



The Newsletter of
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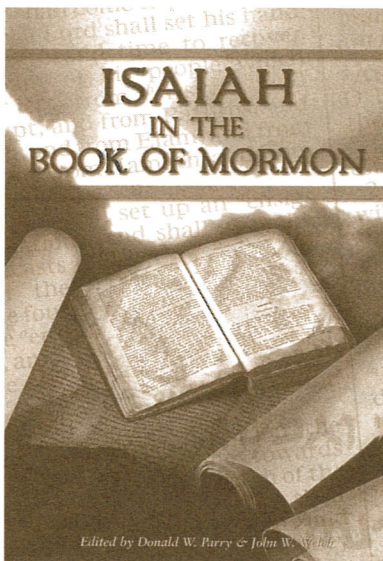
INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

"by study and also by faith" D&C 88:118

New FARMS Release—*Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*

The richness and depth of Isaiah's teachings are often seen as barriers to understanding his words. Scholars devote their entire careers to the study of Isaiah's writings and never run low on questions to answer, interpretations to ponder, or teachings to explore and expound on. It is widely felt that the Isaiah passages quoted by Nephi, Jacob, Abinadi, and the resurrected Lord are the most difficult sections of the Book of Mormon to understand. Isaiah was commanded by the Lord to speak in such a way that his rebellious audience would



"hear . . . but understand *not*" and would "see . . . but perceive *not*" (Isaiah 6:9).

But despite the apparent complexity of this ancient prophet's words, his teachings can be "plain," as Nephi proclaims (2 Nephi 25:4), to those who study them with the spirit of the Lord. *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, edited by Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch, was written to assist readers in their study of Isaiah's writings using insights gained from both the biblical texts and the restored Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon.

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Journal Contains Recent Book of Mormon Research

The most recent issue of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, now on sale, features articles about Nibley's writings on the Book of Mormon, the possibility that Lehi's family were bond servants during their sojourn in the wilderness, eternal life and spiritual death in the Book of Mormon, chiasmus, and Nephi's psalm.

In his "Something to Move Mountains': The Book of Mormon in Hugh Nibley's Correspondence," Boyd Petersen discusses how Nibley's fas-

cination with the Book of Mormon is manifested in his correspondence. Petersen explains that Nibley is interested in the book from three perspectives: its remarkable similarities with other Near Eastern texts, its evidence of Joseph Smith's divine calling, and the book's prophetic warnings. Nibley's correspondence communicates his optimism and enthusiasm about the power of the Book of Mormon.

In further research on Lehi's exodus to the promised land, S. Kent Brown argues that Lehi's family may have lived for a time as bond servants during their years in the wilderness. In "A Case for Lehi's Bondage in Arabia" he examines the clues in the Book of Mormon that might indicate that Lehi's family sold themselves for either food or protection, a situation that could have contributed to their suffering and tribulation in the wilderness.

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FARMS Conference

21 March 1998

"Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World"
(see page 3 for details)



The Foundation for
Ancient Research &
Mormon Studies

FARMS UPDATE

A Report on Research in Progress

Number 116

What the Original Book of Mormon Manuscript Is Not

For well over a decade, FARMS has sponsored extensive research on the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon. About 25 percent of the pages that were written by Oliver Cowdery and other scribes as Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon in 1829 have survived down to the present day.¹ While much has been written and said about what the original manuscript *is*, perhaps just as significant is a collection of facts about what it is *not*.

Critics of the Book of Mormon have sought alternative explanations to account for its existence, arguing that it is a fraud created by Joseph Smith or by Joseph and someone else, such as Sidney Rigdon. However, the original manuscript gives no aid or comfort to such theories nor, indeed, to any explanations other than the account given by Joseph Smith concerning the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Under careful examination, the original manuscript shows no evidence of fraud.

The original manuscript is not a compilation of pages worked on over a long period of time. The paper, ink, handwriting, and everything about the collection indicates that it was created within a short time frame. It bears no trace of collaborative committee work. The work is entirely original. The manuscript is clean and straightforward.²

The original manuscript shows no evidence of developmental research or copying from contemporaneous books or articles. It is not the product of revision and rethinking. It shows no evidence of rewriting to change a modern expression into an archaic-sounding phrase. It does not appear that Joseph Smith reformulated thoughts or doctored the translation to make it sound more plausible. Everything points to a uniform manner of dictation and production. It really looks like one person read and another copied, just as Joseph Smith described.³

What the original manuscript is *not* is quite impressive, especially when one begins to contemplate the number of problems that could have arisen if Joseph Smith had not been telling the truth. The original manuscript is exactly the kind of smoking gun that a prosecuting lawyer would normally love to find in trying to build a case for fraud or deception against an accused. How many mistakes, how many unavoidable problems, how many inevitable inconsistencies would not a prosecutor expect to find in such a document? The original manuscript of the Book of Mormon takes us into the workshop of the translator and his scribes; and much to the critic's chagrin, what we see is what we have been told by Joseph Smith and his companions all along.

