances thoroughly attest.⁹

As late as Maccabean times, brass plates were used for transmission of official messages of paramount importance. Thus, in the case of the negotiations for a league of friendship between nations, described in I

Macc. 14:17, the Roman message to Simon was written "in tables of brass."

An explicit commandment to engrave a biblical record in brass occurs in Isaiah 8:1, where the Hebrew text reads, "Take thee a great *Gillayon* [Roll in King James version] and write in it." The best modern criticism recognizes this as a direction to Isaiah to engrave the words of the prophecy on brass. Thus Dr. Adam Clarke, celebrated biblical scholar, wrote in his commentary on this passage:

According to this derivation, *gillayon* is not a roll or volume, but may well signify a polished tablet of metal, such as was anciently used for a mirror. . . . The mirrors of the Israelitish women were made of brass, finely polished (Ex. 38:8) . . . The prophet is commanded to take a mirror, or brazen polished table, not like these little hand mirrors; but a large one; large enough for him to engrave upon it in deep and lasting characters, with a workman's tool, the prophecy which he was to deliver.

If there were any doubt of the historical accuracy of the foregoing position, it was set at rest by the discovery within the last decade, and more than one hundred years after the publication of the Book of Mormon, of the engraved metal plates of Darius the Great, found where they were buried in the sixth century before Christ, in cemented boxes in the corners of the audience palace at Persepolis.

These plates (Fig. 1) have settled forever two of the fundamental inquiries above noted. It is now indisputable that engraved plates made of a hard alloy of gold were used many centuries before Christ for perpetuation of important records. And it is settled that such engraved plates, sealed in cemented boxes and committed to the earth, may remain easily legible after the lapse of more than twenty-five centuries. The plates of Darius, now in possession of the University of Chicago, engraved in cuneiform characters in three tongues (Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian) are the demonstration of the fact.

There remains for examination only the question of the kinship of the written Egyptian and Hebrew languages, a subject on which there has been much recent research.

The Prophet's proclamation of an Israelitish record engraved on brass plates in Egyptian characters, in the face of the well-known devotion of the Jews to the "holy tongue" evoked jeers from learned and unlearned alike.⁷ They are no longer heard in informed quarters. A century of progress in knowledge of ancient epigraphy has not only silenced those who ridiculed the notion of a record engraved on plates of metal, but has lent to faith in a connected Hebrew-Egyptian system of writing the cumulative assurance of strong demonstrative proofs. Paramount among these are the inscriptions found at Serabit el-Khadim.

It has long been known that there were mysterious petroglyphs in the wilderness of Sinai. Cosmas Indicopleustes noticed them as early as 518 A. D.⁸ and left a Greek record of his visit. The Greek remained untranslated until committed to Latin in 1707 by Montfaucon.⁹ No attempt was made to publish the characters until in 1830, when Mr. G. F. Gray produced one hundred seventy-seven of them in Volume 2, Part I, of the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*. The German professor E. F. F. Beer collected and published a large number of the inscriptions in 1840.¹⁰ Dr. Beer, the friend and collaborator of the celebrated Hebraist, Gesenius, set forth in his work sixteen engraved plates, with a designation of the Hebrew equivalents of the selected characters.

IN 1851, Dr. Charles Forster published his ingenious treatise *The One Primeval Language*¹⁰ with extensive reproductions of the characters copied from the rocks of Sinai, and his conclusion that they were Hebrew in sense and Egyptian in form.

The older investigations seem to have been forgotten; for a great stir of surprise surrounded Dr. Wm. Matthew Flinders Petrie's report of his discoveries in Sinai in 1904-05. With his wife, Dr. Petrie had gone into the wilderness of Sinai

⁷See Nutting's pamphlet *Why I Could Never be a Mormon*; and Kurtz, *Textbook of Church History*, Mitau, 1849 (Bomberger's Translation, Philadelphia, 1860, p. 412).

⁸Cosmas of Alexandria, *Apud Collect.*, Nov. Pat. Bk. 2, p. 140.

⁹Beer, E. F. F., *Studia Asiatica*, Lipsiae, 1840.

¹⁰Forster, Charles, *The One Primeval Language*, London, 1851.

¹1 Nephi 3:1-4, 19-20; 5:10-14.

²2 Nephi 1:2; Mosiah 1:4.

³*The Improvement Era*, January and February, 1942.

⁴Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities*, B XI, ch. V, v. 2 (and footnote, Whiston's Edition).

⁵Exodus 38:8.

