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The Newsletter of  
the Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
& Mormon Studies

# INSIGHTS

## AN ANCIENT WINDOW

October 1996

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

### President Bateman Will Address FARMS Banquet

Elder Merrill J. Bateman, president of Brigham Young University, will be the featured speaker at this year's annual banquet of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies. President Bateman, who will be accompanied by his wife, Marilyn, will address the topic "Book of Mormon Teachings on the Power of the Spirit."

The banquet is scheduled for the evening of Wednesday, 20 November, and will be held at the Provo Park Hotel. A reception will begin at 6:30 P.M., followed by the dinner at 7:00 P.M. Free parking is available in the hotel parking garage.



This banquet, held each fall, gives FARMS volunteers, staff,

and friends the opportunity to meet and discuss projects and ideas, to receive reports on the past year's activities, and to learn about the Foundation's plans for the future.

If you wish to attend, please purchase tickets in advance (use the order form or call the FARMS office) so we can make the necessary arrangements. The banquet is not a fund-raiser; the tickets simply cover costs.

The officers and staff of the Foundation look forward to this opportunity to meet or become better acquainted with many of the people who support the work of FARMS.

### CD Tops List of Recommendations in *Review*

In the latest issue of the *FARMS Review of Books*, editor Daniel C. Peterson recommends the *LDS Collectors Edition* (a CD containing an electronic library of books, periodicals, and study aids) most highly among the publications reviewed. This product is inexpensive and brings together a large quantity of publications invaluable to students and teachers of the gospel. Also receiving favorable reviews are the *Book of Mormon Reference Library* (another CD), and books

by Robert L. Millet and H. Donl Peterson.

In addition to the traditional reviews of books about the Book of Mormon, this issue contains reviews of children's books, study aids, and publications about other scriptures, ancient texts, and other topics.

Particularly instructive is John Clark's review of *The Land of Lehi*, a book that proposes a limited Great Lakes geography for the Book of Mormon. In addition to showing that the

primary claims of the book cannot be logically sustained, Clark points to a major failing of a large number of proposed geographies: they skip the crucial steps of examining all that the Book of Mormon has to say about geography and creating an internal map against which to test real-world candidates. The other major flaw of *The Land of Lehi* is also common: "The failure to acknowledge previous studies [and learn from them] is the

*continued on page 6*



The Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
& Mormon Studies

# FARMS UPDATE

A Report on Research in Progress

Number 108

## The Crocodile God of Pharaoh in Mesopotamia

IN THE FAMOUS ANTI-MORMON crusade against the book of Abraham in 1912, one of the individuals involved asserted that the book of Abraham could not be true because "Chaldeans and Egyptians are hopelessly mixed together, although as dissimilar and remote in language, religion and locality as are American and Chinese."<sup>1</sup> This exaggerated opinion was seconded by the Reverend Samuel A. B. Mercer: "I challenge any intelligent person who knows Chaldean and Egyptian history to read the first chapter of said book [of Abraham] without experiencing the same feeling. Chaldea and Egypt are hopelessly mixed. . . . No one can believe that Abraham made such a blunder in his geography."<sup>2</sup>

Though in Mercer's day scholars studied both Mesopotamian and Egyptian disciplines, they knew nothing of the interactions between the two cultures. In 1971, however, the Egyptologist Georges Posener completed a lengthy and detailed survey of the available evidence and concluded that cultural interactions and interference of Egypt in the area of Syria and Palestine were extensive, even though the precise nature of the "domination by the pharaohs" during the Middle Kingdom "still eludes us; fifty years ago it was barely suspected."<sup>3</sup> Yet some critics who



Detail of Facsimile 1 from the book of Abraham, showing the crocodile god

clearly should know better are still using the same arguments as Mercer and Peters.<sup>4</sup>

Confirmation of the connections that Posener discovered can be seen in recent archaeological evidence found at Ebla. The cult of the Egyptian crocodile god Sobek flourished during the Middle Kingdom (2040–1640 B.C.), as is attested by royal and personal names during the twelfth (1991–1783 B.C.) and thirteenth dynasties (1783–1600? B.C.),<sup>5</sup> temple building,<sup>6</sup> and commemorative scarabs.<sup>7</sup>

In the archaeological site of Ebla in Syria, also known as Tell Mardikh, were found several images of Egyptian gods stylistically datable to the Middle Kingdom, and dated by the

archaeologists to MB II (1750–1650 B.C.),<sup>8</sup> the time period to which most scholars who believe Abraham existed date him. Among these gods were Osiris, Hathor, Horus, and Sobek. This provides concrete archaeological evidence that Egyptian cults existed in Mesopotamia, Abraham's homeland. Thus the book of Abraham accurately describes an aspect of the ancient world about which Joseph Smith could have known little or nothing.

