The background features a detailed black and white engraving of a town, likely Nauvoo, Illinois. In the foreground, there are several large, multi-story buildings with gabled roofs. In the middle ground, a river flows through the town. In the background, a large, grand building with a prominent dome and classical architectural elements, such as columns and arches, stands on a hill. The overall scene is rendered in a fine-lined, engraved style.

# The Prophet's Pattern

An Analysis of Joseph Smith's  
Plural Marriage Proposals

# The Core Inquiry: Consent or Coercion?

“You have a prophet and your prophet is your lifeline who’s going to tell you exactly what to do... so that you don’t have to suffer through the eternities.”

- Alicia Lee, Mormon Stories Podcast

## Free Agency

In Mormonism, “Free Agency” is a foundational doctrine. The ability to **choose** is considered a **divine gift**.



## Invalidated Consent

- **Age:** Proposals to minors as young as 14.



- **Power Imbalance:** The subject is also the prophet, mayor, and military commander.

- **Divine Threats:** The loss of eternal salvation for the individual and their entire family is presented as the cost of refusal.



# A Methodology of Coercion: Five Recurring Patterns



**Targeting the Vulnerable:** Proposing to girls living in his home, often after they experienced a family tragedy like the death of a parent.



**Leveraging Recruiters:** Using his existing plural wives to “soften up” and recruit younger, more hesitant women.



**The Ultimate Bargain:** Promising eternal salvation (exaltation) for the woman and her entire family in exchange for marriage.



**The Divine Threat:** Claiming an angel with a drawn sword commanded him to practice polygamy and would kill him if he was refused.



**Manufactured Scarcity:** Applying pressure with tight deadlines and threats of eternal consequences, such as “the gate will be closed forever.”

# Case Study: Lucy Walker's Ordeal

“Ten motherless children... What were we to do? The prophet came to our rescue.”

- **Age:** 16 years old.
- **Circumstances:** Her mother died in January 1842. Shortly after, Joseph Smith sent her grieving father on a mission to the eastern states.
- **Vulnerability:** Lucy and her siblings were taken into the Smith home, where Joseph introduced her to others as his "**adoptive daughter**," creating a dynamic of dependence and isolation.



**Mother Dies**



**Father Departs**



**Smith Home  
Adoptive Daughter**

# A 'Thunderbolt' Proposal

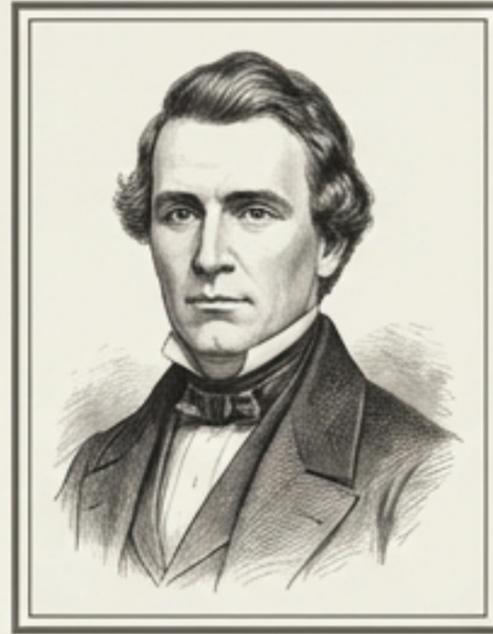
“I have a message for you. I have been commanded of God to take another wife, and you are the woman.”

“My astonishment knew no bounds... Gross Darkness instead of light took possession of my mind. I was tempted and tortured Beyond endurance until life was not desirable.”

“I will give you until tomorrow to decide this matter. If you reject this message the gate will be closed forever against you.”

“It was not a love matter... but simply the giving up of myself as a sacrifice to establish that Grand and glorious principle.”

# Case Study: Zina Huntington, The Married Woman



While Zina (21) was living in the Smith home recovering from illness, Joseph taught her plural marriage. She rebuffed his proposals and married Henry Jacobs, the man she loved, on March 7, 1841.

**The Pursuit Continues:** Joseph's proposals did not stop. When asked why he didn't perform their wedding as requested, he reportedly said he **"couldn't give to one man a woman who had been given to him by the Lord."**

“Oh dear Heaven grant me wisdom. Help me to know the way... let thy will be done.” ”



# The Angel's Sword and the Aftermath

## THE DIVINE THREAT

Months after her marriage and while seven months pregnant with Henry's child, Joseph sent Zina a message: "Tell Zina I put it off and put it off till an angel with a drawn sword stood by me and told me if I did not establish that principle upon the earth I would lose my position in my life."