If Joseph Smith had perpetrated a fraud and were trying to cover his tracks, this unforgiving record should have been the last thing he would have kept, since it would inevitably have contained evidence of his fraud. Yet Joseph Smith did not dispose of the original manuscript. Despite all the hardships and atrocities the Saints experienced in their travel, the original manuscript somehow survived, until it was deposited in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House.

In the end, in addition to all the things that the original manuscript is not, it is certainly not a problem for the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

NOTES

1. *Book of Mormon Critical Text: A Tool for Scholarly Reference* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1987), 1:xx.

2. See Royal Skousen, "Piecing Together the Original Manuscript," *BYU Today* (May 1992): 18–24; Royal Skousen, "Book of Mormon Manuscripts," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:185–86; John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, "Book of Mormon Translation by Joseph Smith," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:210–13.

3. See Royal Skousen, "Translating the Book of Mormon," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 61–93; and Royal Skousen, "Textual Variants in the Isaiah Quotations in the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 369–90.

Based on research by John W. Welch.

Papers in Honor of John L. Sorenson to Be Presented at March FARMS Conference

On 21 March 1998 a conference will be held at Brigham Young University featuring several papers that will be included in a forthcoming Festschrift in honor of BYU's emeritus professor John L. Sorenson. The event, "Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World," is cosponsored by FARMS and BYU's Department of Anthropology. It will begin at 8:30 A.M. in room 151 of the Tanner Building on the BYU campus. It is free and open to the public.

Throughout his career, John L. Sorenson has contributed significantly to anthropological and Book of Mormon scholarship. A graduate of BYU, the California Institute of Technology, and the University of California, Los Angeles, with a Ph.D. in social anthropology, Sorenson taught at BYU from 1953 to 1955, 1958 to 1964, and 1971 to 1986. He initiated the academic program in anthropology in 1959 and headed it until 1964. From 1978 to 1986 he was chair of the Department of Anthropology at BYU and during his tenure was responsible for organizing the Museum of Peoples and Cultures as a separate unit on campus.

Among Sorenson's many publications is a two-volume bibliography entitled *Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Oceans*, done in collaboration with Martin H. Raish. Another of Sorenson's contributions is *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, completed in 1985. This book describes a plausible Mesoamerican setting for Book of Mormon history. FARMS will soon publish another impor-

tant work by Sorenson entitled *Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life* (see the description on page 10). Sorenson was recently appointed editor of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*.

In honor of John Sorenson and his varied and meaningful contributions to scholarship, Davis Bitton has edited a Festschrift, titled *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, that will be released in March. Bitton is an emeritus professor of history at the University of Utah; he has served as president of the Mormon History Association and as assistant historian for the LDS Church (from 1972 to 1982). The Festschrift includes papers on topics of particular interest to John Sorenson.

Papers to be read at the conference come from the Festschrift and will be grouped into two broad categories. The first group, entitled "The Book of Mormon and the Ancient World," will include the following presentations: "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8-23," by Daniel C. Peterson, associate professor of Arabic, BYU; "A Singular Reading: The Maori and the Book of Mormon," by Louis Midgley, emeritus professor of political science, BYU; "Resist-Dyeing As a Possible Ancient Transoceanic Transfer," by Stephen C. Jett, professor of geography, University of California, Davis; and "Festivals As Context for Exchange in the Great Basin-Columbia Plateau Region of Western North America," by Joel C. Janetski, professor of

anthropology and director of the Museum of Peoples and Cultures, BYU.

The second group of papers, "Mormon History and Culture," will include the following presentations: "Mormon Funeral Sermons in the Nineteenth Century," by Davis Bitton; "Baptized, Consecrated, and Sealed: The Covenantal Foundations of Mormon Religious Identity," by Steven L. Olsen, manager of operations, Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake City, Utah, and adjunct assistant professor of anthropology, BYU; and "Mormon Intruders in Tonga: The Passport Act of 1922," by R. Lanier Britsch, professor of history, BYU.