### NOTES

1. John Peters, letter to Franklin S. Spalding, in F. S. Spalding, *Joseph Smith, Jr., As a Translator* (1912), 28.
2. Samuel A. B. Mercer, "Joseph Smith As an Interpreter and Translator of Egyptian," *Utah Survey* 1/1 (1913): 33.
3. Georges Posener, "Syria and Palestine c. 2160–1780 B.C.," *Cambridge Ancient History*, 1.2:550, 549.
4. Stephen E. Thompson, "Egyptology and the Book of Abraham," *Dialogue* 28/1 (Spring 1995): 156–60.
5. Jürgen von Beckerath, *Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen* (1984), 67–73, 159–61, 200–11, 220–2; William Kelly Simpson, *Papyrus Reisner I* (1963), 89–90; cf. Simpson, *Papyrus Reisner II* (1965), 59, and *Papyrus Reisner IV* (1986), 41–2; and William C. Hayes, *A Papyrus of the Late Middle Kingdom in the Brooklyn Museum* (1955), 23–4.
6. Dieter Arnold, *Die Tempel Ägyptens* (1992), 97–8, 186.
7. *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 56 (1957): 81–95; and 63 (1965): 197–200.
8. Paolo Matthiae, Frances Pinnock, and Gabriella Scandone Matthiae, *Ebla* (1995), 458–60, 476–7.

Based on research by John Gee.

*Publicly speaking*

## Brown Bag Presentations Focus on Linguistics and on the Use of the Book of Mormon in the 20th Century

Brian Stubbs gave a Brown Bag lecture in March on "The Hebrew Element in Uto-Aztecan." He examined evidence for connections between Hebrew and a Native American language family relevant to the Book of Mormon, including sound correspondences, vowel patterns, pronoun matches, and other lexical similarities.

The connections are very technical and far from conclusively established, but this line of inquiry holds considerable promise for helping to establish significant cultural contact between the Near East and North America in the years that correspond to the civilizations described in the Book of Mormon. For the complete article on this topic, see *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/1 (1996): 1-49.

On 29 May, Noel B.

Reynolds, professor of political science at BYU and president of FARMS, presented for the first time research in progress on the use and study of the Book of Mormon among the LDS community in the twentieth century. Using a variety of statistical measures, Reynolds analyzed the changing role of the Book of Mormon in the Church.

Examinations of general conference addresses, Sunday School manuals, missionary plans, publications on the Book of Mormon, and the BYU and Institute curricula all point to increased acceptance and study of the Book of Mormon in the last few decades. Interviews with a dozen individuals closely

involved with these developments confirm and shed light on this development.

Reynolds concluded that the Book of Mormon is now much more frequently the focus of official and unofficial attention in all kinds of LDS settings than it was in earlier periods. Latter-day Saints as individuals are much more engaged with the text itself, and the curricula of the Church Educational System and the Sunday School are much more committed to a study of the text. Earlier decades in this century offered a very different

picture in all these respects; center stage was held by some CES employees and BYU faculty who saw no need to take seriously Joseph Smith's claims for the book; that view has been pushed to the periphery of LDS intellectual and religious life.

Publication of Reynold's findings is forthcoming. Allison D. Clark, a recent graduate of Swarthmore College and presently a master's student in religious history at Boston University, provided considerable help with the research.

*Scholar watch*

## LDS Scholar Contributes Essay to Book on Jewish Seafaring

John M. Lundquist, an LDS scholar who has contributed to FARMS publications as author and editor, was recently invited by Raphael Patai, a noted scholar of Judaism, to write an appendix on Lehi's voyage for a new book being prepared for publication by Princeton University Press entitled *Jewish Seafaring*.

Earlier Lundquist, head of the Oriental Division of the New York Public Library, had directed Patai's attention to a FARMS publication when Patai was researching the subject of hidden sacred books for his work, *The Jewish Alchemists*. In a footnote Patai discusses the LDS belief that the Book of Mormon

was inscribed on gold plates and cites H. Curtis Wright's article in *By Study and Also by Faith* as evidence for the assertion that "important documents were in fact inscribed on metal plates and preserved in stone or marble boxes in Mesopotamia, Egypt, etc." He then acknowledges that he is indebted to Lundquist for the reference.