**The Sealing:** Zina submitted and was sealed to Joseph Smith. Her husband, Henry Jacobs, stood as a witness.

## A TRAGIC JUXTAPOSITION

“ I made a greater sacrifice than to give my life, for I never anticipated again to be looked upon as an honorable woman.” *Lora*

## THE INSTITUTIONAL NARRATIVE VS. HISTORICAL RECORD

*“...my love is as ever  
the same and much  
more abundantly...”*

*- Henry Jacobs' letters*

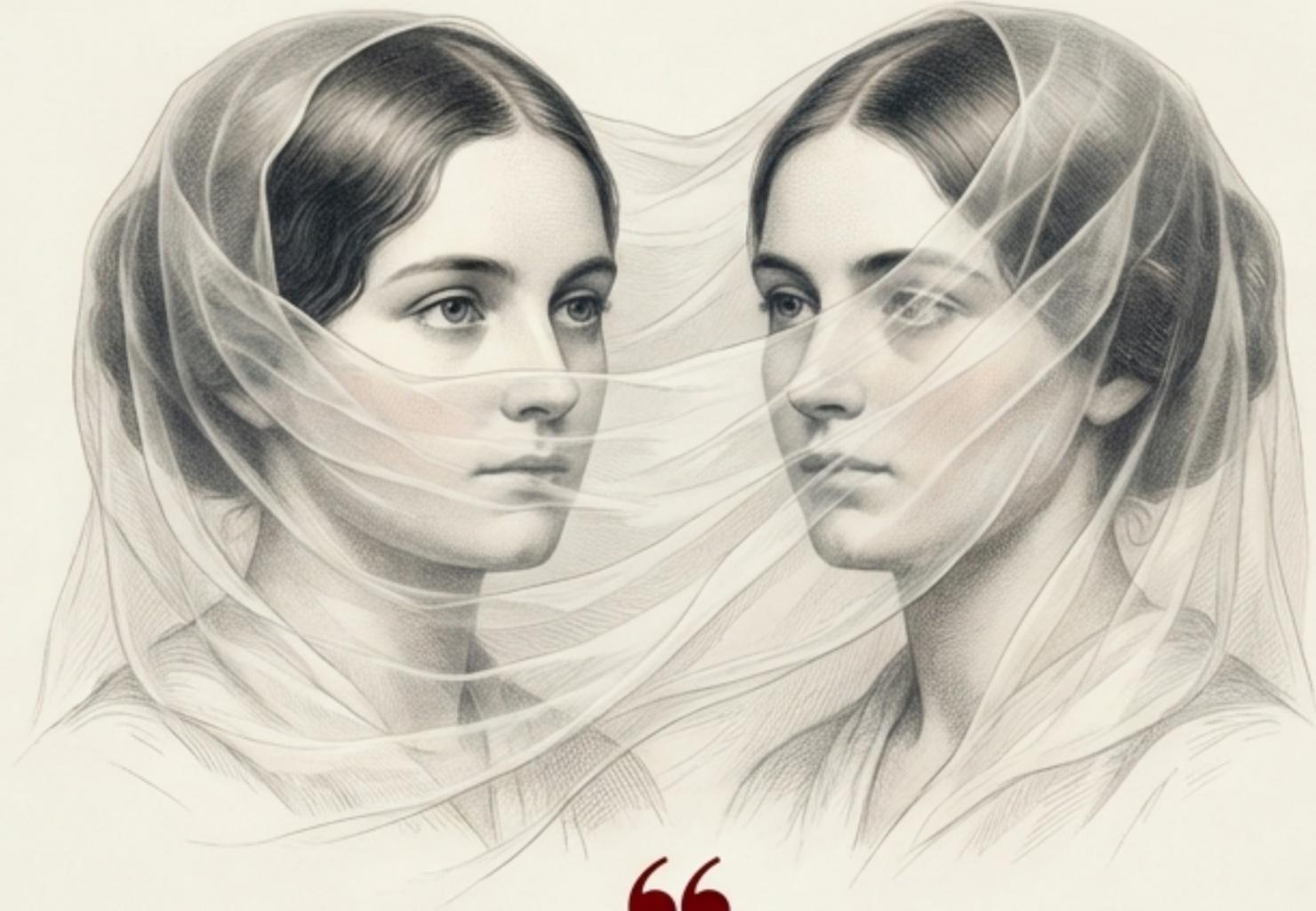
Henry later  
“abandoned” Zina.”

- Modern Church  
assertion

# Case Study: The Partridge Sisters' Secret

## Orphans in the Home:

Emily and Eliza were daughters of the late Bishop Edward Partridge. After his death, they moved into the Smith home.