Publicly Speaking

Brown Bags Continue to Inform

The FARMS Brown Bag Lectures are an ongoing series intended to update BYU faculty, staff, and students and interested members of the community on the progress of Book of Mormon research.

On 3 September Terry Stocker, an independent researcher who conceived and launched the *New World Figurine Project*, published by Research Press, began the semester's lectures with a report of his observations of "Diffusion as Seen from East Asia: New Data." Stocker spent three years

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FARMS on-line**FARMS Website Expands to Serve You Better**

For the past two years, volunteers and FARMS staff have been establishing a strong presence for the Foundation on the World Wide Web. With over 350 pages (and growing), the FARMS website (www.farmsresearch.com) features some of the best FARMS publications. It keeps current with the latest catalog and *Insights*, and it includes excerpts from the latest *FARMS Review of Books* and *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*. Visitors to the site can take advantage of special discounts on popular FARMS products. There is even an on-line order form that you can print out and mail or fax, plus a questionnaire to help us improve the site.

For non-U.S. subscribers, FARMS is in the process of putting foreign language translations of popular FARMS papers on the website.

Our "Book of Mormon Criticism Papers" page was recently voted number six in the top twenty LDS sites on the Internet (see LauraMaery Gold, *Mormons on the Internet* [Rocklin, Cal.: Prima, 1997],

323). Another popular item is the on-line searchable version of *A Guide to Publications on the Book of Mormon: A Selected Annotated Bibliography*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Jeanette W. Miller, and Sandra A. Thorne.

For ease of navigation, a side-bar menu appears on each page to help you get back to where you started or to explore further, and everything on the FARMS site is searchable.

The "What's New" link lets you know exactly what has been added to the website in the last month, making it easy to survey what is of interest to you.

If you have not yet visited FARMS on-line, point your browser at www.farmsresearch.com. We believe you will find much to interest you. If you have not visited the site for a while, take this opportunity to see how it has expanded. And, as always at FARMS, your comments and suggestions are welcome.

Discoveries**Did Joseph Smith Know Egyptian?**

In a letter addressed to Grant S. Heward of Midvale, Utah, an outspoken critic of the book of Abraham, William Foxwell Albright, the doyen of American ancient Near Eastern studies, wrote:

There does appear to be evidence that Joseph Smith had studied some Egyptian. For one thing, he undoubtedly spent a great deal of money and effort in trying to master Egyptian, but, as you know, when the Book of Mormon was written, Egyptian had just begun to be deciphered and it is all the more surprising that there are two Egyptian names, Paanchi and Pahor(an) which appear together in the Book of Mormon in close connection with a reference to the original language as being "Reformed Egyptian."

Albright is mistaken about Joseph Smith having "studied some Egyptian," for no materials were available to him for such studies when the Book of Mormon was published; thus the Prophet had to rely on divine inspiration in translating the

Nephite record. But the letter, dated 25 July 1966, reveals Albright's scholarly opinion that the appearance of Egyptian in the Book of Mormon is remarkable. Albright's closing paragraph is also revealing:

I do not for a moment believe that Joseph Smith was trying to mislead anyone; I accept the point of view of a Jewish friend of mine at the University of Utah [probably Louis C. Zucker], that he was a religious genius and that he was quite honest in believing that he really could decipher these ancient texts. But to insist that he did [mislead] is really doing a disservice to the cause of a great church and its gifted founder.

The letter was located in the Klaus Baer correspondence file at the University of Chicago by FARMS researcher Boyd Petersen. Hugh Nibley, emeritus professor of ancient studies at BYU, was the first to point out the Egyptian nature of the Book of Mormon names Paanchi and Pahoran.

Reflections on the Psalms by C. S. Lewis

FARMS is pleased to make available a short commentary by C. S. Lewis, noted Christian scholar and author, entitled *Reflections on the Psalms* at a discount (see the order form). In the introduction Lewis explains that he writes "as one amateur to another" about what he has learned from the Psalms; his purpose is to compare notes rather than to teach.

The book is optimistic in its viewpoint, highlighting positive themes in the text and finding hope and opportunity for growth even in the Psalms that may seem most disheartening. For example, in his discussion of the cursings in the Psalms, Lewis points out that strong negative emotions such as hatred and resentment are often mixed in with beautiful images of God and mercy and goodness. He explains that we can use these Psalms to assess our own feelings and conduct.

