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FOUNDATION FOR
ANCIENT RESEARCH &
MORMON STUDIES

INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

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

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE JOSEPH SMITH TO TRANSLATE THE BOOK OF MORMON?

Among the amazing facts about the Book of Mormon is the astonishingly short time Joseph took to translate it. Recent research into the historical record shows it unlikely that any more than 65 to 75 days were involved in the actual translation.

Translation of the Book of Mormon, as we have it today, did not begin in earnest until April 7, 1829, after the arrival of Oliver Cowdery in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Before this time, Joseph had translated only the 116 pages of the Book of Lehi (which transcript Martin Harris lost) and had worked on a few pages with Emma as his scribe. Working "with little cessation," Joseph and Oliver had reached 3 Nephi 11 by May 15, and they apparently completed the Plates of Mormon by May 31. This appears likely, since the Title Page at the end of these plates was translated before June 11, the date on which the full text of the Title Page appears in the copyright application for the Book of Mormon. At that point, no more than 55 days had transpired.

The work continued after a move to the Whitmer farm in Fayette, New York. It appears that the Small Plates of Nephi were translated at this time. By mid-June, Joseph and Oliver had finished 1 Nephi and had reached 2 Nephi 27, which most likely sparked the manifestation to the Three Witnesses, although other scenarios are possible. In any event, the manuscripts of the *History of the Church* indicate that the few remaining pages were finished following the visitation to the Three Witnesses. Thus, about 20 days in June.

Total days: Hardly more than 75. Probably less. These were busy days. From April to June, one must also allow Joseph time to reveal several sections of the D&C; to restore the Priesthood; to baptize others; to give personal instructions to Oliver, Hyrum and Samuel Smith, and Joseph Knight; to move on buckboard from Harmony to Fayette (3 to 4 days); to obtain the copyright; and to eat and sleep.

In practical terms alone, this is an impressive feat: 7 to 10 current book pages per day, final copy, day after day. Imagine, on average, only a day and a half to compose King Benjamin's speech, or a week to do 1 Nephi, or a couple of hours for Alma 36! No wonder Oliver wrote in 1834, "These were days never to be forgotten."

UPDATES FOR 1985 NOW AVAILABLE

Updates: Every month, the most exciting discoveries and developments in Book of Mormon research are reported in the F.A.R.M.S. Updates. These are scholarly, documented, quickly readable executive-type reports, mailed to researchers and substantial contributors. At the end of each year these Updates are collected and made available as a F.A.R.M.S. Preliminary Report. For anyone who likes to keep up on Book of Mormon developments, these Updates are a gold mine. Topics this year were:

1. **New Year's Celebrations:** Covenant renewals and major festivals fell on the New Year. Several Book of Mormon connections can be drawn.

2. **Dancing Maidens and the Fifteenth of Av:** A possible connection is proposed between the matrimonial dancing of the girls in ancient Israel on this summer festival and the dancing of the Lamanite daughters in Mosiah 20:1 before their marriage.

3. **Jacob's Ten Commandments:** Jacob's ten "woes" in 2 Nephi 9:27-38 are related in content and usage to the "thou shalt nots" of the Decalogue.

4. **Nephi's Garden and Chief Market:** Recent archaeology confirms central and multiple marketplaces in Mesoamerican settlements, consistent with the description in Helaman 7:10.

5. **What Did Charles Anthon Really Say?:** Early evidence from W. W. Phelps and (if the 1830 letter is authentic) from Martin Harris confirms the use of the phrase "short-hand Egyptian" to describe the characters taken by Harris to Anthon. This technical use of terminology is shown to corroborate Harris' account, which Anthon later denied.

6. **Moses, Moroni, and the Salamander:** The meaning of the salamander in ancient Jewish, Greek, Arabic and Medieval traditions, as well as sources contemporary with Joseph Smith, show the salamander to be associated with immortal, divine, enduring, resurrecting, and protecting spirits. One should note, however, that recent developments have left the

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authenticity of Martin Harris' so-called Salamander Letter very unclear.

