



Type: Book Chapter

The Ancient Owners of the Papyri

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Source: *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri*

Published: Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies,
2000

Page(s): 14–17



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Joseph Smith Papyrus II (in current condition). The vignette is from Book of the Dead 110. A woman named Semminis (late third century B.C.) originally owned the papyrus.



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The Ancient Owners of the Papyri

From the names, titles, and genealogies written on the papyri, we know their ancient owners were Egyptian priests who lived in Thebes in Egypt. They were wealthy individuals who came from important political families. For example, the father of Hor (the owner of JSP I) was the great governor of Thebes. Their official positions were often hereditary.

The ancient owners of the papyri were among the most literate and educated people of the country. They had access to the great Theban temple libraries, containing narratives, reference works, and manuals, as well as scrolls on religion, ritual, and history. The papyri owners also lived at a time when stories about Abraham are known to have circulated in Egypt. If any ancient Egyptians were in a position to know about Abraham, it was the





class of people to whom the owners of the Joseph Smith Papyri belonged.

The Egyptian religion of the time was complex and eclectic. Foreign elements (such as deities and rites), including those from the Greek religion and Judaism, were added to Egyptian practices. As priests, the ancient owners were required to maintain strict standards of personal conduct and purity. Egyptian priests of the time were often buried with a variety of different texts all written on the same papyrus roll, one after the other.

Egyptian Traditions about Abraham

Writer/Text That Mentions Abraham	Ruler/Time Period
Hecataeus of Abdera	Ptolemy I (305–282 B.C.)
Septuagint	Ptolemy II (285–246 B.C.)
Artapanus	Ptolemy V (204–180 B.C.)
Eupolemus	Ptolemy VI (180–145 B.C.)
<i>Testament of Abraham</i>	First century A.D. ?
Philo of Alexandria	Tiberius (A.D. 14–37)
Zosimus of Panopolis	Third century A.D.
Anastasi Archive	Third century A.D.