⁶1 Cor. 13:12; II Cor. 3:18; *Sirach* 12:11; *Wisdom* 7:26; Smith, *Smaller Bible Dictionary*, p. 194; Clarke, A., *Commentary on Isaiah* 8:1.

to recover hieroglyphic inscriptions. At Serabit, Mrs. Petrie, by the merest chance, noticed near an ancient Egyptian mine a fragment of rock with writing on it which neither she nor her husband could immediately identify.

Dr. Petrie's attention was arrested, and with his men he proceeded to make a careful search for additional texts in the same characters. In turning over some large slabs of rock fallen from the face of the cliffs, eight tablets were found, which Dr. Petrie reports were "roughly cut, with broad grooves around them to isolate them, in the general form of an Egyptian round headed tablet."¹¹ He was unable to recognize the characters immediately as being written in any form of Egyptian known to him, although he noted an evident "mixture of Egyptian hieroglyphs." Upon these finds Dr. Petrie concluded that he had found "a definite system, not merely a scribbling made in ignorant imitation of Egyptian writing," and dated the writing at least as far back as the time of Moses. These finds, he added, "finally disprove the hypothesis that the Israelites, who came through this region into Egypt and passed back again, could not have used writing." And again he says, "Here we have common Syrian laborers possessing a script which other Semitic peoples of this region must be credited with knowing."¹²

Dr. Petrie's finds remained almost unnoticed until 1916, when Dr. Alan H. Gardiner proposed the theory that these inscriptions indicated a pictorial

alphabet built on the principle of acrophony, which was the missing link between the Egyptian hieroglyphs and the Phoenician alphabets.¹³

A discussion instantly began which has now reached vast proportions. All of Petrie's other discoveries in Sinai have been dwarfed by the significance of the Serabit finds. Dr. Frederick Kenyon has called them "the real discovery of importance in the Sinai Peninsula."¹⁴

Dr. Gardner and Dr. T. E. Peet published a work *Inscriptions in Sinai* in 1916. Sethe, Grimme, Jensen, von Bissing, Ullman, Cowley, Furlani, Sayce, Eisler, Bruston, Lake, Blake, Butin, Littman, Bauer, Lidbarski, Ball, and a host of others have raised their voices in the exhaustive and most minute examinations which have been made of the inscriptions, their origin and meanings. Out of the whole mass of commentary has grown the definite, fixed conclusion that the characters of the Serabit inscriptions are Egyptian in form and Semitic in meaning, thus inseparably linking, at a remote time, the Egyptian and Hebrew scripts.

Dr. Petrie placed the date of the writing at about 1500 B. C., roughly the time of the Mosaic Exodus. Dr. Gardiner assigned them to the Twelfth Dynasty (c. 2200 B. C.). Sethe favored the Hyksos period (subsequent to 1800 B. C.). The recent examinations by Dr. Butin¹⁵ indicate 1900 B. C. Whatever may

¹²Alan H. Gardiner, *Journal of Egyptian Archeology*, 1916, Vol. 3.

¹³Sir Frederick Kenyon, *Bible and Archeology*, London, 1940, p. 202.

¹⁴"The Serabit Inscriptions," *Harvard Theological Review*, January, 1928.

be the precise age of the particular inscriptions recovered, it is certain that they are of very great antiquity; they are Egyptian in descent, and are reformed or modified toward the development of the Hebrew alphabet.

Professor H. Grimme, of Munster, found the name of Moses among the inscriptions, written in the usual Hebrew fashion, without vowels.¹⁶ And he found likewise, a reference to the princess who rescued Moses from the water. An instant storm arose, in which Grimme was ably supported by Volter¹⁷ and as earnestly criticised by Furlani,¹⁸ Sethe¹⁹ Smith,²⁰ and Schamburger.²⁰

There appears to be nothing in the inscriptions which indicates that the Moses referred to is necessarily the Moses of the Old Testament. On the contrary, he appears to be an overseer who engaged in prayers to Ba'alat, a goddess.²¹ There is, however, significance in the very occurrence of the name.

THE Serabit Inscriptions are closely parallel to the characters of the Anthon Transcript (Fig. 1, p. 75 *The Improvement Era*, February, 1942). Among the peculiar characteristics of both inscriptions is the frequent occurrence of inexplicable

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¹⁶Grimme, H., *Althebraische Inschriften vom Sinai*, 1923.

¹⁷Volter, *Nieuw Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 1925, pp. 215-244.

¹⁸Yahu, "Sapdu e una presunta Iscrizione di Mose," in *Giornale della Societa Asiatica Italiana*, N. S., Vol. I, pp. 1 sq.