7. **Lost Arts:** Solid examples of the true arch and the potter's wheel in the New World are discussed as typical examples of the way a society's technology can be lost over time. After this Update went out, Paul Hoskisson added the point that the use of the wheel was lost in the Near East after about 200 A.D.

8. **Joseph Smith: "Author and Proprietor":** In the first edition of the Book of Mormon Joseph Smith called himself its "author and proprietor." Federal copyright law of the period explains why.

9. **Abinadi and Pentecost:** Recent work by Professor Moshe Weinfeld, Hebrew University, links the recitation of the Ten Commandments with Pentecost, allowing us to put Abinadi's use of the Decalogue into its festival context.

10. **View of the Hebrews: "An Unparallel":** This Update summarizes many ways in which the Book of Mormon ignores, diverges from, and contradicts Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*, an alleged source of parallels to the Book of Mormon.

11. **No, Sir, That's Not History!:** B. H. Roberts is shown to have written his "Study of the Book of Mormon" in 1922 (contrary to assumptions others have made); several problems regarding essays about Roberts and the Book of Mormon are discussed.

12. **Number 24:** Our 24th Update deals with the significance of the number 24 as a judicial and priestly number in the courts of law and temple service in ancient Israel, Rabbinic Judaism, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Book of Mormon.

The 12 **Updates of 1984** are also still available on the attached Order Form.

Best of the Newsletter, 1981-85: In addition to the Updates, excerpts from the F.A.R.M.S. Newsletter over the past five years have now been gathered into one set. Past articles are about synagogues, metonymy, Nephi's arrows, and a "day and half's journey." For new F.A.R.M.S. participants, here is a chance to get caught up on some past reading.

"AND IT CAME TO PASS" IN MAYAN

Martin Raish reports a passing curiosity. Last spring at the Maya Hieroglyphic Workshop at the University of Texas, the translation of a common glyph was proposed by Linda Schele. The glyph, in the Palace Tablet at Palenque, translates "And it came to pass." Virginia Morell's article, "The Lost Language of Coba," *Science* '85, March, p. 48, similarly notes that David Stuart translates the first glyph on a Palenque tablet as meaning "it came to pass." These points may be added as footnotes to Robert F. Smith's "'It Came to Pass' in the Bible and the Book of Mormon," SMI-80, available on the attached order form.

VISIT RAMSES WITH HUGH NIBLEY

Thursday, April 3, 1986, will be a F.A.R.M.S. Night at the Ramses II exhibit on the BYU campus through April 5. We have 200 tickets at \$4.00 each, and they will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis (see attached order form). We will gather at the exhibit entrance at 7 p.m. to tour the artifacts, then later meet in Room 254 of the Harman Conference Center for a reception, brief presentation, and question/answer session with Dr. Nibley. We hope you will be able to join us.

GENERAL AUTHORITIES TALK ABOUT THE BOOK OF MORMON

A new collection of talks and articles about the Book of Mormon by General Authorities has been added to the F.A.R.M.S. materials this month. In this issue we offer talks by Mark E. Petersen, and several articles by B. H. Roberts written between 1900 and 1911. They may be ordered on the attached Order Form.

President Benson has stressed the importance, mission and use of the Book of Mormon. "Not only should we know what history and faith-promoting stories it contains, but we should understand its teachings," President Benson has stated. Many talks by General Authorities aid our faith and understanding of the Book of Mormon. Elder Petersen's talks emphasize America's destiny and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. He asks, "Dare we forget?"

Various articles from B. H. Roberts' early studies of the Book of Mormon deal with the originality of certain teachings in the Book of Mormon, ways in which the translation of the Book of Mormon employed passages from the Bible, the plausibility of Joseph Smith's story, and the examination of texts through higher criticism. Some of these studies are now a little outdated, as Roberts knew they would become: "We need not be surprised if . . . the generations who succeed us . . . will find that we have had some misconceptions and made some wrong deductions." However, most of his insights are still very timely and over his active and probing intellect, which profoundly recognized its own limitations, reigned a monumental faith: The Book of Mormon "will resist all such conclusions of higher criticism. . . . The truth of God it will establish." Only if testimony prevails, Roberts says, will the Lord "find faith in the earth" at his coming.

