



# BOOK OF MORMON CENTRAL

<https://bookofmormoncentral.org/>

---

Type: Newsletter

---

## Insights, Vol. 14, No. 5 (September 1994)

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.



The Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
& Mormon Studies

# INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

1994, No. 5

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

September

## Elder Eyring Will Address Annual F.A.R.M.S. Banquet

Elder Henry B. Eyring, a member of the First Quorum of Seventy and Commissioner of Church Education for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, will be the featured speaker at the 1994 F.A.R.M.S. banquet, to be held the evening of Thursday, October 13.



His topic has not yet been announced.

This annual event gives the many people associated with the Foundation (subscribers, volunteers, researchers, members of the board of directors, and many other friends of F.A.R.M.S.)

a chance to renew old friendships and make new ones with others who support the mission of the Foundation.

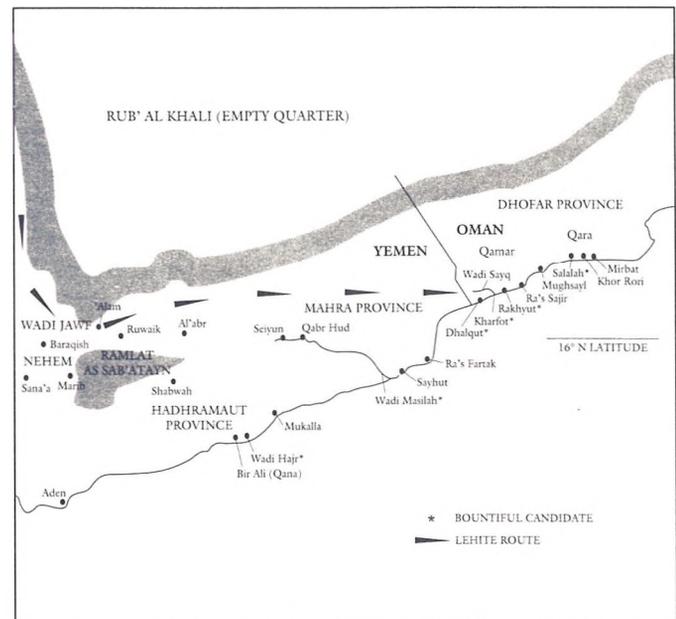
The banquet will begin at 7:00 P.M. in room 394 of the Wilkinson Center at Brigham Young University. Please note that the room is not the same one in which the banquet has been held the last few years. We have had to move to a new location within the Wilkinson Center to accommodate the larger number of people who wish to attend.

Reservations are required and may be made using the order form or by calling the F.A.R.M.S. office. Free parking is available in the parking lot directly east of the

## New Book Describes Efforts to Trace Lehi's Trail

No one has done as much to advance our understanding of Lehi's journey as have F.A.R.M.S. workers Warren and Michaela Aston. For more than a decade they have expended time, money, and great effort in searching the remote valleys and deserts of the Arabian peninsula for candidates for locations mentioned and described in the Book of Mormon. Now a very personal and moving account of their efforts has been published by Deseret Book, *In the Footsteps of Lehi: New Evidence for Lehi's Journey across Arabia to Bountiful*.

In this slim volume (see the order form), the Astons detail their research methods and their findings, supplemented with maps and photographs. Though they are not professional scholars, their work has both impressed and aided the scholarly community and will provide the basis for future scholarly efforts to explore the sites they have identified. They have gone about



CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



# F.A.R.M.S. UPDATE

The Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies

Number 96

September 1994

## Was There Leprosy among the Nephites?

**S**PEAKING TO THE NEPHITES assembled at the temple in Bountiful, the risen Jesus Christ said, "Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous . . . ? Bring them hither and I will heal them" (3 Nephi 17:7). Yet medical researchers do not believe that "leprosy" existed in ancient America. How can we resolve this apparent conflict between what the Book of Mormon describes and what modern researchers have concluded?