This is one more good example of the beneficial results of the efforts of LDS scholars to collaborate with other scholars. When the book on seafaring is published, we hope to be able to make available a reprint of Lundquist's appendix and other portions of the book that may be of interest to FARMS readers.

*President's message***Research Opportunities Widen Fund-Raising Focus**

We appreciate the interest you have shown and the support you have given to our plans for a new FARMS building. We thought you might like an update on those plans.

With our move earlier this year from Amanda Knight Hall to the homes we purchased on the edge of the BYU campus, we have solved our immediate space needs. That has given us time to consider the nature and location of the new building and to discuss these matters with our neighbor, BYU, to make certain that we will be able to cooperate successfully on joint ventures we decide to pursue with BYU.

We appreciate very much the donations already received for the building. We encourage you to continue this support and to invite others to join the effort. Donations already received and future contributions earmarked for the building will be kept in a special fund until we are ready to start building.

In the meantime, research opportunities have increased dramatically and we are widening our fund-raising focus to seek major donations to pursue them. Projects planned or underway that need support include completing the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*; collecting and creating photos and art work for John Sorenson's *Illustrated Companion to the Book of Mormon*; preparing documentary collections for Book of Mormon witnesses; developing electronic reference libraries on the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Book of Mormon, Mesoamerican images and texts, and other texts; possible

archaeological explorations; and many other projects.

If you are interested in supporting the Foundation's research projects, we invite you to contact Brent Hall at the FARMS office; he can tell you more about these and other exciting projects that await funding and

can discuss ways to donate that will bring the greatest benefits to you and the Foundation.

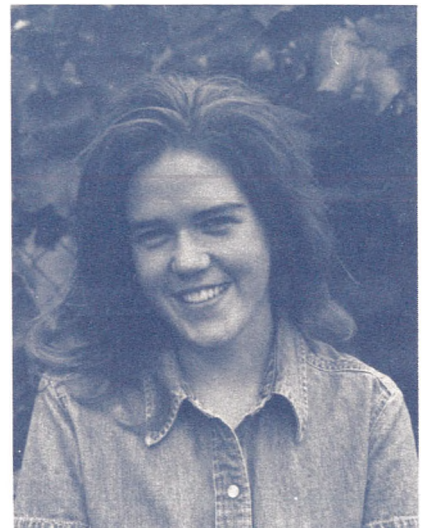
Every donation, small or large, helps make possible research on the Book of Mormon and other scriptures. We thank you for each one.

*Noel B. Reynolds*

*Staff notes***FARMS Staff Welcomes Newcomers**

Mary Mahan, a recent graduate in English from BYU, joined the FARMS editorial team in August as an assistant editor. An English usage class at BYU sparked Mary's interest in pursuing editing, and she worked several months as an editor for BYU English professor Don Norton before joining FARMS. Mary comes from Centerville, Utah. She enjoys mountain biking, playing the guitar, and listening to the Eagles. We are pleased to have her help with the Foundation's increasing editorial workload.

The research staff welcomes Claire Foley as a full-time research assistant. Her duties include helping researchers with the research and editorial tasks required to move a nearly completed research project to the manuscript stage. Claire graduated from BYU in English, the discipline she chose to pursue because she loves to read. She also enjoys reading in other fields, especially philosophy, physics, and psychology—interdisciplinary interests and experience that should serve her well at FARMS. Other interests in-



clude art and outdoor activities, especially skiing and swimming.

## Scholars Reminds Us That Caution Is Wisdom

As FARMS-sponsored research extends further into the realm of archaeology—such as our exploration of the Arabian Peninsula and our participation in projects at Bonampak, Qumran, and Izapa—some may wonder whether we will ever have “irrefutable physical proof” of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

Scholars working on FARMS projects avoid such phrases. Instead, they tend to follow the admonition contained in the title of a chapter in Hugh Nibley’s *Since Cumorah* that, in these kinds of studies, we should remain “Forever Tentative . . .”