Much of *Reflections on the Psalms* is a literal approach to the Psalms, but the last few chapters take a more figurative angle. Lewis discusses second meanings in text, which he explains as existing

in three forms: total accidents, strict prophecies, and predictions made by gathering information and using one's knowledge to offer a hypothesis. He cautions that although an allegorical reading is in principle the most authoritative, this does not mean that all possible interpretations are logical or useful. He proposes some possible second meanings in the Psalms beyond their literal meanings. For example, he explains that Psalm 45 is on the surface an ode for a wedding, but on a deeper level it discusses Christ's birth. Lewis states that Christ is the Bridegroom and the church of the faithful is the bride, then expands on this imagery to suggest that Christ's birth is the arrival of the great warrior and king, lover, and father of children yet to be born.

One of the themes of Lewis's book is using the different aspects of and perspectives in the Psalms to deepen our study and improve ourselves. Among the topics he discusses are judgment, death, the beauty of the Lord, connivance, nature, praising, and scripture. His overall message is one of encouragement.

Sperry Symposium Papers on Old Testament Prophets Published

The twenty-sixth annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, sponsored by BYU and the Church Educational System, focused on the writings of Old Testament prophets. The publication of papers from that symposium by Deseret Book under the title *Voices of Old Testament Prophets* provides a significant opportunity to reflect on prophetic voices of the past and their value for Latter-day Saints. See the order form accompanying this issue of *Insights* to order your own copy.

The twelve essays included in this volume examine various aspects of Old Testament prophecy. Some are traditional studies of doctrine; others examine textual and contextual matters related to the biblical writings or their cultural and historical context. All are written by Latter-day Saint scholars with firm testimonies that the Old Testament is a testament of Jesus Christ.

For example, in the opening chapter, Elder

Russell M. Nelson examines the links between ancient and modern Israel, concluding that "ancient and modern Israel subscribe to an ageless message of the Old Testament: 'Know therefore that the Lord thy God . . . keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations' (Deuteronomy 7:9)."

The concluding chapter, by Robert L. Millet, dean of Religious Education at BYU, treats the topic of "Prophets and Priesthood in the Old Testament," examining the nature of Old Testament prophetic authority by the lamp of the restored gospel, thus tying Latter-day Saints to the Saints of former days.

In between are insightful chapters that can help the serious student of the scriptures come to love and appreciate better the writings of the Old Testament prophets.

Discoveries

Acrostics and Dating the Bible

Some biblical poetry is written using acrostics, meaning that each stanza or verse (or sometimes each half verse) begins with a different letter of the alphabet in a specific sequence, usually alphabetic. Acrostics are found in the books of Psalms, Proverbs, and Lamentations.¹ Biblical scholars, believing that the order of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet was established sometime after the sixth century B.C., have used such acrostics to assert that these books of the Bible were composed after 600 B.C. They have suggested that these books are from postexilic times, that is, after the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity.

During the late 1970s the discovery of a Hebrew *abecedary* (a listing of the letters of the alphabet in their alphabetical order) from the seventh century B.C. made it clear that the order of the letters had already been established in preexilic times.² Another discovery made at about the same time pushes the dating back by another five centuries. In 1978 an ostrakon (inscribed pottery shard) was uncovered at 'Izbet Sartah, thought by archaeologist Moshe Kochavi of Tel Aviv University to be the ancient site of Eben-ezer, where the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant (see 1 Samuel 4:1–11). The text, inscribed in letters whose form dates to the early twelfth century B.C., is a simple abecedary. The order of the letters is virtually the same as in later Hebrew abecedaries, although the order of *ayin* and *peh* is reversed.³

In a recent article, Harvey Minkoff explained the significance of the ostrakon for Bible studies,

noting that the early dating of the ostrakon suggests that the use of acrostics in biblical texts does not imply that those texts were postexilic.⁴ Indeed, the *peh-ayin* order of the abecedaries found at 'Izbet Sartah and Kuntillat Arjud (dating to the ninth century B.C.) is used three times in the Bible, including in the acrostics that make up Lamentations 2–4 and Psalm 34. Aaron Demsky, Kochavi, and Minkoff all suggest that this unusual letter order may have been a variant used in Israel from about 1200 to 539 B.C., when Lamentations was written.

Though many Bible scholars, and notably the "higher critics" (who tend to reject literal interpretations of the Bible), are hesitant to push any part of the biblical text back to preexilic times, the alphabetic acrostics suggest that this is exactly the time from which the poetry in the books of Psalms, Proverbs, and Lamentations originated.

NOTES

Thanks to John A. Tvedtnes for summarizing this evidence.

1. See Psalms 9–10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145; Proverbs 31:10–31; Lamentations 2; 3; 4. A partial alphabetic acrostic was used at the beginning of the book of Nahum.

