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The Foundation for
Ancient Research
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INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

1994, No. 4

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

July

New Book: LDS Scholars Explore the Nature and Significance of Temples in Ancient and Modern Times

Three essays by Hugh Nibley, all the papers presented at the 1993 F.A.R.M.S. annual symposium, other important temple papers, a keynote address by Elder Marion D. Hanks (former president of the Salt Lake Temple), striking illustrations by Michael Lyon (who illustrated Nibley's *Temple and Cosmos*)—these features and more make *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism* one of the most significant volumes ever published on the temple. Never has one book contained so many original contributions by LDS scholars to our understanding of ancient temples and their modern counterparts.

Temples of the Ancient World focuses on the temple in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East, in the New Testament, in Jewish writings, and in the Book of Mormon and ancient America. Its twenty-four essays examine the meaning of sacred vestments and sacred time, the rich symbolism of the temple ceremonies, the distinction between sacred versus profane space, temple architecture, and the relationship of the temple to kingship, law, and covenants (see the order form for a complete table of contents). The insights gained from these studies also generate reflections on the modern temple.

The Saints have always been a temple-building people. From the Kirtland temple to the sacred structures of today, the Latter-day Saints have built temples wherever they have been. This great concern for sacred houses of the Lord has been shared by the people of God in past dispensations as well. "What was the object of gathering the Jews, or the people of God in any age of the world?" Joseph Smith asked. "The main

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Spring 1994 Issue of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* Released

The latest issue of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* features studies of the language, literary style, theology, and history of the Book of Mormon. The following essays are included:

- "What's in a Name? Book of Mormon Language, Names, and [Metonymic] Naming," Gordon C. Thomasson
- "The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?" Royal Skousen
- "Recurrence in Book of Mormon Narratives," Richard Dilworth Rust
- "Dissent: Perspectives from the Book of Mormon," Lynn D. Wardle
- "A Response to David Wright on Historical Criticism," Kevin Christensen
- "The Secular as Sacred: The Historiography of the Title Page," David B. Honey
- "The Jaredite Exodus: A Literary Perspective of a Historical Narrative," John S. Thompson
- "Enallage in the Book of Mormon," Kevin L. Barney
- "Cry Redemption: The Plan of Redemption as Taught in the Book of Mormon," Corbin T. Volluz
- "Historical Parallels to the Destruction at the Time of the Crucifixion," John A. Tvedtnes
- "Wanderers in the Promised Land: A Study of the Exodus Motif in the Book of Mormon and the Holy Bible," Bruce J. Boehm
- Notes and Communications
 - * "Lehi's Jerusalem and Writing on Metal Plates," William J. Adams, Jr.
 - * "'My First-Born in the Wilderness,'" John A. Tvedtnes

This issue of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* may be ordered using the enclosed order form.



F.A.R.M.S. UPDATE

The Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies

Number 95

July 1994

Metal Plates and the Book of Mormon

IN THE PAST CRITICS OF THE BOOK of Mormon have attacked the alleged absurdity of the Book of Mormon having been written on golden plates and its claim of the existence of an early sixth century B.C. version of the Hebrew Bible written on brass plates.¹ Today, however, critics almost universally admit that there are numerous examples of ancient writing on metal plates. Ironically, some critics now claim instead that knowledge of such plates was readily available in Joseph Smith's day. Hugh Nibley's 1952 observation seems quite prescient: "it will not be long before men forget that in Joseph Smith's day the prophet was mocked and derided for his description of the plates more than anything else."²

Recent reevaluation of the evidence now points to the fact that the Book of Mormon's description of sacred records written on bronze plates fits quite nicely in the cultural milieu of the ancient eastern Mediterranean.