Answering such a question always demands that we first look carefully at the text. It seems safe to suppose that behind Joseph Smith's translation of "leprous" in 3 Nephi would have been the Hebrew word that is consistently translated "leprosy" in the Old Testament. That Hebrew term is *šāra'at*. The Jewish scholars in Alexandria who put the Old Testament into Greek (the Septuagint) used Greek *lepra* as the equivalent of *šāra'at*. *Lepra* is regularly referred to in the Gospels where it is translated "leprosy."

A sizable body of scholarly writing has tried to identify what medical condition fits the Bible's statements regarding the nature, incidence and cure of *šāra'at* and *lepra*.<sup>1</sup> The somewhat surprising conclusion is that *šāra'at* "is not leprosy and does not include it."<sup>2</sup> The Old Testament statements about the lesions and symptoms simply do not fit leprosy. In fact the history of disease and medicine sug-

gests that "it is doubtful if leprosy existed at all in the Ancient Near East at the time of the Old Testament,"<sup>3</sup> although it is possible that true leprosy had reached Judea by the time of Jesus and could have been included by New Testament writers with the diseases previously encompassed under the term *šāra'at*.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the result of this research concludes simply that *šāra'at* denoted "several types of skin lesions which exhibit exfoliation or scaling of the skin"<sup>5</sup> but were not leprosy per se. Thus it appears that the English translations of the Old Testament use "leprosy" to refer to skin conditions that were not epidemiologically leprosy.

Thus it is highly unlikely that Lehi's or Mulek's parties could have brought real leprosy with them to the New World. To what disease, then, might the Savior have referred in calling for the Nephite "leprous" to be brought to him to be healed? Two candidates are *uta* (*leishmaniasis*) and Chagas' disease. Both attack the mucous membranes of the face and cause an appearance like leprosy.<sup>6</sup> Another skin disease that was present in ancient America is called *pinta*; it discolors the skin with light blotches that sound like one of the symptoms of *šāra'at*.

Among the Aztecs, Father Sahagun reported that one of the diseases attributed to the god Tlaloc was what he translated to Spanish as "leprosy."<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile among those few of the dead who were

deemed eligible to enter the paradisaical land of the Tlalocs, the rain gods, were those with "certain incurable skin diseases," including what Sahagun had called "leprosy."<sup>8</sup>

It is reasonable, therefore, to suppose that several kinds of skin diseases existed in the American land of the Nephites which would have recalled to Book of Mormon writers the *šāra'at* or "leprosy" of the Old Testament. When Jesus called for those suffering from those ills to come forward, the Book of Mormon term "leprous" would serve to denote their condition just as accurately as in the case of the Bible and its peoples.

We can see "leprosy" in the Book of Mormon text as one in a substantial series of terms which prudent readers will understand to demand careful explication before their actual meanings are clear.

### NOTES

1. See David P. Wright and Richard N. Jones, "Leprosy," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, ed. David Noel Freedman (Doubleday: New York, 1992), 277-82; for further references see M. Gary Hadfield, "Neuropathology and the Scriptures," *BYU Studies* 33/2 (1993): 327.
2. *Ibid.*, 278.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, 281.
5. *Ibid.*, 279.
6. See S. A. Alchon, *Native Society and Disease in Colonial Ecuador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 23-24.
7. See *Codex Florentino* 1:287.
8. See J. E. Thompson, *Mexico before Cortez* (New York: Scribner's, 1933), 50.

Based on research by John L. Sorenson

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

## Annual Banquet

Wilkinson Center.

The program will also feature reports on current projects and discussions of plans for the future. Good food, beautiful music, great company, and an inspiring message—we hope you'll agree that all the ingredients are present for a wonderful evening.

The Foundation values this opportunity to report on its projects and to share ideas informally with you about the future work of the Foundation. We hope that you will plan to attend.

## New Book Reports Aston's Research

their research carefully and methodically—and passionately; it is this passion that makes the book such interesting reading.