2. See the following works by Rudolph Cohen: "Excavations at Kadesh-barnea 1976–78," *Biblical Archaeologist* (spring 1981): 98–99; "Did I Excavate Kadesh-Barnea?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 7/3 (1981): 25–30.

3. See Aaron Demsky and Moshe Kochavi, "An Alphabet from the Days of the Judges," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 4/3 (1978): 22–30.

4. See Harvey Minkoff, "As Simple as ABC: What Acrostics in the Bible Can Demonstrate," *Bible Review* 31/2 (1997): 27–31, 46–47.

Isaiah in the Book of Mormon (continued from page 1)

In four different sections the book offers guidance for the reader. The first section contains four essays that address the issue of understanding Isaiah's teachings by knowing the context in which the teachings are given and using clues from Israelite traditions and beliefs. First, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, in "'More Fully Persuaded': Isaiah's Witness of Christ's Ministry," discusses Isaiah's witness of the role of Christ as Redeemer. Isaiah's words speak powerfully to the hearts and souls of Latter-day Saints.

In the next essay, "Getting through Isaiah with the Help of the Nephite Prophetic View," John W.

Welch outlines a four-stage pattern in the Nephite prophetic writings that helps readers place these teachings in the context in which the Nephites understood them.

Donald W. Parry offers "Keys to Understanding Isaiah (2 Nephi 25:1–8)," which elaborates on each of the five keys Nephi gives. These keys center around knowing about the literary, historical, and geographical background of the prophecies, acknowledging their fulfillment, and being in tune with the Spirit.

In "'Choose the Things That Please Me': On the Selection of the Isaiah Passages in the Book of

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Isaiah in the Book of Mormon (continued from page 6)

Mormon," John Gee provides a look at how and why the early Nephite prophets used Isaiah. In addition to providing a basic pattern for future writers, their main purpose was to underscore their conviction that Jesus is the Christ.

Part two of the book contains section-by-section analyses of quoted Isaiah passages. Andrew C. Skinner considers "Nephi's Lessons to His People: The Messiah, the Land, and Isaiah 48–49 in 1 Nephi 19–22," showing that Nephi offered Isaiah's words as a message of hope and redemption in Christ. Nephi taught his people to exercise faith in the Redeemer, who would reject the rebellious; save the righteous from sins, suffering, and scattering; and redeem and restore the righteous to their lands of promise and to the presence of the Father.

In "Isaiah 50–51, the Israelite Autumn Festivals, and the Covenant Speech of Jacob in 2 Nephi 6–10," John S. Thompson shows a possible historical setting for Jacob's speech: the ancient covenant-renewal ceremony required by the law of Moses. Jacob's use of Isaiah, who prophesied of hope and redemption in the Messiah, in this ceremonial address indicates that the Nephites understood the festivals to typify Christ and point to his coming.

David Rolph Seely presents "Nephi's Use of Isaiah 2–14 in 2 Nephi 12–30," arguing that reading Isaiah with certain themes in mind makes comprehending his teachings easier. Besides addressing the themes of the coming of the Messiah and the succession of nations, he identifies pride as the main evil exposed by Isaiah. Nephi warned of the dangers of pride and encouraged humility.

"Heavenly Visions and Prophetic Calls in Isaiah 6 (2 Nephi 16), the Book of Mormon, and the Revelation of John," a contribution by Stephen D. Ricks, compares the heavenly visions seen by Isaiah, Lehi, and John the Revelator as they received their prophetic calls. Prophetic calls include most or all of the following features: God on his throne, a heavenly book, songs of praise, a commission, protests, and reassurances.

Robert A. Cloward discusses "Isaiah 29 in the Book of Mormon," showing how Nephi likened this chapter to his own circumstances and formulated an original prophecy that gave the old scriptures new significance and saw fulfillment in later Book of Mormon times.

In "How Beautiful upon the Mountains': The Imagery of Isaiah 52:7–10 and Its Occurrences in

the Book of Mormon," Dana M. Pike discusses the main features and symbolism of this oft-quoted Isaiah passage. Pike explores the possible meanings Isaiah may have intended for the imagery of this passage and its significance for Latter-day Saints.

John W. Welch next analyzes "Isaiah 53, Mosiah 14, and the Book of Mormon" to show that while Abinadi and others in antiquity interpreted Isaiah's suffering servant messianically, the Hebrew text left enough unstated that King Noah's wicked priests could adopt another reading to serve their purposes. The priests tried to convict Abinadi of false prophecy in a legal trial, but the Lord's servant had a higher purpose in calling the priests to repentance using the teachings of this passage.

