

Institute 2-11-20 Joseph Smith's History 1828-1829: "Book of Lehi" or 116 Manuscript Pages

Time Line

- 1828 Jan** Joseph begins translation with the help of Emma and her brother, Ruben, as scribes
Feb Martin Harris takes characters and translation to Columbia College where Prof. Charles Anthon authenticates them
Mar(?) Lucy Harris and Martin come to Harmony for 2 weeks
Apr 12- June 14 Book of Lehi is translated with Martin acting as scribe
June 14 Martin leaves Harmony with the Book of Lehi (116 pages), Moroni takes the Urim and Thummim
June 15 Emma's first child, Alvin, is born and dies, Emma is near death too
June 30-July Joseph travels to and from Palmyra Manchester, NY
July Angel Moroni returns interpreters and Joseph receives D&C 3 (and 10), takes the plates and interpreters
Summer-Winter Joseph worked on his portion of the Hales farm
Sep 22 Moroni gives Joseph the Interpreters and plates again and promises another scribe
Dec David Whitmer visits Palmyra/Manchester area on business and meets Oliver
1829 Jan ("Winter")—Emma and Joseph visit Mr. Knight who gives them some food, shoes, and \$3.00.
Emma acts as scribe with plates kept on the table or in her red Moroccan trunk.
1829 Feb Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith visit Joseph and Emma in Harmony PA, D&C 4.

Witnesses of the Translation: Emma

Emma was probably the first scribe for Joseph and an eyewitness of the translation process. At the end of her life her son interviewed her about several historical details over three days. He asked about the translation and he recorded her as saying:

I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscript unless he was inspired; for, when acting as his scribe, your father would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him. There were no delays over obscure passages, no difficulties over the choice of words, no stoppages from the ignorance of the translator; no time was wasted in investigations or argument over the value, intent, or meaning of certain characters, and there were no references to authorities. . . . All was as simple as when a clerk writes from dictation. The translation of the characters appeared on the Urim and Thummim, sentence by sentence, and as soon as one was correctly transcribed the next would appear" (*Studies in Scripture*, 2:203–204).

Martin Harris—Supportive of the Translation, yet an Unsatisfied Witness

For 20 years Martin and Lucy lived in Palmyra as respected landowners of a 240-acre farm that his father gave him. He was known as a gentleman and patriot for serving as a sergeant in the War of 1812. In 1824, his reputation became tarnished when he became interested in young Joseph's calling as a prophet. He hired Hyrum and Joseph Smith Sr. and tried to learn more: "Each day while they were there Martin would find [an] excuse to bring up the matter and would ask many questions, referring frequently to the Bible to prove that heavenly messengers visiting the earth was not a new doctrine . . . Martin was thrilled beyond expression. He requested that he be kept posted on any new developments" (Black, *Who's Who in the D&C*).

In 1827, Martin supported Joseph with fifty dollars in silver to facilitate his move to Harmony, PA. In 1828 Martin received Drs. Anthon and Mitchell's affirmation of the characters and translation, and acted as a scribe of the Book of Mormon. In 1829, he became a witness of the plates and Angel Moroni, and then mortgaged his farm for \$1,000, to cover the publishing costs of the Book of Mormon. In 1830 he was baptized at the organization of the church. In 1831, he lost his farm, and later lost his wife Lucy over the issue. Martin had many witnesses, but he was not satisfied for long. No matter how strong his witnesses, he became dissatisfied.

Martin sacrificed much and as a result, Joseph felt a great obligation to him. From April 12 to June 14, when Martin acted as scribe for the "Book of Lehi." During that time he came up with a scheme to test Joseph's seership. One day while skipping rocks, Martin found a stone that looked like Joseph's seer stone. Without Joseph noticing, he switched the stones.

" . . . On resuming their labors of translation . . . He said that the Prophet remained silent unusually long and intently gaining in darkness, no trace of the usual sentence appearing. Much surprised Joseph exclaimed: 'Martin! What is the matter? All is as dark as Egypt.' Martin's countenance betrayed him, and the Prophet asked Martin why he had done so. Martin said, to stop the mouths of fools, who had told him that the Prophet had learned those sentences and was merely repeating them" (B.H. Roberts, *New Witness for God*, 2:11).

He continued to act as scribe for 116 foolscap pages, finishing the Book of Lehi on June 14.

Loss of "Book of Lehi" or 116 Pages of Manuscript

Our canonized JS-H does not reference the loss of 116 pages of translation. But D&C 3 and 10 give a firsthand account. We also have ~20 pages of Lucy Mack Smith's second-hand account, preface to the 1829 Book of Mormon, etc.

D&C 3:12-13

"thou deliveredst up that which was sacred into the hands of a wicked man, who has set at naught the counsels of God, and has broken the most sacred promises . . . and has depended upon his own judgment and boasted . . ."

D&C 10:1-2

"Because you delivered up those writings which you had power to give unto you to translate by the means of the Urim and Thummim, into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them. And you also lost your gift . . ."