F.A.R.M.S. readers who have followed reports of the Aston's F.A.R.M.S.-supported research in this newsletter will learn fascinating new details about their experiences and feelings as they have pursued their dream of finding Nahom and Bountiful. For example, the difficulties they experienced on their first visit to Yemen make one wonder how they had the courage to return; but return they did, and often, until they fell in love with the land and its people and found what they were looking for. Readers who are less familiar with the Aston's efforts will get the whole story—nowhere else is the whole story told in one place.

And it truly is quite a story.

## Elder Holland Bears Powerful Testimony of the Keystone of Our Religion

At the annual CES symposium at BYU, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, newly called member of the Quorum of the Twelve of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, highlighted several themes in the Book of Mormon and bore testimony of its truthfulness. He also spoke of his calling and of his experiences with President Hunter. Since many of our readers are seminary and institute teachers who were not able to attend the symposium, a transcript of this powerful address is available by using the order form in this issue of the F.A.R.M.S. newsletter.

Elder Holland discussed the ways in which Nephi, Jacob, and Isaiah are witnesses positioned at the beginning of the Book of Mormon to testify of the divinity of Jesus Christ. He suggests that part of the "wise purpose" for which Nephi made the small plates, in addition to the need that Joseph Smith would have to use them to replace the lost portion of the record, was to place these three witnesses of Christ at the beginning of the book that we would receive. Elder Holland points out that Nephi stresses this role of the three prophets in 2 Nephi 11:2-3, telling us that all three had seen their Redeemer and that the words of Isaiah and Jacob would prove that his own words about the Savior were true.

Elder Holland also pointed out that more than four-fifths of the Book of Mormon comes out of a period before Christ's appearance to the Nephites, so that most of the testimonies of Christ given in the book came from people who "had not a Christ who had come in the flesh but only the trust and consummate hope of such a Christ who would come. . . . What godly, believing, stalwart

people. I am moved to tears at their trust. And I feel ashamed for our post-advent generations who have so many witnesses and so much evidence, but still do not believe."

Three other themes from the Book of Mormon that Elder Holland discussed eloquently and forcefully are the prevalence and central participation of angels in the gospel story, especially in bearing testimony of Christ, a role "which may not yet have been developed enough in our teaching of young people"; the beautiful image of the praying Christ in 3 Nephi; and the need for purity through the blood of the Lamb.

On a more personal note, Elder Holland shared "what is shareable" about the experience he had in being called to serve in the Quorum of the Twelve, as a way of bearing testimony about President Hunter. He spoke of the "sweet counsel and continued reassurance" President Hunter gave him, followed by the meeting in the temple in which President Hunter gave him his apostolic charge along with personal counsel and then set him apart. Following that 90-minute sequence, President Hunter proceeded to conduct the business of the remaining two hours, doing things personally that he might have delegated.

"My point," said Elder Holland, "is that at the end of a day in which I was absolutely drained, just as emotionally and tearfully exhausted as one could possibly be, President Hunter was apparently getting stronger by the hour—and so it has seemed from that day to this."

## The Symbolism of Eating and Drinking in the Book of Mormon Is Explored

In a recent article published in the latest issue of *BYU Studies*, Richard D. Rust of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill discusses images of eating and drinking (and the lack thereof) from the Book of Mormon and the ways in which these images are used to "define the essential nature of people, emphasize problems of survival, illustrate degradation, characterize social relationships, reinforce covenants, poetically define a hope for eternal life, and suggest a response to the book as a whole."

In "Taste and Feast: Images of Eating and Drinking in the Book of Mormon," Brother Rust gives clear examples of all these uses of the literal and metaphorical references. A valuable and unexpected bonus in this article is an appendix that gives a comprehensive list of references in the Book of Mormon that contain the direct words of Jesus Christ—Rust's intention is to help us "feast on the words of Christ." A reprint is available on the order form. The entire issue of *BYU Studies* is also available.

## F.A.R.M.S. Videos Go Down Under

Dennis Curyer of Lilydale, Melbourne, has volunteered to transfer F.A.R.M.S. videotapes to the format used in Australia to give F.A.R.M.S. subscribers there the chance to enjoy these materials. We appreciate his generosity. Brother Curyer can be contacted by phone at 03-735-4748 or through the mail at 58-60 Old Gippsland Road, P.O. Box 770, Lilydale, Melbourne, VIC 3140.

