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Insights

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD VOLUME 23 | 2003

Number 1

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BYU, Institute Continue Presence at Scholarly Conference

Several BYU and Institute scholars attended the joint annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature held in Toronto, Ontario, last November. In recent years this scholarly venue has enabled BYU entities specializing in religious scholarship to join ranks in the interest of promoting their recent publications while cultivating professional contacts, staying abreast of developments in the field, and presenting their research findings at conference sessions.

Although BYU researchers did not deliver scholarly papers at the conference as they have in past years, the university continued its customary presence there with its popular exhibit and through other involvement. In addition, several Institute scholars and other personnel responded to invitations to give firesides in the Toronto area or speak at local ward meetings. Reports on a few of those presentations follow.

Conference Participation, Firesides

Institute board member John W. Welch presided at a morning session of the Biblical Law Section in which five papers were summarized and discussed. Topics included cities of refuge, the case of Phineas,

and several aspects of purity and incest laws exemplified in the Bible and at the community at Qumran. Addressing a ward gathering two days earlier, Welch discussed effective tools for gospel scholarship and scripture study and presented recent findings illustrating the need to pay close attention to details of scripture that are illuminated by ancient studies.

In a fireside at the Toronto stake center, Institute scholar Kristian Heal discussed the contents of certain Syriac manuscripts residing in the Vatican Library that the Institute was allowed to digitize. He focused on interesting aspects of Joseph of Egypt's account (see Genesis 37–50) as retold in the Syriac tradition. Heal showed that by adding extra narratives to the story, Syriac Christians were able to emphasize that Joseph was a type of Christ and teach more clearly the principles of repentance and forgiveness.

At another fireside, BYU Hebrew professor Donald W. Parry addressed the topic "LDS Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls." He spoke about the discovery and content of the scrolls and their significance as aids for better understanding the Old Testament. He concluded by touching on several prophecies that find fulfillment in Jesus Christ's life, mission, and atoning sacrifice.

In a similar engagement, Brent Hall, director of operations at the Institute, spoke on the Institute's

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Brown Bag Report

On 30 October John L. Clark, emeritus instructor in the Church Educational System, spoke on the topic "Painting Out the Messiah: Theologies of the Dissidents." Clark began by showing that Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob all taught specifically about the Messiah but that dissidents like Sherem and Nehor opposed their teachings with "theologies" that denied Christ's redemptive role and godhood, thereby causing many

believers to lose faith. Clark then examined the arguments of the dissidents in the Book of Mormon to show what the prophets were teaching and what the objections to those teachings were. He discusses this topic at length in an article in the current issue of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, mailed along with this newsletter.

On 6 November Mark Thomas of BYU's Marriott School of Management reviewed accounts of

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King Mosiah and the Judgeship

The immediate situation that prompted Mosiah to institute a system of judges to govern the Nephites was the departure of his four sons. The people asked that Aaron be appointed king, but he and his brothers had gone to the land of Nephi to preach to the Lamanites and had renounced their claims to the monarchy (see Mosiah 29:1–6).¹

Mosiah had other reasons for abolishing the monarchy. One of these was the iniquity that resulted from the reign of King Noah over the Nephites who lived in the land of Nephi and who had recently resettled in the land of Zarahemla, where Mosiah reigned (see 29:17–24). But most of the reasons Mosiah gave his people had no precedents in Nephite history. An examination of those reasons suggests that they were prompted by the Jaredite history that Mosiah had recently translated (see 28:11–19).