In the final essay of this section, "The Lord's Covenant of Kindness: Isaiah 54 and 3 Nephi 22," Cynthia Hallen analyzes key phrases that demonstrate the Lord's beautiful, astonishing, and merciful love for his children, especially for the suffering and barren woman, who symbolically represents Zion, the earth, and God's servants.

Section three contains essays that address Isaiah and the restoration. Ann N. Madsen explores "Joseph Smith and the Words of Isaiah." She shows that Joseph Smith and Isaiah were each instructed in the mission of the other, Isaiah prophesying of Joseph Smith and Joseph Smith preaching Isaiah's teachings and his connection to them, particularly through the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

Royal Skousen analyzes the "Textual Variants in the Isaiah Quotations in the Book of Mormon." He explores how the King James Version of the Bible compares to the Isaiah quotations in the Book of Mormon, how Joseph Smith's personal revelation during the translation process influenced the wording of the Isaiah texts, and what changes the Prophet made to the Isaiah sections when he wrote the "New Translation" of the Bible.

In "Isaiah in America, 1700–1830," Andrew H. Hedges looks at how ministers and commentators in America during Joseph Smith's day used the Isaiah sections in the Bible. He finds that rarely did anyone look as deeply as Joseph Smith into the meaning of Isaiah's teachings, and none used Isaiah's teachings in the same way as did the writers of the Book of Mormon. Thus there existed no precedent for such an extensive usage of Isaiah.

Section four contains reference pieces, the first

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Isaiah and the Book of Mormon (continued from page 7)

of which is entitled "Notes on Vocabulary in Isaiah 2-11, 13-14, 29, 48-54," written by Donald W. Parry and Janet L. Garrard Willis. This glossary explains the archaic or perhaps unfamiliar English words or usages found in the English translation of the Isaiah texts in the Book of Mormon.

John W. Welch discusses the "Authorship of the Book of Isaiah in Light of the Book of Mormon." Whether the Isaiah chapters in the Bible had multiple authors is a controversial topic in Bible studies. While questions remain about exactly when some Isaiah passages were written or assembled, the Book of Mormon shows that its Isaiah passages took their final form before 600 B.C.

In "Wordprinting Isaiah in the Book of Mor-

mon," John L. Hilton shows that while measuring characteristics of other Book of Mormon authors has produced interesting findings, external constraints in Isaiah's texts (such as frequent quotations and poetic rather than prosaic passages) preclude statistically conclusive wordprints.

Finally, in "Isaiah and the Latter-day Saints: A Bibliographic Survey," John S. Thompson and Eric Smith provide an annotated listing of all books and articles by modern LDS scholars that treat Isaiah, with emphasis on Isaiah in the Book of Mormon.

Isaiah in the Book of Mormon is an excellent resource for your study of both the Book of Mormon and the Old Testament. Obtain your copy using the enclosed order form or look for it in LDS bookstores.

Brown Bags Continue to Inform (continued from page 3)

teaching English in South Korea, where he gathered further research on transoceanic diffusion. He discussed common features of ancient art and architecture in Asia and the New World, features that evidence contact between the two worlds.

On 17 September Allen J. Christenson, a Ph.D. candidate in Pre-Columbian Art History at the University of Texas, Austin, discussed a life-giving tree, similar to Lehi's tree of life, that is a central feature of Maya belief and permeates their mythology and worldview.

On 1 October Professor Stephen Houston of the BYU anthropology department gave an update on the continuing Piedras Negras excavation, highlighting the difficulties of conducting archaeological work at this site. Despite those difficulties, Houston is encouraged by the work being done and the discoveries being made at this site.

On 15 October John Pratt speculated about signs of the second coming of the Lord in a lecture entitled "The Night the Stars Fell: When Is a Sign a Sign?" A meteor shower on the night of 13 November 1833 was so spectacular that witnesses described it as stars falling like snowflakes. Joseph Smith proclaimed it a "sure sign" of the coming of the Lord, but not "the" sign. It has been determined that the earth passed through what once was the head of a comet. The debris from the comet still follows the comet's original orbit and burns up when it meets the earth's atmosphere, an event that occurs about every thirty-three years. Pratt's main

concerns were: If a sign can be predicted, does that disqualify it as a sign? He concludes that signs of the Lord's coming can be predictable.