One of the earliest known surviving examples of writing on "copper plates" are the Byblos Syllabic inscriptions (eighteenth century B.C.), from the city of Byblos on the Phoenician coast. The script is described as a "syllabary [which] is clearly inspired by the Egyptian hieroglyphic system, and in fact is the most important link known between the hieroglyphs and the Canaanite alphabet."³ It would not be unreasonable to describe the Byblos Syllabic texts as eighteenth century B.C. Semitic "bronze plates" written in "reformed Egyptian characters."⁴

Walter Burkert, in his recent study of the cultural dependence of Greek civilization on the ancient Near East, refers to the transmission of the practice of writing on bronze plates (Semitic root *dlt*) from the Phoenicians to the Greeks. "The reference to 'bronze *deltai* [plates, from *dlt*]' as a term [among the Greeks] for ancient sacral laws would point back to the seventh or sixth century [B.C.]" as the period in which the terminology and the practice of writing on bronze plates was transmitted from the Phoenicians to the Greeks.⁵ Students of the Book of Mormon will note that this is precisely the time and place in which the Book of Mormon claims that there existed similar bronze plates which contained the "ancient sacred laws" of the Hebrews, the close cultural cousins of the Phoenicians.

Burkert also maintains that "the practice of the *subscriptio* in particular . . . connects the layout of later Greek books with cuneiform practice, the indication of the name of the writer/author and the title of the book right at the end, after the last line of the text; this is a detailed and exclusive correspondence which proves that Greek literary practice is ultimately dependent upon Mesopotamia. It is necessary to postulate that Aramaic leather scrolls formed the connecting link."⁶ Joseph Smith wrote that "the title-page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from *the very last leaf*, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates, which contained the record which has been translated."⁷ This idea would have

been counterintuitive in the early nineteenth century when "Title Pages" appeared at the beginning, not the end, of books.

Why, then, did Joseph claim the Book of Mormon practiced *subscriptio*—writing the name of the author and title at the end of the book? If the existence of the practice of *subscriptio* among the Greeks represents "a detailed and exclusive correspondence which proves that Greek literary practice is ultimately dependent upon Mesopotamia [via Syria]," as Burkert claims, cannot the same thing be said of the Book of Mormon—that the practice of *subscriptio* represents "a detailed and exclusive correspondence" which offers proof that the Book of Mormon is "ultimately dependent" on the ancient Near East?

NOTES

1. See for example John Hyde, Jr., *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York: Fetridge, 1857), 217-18; M. T. Lamb, *The Golden Bible* (New York: Ward and Drummond, 1887), 11; and Stuart Martin, *The Mystery of Mormonism* (London: Odhams Press, 1920), 27; see William J. Hamblin, "Sacred Writing on Bronze Plates in the Ancient Mediterranean," available on the order form in this issue of *INSIGHTS*, for full references and analysis of the issues raised in this Update.
2. Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, CWHN 5:107.
3. See David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 4:178-80. Byblos is only about 170 miles north of Jerusalem.
4. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, 105-6, mentions these plates, which were not deciphered until 1985.
5. Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, 30.
6. *Ibid.*, 32.
7. HC 1:71, emphasis added.

Based on research by William J. Hamblin

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

New Temple Book

object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby he could reveal unto his people the ordinances of his house and the glories of his kingdom" (HC 5:423-24).

The temple was so important to the ancient Israelites and the other people of the ancient Near East that it played a prominent role not only in their religion but also in their government, economy, art, and social structure. The tabernacle of Moses was so important to the Israelites that they carried it about with them in their wanderings to serve as a mobile sanctuary. The temple of Solomon in Jerusalem became the political and religious focal point for the kingdom of Israel under the reigns of the early Israelite kings. During his mortal ministry, Jesus placed great emphasis on the temple of Herod—it was a place where he both learned and taught. Soon after their arrival in the New World, the Nephites built a temple patterned after the temple of Solomon, and it was at the temple in Bountiful that the resurrected Lord visited and taught the Nephite faithful.

The recent popularity of Hugh Nibley's *Temple and Cosmos* indicates that Latter-day Saints are vitally interested in temples and information related to sacred structures and rituals. The information in the new volume builds on and goes beyond the discussions in *Temple and Cosmos*. New and significant material is presented especially about the temple in the Book of Mormon and about temple imagery in the Revelation of John, the book of Hebrews, and the epistles of Peter.

Readers of the 805-page *Temples of the Ancient World* will gain a greater appreciation for the temples of old and, at the same time, come to more fully understand the temples of the present era.

See the order form for details on ordering this significant volume at a special introductory price of \$22.50.