In his message to the people, Mosiah noted “that he to whom the kingdom doth rightly belong has declined, and will not take upon him the kingdom. And now if there should be another appointed in his stead, behold I fear there would rise contentions among you. And who knoweth but what my son, to whom the kingdom doth belong, should turn to be angry and draw away a part of this people after him, which would cause wars and

contentions among you” (29:6–7). Such a situation had never occurred among the Nephites, but it had been common among the Jaredites for brother to rebel against brother or father and to draw away part of the people to wage war (see Ether 7:4–5, 15–17; 8:2–3; 9:11–12; 10:3, 8–10, 14, 32; 11:4, 15–18). Indeed, the idea of “drawing away” supporters found in Mosiah 29:7 is known in the Book of Mormon only from the Jaredite record (see Ether 7:4, 15; 9:11; 10:32).²

Mosiah stressed that the wickedness of King Noah had caused the people to come into bondage (see Mosiah 29:18–19). This is also a common theme in the book of Ether. At the time kingship was first established among the Jaredites, the brother of Jared warned that it would lead to captivity (see Ether 6:22–23). Throughout Jaredite history, a number of kings were conquered by a son or brother and made to serve in captivity (see 7:5, 7, 17; 8:3–4; 10:14–15, 30–31; 11:9, 18–19, 23; 13:23).

One of Mosiah’s justifications for allowing the people to elect judges was that “it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right” (Mosiah 29:26). But he noted that “if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will

come upon you; yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction even as he has hitherto visited this land” (29:27). Since the Nephites had not experienced such “great destruction” on “this land,” Mosiah must have had the destruction of the Jaredites in mind.

What is significant about these facts is that Joseph Smith did not dictate the story of the Jaredites until long after he dictated the book of Mosiah. Consequently, the historical details of Jaredite kingship could not have been known to Joseph at this early stage of the translation. This lends evidence to the authenticity of the account of Mosiah’s having translated the book of Ether and becoming acquainted with its contents.

Notes

1. See the discussion in Daniel C. Peterson, “Priesthood in Mosiah,” in Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr., eds., *The Book of Mormon: Mosiah, Salvation Only through Christ* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1991), 205–8.
2. In Alma 52:13 the phrase has a different meaning, referring not to persuading people to join a cause but to luring away and entrapping a military force.

By John A. Tvedtnes

More Scrolls Discovered Near Dead Sea

A recent Associated Press article on the *Jerusalem Post* Web site reports the discovery of more artifacts in the region where the Dead Sea Scrolls were originally found in 1947. A cave survey in Israel's Ein Gedi Nature Reserve, near the Dead Sea, led to the discovery of papyrus scrolls, scraps of cloth, wooden arrows and metal arrowheads, and coins.

The coins bear the name Shimon, referring to Simeon ben Kosiba (nicknamed Bar Kokhba),

leader of the second-century Jewish rebellion against the Roman Empire. "Historians believe the rebels fled to the desert after the Romans crushed the revolt, hiding out in hillside caves dotted throughout the rugged terrain."

The article also reports that the unopened scrolls were given to the Israel Museum for study and are "believed to be less significant than the Dead Sea Scrolls." More on this find will appear in *Insights* as that information becomes available.

Conference continued from page 1

work of producing a documentary film tracing Lehi's trail from Jerusalem to Old World Bountiful. He noted that he and BYU professors S. Kent Brown (ancient scripture) and Arnold H. Green (history) visited key spots along the proposed route to Yemen and that although part of the overall effort occurred during the dire events of 11 September 2001, the research team was ultimately successful in confirming earlier research on the location of Nahom, an ancient place-name recorded in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 16:34).

While in the Toronto area, Daniel C. Peterson, an associate executive director of the Institute, and Institute scholars Morgan Davis, Carl Griffin, and Kristian Heal attended the second annual symposium of the Canadian Society of Syriac Studies. The topic of the conference was "The Role of the Syriac People in the Translation Movement during the Abbasid Period." Numerous academics and members of the local community attended to hear an impressive collection of speakers. The Institute had strong connections with a number of the presenters through its Middle Eastern Texts Initiative (METI), including authors from the University of Toronto and The Catholic University of America and advisers from the University of Hamburg, the University of Columbia, and the University of St. Joseph in Beirut.