Matthew B. Brown, an undergraduate history student at BYU, gave a lecture on 11 November about his recently published book entitled *Symbols in Stone: Symbolism on the Early Temples of the Restoration*. Brown and his coauthor traveled to the sites of temples in Nauvoo, Kirtland, and Salt Lake City to gather information about their architecture, building plans, early records, revelations, and documents to discover what these symbols meant to the prophets and early Saints and to uncover the myths about some of these symbols. Brown discussed such common temple symbols as stars, moons, and suns; the baptismal font oxen; the angel Moroni; and spirals.

In a two-part lecture on 18 November, E. Jan Wilson, Assistant Director of the FARMS Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts, reported on the formation and prospects of the Center. Wilson explained that the Center was created because FARMS had received projects that, while furthering religious understanding, have objectives not closely related to the FARMS focus on Book of Mormon scholarship. Current projects include the Dead Sea Scrolls Database and the preservation and cataloging of a collection of ancient texts. Steven W. Booras, Electronic Projects Specialist for FARMS, presented *The Dead Sea Scrolls on CD: The FARMS Electronic Database*. Before demonstrating

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Brown Bags Continue to Inform (continued from page 8)

the CD's capabilities, Booras related the four-year history of the Dead Sea Scrolls Database project. The CD contains the world's largest collection of high-quality digitized images of the Dead Sea Scrolls (roughly seventy-nine hundred images).

On 2 December David Arnold and David Long, assistant and associate professors, respectively, in the electrical and computer engineering department, described the history of synthetic aperture radar (SAR) in archaeological and geographical studies, focusing on the status of BYU's SAR project. SAR collects data that a computer can use to map terrain digitally rather than optically, revealing geologic and manmade features not apparent visually. With support from FARMS, BYU first used SAR in Israel to collect data from archaeological sites, including a site near Qumran. BYU plans to take another trip to map Israel and also to use SAR to map areas in Colorado and Chiapas and at the Piedras Negras ruins.

In the final lecture of the semester, on 10 December, S. Kent Brown, professor of ancient scripture and director of ancient studies at BYU, discussed "What Is Isaiah Doing in First Nephi? Or, How Did Lehi's Family Fare So Far from Home?" He focused on Nephi's public and private reasons for including the Isaiah passages and on the reaction of Lehi's family to being separated from Jerusalem. Brown argued that Nephi believed Isaiah's words prophesied of his family's journey through the wilderness to the promised land and saw parallels to his family's sufferings in Isaiah's teachings about scattered Israel and its eventual gathering. Brown also pointed out that Jacob gave poignant descriptions of his family's sorrow in leaving their beloved land of Jerusalem, describing the experience as including a painful separation, suffering with much affliction, and harshness, and describing his family as wanderers who had been cast out.

Journal Has Recent Research (continued from page 1)

In "The Way of Life and the Way of Death in the Book of Mormon," Mack C. Stirling discusses how nine Book of Mormon texts reinforce and clarify the chasm between eternal life and spiritual death. Whether a person walks the way of life or the way of death depends on his or her response to the Father and the Son during mortal life. The two paths are opposite and mutually exclusive, a dualism that underlies the entire Book of Mormon and links it theologically to the Doctrine and Covenants.

Furthering previous research on chiasmus, David E. Sloan considers Nephi's use of chiasmus to testify that Jesus is the Christ. In his "Nephi's Convincing of Christ through Chiasmus: Plain and Precious Persuading from a Prophet of God," Sloan explains that one of Nephi's major themes is his desire to convince Jews and gentiles that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. A second theme is his wish to write plain and precious truths. Sloan combines these themes to propose that some of Nephi's most precious truths are those that use the name *Christ* in chiasmus or other poetic forms to show that Jesus is indeed Christ our Redeemer.

In another article discussing literary techniques and forms, "Nephi's Psalm: 2 Nephi 4:16-35 in the Light of Form-Critical Analysis," Matthew Nickerson uses form-critical analysis to show how

Nephi's psalm clearly follows the conventions of the individual lament, a poetic form common in the Old Testament. An understanding of this poetic form can help readers better appreciate the message of trust and hope found in 2 Nephi 4:16-35.