MORE PERSPECTIVES ON BENJAMIN'S SPEECH

Two more interesting insights into the complex nature of King Benjamin's speech have been noticed. First, in the June 1985 issue of the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, an article by William Kurz analyzes the twenty elements found in typical classical Greek, Roman and Biblical "farewell addresses." In such speeches, the person who is about to die summons successors, points to his own mission as an example, proclaims his innocence, discusses his impending death, gives exhortations, appoints a successor, etc. While many of these elements taken alone are unremarkable, the full pattern Kurz displays is interesting. It is apparent that King Benjamin's speech fits the pattern as well as or better than most of the examples Kurz analyzes.

Second, Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* 1:100-15, discusses the probable elements of standard Israelite coronations. Coronations occurred at the temple (cf. Mosiah 1:18), following an investiture with royal insignia such as a scepter or sword (cf. 1:16). The king was anointed (cf. 6:3), then acclaimed by the people in a proclamation of willingness to keep the king's or God's commandments (cf. 5:5). After the coronation the officers of the kingdom were reordained to reestablish the political order under the new king (cf. 6:3). It was also common (unlike the practice in Europe) for a co-regency to exist, with the new king serving concurrently with the old monarch until the latter's death (cf. 6:4-5). These and other factors indicate that King Benjamin's coronation of his son Mosiah II followed identifiable ancient Israelite customary procedures.

SCRIPTURE CONCORDANCE ON COMPUTER DISK

The "DSEARCH" Scripture Computer Concordance, recently developed by a BYU research staff, is now available for purchase at the BYU Bookstore. This computerized index engine (\$30.00) locates chapter and verse references by simply entering a word or combination of words contained in the scripture, searching 40,000 verses in about 3 seconds. Single-disk-drive IBM PC-compatible systems will run the programs for the Book of Mormon, New Testament, Doctrine & Covenants with Pearl of Great Price (\$6.00 each). To search the full Bible or Quadruple Combination (\$15.00 each) requires an IBM PC-compatible system with a hard disk. This product offers only concordance or index outputs. Write directly to the BYU Bookstore for further information.

DOCTRINE & COVENANTS BOOK BENEFITS F.A.R.M.S.

The *Doctrine & Covenants by Themes*, published recently by Bookcraft and edited by John and Jeannie Welch, is a useful study aid which will probably make the ideas of the Doctrine & Covenants more accessible to most readers. We make it available, since readers of the scriptures will find it handy and since all royalties for the book have been donated to F.A.R.M.S.

STATUE DONATED TO ASSIST BOOK OF MORMON STUDIES

Stan Johnson, noted sculptor from Mapleton, Utah, has donated to F.A.R.M.S. a significant bronze statue of a Moqui Indian dancer. This beautiful gift is gratefully acknowledged. We are interested in locating connoisseurs of fine bronze to discuss the highest possible use the Foundation might make of this valuable piece of art. Any contacts would be welcomed.

AAR/SBL SESSION TO BE HELD

A call for papers has gone out for a new "Consultation" Session to be held at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Atlanta in late November. The session theme is the "The Latter-day Saint Religious Tradition." For further information, contact Gordon Thomasson, 821 North 2200 West, Provo, Utah 84601.