For example, John Sorenson has pointed out that despite

“many, often remarkable, ways the events and circumstances in the scripture have parallels with what archaeological and historical sources tell us about ancient America . . . no number of them would unequivocally establish the book as an authentic pre-Columbian document.”<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, a lack of physical evidence does not invalidate a written history. As Nibley reminds us, “the possibility that a great nation . . . could actually get lost and stay lost, in spite of every effort of men to discover its traces, has been demonstrated many times since Schliemann found the real world of the Mycenaeans.” Scholars have studied civilizations

successfully for centuries before finding “so much as a button or bead that could be definitely assigned to them.”<sup>2</sup>

Physical evidence has an important role in FARMS research. It can inform us about the world in which the scriptures were written and thus help us understand the scriptures’ messages. It can also give support to testimonies already established and provide opportunities for the Spirit to bear witness. But we should not expect physical proof in spiritual matters where faith is required.

### NOTES

1. *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (1985), xviii.
2. *Since Cumorah* (1967), 213.

### New FARMS publications

## FARMS Lecture Series on Prophets Concludes

Lectures on Mormon and Moroni and a summary lecture complete the series focusing on *The Prophets of the Book of Mormon and Their Messages* (see the order form).

In “Mormon: A Witness with a Warning,” Clyde J. Williams, assistant professor of Ancient Scripture at BYU, describes a powerful prophet who faced tragic circumstances, yet was faithful to the end. In “Thus We See: The Teachings of Mormon,” Williams covers Mormon’s guidance for latter-day readers, especially his encouragement to use the Spirit as a guide in our lives and to study and learn from sacred records. Throughout the

Book of Mormon, Mormon flagged important principles and teachings for modern readers with the phrase “thus we see.”

Byron Merrill, assistant professor of Ancient Scripture at BYU, emphasizes in two lectures entitled “Moroni: The Man and the Message” that Moroni’s message to modern readers is one of warning and hope. Though he ministered among his own people, Moroni’s great mission was to call to repentance those who live in the last days. In his personal writings, Moroni gives us lessons in the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. In order to maintain these virtues, we must have a desire to come unto

Christ.

Robert L. Millet, dean of Religious Education at BYU, presents “Lifting the Condemnation through the Book of Mormon,” in which he emphasizes the Lord’s warning in Doctrine and Covenants 84 that the Church is under condemnation for treating the messages of the Book of Mormon lightly. Millet highlights significant teachings we have received from ancient American prophets and emphasizes our need to study the Book of Mormon to prepare for the events that are foretold therein—especially by gaining a testimony of Christ.

Continued from page 1

primary weakness of most Book of Mormon geographies. . . . Until the various practitioners can overcome the colossal conceit implied in their self-imposed ignorance, all their attempts are doomed to fail."

The contents of this issue of the *Review* are as follows:

#### The Book of Mormon:

- *The Land of Lehi*, by Paul Hedengren, reviewed by John E. Clark
- *The Power of the Word: Saving Doctrines from the Book of Mormon*, by Robert L. Millet, reviewed by Dennis H. Karpowitz
- *Moroni's Promise: The Converting Power of the Book of Mormon*, by Glenn L. Pearson, reviewed by Phillip R. Kunz
- *I Know Thee by Name: Hebrew Roots of Lehi-ite Non-Biblical Names in the Book of Mormon*, by Joseph R. Salonimer and Norrene V. Salonimer, reviewed by John A. Tvedtnes

#### Other scriptures and ancient texts:

- "Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead (1 Corinthians 15:29): Insights from Archaeology and Anthropology," by Richard E. DeMaris, reviewed by John W. Welch
- *The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham: A Study of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, by James R. Harris, reviewed by John Gee
- *For His Ka: Essays Offered in Memory of Klaus Baer*, edited by David P. Silverman, reviewed by John Gee
- *The Story of the Book of Abraham: Mummies, Manuscripts, and Mormonism*, by H. Donl Peterson, reviewed by John Gee

#### Other publications:

- *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*, by John Ankerberg and John Weldon, reviewed by Daniel C. Peterson
- *The Mormon Concept of God*, by Francis J. Beckwith and Stephen E. Parrish, reviewed by Blake T. Ostler
- *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, by Fawn McKay Brodie, reviewed by Louis Midgley
- *Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend: Effective Ways to Challenge a Mormon's Arguments without Being Offensive*, by Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson, reviewed by D. Charles Pyle
- "Joseph Smith's Use of the Apocrypha," by Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner, reviewed by John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper

#### Publications for children:

- *Norman the Nephite's and Larry the Lamanite's Book of Mormon Time Line*, by Pat Bagley, reviewed by Ted L. Gibbons
- *My First Scripture Stories*, by Sherrie Johnson, reviewed by Elaine A. Andelin

