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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.



# INSIGHTS

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

October 2000

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

## New Guide on the Joseph Smith Papyri

Since their rediscovery in 1967, the Joseph Smith Papyri have been the target of conflicting and often confusing claims. New from FARMS, *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri*, by Egyptologist and FARMS associate John Gee, is a full-color, reader-friendly guide that sets forth the basic facts and major theories about the papyri.

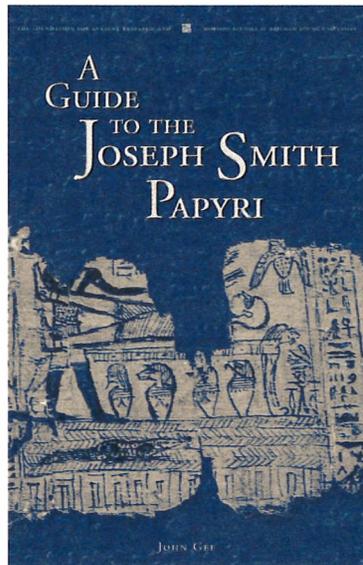
More than a primer, the 67-page book reflects the latest Egyptological research and most informed LDS thought on the papyri as it succinctly covers the origin and history of the papyri and their relationship to the Book of Abraham.

"One of the major problems with understanding the complicated issues surrounding the papyri has been the lack of up-to-

date, reliable, readily available information," Gee writes in the introduction. "This guide has been prepared to provide basic information about the Joseph Smith Papyri and an overview of the discussion about the connections that they may have with the Book of Abraham for those who have no knowledge of ancient Egypt and perhaps little of the Latter-day Saints."

The first chapter surveys the history of the papyri and of the translation and publication of the Book of Abraham. The next chapter briefly considers the ancient owners of the papyri, whom Gee characterizes as wealthy, religious, educated Egyptians who came from politically important families.

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## FARMS Welcomes New Board Members

The Foundation is pleased to announce the appointments of Brigham Young University professors John F. Hall and Andrew C. Skinner to the FARMS Board of Trustees. Their formal training and experience in subject areas suited to the research interests of FARMS will be of great value to the board.

John Hall, a professor of classical languages and ancient history and former chairman of BYU's Department of Humanities, Classics, and Compara-

tive Literature, graduated from BYU with a double major in Latin and Greek and earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in ancient history from the University of Pennsylvania. He has served as executive director and president of a national organization for professors of ancient languages and history. The author of scholarly publications on Roman history and the world of the New Testament, he is currently researching the development of Christianity in the Roman world and the original Greek version of the New Testament—areas congenial to his work as a principal investigator in FARMS's Early Christianity Initiative (see last month's newsletter for more about this initiative).

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The Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
and Mormon Studies

# FARMS UPDATE

A Report on Research in Progress

Number 139

## Inverted Quotations in the Book of Mormon

When the Book of Mormon appeared in 1830, the Western world had only a limited knowledge of the literary techniques utilized by Semitic authors.

Even today, many students of the Bible remain unaware of exciting textual discoveries made by Israeli scholars whose work has appeared only in Hebrew.

One such discovery came to light in 1955 when a scholar named Seidel published a study on parallel statements in Psalms and Isaiah.<sup>1</sup> Though many of Seidel's original claims proved doubtful, his work prepared the way for further analysis of inverted quotations in the Bible.<sup>2</sup>

The Bible contains many examples of inverted quotations.<sup>3</sup> For example, in Leviticus 26:4 the Lord declared, "and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruits." When Ezekiel later referred to this promise, he intentionally reversed its original sequence: "and the trees of the field shall yield their fruits, and the land shall yield her increase" (Ezekiel 34:27).<sup>4</sup> Today scholars refer to such inverted quotations of earlier sources as Seidel's law.

Deuteronomy 4:15-19 is an important example of this phenomenon: "Take good heed lest ye make the similitude of any

figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth: and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, should be driven to worship them." Using a technique that would have been recognized by ancient readers, Moses essentially reversed the sequence of creation described in Genesis 1:14-27.