Catalog Number	Author and Title	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Price
HIL-86	Hilton, John L., "Review of Taves' Book of Mormon Stylometry"		\$.75	
PET-86	Petersen, Mark E., "Book of Mormon Addresses" (25 pp.)		\$ 1.50	
ROB-00	Roberts, B. H., "A Nephite's Commandments to His Three Sons," (<i>Improvement Era</i> , 1900, 17 pp.)		\$ 1.00	
ROB-04	Roberts, B. H., "Bible Quotations in the Book of Mormon" (<i>Improvement Era</i> , 1904, 10 pp.)		\$.75	
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ROB-05	Roberts, B. H., "Higher Criticism and the Book of Mormon" (<i>Improvement Era</i> , 1911, 15 pp.)		\$.75	
SMI-80	Smith, Robert F., "'It Came to Pass' in the Bible and the Book of 1 Nephi"		\$.75	
STF-85c	"The F.A.R.M.S. Monthly Updates for 1985" (14 pp.)		\$ 1.00	
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STF-85d	"The Best of the F.A.R.M.S. Newsletter, 1981-85" (50 pp.)		\$ 2.50	
STF-84a	Staff, F.A.R.M.S., "Book of Mormon Critical Text: A Tool for Scholarly Reference" (3-volume set, available only as a set, volumes 1 and 2 now available). ISBN 0-934893-02-0		\$55.00	
N-I	Nibley, Hugh W., <i>Old Testament and Related Studies</i> (Deseret and F.A.R.M.S., 1986), volume 1 of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley (publication date March 18), 300 pp. ISBN 0-87579-032-1		\$15.95	
D&C	Welch, John W., and Jeannie, <i>The Doctrine & Covenants by Themes</i> (Bookcraft, 1985), 320 pp. ISBN 0-88494-583-9		\$12.95	
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NIBLEY WORKS VOLUME I PUBLISHED

The first volume of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley is now available. *Old Testament and Related Studies* gathers together eleven Nibley articles and talks, several of which are published here for the first time. The first four address problems raised by opponents of the Bible—claims against the historicity of the creation account and early narratives in Genesis, and the skeptical views of existentialist theologians, textual critics, and evolutionists. Three other papers deal with the creation itself, with innuendos regarding rituals based on creation account narratives. Other essays are about Isaiah and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

This is the first of a multi-volume series of Nibley's Collected Works, being published in cooperation with Deseret Book Company. The second volume, *Enoch The Prophet*, will appear this fall. All the articles are being edited, footnotes checked and standardized, and newly typeset. Subsequent volumes will cover Ancient History, Pearl of Great Price, Early Christianity, Book of Mormon, Mormonism, Education, Politics and Society. Editors include Linda Adams, Jim Bell, Todd Compton, Gary Gillum, Don Norton, Stephen Ricks, Michael Rhodes, John Welch, David Whittaker, and many assistants.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

1985 has been an eventful and successful year for the work of the Foundation. Your support and interest has made most of it possible. In addition to completing several books and papers in 1985, we have greatly enhanced our office staff and equipment; our 1985 Catalog has proved very valuable; funding has been generous, and major news coverage has accelerated. For 1986 we look forward to projects now underway with the Nibley Collected Works, warfare, temples, legal texts, King Benjamin's Speech, and many others.

We appreciate and always welcome your comments. Each F.A.R.M.S. Preliminary Report bears an inscription which states that the reports are "made available to be critiqued and improved and to stimulate further research." Your comments, suggestions, criticisms, and corrections are our most valued responses. They improve our collective knowledge. As B. H. Roberts wrote in 1909, "The book of knowledge is never a sealed book; rather it is an eternally open book in which one may go on constantly discovering new truths and modifying our knowledge of old ones." Your participation in this significant process is always invited.

CRITICAL TEXT VOL. II COMPLETED

Volume II of the *Book of Mormon Critical Text: A Tool for Scholarly Reference* has just been completed. At almost 550 pages, it is the result of thousands of hours of painstaking comparison of the various manuscripts and editions of the Book of Mormon; it organizes thousands of Biblical and other textual parallels. Not for the casual reader, this monumental three-volume work shows each noteworthy change that has ever occurred in the Book of Mormon through all its major editions.

BOOK REVIEWED

John Hilton has submitted a review of the stylometric or word-print studies of Ernest Taves. While word-print studies may eventually tell us a great deal about various word-placement habits in the texts of the Book of Mormon and the writings of Joseph Smith, the efforts of Taves are flawed in several ways. Hilton and his colleagues have been working for several years on what they hope will be a more-definitive computer analysis of Book of Mormon texts. Hilton's review may be ordered now, while the larger study is still in preparation.

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Do your friends and yourself a favor! Now is a good time to send in names and addresses for the F.A.R.M.S. mailing list. We will send an "Introductory Packet" to each person you refer to us. This material explains F.A.R.M.S. to your friends and extends an invitation to receive the Newsletter. For your effort, we will extend your Newsletter enrollment for an additional nine months. If you are moving, be sure to send us your change of address.

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