## Fourth Semester Videos of Nibley's Book of Mormon Class Now Available

The fourth semester's videos of Hugh Nibley's Honors Book of Mormon class are now available for purchase on the order form in this issue of *INSIGHTS*. We appreciate the volunteer efforts of some of our

friends at NuSkin International, Kurt Jurgens and Joel Clark, and Jack Lundquist of Da Vinci Films, who have worked to prepare the videos of these insightful and inspiring class sessions for distribution.

# INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

Published by the  
**Foundation for  
 Ancient Research  
 and Mormon Studies**  
 P.O. Box 7113, University Station  
 Provo, UT 84602  
 1-800-327-6715

### Board of Directors

Stephen D. Ricks, Chairman of the Board of Directors  
 Brent Hall, Director of Operations & Development  
 William J. Hamblin  
 Donald W. Parry, Research Manager  
 Daniel C. Peterson  
 Noel B. Reynolds, President  
 Michael D. Rhodes  
 Melvin J. Thorne, Vice President & Executive Editor  
 John W. Welch

### 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 witnesses of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

## FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

### Now on Audiocassette!

# F.A.R.M.S. Book of Mormon Lecture Series

The very popular Book of Mormon lecture series, originally produced on video, is now available on audiocassette—the same outstanding lectures on the Book of Mormon by some of BYU's finest faculty members and other respected teachers.

Thanks to generous donations, this series is available very inexpensively. A further discount is available to CES seminaries and institutes.

Take advantage of this opportunity to learn at the feet of some of the finest Book of Mormon scholars, and watch for more lectures (both on videotape and audiotape) to be featured in future issues of *INSIGHTS*.

#### PRICES

Individual audiotape .....	\$5.95
Any ten audiotapes .....	\$53.95
Individual videotape and transcript .....	\$7.95
Any ten videos and transcripts .....	\$72.95
Individual transcripts .....	\$1.50
CES special, individual audiotape .....	\$2.95
CES, any ten audiotapes .....	\$26.95
CES, videotape and transcript .....	\$4.95
CES, any ten videos and transcripts .....	\$44.95

#### TITLES

- Susan E. Black, "Christ in the Book of Mormon."** Insights into the mission of Christ that can be gained by examining the 101 names the Book of Mormon used to describe Him. **BLA-T1**
- Larry E. Dahl, "Faith, Hope, and Charity."** Explores Book of Mormon teachings concerning faith, hope, and charity: their meanings, how they are acquired, and what their fruits are. **DAH-T1**
- Victor L. Ludlow, "The Covenant Teachings of the Book of Mormon."** Shows how the book fulfills its purpose to teach the House of Israel about the covenants of the Lord. **LUD-T1**
- Robert L. Millet, "The Doctrine of the New Birth."** Discusses what the book teaches about a life-long process of renewal that we experience when we choose to follow Christ. **MIL-T3**
- Robert L. Millet, "The Fall as Taught in the Book of Mormon."** Discusses what the Book of Mormon teaches about the fall, which is essential to understanding salvation. **MIL-T2**
- Robert L. Millet, "The Nature of God in the Book of Mormon."** What the Book of Mormon reveals about each member of the godhead and the relationships among them. **MIL-T1**

**Monte S. Nyman, "Is the Book of Mormon History?"**

Discusses the book as *spiritual* history. **NYM-T1**

**Dallin H. Oaks, "Another Testament of Jesus Christ."**

Focuses on the message and promise implied in the book's subtitle. **OAK-T1**

**Donald W. Parry, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon."**

Gives keys to understanding the writings of Isaiah and reasons why we should study them. **PAR-T1**

**Ed Pinegar, "Missionary Work and the Book of Mormon."** Shows how the book is vital for missionaries, as well as for investigators. **PIN-T1**

**Noel B. Reynolds, "The Gospel as Taught by the Nephites."** Examines a series of six items that are presented repeatedly in the Book of Mormon as the gospel of Christ. **REY-T1**