This inverted passage proves meaningful for Book of Mormon studies. In a sermon to his son Jacob, Lehi also reversed the elements of creation: "And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be there was an opposition" (2 Nephi 2:15).

After listing the final three elements in creation, Lehi, unlike Moses, summarized the earlier components with the inclusive statement "and in fine, all things which are created." One possible explanation for this synopsis is that while Moses felt the need to thoroughly categorize

every example of graven images whose worship would lead Israel into apostasy, Lehi's citation served a different purpose. His pivotal statement concerning the existence of and need for opposition is strengthened because opposition itself is presented as a divinely ordained aspect of creation.

Since Bible scholars in Joseph Smith's day had not yet recognized the existence of Seidel's law, its attestation in 2 Nephi 2:15 and elsewhere in the Book of Mormon (e.g., Alma 5:19; compare Psalm 24:4) provides additional evidence that the Book of Mormon is an authentic record of ancient origin.

### NOTES

1. M. Seidel, "Parallels between Isaiah and Psalms," *Sinai* 38 (1955-56): 149-72, 272-80, 335-55 (in Hebrew).

2. See especially P. Beentjes, "Inverted Quotations in the Bible: A Neglected Stylistic Pattern," *Biblica* 63 (1982): 506-23.

3. In the New Testament see Mark 12:1, which reverses the Greek translation of Isaiah 5:2, and 2 Corinthians 6:17, which quotes the Septuagint version of Isaiah 52:11.

4. The words in both passages are identical in Hebrew but are translated differently in the KJV, whose translators opted, for example, for the term *land* in Leviticus 26:4 but *earth* in Ezekiel 34:27.

By David Bokovoy



## FARMS WEB PAGE UPDATE

<http://farms.byu.edu>

### FARMS Reference Service

"Are there studies of ancient American ruins that will contribute to my understanding of the Book of Mormon?" "What is known about the Joseph Smith Papyri?" "How does the Sermon at the Temple in the Book of Mormon relate to the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament?"

These are typical questions submitted to the FARMS Reference Service. This service has recently been reorganized to more efficiently provide FARMS members, as a benefit of membership, with reference information pertaining to all research that FARMS has published or distributed on the Book of Mormon, other ancient Latter-day Saint scriptures, and related topics.

Reference Service personnel use this research, which is carefully peer reviewed and updated, to prepare responses to individual inquiries and to assist scholars and others who are working with FARMS on various research projects. FARMS makes this information available, mostly in bibliographic form, to facilitate the serious study of ancient scripture.

Using the Reference Service is very simple. Acting manager Daniel McKinlay suggests that users first formulate their questions as precisely as possible so that Reference Service personnel can focus their search. It will be beneficial, he says, if users have access to a FARMS catalog, either in print or on the FARMS

Web site, before making a query. This will enable staff to easily direct them to pertinent articles or publications listed therein.

Once their questions are narrowed, users can contact the FARMS Reference Service by e-mail, telephone, postal mail, or fax. Reference Service personnel will endeavor to match their response to the scope of the inquiry. Some questions may be adequately answered with just one or two references; others may require a more comprehensive bibliographic search.

Reference Service personnel are able to access references that have been amassed over the past 20 years in (1) every chapter in every book published to date by FARMS, (2) every article in every issue of the three scholarly periodicals published by FARMS (the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, the *FARMS Review of Books*, and *FARMS Occasional Papers*), (3) selected material from the *INSIGHTS* newsletter, (4) every preliminary report or reprint distributed by FARMS, (5) every entry in the *Encyclope-*

*dia of Mormonism*, (6) FARMS Research Reports, which are online reports on selected research topics available on the FARMS Web site, and (7) every audiotape, videotape, chart, and other material published or distributed by FARMS.

The Reference Service does not do original research for people but rather provides information on research projects that the Foundation has supported and that have led to formal or informal publication on the Book of Mormon, other ancient Latter-day Saint scriptures, and related topics. If FARMS has published material on the topic of the inquiry or if it distributes such material, the Reference Service will provide only the references to those items, which may then be purchased from FARMS or from other outlets.