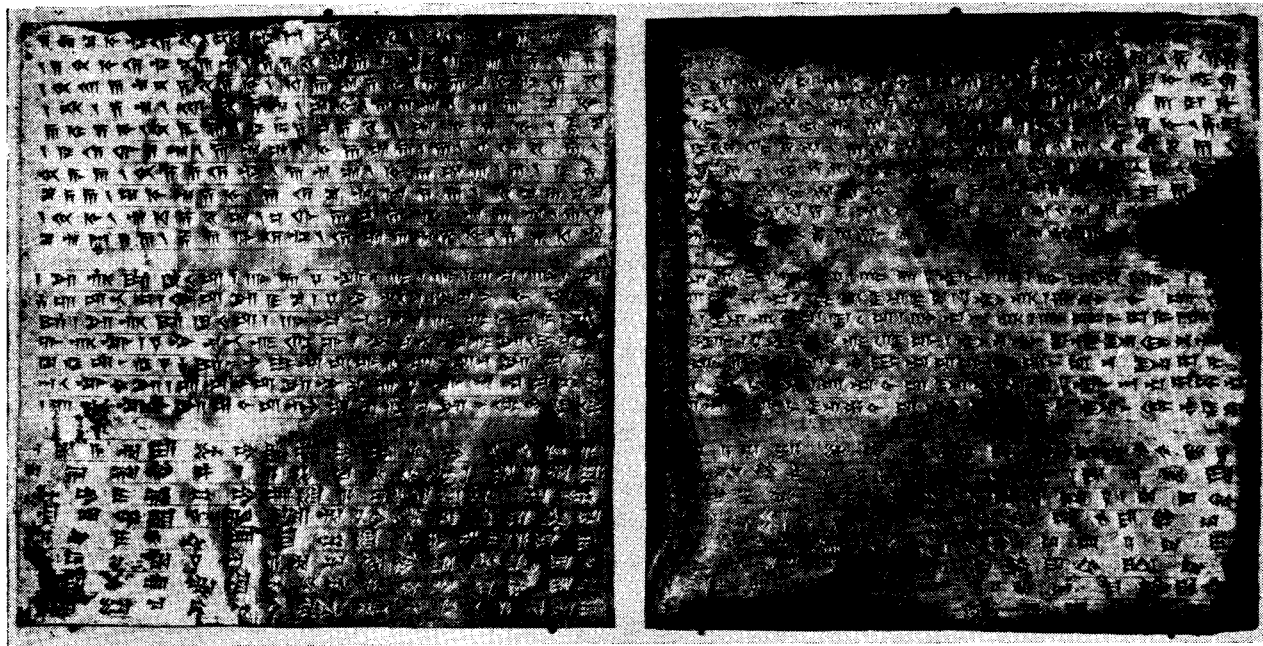
¹⁹Neuentdeckte Sinai-Schrift, p. 452.

²⁰"A New Disclosure in Sinai," in *Journal of Religion*, 1926, p. 195.

²¹"Die angeblichen Inschriften vom Sinai," *Biblica*, Vol. 6, 1925, pp. 26, 156.

²²*Harvard Theological Review*, January, 1928, p. 50.

FIG. 1. GOLD AND SILVER PLATES FOUND BY UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO IN THE CORNERSTONE BOXES, AUDIENCE PALACE OF DARIUS THE GREAT



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dots accompanying the characters. Of these dots Dr. Butin says:²²

Letters are occasionally accompanied by a dot; sometimes apparently to indicate the end of a word where there might be danger of running its last letter into the next word, . . . ; at other times each letter is thus marked with a dot; and at still other times it is hard to know just why the dots have been used with some letters and not with others.

In the condition of knowledge of the Egyptian language prevalent in 1830, the unequivocal assurance with which the Book of Mormon declared an affinity between Egyptian and Semitic tongues back to the time of Moses was most extraordinary. The positive announcement that ancient religious records were engraved on alloyed metal (brass) was not less remarkable. Similarly striking was the declaration that records had survived, written on metal plates and buried for centuries in the earth. One by one these things have been demonstrated to be true by the combined labors of archeologists and philologists.

That the prophet should have gone yet farther and produced a transcript of characters for examination, in which a system of pointing by use of dots anticipated an archeological find to be made a century later in the remote wilderness of Sinai, is incredible on any hypothesis except truth. Yet that is precisely what happened in the case of the Anthon Transcript.²³ (Fig. 1, February, 1942, *The Improvement Era*, p. 75.)

What then may be said of the fact that the same Sinai finds reveal, by the same sort of incredible coincidence, duplications of numerous characters contained in the Anthon Transcript? The answer is necessarily that we have here no coincidence, but truth asserting itself out of the dust. The demonstration is visual.