The BYU Exhibit

A popular attraction at these conferences is the exhibition area, where publishers from all over the

world exhibit their recent titles. The BYU exhibit displayed publications from the Institute and its sister organizations on campus: Ancient Studies, BYU Studies, the Classics department, the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for LDS History, and the Religious Studies Center. Of particular interest to visitors were recent METI publications, including the first volume in the Eastern Christian Text Series, a translation of Yahyā ibn 'Adī's 10th-century treatise *The Reformation of Morals*. Also of interest were the first two volumes in the Institute's Graeco-Arabic Sciences and Philosophy series: Maimonides' *On Asthma* and Averroës' *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's De anima*. The exhibit sparked a great deal of interest in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Scholars who visited the exhibit appreciated a free publication from BYU Studies and the Religious Studies Center containing materials from *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. In time for the conference, BYU Studies and the Smith Institute released a groundbreaking set of DVDs titled *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. The latest book from FARMS, *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, was also featured in the BYU exhibit and was enthusiastically received.

The exhibit was designed and built under the direction of Brent Hall with help from Institute personnel Shane Heath, manager of outreach, and Milton Briggs, distribution manager. Staffed by various people from different BYU departments, it soon became a gathering point for friends of the university and the church.

It is expected that BYU's established presence at the AAR/SBL meetings will continue to encourage the university's religious scholars and related specialists to publish research that will further strengthen the academic footing of Mormon studies while contributing in important ways to religious scholarship in general. 

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the angel Moroni's 1823 visit to Joseph Smith in terms of form criticism, a literary approach that Thomas believes effectively counters charges that Joseph invented the story. Thomas noted that prophets speak in language familiar to them and that literary forms influence the way they think and write. He said that Joseph's accounts of the angel's visit reflect a kind of revival experience consistent with the dramatic conversions seen at camp meetings with their focus on guilt, a state of conviction, and forgiveness. Joseph's various tellings of the visitation have a common core, fit a real-world setting, and contain hidden authenticating details—all of which deflect the charges of detractors and place the burden of proof on them, Thomas concluded. 

INSTITUTE NEWS

Call for Papers

As announced in the last issue of *Insights*, the Institute invites interested persons to submit papers for possible presentation at an upcoming conference on Latter-day Saint views on the sacrifice of Isaac. The conference will be held at BYU on 11 October 2003.

Papers should deal with some aspect of the sacrifice of Isaac as recorded in Genesis 22 and should reflect close readings of scriptural texts and appropriate use of relevant outside material. Examples of broad topics include but are not limited to typology of the sacrifice of Isaac, literary devices in the account, historical background of the sacrifice, and Latter-day Saint use of the account.

Detailed outlines of proposed presentations were due on 31 January 2003. Further deadlines are as follows:

15 March 2003: Participants whose submissions are provisionally accepted will be notified.

31 August 2003: PowerPoint presentations are due.

31 December 2003: Final drafts for publication are due.

Please send correspondence to Book of Abraham Conference, c/o Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts, WAIH, Provo, UT 84602. Electronic submissions should be sent to bookofabraham@byu.edu.

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**Institute for the Study and
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Brigham Young University

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FARMS is part of Brigham Young University's Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts. As such, it encourages and supports research on the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham, the Bible, other ancient scripture, and related subjects. Under the FARMS imprint, the Institute publishes and distributes titles in these areas for the benefit of scholars and interested Latter-day Saint readers.

Primary research interests at FARMS include the history, language, literature, culture, geography, politics, and law relevant to ancient scripture. Although such subjects are of secondary importance when compared with the spiritual and eternal messages of scripture, solid research and academic perspectives can supply certain kinds of useful information, even if only tentatively, concerning many significant and interesting questions about scripture.

FARMS makes interim and final reports about this research available widely, promptly, and economically. These publications are peer reviewed to ensure that scholarly standards are met. The proceeds from the sale of these materials are used to support further research and publications. 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 appreciate more fully the scriptural witnesses of the divine mission of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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1-800-327-6715 (or 801-422-9229)
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