To ensure that users receive a thorough response, Reference Service personnel may share inquiries with scholars who can assist them. Because the focus of FARMS is on ancient LDS scripture, the Reference Service does not ordinarily deal with many aspects of LDS doctrine, many topics related to LDS Church history, matters pertaining to the policies and practices of the LDS Church, moral issues, teachings or topics related to other religions

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#### How to Contact the FARMS Reference Service

- e-mail: [farmsreference@byu.edu](mailto:farmsreference@byu.edu)
- telephone: 801-378-8283, or use our toll-free number (1-800-327-6715) and ask to be transferred to Reference Service
- postal mail: FARMS Reference Service, P.O. Box 7113, University Station, Provo, UT 84602
- fax: 801-373-5348

and denominations, or any other topic that falls outside of the Foundation's focus.

Daniel McKinlay and his staff oversee and coordinate efforts to respond to all inquiries. Their goal is to provide a helpful service that is reliable, comprehensive, and efficient. "We hope this service will be beneficial to FARMS members, who can now be quickly directed to key information found

in the extensive database that we have compiled over the years," says M. Gerald Bradford, director of research at FARMS. "This is another way we are trying to be of real service to FARMS members, helping them to better understand and appreciate the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. That's what FARMS is about."

### *Scripture insight*

## **"Do Not Procrastinate the Day of Your Repentance"**

One of the more frequently quoted yet misunderstood passages of the Book of Mormon is found in Alma 34:32–34, where Amulek declares that

this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors. . . . Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world.

Critics have suggested that these verses contradict the LDS belief in preaching the gospel to the dead, since Amulek says that "there can be no labor performed" after death. But his words were addressed to the Zoramites, who had dissented from the Nephite religion and had already "received so many witnesses" (Alma 34:30). Unlike those who die without having heard the gospel (see D&C 138:32–34), the Zoramites had heard and accepted the gospel but then had rejected it. Amulek was calling upon them to repent and return to the fold lest they die in their sins, thereby placing their souls in eternal jeopardy (see Mosiah 2:33; D&C 76:31–38).

Another misreading of the passage has led some people to believe that the "same spirit" (Alma 34:34) refers to a person's own spirit, which they suppose cannot change after death. Occasionally, some have suggested that this means that a smoker, for example, will still have a craving for

tobacco after he dies, but that his spirit will not be able to satisfy this craving. However, a careful reading of the next verse shows what Amulek meant. Speaking to these people who had already been members of the church, he declared:

[I]f ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth seal you his; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you; and this is the final state of the wicked. (Alma 34:35)

From this it is clear that the "same spirit" that possesses the wicked person and will continue to possess him in the hereafter is the devil, not the individual's spirit. Those who do the devil's will and refuse to repent will come under his power both in this world and the world to come. This is particularly true of those who have already entered into the covenant by being baptized.

King Benjamin taught this same principle to his people assembled at the temple in Zarahemla:

[I]f ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom's paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved—I say unto you, that the man that doeth this, the same cometh out in open rebellion against God; therefore he listeth to obey the evil spirit, and becometh an enemy to all righteousness. . . . Therefore if that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, . . . mercy hath no claim on that man. (Mosiah 2:36–39)

**By John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew P. Roper**

## Joseph Smith Papyri

continued from page 1

Chapter 3 reviews several theories about the relationship of the papyri to the Book of Abraham text, touching on the date and transmission of that text, the date of the papyri, and attempts to explain the origin of the facsimiles in the Book of Abraham. Chapter 4 deals with the copying and interpretation of the facsimiles.

In the next chapter, Gee discusses the role of the Book of Abraham in LDS scripture and notes the book's significant contribution to the clear understanding of the premortal existence and the purpose of life. Chapter 6 is a select bibliography of works that discuss (1) the later history, editions, size, and ancient background of the papyri and (2) the translation, role, facsimiles, and Abrahamic background of the Book of Abraham. Additionally, two glossaries that define key people and terms are cross-referenced with the text, serving as an index.