**Stephen D. Ricks, "The Translation and Publication of the Book of Mormon."** Looks at what Joseph Smith and his associates said about the process of translating the Book of Mormon. **RIC-T1**

**Richard D. Rust, "The Poetic Testimony of the Book of Mormon."** Points out how in the Book of Mormon God speaks to us in the most powerful, effective way possible. **RUS-T1**

**Royal Skousen, "The Critical Text of the Book of Mormon."** Reports on a project to determine the original English text of the book, as far as it can be determined. **SKO-T1**

**James E. Smith, "A Study of Population Size in the Book of Mormon."** Helps us understand the possible size of the populations reported in the Book of Mormon. **SMI-T1**

**M. Catherine Thomas, "Zion and the Spirit of At-one-ment."** Examines what the Book of Mormon teaches about the spirit of at-one-ment and how we can live it. **THO-T1**

**John A. Tvedtnes, "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon."** Describes the influence of Hebrew on the language of the book. **TVE-T1**

**John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon."** Toss the story and shows examples of an ancient literary form and how it is used in the book. **WEL-T1**

**John W. Welch, "Christ and Temples in the Book of Mormon."** Considers ten steps for discovering what the book says about temples. **WEL-T3**

**John W. Welch, "Ten Testimonies of Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon."** Looks at the distinctive and personal natures of the testimonies of ten prophets. **WEL-T2**

Catalog Number	Titles	Qty.	Unit Price	Total Price
AST-94	Warren and Michaela Aston, <i>In the Footsteps of Lehi: New Evidence for Lehi's Journey across Arabia to Bountiful</i> . Deseret Book, 93 pp., retail \$15.95. <b>Special price, 25% off.</b>		\$12.00	
HOL-94	Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, Address at 1994 CES symposium. 24 pp.		\$2.25	
RUS-93	Richard D. Rust, "Taste and Feast," reprinted from <i>BYU Studies</i> , 8 pp.		\$.75	
BYUS-33/4	<i>BYU Studies</i> , volume 33, number 4.		\$6.00	
N-V4d	Semester 4, <i>Hugh Nibley Book of Mormon Class on Video</i> , 14 tapes and transcripts.		\$100.00	
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, <b>special price is 25% off.</b>		\$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	
	Ticket for one person to the 1994 F.A.R.M.S. banquet, October 13.		\$25.00	
	F.A.R.M.S. Book of Mormon Lecture Series, audiotapes and videotapes (from other side)			

Payment by Credit Card \_\_\_ or Check \_\_\_ Check No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Visa or MasterCard Card No. \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cardholder's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please charge me for sending my order outside the United States by air mail.

Total Purchases:	
10% postage & handling (\$ .50 minimum, \$15 maximum):	
Annual subscription (\$12 per year, \$30 for 3 years):	
Donations:	
<b>Total Enclosed:</b>	

## Benefits

**Regular Subscription: still only \$12 per year  
(\$30 for 3 years)**

- The *Insights* newsletter, 6 times per year
- **15% discount** on books from Deseret Book, Bookcraft, and Doubleday, ordered through F.A.R.M.S.
- Three requests per year to the F.A.R.M.S. Reference Service

**Gold Subscription: \$60 to \$499 per year  
All amounts over \$20 are tax deductible.**

- *Insights*
- A free copy of the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* and *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* published during that year.
- **20% discount** on books from Deseret Book, Bookcraft, and Doubleday, ordered through F.A.R.M.S.
- Full access to the F.A.R.M.S. Reference Service

**Liahona Club: \$500 to \$100,000 per year**

**All amounts over \$50 are tax deductible.**

- All Gold benefits, including the **20% discount** on books ordered through F.A.R.M.S.
- All new F.A.R.M.S. papers and reprints offered during the year
- Selected books published by F.A.R.M.S. during that year



**Foundation for  
Ancient Research &  
Mormon Studies**

P.O. Box 7113, University Station  
Provo, UT 84602  
(801) 378-3295  
Toll free 1-800-327-6715  
FAX (801) 378-3724