



BOOK OF MORMON CENTRAL

<https://bookofmormoncentral.org/>

Type: Newsletter

Insights, Vol. 3, No. 1 (March 1983)

Editor(s): FARMS Staff

Published by: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies



The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) existed from 1979 until 2006, when it was formally incorporated into the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. Archived by permission.

Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies

P.O. Box 7113 Univ. Station, Provo, UT 84602



Newsletter

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies is a non-profit research and educational organization dedicated to the study of ancient Scripture. Your tax deductible contributions enable FARMS to sponsor and coordinate a wide range of research projects that enhance our understanding of these sacred writings.

MARCH 1983

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As the Foundation continues to grow, we pass by some exciting milestones. Here are some *firsts* for F.A.R.M.S. for the last quarter:

We now mail to all 50 states in the United States.

Students in Australia used F.A.R.M.S. materials as the basis for an innovative conference on the Book of Mormon.

One person ordered a copy of everything we had (which at that time cost him \$107.65).

We commenced production of our first filmstrip on the Book of Mormon.

We received our first donation of corporate stock.

We held our first telephonic fireside.

We managed our first completely computerized Newsletter mailing.

We received our first unsolicited donation in excess of \$1,000.

We have twice outgrown our Reprint distribution storage shelves!

But first and foremost, we continue to find the post office box full of letters from participants all over the world. Please let us know if we can help. You can help by telling us what projects you have underway or by giving us the names and addresses of people you know who would be interested in receiving the Newsletter. That way our firsts will last.

F.A.R.M.S. NEWS

Jewish Professor Lectures of the Book of Mormon

In the fall of 1978 Professor Joseph P. Schlutz, Professor of Talmudic and Rabbinic literature at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, conducted a semester-long seminar in which he and the class together considered various Jewish elements present in the Book of Mormon. The lectures considered such topics as the concept of God, cosmology, prophecy, law, sacrifice, prayer, liturgy, festivals, family and political institutions, messianism, and views of the afterlife. About 20 students participated in the seminar and through the generosity of several of them, F.A.R.M.S. has been able to obtain two sets of cassette recordings of the sessions. In the next few months, these tapes will be transcribed and prepared for convenient use. Watch for the written copies of these interesting lectures to become available.

First Edition Donated

A remarkable copy of the 1830 First Edition of the Book of Mormon has been donated to F.A.R.M.S. This book, first owned by James Gilruth in 1831, was handed down within the family to Louis Edward Hills (1897), who served in the RLDS Quorum of Seventy until his release in 1923.

This volume is in excellent condition, containing all of its original pages. Since the printer, E. B. Grandin, made minor typographical corrections during the run of the first edition, some 36 of the 41 such corrections appear in this copy.

The Foundation deeply appreciates this precious contribution.

Dutch Readers Respond

Last September a translation of John W. Welch's 1969 article from *BYU Studies*, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," appeared in *Horizon*, a new magazine published in Holland for the LDS community in Europe. Each issue of *Horizon* features a "Studies" section in which F.A.R.M.S. Reprints and Preliminary Reports appear from time to time.

Response of readers, according to Editor Wilford Decoo, was overwhelming. Of particular interest was a letter from a Catholic Father, J. R. Nijmegen, which reads:

I wish that all my colleague-priests could read this remarkable article. It was a revelation for me. I have several inexpensive articles and books on my desk that give a "quick" explanation of Mormonism. The Book of Mormon is there noted as both "gruff and mixed," "styleless," and a "caricature of the Bible," and "heathenish and disordered."

And now it appears that this Book is built on rich and perfect chiasmic structures, which places it as an authentic literary document on the same high plain as the best texts from Biblical antiquity. I think that students and critics of the Mormon Church must learn to be more objective and careful in their judgments. Whoever would dispatch the Book of Mormon with a few cheap statements only shows that the spirit of the Inquisition is not yet dead. The Book of Mormon is an intriguing book. We must be able to and dare to judge it for its internal value.



More of Metal Plates in Stone Boxes

For the last two years F.A.R.M.S. has offered as one of its Reprints Curtis Wright's article from the *Journal of Library Science*, "Ancient Burials of Metal Documents in Stone Boxes: Implications for Library Science." Last month, an expanded version of this article was published by the University of Illinois in their Occasional Papers Series for the Graduate School of Library Science. This is high academic recognition for his work. You can order copies of this publication for \$3.00 from Occasional Papers, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, Publications Office, 249 Armory Bldg., 505 E. Armory Street, Champaign, IL 61820.