It should be remembered that the total number of characters found in the Serabit inscriptions is small; and that in the degree that the script was reduced to alphabetic form, thus minimizing the number of characters employed, the probability of duplication of characters found in the older forms of writing or in the hieratic and demotic was proportionately reduced. That there should be found a duplication at all is accordingly a weighty, if not conclusive evidence of affinity between the scripts.

A great many years ago the pro-

CHARACTERS FROM THE ANTHON TRANSCRIPT

Anthon Transcript, Line 7, Character 24.



Photo of Facsimile, p. 53, Vol. 21, Harvard Theological Review, Jan., 1928. Inscription No. 354.

Anthon Transcript, Line 1, Character 7.



Photo of Facsimile, p. 48, Vol. 21, Harvard Theological Review, Jan., 1928. Inscription No. 346.

Anthon Transcript, Line 5, Character 29.



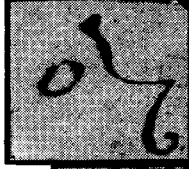
Photograph from Petrie, Researches in Sinai Pl. 124.

Anthon Transcript, Line 2, Character 11.



Photograph from Plate 124, Petrie, Sir. W., Researches in Sinai, New York, 1906.

Anthon Transcript, Line 4, Character 1.



Photograph of Facsimile, p. 48, Vol. 21, Harvard Theological Review, Jan., 1928. Inscription No. 346.

Anthon Transcript, Line 3, Character 14.



Photograph from Inscription 345, Plate 8, Butin, R. F., in Harvard Theological Rev. Vol. 21, No. 1, Serabit Inscriptions.

Anthon Transcript, Line 3, Character 20.



Photograph of Facsimile p. 37, Vol. 21, Harvard Theological Review, Jan., 1928. Inscription No. 356.

Anthon Transcript, Line 6, Character 2.



Photograph of Facsimile p. 37, Vol. 21, Harvard Theological Review, Jan., 1928. Inscription No. 358.

Anthon Transcript, Line 1, Character 16.



Photograph of Facsimile p. 37, Vol. 21, Harvard Theological Review, Jan., 1928. Inscription No. 358.

Anthon Transcript, Line 6, Character 34; or Line 4, Character 11 (Inverted).



Photograph of Facsimile p. 37, Vol. 21, Harvard Theological Review, Jan., 1928. Inscription No. 353.

²²"The Serabit Inscriptions," *Harvard Theological Review*, January, 1928, p. 35.

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foundly learned Egyptologist, Heinrich Brugsch, prophesied in the introduction to his monumental dictionary that some day philological science would be astonished at the closeness of the relationship between the Egyptian and Semitic languages.²⁴

The universality with which this relationship is now acknowledged may be summarily indicated by reference to a few of the major works. From the early works of Wall²⁵ and Foster²⁶ premised on wholly insufficient material, but tending in the same direction, to the works of Gardiner,²⁵ Erman²⁶ and their colleagues

²⁴Wall, Chas. Wm., *An Examination of the Ancient Orthography of the Jews*, London, 1835.

²⁴Brugsch., H., *Hieroglyphisch-Demotisches Wörterbuch*, Bd. 1, p. ix.

²⁵Gardiner, A. H., Paper read before International Orientalist Congress, Oxford, August 29, 1928.

²⁶"Das Verhältniss des Aegyptischen zu den semitischen Sprachen," Bd. XLVI, p. 93 ff.

and the *Budge Dictionary*, there are dissents on particular points but scarcely a serious dissent to the proposition that the Egyptian and Hebrew are akin. And all are agreed that the relationship is as of remote date certainly no later than the times of Moses.

Nor are the Serabit finds alone. As late as 1930, Dr. Dunland found at Byblos inscriptions on stone and copper confirmatory of the finds of P. Montet at the same place ten years earlier, in which upward of eighty characters written in a modified or reformed hieroglyphic script were identified as Semitic.²⁷

²⁷See discussion in Kenyon, Sir Frederick, *Bible and Archeology*, London, 1940, pages 166-167.

CONCLUSION

THE things once deemed strange and urged as evidences of the falsity of the Book of Mormon are now established as weighty proofs of the divinity of its origin. Of the learned men of the world who have taken a century to learn by arduous toil what was openly proclaimed by the Prophet, it might with full propriety be said, in the language of the Messiah:

O dull-witted men, with minds so slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!²⁸

The Anthon Transcript, in the light of the archeological finds above referred to, attests the accuracy of the Book of Mormon account of the brass plates.

²⁸Luke 24:25 (*Weymouth's Translation*).