## The Recruiter:

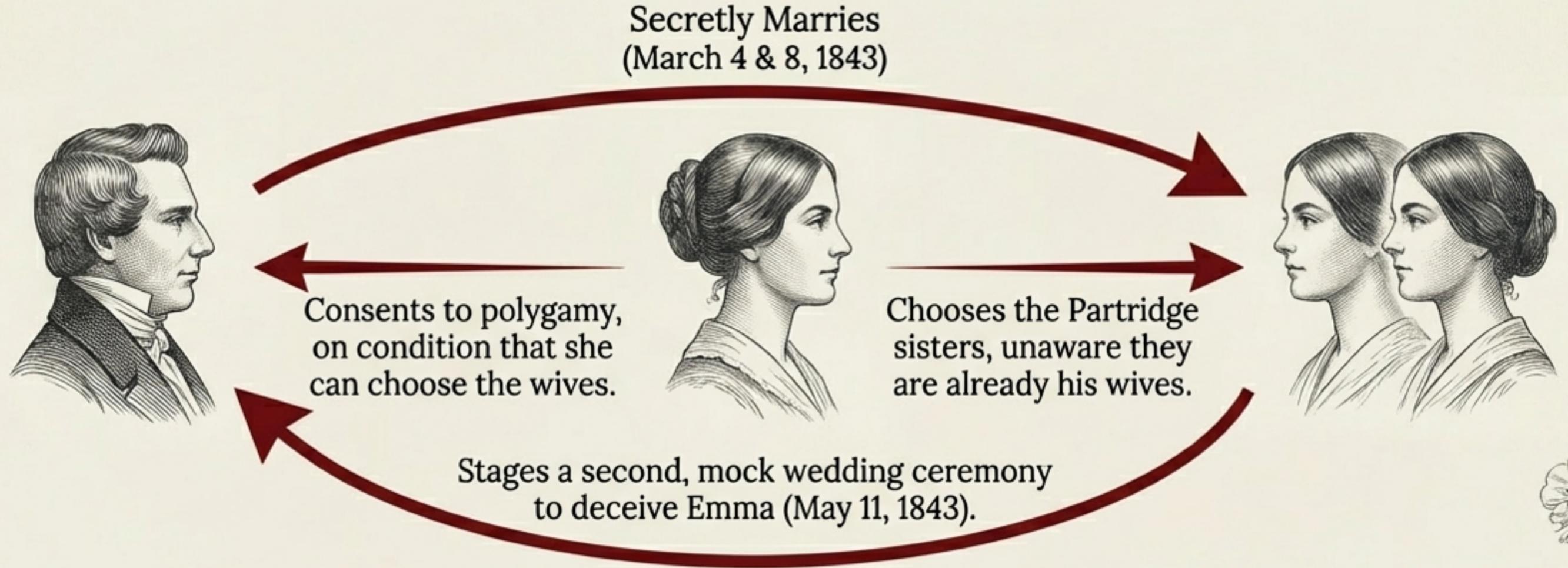
After 18-year-old Emily initially “shut Joseph up so quick” about polygamy, he sent an older plural wife, Elizabeth Durfee, to recruit her. Durfee deceptively acted as if she were merely exploring rumors before promoting the principle.

“

Neither of us knew about the other at the time. Everything was so secret.

- Emily Partridge

# A House of Disorder: The Sham Marriage



Emma's acceptance soured almost immediately after the mock wedding. She forced Joseph to kick the Partridge sisters out of the house.

This event exemplifies the secrecy and deception endemic to the practice, involving concealing marriages from family, the women themselves, and his first wife, Emma.

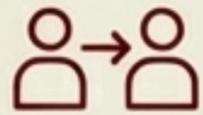
# The Pattern Confirmed: Connecting the Evidence



## 1. Targeting the Vulnerable

Lucy Walker  
(orphan, living in home)

Partridge Sisters  
(orphans, living in home)



## 2. Leveraging Recruiters

Emily Partridge  
(recruited by Elizabeth Durfee)



## 3. The Ultimate Bargain

Lucy Walker  
(promised blessings for her father's house)



## 4. The Divine Threat

Zina Huntington  
(the angel with the drawn sword)



## 5. Manufactured Scarcity

Lucy Walker  
(given a 24-hour deadline)

# An Enduring Ethical Question

“Is there an ethical line for you? Like, does a line exist, and if so, where is that?” – Erin Rackham, PhD

1. At what point does religious obedience negate personal consent?
2. How does a system of absolute prophetic authority impact the vulnerable?
3. Henry Jacobs rationalized, “Whatever the prophet did was right.” What are the dangers of this mindset?
4. If this behavior is predatory in any other context, why is an exception made here?

# “Explore the History” in Playfair Display

## Source Attribution

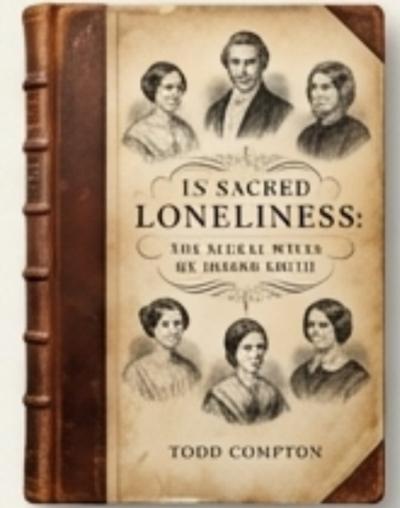
This presentation is based on the research and analysis presented in the “LDS Discussions” series, specifically the essay “Joseph Smith’s Plural Marriage Proposals.”

**Source Podcast:** Mormon Stories Podcast, Episode 1679



## Resources for Further Study

**Book:** *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* by Todd Compton



**Podcast:** *Year of Polygamy* by Lindsey Hansen Park