BOOK OF MORMON BRAIN TEASER

On Your Honor

What is an oath worth? It depends on who makes it. Each person (or group of people) from the Book of Mormon listed below on the left is associated in some way with oaths or promises. Match the person or group with the correct situation on the right. [This quiz was submitted by Jeanine Tew. We welcome similar educational contributions from other readers.]

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. ___ Akish | A. Gadianton robber leader. Swore an oath to destroy all the Nephites unless they surrendered to him. Laid siege but failed to defeat them. |
| 2. ___ Amalickiah | B. Made an oath never to take up arms again after being converted to Christ—and didn't. |
| 3. ___ Giddianhi | C. Arch enemy of Captain Moroni. Swore to drink Moroni's blood but died without getting a sip. |
| 4. ___ Jesus Christ | D. Nephi's oath convinced this man that he would be safe if he left Jerusalem with Lehi's family. |
| 5. ___ Lamanites | E. Put the idea of using secret oaths and combinations to gain power into Gadianton's heart. |
| 6. ___ People of Ammon | F. A Lamanite warrior who refused to take an oath of peace because he was sure he would break it. |
| 7. ___ Mormon | G. Wanted to be king of the Jaredites. Set up a conspiracy using secret oaths. |
| 8. ___ Satan | H. Promised the people of Alma their liberty if they would reveal the way to the land of Nephi—but didn't keep the promise. |
| 9. ___ Zerahemnah | I. Took an oath not to lead the Nephites in a battle again, but after seeing their heavy losses, he relented and assumed command. |
| 10. ___ Zoram | J. Taught people not to swear oaths except with simple "yeas" and "nays." |

answer key on page 4

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Participants at BYU Summer Programs Are Invited to Visit F.A.R.M.S.

INSIGHTS subscribers who attend programs at BYU this summer, such as Education Week or the CES Symposium, as well as any other friends of F.A.R.M.S. who find themselves in Provo, are invited to stop by the F.A.R.M.S. office. You'll find us on the third floor of Amanda Knight Hall, which is on the southwest edge of the BYU campus, on the corner of University Avenue and 800 North. There will also be displays of F.A.R.M.S. materials in the BYU bookstore and at the CES Symposium teaching fair

(the F.A.R.M.S. catalog will be available free, organized according to chapters and topics in the Book of Mormon to assist in preparations for the seminary focus for 1994–95).

We enjoy meeting you any time that you can visit us. Your responses to the programs and publications of the foundation and your suggestions on how we can serve you better are very valuable. And bring your friends along when you visit our office or our displays—we hope that our services can benefit them as much as they do you.

Board Notes

Donald W. Parry has returned from six months in Jerusalem. In addition to teaching an intensive Hebrew class at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies, he provided volunteer help at the Dead Sea Scrolls Foundation, resulting in his being invited to assist Frank M. Cross in the preparation of one of the scroll volumes in the official publication series, *Discoveries in the Judean Desert*.

Stephen D. Ricks has left BYU for a year overseas—six months in Vienna with BYU Study Abroad and six months at the BYU Jerusalem Center. He will continue to serve as chairman of the F.A.R.M.S. board of directors and edit the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* during that time.

Another member of the board, Daniel C. Peterson, has left Provo for most of the summer to participate in an NEH Summer Seminar at Princeton University on magic and religion in antiquity.

Upcoming Events

- July 17: KBYU will begin broadcasting the F.A.R.M.S. Book of Mormon Lecture Series each Sunday at 4:30 P.M.
- September 17: Truman G. Madsen will speak at a F.A.R.M.S.-sponsored fireside in San Jose, California.
- October 13: Elder Henry B. Eyring will be the featured speaker at the annual F.A.R.M.S. banquet. 7:00 P.M., Garden Court of the BYU Wilkinson Center.
- November 27: A F.A.R.M.S.-sponsored ten-day tour will leave for Jerusalem, led by John W. Welch.

Brain Teaser Key

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. B |
| 2. C | 7. I |
| 3. A | 8. E |
| 4. J | 9. F |
| 5. H | 10. D |

INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

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 P.O. Box 7113, University Station
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The Purpose of F.A.R.M.S.

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.) encourages and supports research about the Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ, and other ancient scriptures.