Lucy Mack Smith's account speaks of Lucy Harris' 1828 growing antagonism and pleading for more evidences: "Mrs. H went from place telling her grievances to everyone she met but particularly bewailing that the deception which Joseph Smith was practicing" (*Lucy's Book*, 407). While Martin acted as Joseph's scribe from April 12 to June 14 for the "Book of Lehi," he hoped

his wife's complaints could be appeased by reading the manuscript. Joseph desperately needed Martin's help, money and time. He felt obligated to him. In 1844, Lucy Mack described July 1828 in her memoirs (ibid., 410-411; *JosephSmithPapers.org*):

Joseph was willing to gratify his friend as far as he could consistently, and he inquired of the Lord...but was refused... at his urgent request...a second refusal...Joseph for a long time refused every entreaty at last however he begged The privilege of obliging Mr. Harris...There is no doubt of this indulgence being given to Joseph in order to show him by another lesson of bitter experience how vain are all human calculations—and also to learn him not to put his trust in man.

Birth and Death of Emma's First Baby (June 15, 1828)

After letting Martin borrow the 116 pages, Joseph was delayed in Harmony with the birth and death of his first child, Alvin, and near death of Emma. One source says the baby was deformed, another that it was stillborn (which meant the baby didn't cry). Joseph stayed beside her night and day and "never slept one hour in undisturbed quiet" for two weeks (ibid 412). Emma was aware of the triple burden Joseph carried. Once she turned the corner towards healing, she encouraged him to go Palmyra to see what happened to the manuscript. Her mother came over to help.

Harris' Loss of the 116 Pages (June-July 1828)

Joseph took a stagecoach to Palmyra to get there as fast as possible. Yet even then, he did not eat or sleep. When he got off the coach, he had 20 miles to walk during the night. A fellow passenger later told Lucy that he had been watching Joseph and changed his plans to help him:

I will go with you for I fear . . . you will be in danger of falling asleep in the forrest [*sic*] and some accident befall you— Joseph thanked him and they proceeded together—. . . it was nearly daylight 4 miles of distance the stranger was under the necessity of leading Joseph by his arm for [his] nature was too much exhausted to suport [*sic*] him any longer and he would fall asleep on as he stood upon his feet as often as once in a few minutes— When they came in the stranger said I have brought your son through the forrest [*sic*] because he insisted on coming but he is sick and wants rest and refreshment he ought to have some pepper immediately to warm his stomach— After you have prepared that I will thank you for a little breakfast as I am in haste to be on my journey again" (<https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845/85>; accessed 2-8-20)

As soon as the stranger left, Joseph sent for Martin. The family waited breakfast for six hours. Finally a sullen Martin slunk in.

Joseph, who had smothered his fears till now, sprang from the table, exclaiming, "Oh! Martin, have you lost that manuscript? Have you broken your oath and brought down condemnation upon my head as well as your own?" "Yes," replied Martin, "it is gone and I know not where." "Oh, my God, my God," said Joseph, clinching his hands together.

"All is lost, is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned. It is I who tempted the wrath of God by asking him for that which I had no right to ask, as I was differently instructed by the angel." And he wept and groaned, walking the floor continually. Lucy remembered that Joseph did not eat until supper. Finally, he ate a little and slept a few hours, but left the next morning to return the 140 miles to Emma in Harmony, PA.

Lucy Mack Smith also includes her thoughts about what happened to the 116 pages of manuscript: "[Martin's] wife seemed highly pleased with what she heard and entered into the spirit of it so much that she gave her husband the priviledge of locking it up in a set of drawers which she had never <before> permitted him to look into[.] after . . ." (ibid., p. [7], bk. 7). Next follows the sad account of breaking his oath and losing the pages. A friend of Martin's,

made him a visit to whom he related all he knew concerning the record The man's curiosity was much excited and he earnestly desired to see the transcript Martin was anxious to gratify his friend although it was contrary to his obligation, but when he went to seek for it he found that key could not be found but he soon resolved to carry his design into execution and to do this he picked the lock and in so doing he injured his lady's beaureau considerably" [p. [7], bk. 7]

The combined events infuriated Lucy Harris, but Martin continued to show it to others until the time Joseph came to call. Martin went to his dresser, but ". . . the manuscript was gone— he asked his wife where it was— she solemnly averred that she did not know anything about it whatever— not regarding what she said he went through the house and made a faithful search, but it was more vain than Esau's seeking his blessing" (ibid., p. [8], bk. 7). We can learn that once one ignores the Spirit, temptations take over and Satan moves in to take control of his victims like a marionette, as one to be acted upon.

Lord's Omniscient Plan

We learn more from D&C 10:9-13. Joseph Smith was forbidden to retranslate because those who stole and altered the 116 pages hoped to publish and defraud Joseph with it. Instead, D&C 10:41 explained the small plates of Nephi were prepared.

Joseph Sr. and Lucy's Visit (Feb 1829)

After seven months of no news, Joseph Sr. and Lucy came to visit Joseph and Emma. Lucy recorded what Joseph said:

After I arrived here [Harmony, PA] I commenced humbling myself in mighty prayer before the Lord and <as> I poured out my soul in supplication to him that if possible I might obtain mercy at hands and be forgiven of all that I had done which was contrary to his will. As I was doing this an Angel stood before me and answered me saying that I had sinned in that he had delivered the manuscript into the hands of a wicked man and as he had ventured to become responsible for this man's faithfulness he would of necessity suffer the consequence's of his indiscretion that he must now give back the plates into the hands of the angel from he had received them but said he it may be if you are sufficiently humble and penitent that you will receive them again on the 22 of September (*JosephSmithPapers.org*)

We have other evidence that the repentant Joseph received God's instruction as Moroni returned the interpreters long enough for him to receive a revelation: "The works and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught" (D&C 3:1-2). Then the angel took both the interpreters and the plates, with the potential return Sept 22.