1828 Webster's Dictionary Available

Gordon Thomasson has brought to our attention the availability of a reproduction of *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828 First Edition, by Noah Webster. The dictionary is two volumes bound as one with 2,000 pages. It can be ordered from the Foundation for American Christian Education, 2946 Twenty-fifth Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94132. The cost is \$30.00 plus \$2.15 postage. As one might expect, this resource is valuable in determining the meanings of words used by Joseph Smith and his contemporaries. This sheds light on the meanings of passages in the Latter-day scriptures and historical documents.

Bibliography Contest Deadline

As announced in the last Newsletter, F.A.R.M.S. is sponsoring a contest to see who can add the most overlooked entries to the recently released Comprehensive Bibliography of the Book of Mormon. Over 130 copies of the Bibliography have already been sent out. Your assistance can help to make this research tool even more useful for future scholarship. Prizes for those who send in the most additions will be copies of recent books about the Book of Mormon autographed by their authors. The deadline for contest entries has been extended to April 30, 1983, but your suggestions or additions are welcome at any time.

NOTICES AND REVIEWS

Australian Students Host Symposium

It seemed like a good idea—a first-of-its-kind-in-Australia Book of Mormon symposium sponsored by the LDS Student Association at the University of Sydney in Australia.

It was a good idea. On October 9, 1982, about 220 people arrived for the all-day symposium, some from almost six hundred kilometers away. Gary L. Sturgess, one of the participants, wryly commented, "For a country where the only real experience with intensive Church 'scholarship' has been loonies saving up to buy a boat to sail to the North Pole to look for the Lost Tribes, it was a good experience.

The symposium's planners decided that the papers should introduce and summarize existing work rather than break new ground, for much of the material would be new indeed to those present. Most of the topics selected drew from papers in the F.A.R.M.S. Reprint Series and Sturgess acknowledged that "our reliance on F.A.R.M.S. is apparent," adding, "it is an indication of the value your work will have for those of us isolated from primary sources and the mainstream of Gospel scholarship."

Steven Mackie presented an analysis of the eight major theories of where the Book of Mormon lands might be. His presentation also discussed Lehi's probable route from Jerusalem to the Red Sea, the probable location of the Jaredite nation, whether the "face of the land" had become unrecognizable at the time of Christ's crucifixion, and how Joseph Smith received the plates in New York.

In discussing literary aspects of the Book of Mormon, Gary Sturgess explained and gave examples of its chiasmic structure drawn from the work of John Welch and Noel Reynolds, but also examined the literary antecedents and force of such images as the tree of life as described by Bruce Jorgensen's work, and reconstructed the possible Jerusalem temple rituals as prelude to examining evidences of the same theme in the Book of Mormon.

Ronald W. G. Innis attempted to bring some order to the field of Book of Mormon studies for the student by organizing forty selected books and papers according to their intent: defending the Book of Mormon (a purpose of earlier scholars); comparing possible links between the Old World and the New (examples were the cross-cultural studies of John Sorenson and Ray Matheny's analysis of the Padilla Gold Plates); doing a textual study of subjects contained only within the Book of Mormon (as John Tvedtnes's phonemic analysis of proper names for both Nephite and Jaredite figures); and current studies which approach such recurrent attacks as the Spaulding theory with new critical tools.

A detailed list of New World-Old World cultural similarities was provided by Richard W. Fee, while Michael Otterson related some warmly inspirational anecdotes about contemporary translations of the Book of Mormon gathered from interviews with members of the Church Translation Division.

LDSSA president Spencer Tasker and his organizing committee went the second mile in publishing the symposium's proceedings in an attractive notebook. Clearly the Australian vision for Book of Mormon studies is a responsible and an expansive one.

וְרֵאשִׁית בְּרֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: וְהָאָרֶץ אֲהִיָּה תְהוֹ וְכִהֵן וְהָאֵל

PROJECT UPDATES

Linguistic Report Submitted

Brian Stubbs has completed and submitted to F.A.R.M.S. his 93 page report entitled "Observations in Uto-Aztecan." Stubbs has been assisted by a research grant from the Foundation. His report concludes that there exists a possibility that "something Semitic" exists as a "substantial element of a proto Uto-Aztecan creole." (A creole is a mixture of two languages, for example, using the grammar of one and the vocabulary of another.)

He compares several hundred lexical sets showing similarities between Near Eastern Semitic languages and several branches of the New World Uto-Aztecan dialects. Stubbs finds that there are enough lexical, morphological, and root-specific semantic similarities that it would be difficult to attribute them all to chance.

These comparisons are representative: in Hebrew *dood* means beloved one or uncle, and *doda* means aunt. In Papago *daada-j* means mother's elder sister. Likewise, in Hebrew *hamar* means to cover or smear, while in Cahuilla *humay* means to smear or paint.