#### Study aids:

- *Book of Mormon Reference Library (CD-ROM)*, reviewed by Alan C. Ashton
- *Book of Mormon Studybase (CD-ROM)*, reviewed by Alan C. Ashton
- *LDS Collectors Library 1995 Edition (CD-ROM)*, reviewed by Alan C. Ashton

#### 1995 Book of Mormon Bibliography

# INSIGHTS

## AN ANCIENT WINDOW

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### The Purpose of FARMS

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

FARMS 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 research on such subjects is 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 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 take more seriously these ancient witnesses of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

## Charting the Book of Mormon

FARMS is planning to prepare a collection of charts and maps to assist in studying the Book of Mormon. Similar materials have appeared in the past in such LDS publications as the *Instructor* and the *Church News*. For example, charts and maps have shown the composition of the Book of Mormon plates, chronologies, Nephite and Jaredite pedigrees, travels between the lands of Nephi and Zarahemla, and so forth.

If FARMS readers have any such charts or maps that they would be willing to share with us, we invite them to send them (either originals or photocopies) to John A. Tvedtnes at the FARMS office.

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*Bargain basement*

## For a Limited Time, FARMS Offers a Special Book at a Very Special Price

No text in the Bible is more important or has had more influence on the history and character of Christianity than the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7. In the account of Jesus' ministry among the Nephites at the temple in Bountiful, three chapters that record substantially the same sermon may be called the Sermon at the Temple. In *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*, author John W. Welch offers a thorough Latter-day Saint interpretation of Jesus' famous sermons, including their history, language, and temple context.

Close examination of the Savior's sermon given at the temple in Bountiful and recorded in the Book of Mormon reveals that its meaning centers around covenant-making, which attests its temple significance. The relationship of the Sermon to temples generates an extraordinary explanation of the Sermon on the Mount as a sacred and holy text.

This hardbound book, copublished by Deseret Book and FARMS, is 230 pages long; the normal retail price is \$13.95, but until the end of November it can be obtained from FARMS for only \$9.75, a 30% savings.



Catalog Number	Items featured in this issue	Qty.	Unit Price	Total Price
	Tickets to the Annual FARMS Banquet, per person		\$25.00	
REV-96b	Daniel C. Peterson, <i>FARMS Review of Books</i> , 8/2, 450 pp.		\$7.95	
WIL-V1 WIL-T1 WIL-VT1	Clyde J. Williams, "Mormon: A Witness and a Warning," video audiotape transcript		\$7.95 \$5.95 \$1.50	
WIL-V2 WIL-T2 WIL-VT2	Clyde J. Williams, " 'Thus We See': The Teachings of Mormon," video audiotape transcript		\$7.95 \$5.95 \$1.50	
MER-V1 MER-T1 MER-VT1	Byron Merrill, "Moroni: The Man and the Message," part 1, video audiotape transcript		\$7.95 \$5.95 \$1.50	
MER-V2 MER-T2 MER-VT2	Byron Merrill, "Moroni: The Man and the Message," part 2, video audiotape transcript		\$7.95 \$5.95 \$1.50	
MIL-V14 MIL-T14 MIL-VT14	Robert L. Millet, "Lifting the Condemnation through the Book of Mormon," video audiotape transcript		\$7.95 \$5.95 \$1.50	
WEL-90	John W. Welch, <i>The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount</i> , Deseret Book and FARMS, hardbound, 230 pp., retail \$13.95, 30% off		\$9.75	
<b>Selected items featured in the previous issue of <i>Insights</i></b>				
J-96a	Stephen D. Ricks, ed., <i>Journal of Book of Mormon Studies</i> 5/1 (Spring 1996), 185 pp.		\$7.95	
PMT-96	Donald W. Parry, Jeanette W. Miller, and Sandra A. Thorne, eds., <i>A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography</i> , hardbound, 650 pp., Research Press		\$99.95	
PMT-96s	Donald W. Parry, Jeanette W. Miller, and Sandra A. Thorne, eds., <i>A Guide to Publications on the Book of Mormon</i> , paperbound, FARMS		\$19.95	
SOR-85p	John L. Sorenson, <i>An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon</i> , paperback 415 pp., FARMS and Deseret Book, retail \$17.95		\$14.35	
INF-97W	Infobase, <i>LDS Collectors Library '97</i> , retail \$129.95, 20% off		\$104.00	
INF-HIST	Infobase, <i>LDS Family History Suite</i> , retail \$99.95, 40% off		\$59.95	

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