The guide includes images of all 11 surviving fragments of the papyri; maps of Egypt in Greco-Roman times, the proposed "findspots" of the papyri at Thebes, and the travels of the papyri in the United States; and many charts and illustrations that effectively present and summarize other key information (such as the owners of the papyri, the original extent of the papyri, and chronologies) and items of interest (such as whether the ink traces near the missing portion of the original of Facsimile 1 depict wings or the upraised hands of the sacrificial victim).

*A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* is the only book on the Joseph Smith Papyri authored by an Egyptologist. It is a helpful resource for both general readers and those pursuing advanced studies of the papyri and the Book of Abraham. For purchasing information, see the enclosed order form or visit the catalog section of the FARMS Web site.

## Possible Book of Mormon Parallel

The Guatemalan historian Don Domingo Juarros (1752–1820), relying on earlier documents, wrote of a tradition that "the Tultecas were descended from the house of Israel, and were released by Moses from the captivity in which Pharaoh held them," then crossed the ocean to Mexico. He then wrote of the division of the Quiché empire into three kingdoms in the time of King Acxopil and noted that "this division was made on a day marked by the extraordinary circumstance of three suns being visible at the same time, an incident that has induced some persons to think the partition was effected on the day of our Saviour's birth, as it is commonly asserted that such a phenomenon then occurred; but as a parhelion is a meteor which has been so frequently observed, this does not appear to be sufficient authority for fixing the division to that particular day" (Don Domingo Juarros, *A Statistical and Commercial History of the Kingdom of Guatemala in Spanish America*, trans. J. Baily [London: John Hearne, 1823], 163–64).

The Book of Mormon indicates that 30 years after heavenly signs marked the birth of Christ the central government of the Nephites was destroyed and the people re-separated into tribes (see 3 Nephi 7:1–4). This is not to say that we must identify the Nephites with the Tultecas or Toltecs, but it is interesting that this tradition, connected with the time of Christ's birth, should be preserved in the area where many scholars believe the Book of Mormon story took place. —Contributed by Matthew P. Roper

NEW!

FARMS members can now download the *INSIGHTS* newsletter to their electronic pocket organizers. Go to Member Services in the Web site and choose the "Palm" icon.

## New Board Members

continued from page 1



**John F. Hall**

"Since I began to study Latin at age 10, and Greek a few years later, I have spent most of my life coming to know the world that was home to early Christianity," Hall said. "I have had the opportunity to learn many interesting and exciting things about the world of the New Testament.

Each new discovery has served to demonstrate more clearly to me that the Prophet Joseph Smith was absolutely correct in his teachings about the church in the meridian of time. My being a part of the FARMS effort to share historical and linguistic information that corroborates the teachings of the restored gospel fills me with unbounded excitement."

Andrew Skinner is the new dean of Religious Education at BYU, succeeding Robert L. Millet, who stepped down from that position (and from the FARMS board) to return to teaching. Skinner's academic training includes a B.A. in history, M.A. in Hebrew Bible and Judaic studies, Th.M. in biblical Hebrew from Harvard, and Ph.D. in European and Near Eastern history from the University of Denver.



**Andrew C. Skinner**

After teaching at Ricks College for four years, he joined the faculty of BYU's Department of Ancient Scripture in 1992, becoming chair of that department in 1997. He has filled three teaching assignments at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern studies and is a member of the international team of scholarly editors who are preparing translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls for publication in Oxford University Press's *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* series. The author of many publications, he is currently researching military history and ancient Near Eastern history and texts.

Of his appointment to the FARMS board, Skinner said, "I look forward to working with the faithful scholars and teachers at FARMS. We have all benefited from their work in helping Latter-day Saints and non-affiliated scholars to understand the historical, cultural, linguistic, and geographical contexts of the scriptures."

## INSIGHTS

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

Published by the

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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. It also works to preserve ancient religious documents.

FARMS is a nonprofit educational foundation at Brigham Young University. 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. These publications are peer reviewed to ensure scholarly standards are met. The proceeds from the sale of these publications, including most royalties, are used to support further research and publications on the scriptures. 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.

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