Research Corner: Synagogues in the Book of Mormon

Looking for an interesting research topic? You might consider studying the development of the synagogue in ancient Israel. It has some interesting possible parallels in the Book of Mormon.

Synagogues are mentioned several times in the Book of Mormon. Places of worship were called synagogues during the time of Nephi and Jacob (2 Ne. 26:26). Several centuries later, they were still being built by the Nephites "after the manner of the Jews" and were used along with temples and other sanctuaries, among other things, as places of preaching (Al. 16:13). Later, particular forms of synagogue worship developed. The Amalekites and Amulonites built synagogues "after the order manner of the Nehors" in the city of Jerusalem joining the borders of Mormon (Al. 21:4), where Ammon preached. The Zoramites also built synagogues in Antionum (Al. 31:12), which contained rameumptoms upon which the elect were allowed to pray.

Several points should be explored here. First is the amount of diversity evident in Book of Mormon synagogues. The institution of the synagogue was not rigid. There were synagogues after the manner of the Jews, after the manner of the Nehors, and in Antionum after a manner which amazed Alma and his companions. Similarly, ancient Israelite communal worship appears to have begun as a flexible practice and was known in several developmental stages.

The earliest hints possibly relevant to the origins and development of the synagogue in Israel are references to "holy convocations" (see Lev. 23:4; 2 Kings 4:23; Isa. 4:5), which according to Louis Finkelstein were the antecedents of the later established synagogue. It is noteworthy that these very early convocations were for the purposes of prayer and worship, which also seems to be the dominant function of the early synagogues in the Book of

Mormon. Nephi expressly calls his synagogues "houses of worship."

It is a matter of much scholarly debate when and how the synagogue as known to later Judaism actually developed. As the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* cautions, the specific origins of the synagogue are too faint "to venture a conjecture in this kind of antiquity." But there are certain possibilities. Some historians see the development of the synagogue occurring during the captivity of the Jews in Babylonia during the Sixth Century B.C. Others point to the Reforms of Josiah in 621 B.C. as giving rise to the use of local congregations for worship, prayer, and instructions among the Israelites. It is, of course, possible that both are right: there is no reason to believe that the Jewish synagogue suddenly came from nowhere and appeared in one instant in its fully developed form as known to later Rabbinic Judaism.

The Book of Mormon, of course, lends credence to the idea that synagogues, at least as places of worship, were known to Israel before the departure of Lehi from Jerusalem. While most scholars focus their attention on the development of the synagogue in post-Exilic Israel, those who discuss the pre-Exilic origins of the synagogue include the following: Leopold Loew, *Gesammelte Schriften*; Julian Morgenstern, *Studi Orientalistici in onore Giorgio Levi Della Vida*; Louis Finkelstein (long-time Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America); Azriel Eisenberg, and others. Weingreen in *Hermathena* (1964) writes: "It would be natural to suppose that, following upon the enforcement of Josiah's edict, religious services continued to be held outside Jerusalem, but now without sacrifices. . . . These must . . . have constituted the basis of the synagogue service of later times." An extensive treatment of all sides of the history of the synagogue can be found in Joseph Gutmann, *The Synagogue* (New York: Krav, 1975).

Another aspect of this study would examine the name *synagogue*. The word *synagogue* is of Greek origin. It is the term used in the Septuagint to translate several Hebrew words ranging from *camp* to *assembly*, *community*, and *congregation*. The Hebrew roots involved here should be explored to cast light on the underlying practices of ancient Israel. Of course, we do not know what Hebrew or other word the Nephites or Zoramites used in naming their places of worship. It is interesting to note, however, that the word *synagogue* is made from two parts: the prefix *syn* which means together and the verb *ago* which means to gather or to bring together. Interestingly, in Alma 31:12 the phrase "gather together" appears in immediate literal conjunction with the term *synagogue*: "the Zoramites had built synagogues and they did gather themselves together."

Obviously, considerably more work will be needed before we fully will understand, if we indeed ever will, even the basic nature of ancient Israelite places of worship, their sanctuaries, temples, and the names by which they knew them. This history, however, is significant and takes on particular interest to the student of the Book of Mormon.

EN ἀρχῆ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸ

REPRINTS & PRELIMINARY REPORTS

F.A.R.M.S. is pleased to announce the addition of the following articles as Reprints and Preliminary Reports now available. One of the Foundation's main functions is to make research about the Book of Mormon easily accessible to general readers. The demand for these papers continues to be very strong and responses have been enthusiastic.