F.A.R.M.S. is a nonprofit educational foundation, independent of all other organizations. Its main research interests include ancient history, language, literature, culture, geography, politics, and law relevant to the scriptures. Although such subjects are of secondary importance when compared with the spiritual and eternal messages of the scriptures, solid research and academic perspectives alone can supply certain kinds of useful information, even if only tentatively, concerning many significant and interesting questions about the scriptures.

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 both in 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 witnessses of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

Temples of the Ancient World Ritual and Symbolism

Contents

Part One: Reflections on the Modern Temple

1. Christ Manifested to His People
Marion D. Hanks
2. A House of Glory
Hugh W. Nibley
3. "Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord?"
Sesquicentennial Reflections of a Sacred Day: 4
May 1842
Andrew F. Ehat
4. The Temple and the Atonement
Truman G. Madsen

Part Two: The Temple in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East

5. What Is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology
John M. Lundquist
6. Liturgy and Cosmogony: The Ritual Use of
Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East
Stephen D. Ricks
7. Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary
Donald W. Parry
8. Temple-Building Motifs: Mesopotamia, Ancient
Israel, Ugarit, and Kirtland
Stephen D. Ricks and Michael A. Carter

Part Three: Temple, Covenant, Law, and Kingship

9. The Legitimizing Role of the Temple in the
Origin of the State
John M. Lundquist
10. King, Coronation, and Temple: Enthronement
Ceremonies in History
Stephen D. Ricks and John J. Sroka
11. Temple, Covenant, and Law in the Ancient
Near East and in the Old Testament
John M. Lundquist

Part Four: The Temple in the Book of Mormon and Ancient America

12. The Temple in the Book of Mormon: The
Temples at the Cities of Nephi, Zarahemla, and
Bountiful
John W. Welch
13. The Brother of Jared at the Veil
M. Catherine Thomas
14. Ancient Temples: What Do They Signify?
Hugh W. Nibley

Part Five: The Temple according to Judaism

15. Demarcation between Sacred Space and Profane
Space: The Temple of Herod Model
Donald W. Parry
16. Temple Motifs in Jewish Mysticism
William J. Hamblin

Part Six: The Temple in the New Testament

17. Hebrews: To Ascend the Holy Mount
M. Catherine Thomas
18. Temple Imagery in the Epistles of Peter
Daniel B. McKinlay
19. The Temple in Heaven: Its Description and
Significance
Jay A. Parry and Donald W. Parry

Part Seven: The Real and the Symbolic

20. On the Sacred and the Symbolic
Hugh W. Nibley
21. What Is Reality?
John M. Lundquist
22. Sacred Time and the Temple
Brian M. Hauglid

Part Eight: The Temple and Sacred Vestments

23. Priestly Clothing in Bible Times
John A. Tvedtnes
24. The Garment of Adam in Jewish, Muslim, and
Christian Tradition
Stephen D. Ricks

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PAR-94	Donald W. Parry, ed., <i>Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism</i> , F.A.R.M.S. and Deseret Book, 805 pp., retail \$29.95, special introductory price is 25% off.		\$22.50	
J-94a	Stephen D. Ricks, ed., <i>Journal of Book of Mormon Studies</i> , vol. 3, no. 1 (Spring 1994).		\$7.95	
HAM-94	William J. Hamblin, "Sacred Writings on Bronze Plates in the Ancient Mediterranean."		\$2.25	
N-13	Hugh W. Nibley, <i>Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints</i> , vol. 13 in the <i>Collected Works of Hugh Nibley</i> , F.A.R.M.S. and Deseret Book, 540 pp. retail \$23.95, special introductory price is 20% off.		\$19.00	
RHO-94	Michael D. Rhodes, "The Joseph Smith Hypocephalus—Seventeen Years Later," 22 pp.		\$2.25	
KNO-94	Eleanor Knowles, <i>Howard W. Hunter</i> . 1994, Deseret Book, 362 pp. This biography is offered here as a special service to readers who do not have access to an LDS bookstore. \$15.95 retail (see below for information on discounts).		(-15%) \$13.50 (-20%) \$12.75	

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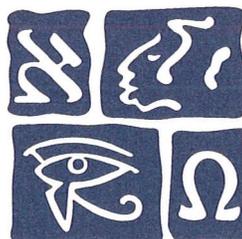
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(801) 378-3295
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FAX (801) 378-3724