Other articles found in this issue of the *Journal* are the following: "The Journey of the Hero: Archetypes of Earthly Adventure and Spiritual Passage in 1 Nephi," by Tod R Harris; "Glowing Stones in Ancient and Medieval Lore," by John A. Tvedtnes; "Girded about with a Lambskin," by Matthew B. Brown; and "Inspiring but Not True: An Added Glimpse of the RLDS Stance on the Book of Mormon," by Louis Midgley. The *Journal* also includes the following Notes and Communications: "Divine Discourse Directed at a Prophet's Posterity in the Plural: Further Light on Enallage," by Kevin L. Barney; "Another Note on the Three Days of Darkness," by John Gee; "That Which Is to Come," by John A. Tvedtnes; "Alma and the Jewish Practice of Blessing God after Eating One's Fill," by Angela M. Crowell and John A. Tvedtnes; "Hebrew Place Names in the Book of Mormon," by Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes; "'A Visionary Man,'" by John A. Tvedtnes; "Word Groups in the Book of Mormon," by John A. Tvedtnes; and "The Book of Lehi and the Plates of Lehi," by David E. Sloan.

Forthcoming publications

Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life, by John L. Sorenson. This large-format, full-color volume combines the best scholarly information about the way of life in ancient Mesoamerica with careful interpretations of what that information can tell us about life in Book of Mormon times. Over four hundred beautiful photographs, drawings, and maps help readers form visual images of life among the peoples of the Book of Mormon. After studying and enjoying this unique volume, students of the scriptures will read—and see—the Book of Mormon in new ways. Available in April.

King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom," edited by John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks. This volume contains the most substantial collection of studies ever assembled on King Benjamin's speech, a treasure trove of inspiration, wisdom, eloquence, and profound spiritual insight. Available in April.

Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson, edited by Davis Bitton. (See story on page 3.) Available in March.

Upcoming Events

21 March 1998: "Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World," a conference featuring papers from a forthcoming festschrift in honor of John L. Sorenson. Cosponsored by FARMS and BYU's Department of Anthropology, 8:30 A.M., room 151 of the Tanner Building on the BYU campus.

Book Donations Enhance FARMS Research Library

The LDS Church Translation Department has donated a collection of books and journals to FARMS. Tod Harris, manager of the department, delivered the 163 books and periodicals, including such works as *Vetus Testamentum*, *Novum Testamentum*, *Novum Testamentum Supplements*, *Studies in the History of Religions*, *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*, and *The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*. Several of these items will be of immediate value in FARMS research projects currently under way.

The FARMS Research Library is a noncirculating library, recently cataloged using Library of Congress catalog numbers (thanks to Dan McKinlay and Margaret Thorne) and available for use by FARMS researchers and subscribers. It includes books, papers, periodicals, videotapes, and audiotapes.

In the past, a number of subscribers have donated books to the library, for which FARMS is grateful. Readers who wish to make such contributions should contact the FARMS office to determine if books or other materials in their possession may be of use to FARMS researchers.

INSIGHTS

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The Foundation works to make interim and final reports about this research available widely, promptly, and economically. As a service to teachers and students of the scriptures, research results are distributed in both scholarly and popular formats.

It is hoped that this information will help all interested people to "come unto Christ" (Jacob 1:7) and to understand and take more seriously these ancient witnesses of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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P&W-98	Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch, eds., <i>Isaiah in the Book of Mormon</i> , 548 pp., retail \$24.95		\$19.95	
J-97b	Stephen D. Ricks, ed., <i>Journal of Book of Mormon Studies</i> 6/2		\$8.95	
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LDS Scholarship at SBL

At the recent annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), held 22–25 November 1997 in San Francisco, there were some interesting developments in the area of LDS scripture studies. In addition to a number of attendees from BYU and FARMS, at least three LDS scholars—Donald W. Parry, Eric G. Hansen, and John A. Tvedtnes—were speakers on the program. Hansen's paper, entitled "Parallels between the Egyptian 'Opening of the Mouth' Ritual and the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 25 through Alma 29)," may have been the first to use the Book of Mormon as the subject of a formal presentation at the international meeting. Other presentations on this volume of scripture have been made at regional meetings by both LDS and RLDS scholars.

Two other presenters, Claire Gottlieb and Gregory Glazov, acknowledged the work of LDS scholars in their presentations. Finally, Nili S. Fox provided support for LDS scholarship on the Book of Mormon in a discussion of the development of the Egyptian hieratic numerals used in written Hebrew texts by the Israelites during the ninth through the seventh centuries B.C. Fox suggested that the kinds of modification of the Egyptian symbols made by Israelite scribes demonstrated that these scribes were acquainted with the Egyptian writing system and that there was a longer history of close ties between Egypt and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah than previously thought. In making this argument, Fox inadvertently provided evidence that the Book of Mormon is correct in saying that there were Israelite scribes who were acquainted with the Egyptian language.

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