Two papers, both entitled "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon," one by Angela Crowell from *Zarahemla Record* (published by the Zarahemla Research Foundation, discussed below) and the second by John Tvedtnes from *BYU Studies*, discuss Hebrew idioms and grammatical constructions in the Book of Mormon. The authors cover Hebraisms such as singular-plurals, specific idioms, pronominal suffixes, construct state, adverbs, cognate accusatives, the prophetic perfect, and other words or phrases which may sound awkward as English constructions but are normal in Hebrew. These studies are not exhaustive and further analysis of both the Hebrew and non-Hebrew expressions in the Book of Mormon is still needed. But these studies make excellent points of departure. Both authors find the study of Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon to be enlightening and confirming.

The Zarahemla Research Foundation provides materials about Book of Mormon archeology and linguistics. It operates a library and Book of Mormon research center in Independence, Missouri. They distribute books, maps, games, posters and other scriptural enrichment materials in addition to their quarterly newsletter, *Zarahemla Record*. Anyone interested should write to P.O. Box 1727, Independence, MO. 64055.

Robert Paul's article on Joseph Smith and the Manchester (New York) Library studies the information environment of the 1820s in Manchester, New York, and lists all books held by its library up to 1845. The list shows the relatively meager resources available to Joseph Smith and concludes, moreover, "We can be reasonably certain that young Joseph did not exploit the resources of the Manchester Library."

Read Putnam's paper, "Were the Plates of Mormon of Tumbaga," is a metallurgist's pondering over what alloy might have been used by Mormon in fashioning his "golden" plates. An alloy known to early American metalsmiths called tumbaga has characteristics which would have made it an attractive candidate for Mormon to use: it was relatively lightweight, could be pounded into thin sheets, had a good Brinell hardness for engraving and would have presented a solid gold appearance to the eye.

Two articles by John W. Welch from the *Ensign* offer some Old World views on the Book of Mormon. The first looks at the world of Jerusalem during the days when Lehi would have been growing up and finds many concerns of that day, particularly in the Reforms of Josiah and the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in the first year before the reign of Zedekiah, which set the stage dramatically for the religious awareness and prophetic statements of the early Book of Mormon prophets. The second article reports several experiences with scholars who find themselves convinced by several remarkable aspects of the book.

Recently completed is the Preliminary Report from Gary Gillum, "Hugh Nibley: A Subject Index to His Works." Also listed, from Gillum and Welch is the Comprehensive Bibliography. These are extensive reports which should prove to be indispensable for the serious Nibley buff or Book of Mormon scholar. Special thanks go to Reed Hyde and Bev Wilbur for their work on the 96 page computerization of the Bibliography.

In his paper "Lehi's 600-Year Prophecy and the Birth of Christ," Jay Huber examines in detail the apparent problem of the historical dating of "the first year of the reign of king Zedekiah, king of Judah," when Nephi's account begins. From then to the probable date for the birth of Christ is somewhat less than the "600 years" given by the Nephite record. Here for the first time, an LDS author treats fully the matter of the Nephite calendar in relation to historical and astronomical information from both the Near East and Mesoamerica. In the course of resolving the calendrical riddle, Huber discusses a hitherto neglected prophecy about Christ which his reconciliation of chronology makes plausible. This report has had the benefit of significant cooperation from astronomers, historians, archeologists and scriptionists, all of whom have enhanced this study.

The Book of Mormon describes small ancient migrations of Near Eastern people (presumably bearded) to the New World. One of the salient physiological characteristics of American Indians, however, is a general absence of facial hair. This anomalous situation is complicated by the fact that bearded figures are frequently portrayed in Mesoamerican art. Kirk Magleby's paper catalogues and analyzes over 250 ancient Mesoamerican bearded figures in an attempt to uncover a relationship between these artistic portrayals and the Book of Mormon peoples.

Gordon Thomasson discusses the significance of the icons of royalty in the Book of Mormon. Comparisons are drawn with illustrations of regal symbols from European art. The paper discusses the dialectical style of literary composition of the Book of Mosiah and explores the relationship of some principles of political philosophy and theology in Nephite society.

Bruce Van Orden, who has recently completed a doctoral dissertation on the life of George Reynolds, one of the leading Book of Mormon scholars around the turn of the century, has prepared two concise biographical sketches, one of Reynolds and another of his contemporary Janne Sjodahl. Van Orden's research provides a background against which to appreciate and assess the scholarly output of these two Book of Mormon commentators.

Also offered with this Newsletter is a F.A.R.M.S. staff paper on weights and measures. It examines Alma 11 concerning the monetary units and measures used among the Nephites in relation to data from the ancient Near East. Detailed information is mustered in several languages, and several systems of weights and volumes are compared with Nephite usage. For example, the Egyptians measured grain with bars and dots reminiscent of the Mesoamerican system. The paper also shows that in Sumerian, the -um suffix was the masculine singular and the -on suffix was the masculine double, as in Alma 11, a *shiblun* is twice the size of a *shiblum*.

