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The Newsletter of  
the Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
and Mormon Studies

# INSIGHTS

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

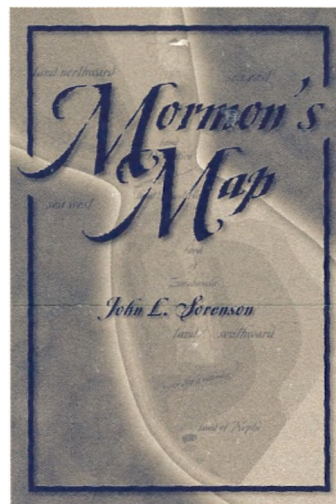
February 2000

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

## New Book on Book of Mormon Geography Provides Maps, Helpful Explanations

As Mormon edited the Book of Mormon, he must have had a map in his mind of the places and physical features that were the setting for the events described in that book. In *Mormon's Map*, a new book from FARMS, John L. Sorenson attempts to reconstruct that mental map—"Mormon's Map"—using information in the Book of Mormon text.

*Mormon's Map* provides a comprehensive map of the entire area in which Lehi's descendants lived in the promised land, as well as 18 other helpful maps of smaller areas and clear discussion of the maps' features. The maps are all internal, meaning that they are con-



structed based only on textual information—they are not pinned to any real-world location. Sorenson uses stories in the record, such as accounts of wars and journeys, to glean information about distances traveled and the length of time taken to cover those distances.

The book is divided into chapters that discuss the overall shape of the land, the environment of the Nephites, climate, topography, distances and directions, civilization, and historical geography. Maps are integrated with the chapters and

clearly illustrate such events as Alma the Younger's missionary journeys, the locations of

*continued on page 7*

## FARMS and BYU Participate in the 1999 AAR and SBL Annual Meetings in Boston

Since 1995 FARMS representatives have attended the joint annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL). AAR and SBL are long-standing learned societies with members from col-

leges, universities, seminaries, and other academic institutions in the U.S. and abroad. Each year they jointly hold their annual meetings, which constitute the largest gathering of religion scholars in the world, offering sessions on subjects ranging from the history of Christianity and the study of Islam to biblical texts and their ancient contexts.

During these meetings, nearly 200 publishers and related organizations—major university presses, commercial publishers, and smaller, more specialized publishers—from all parts of the world exhibit and sell thousands of publications dealing

*continued on page 7*

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The Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
and Mormon Studies

# FARMS UPDATE

A Report on Research in Progress

Number 132

## Reflections of Nephi's Vision in His Psalm

Second Nephi 4:16–35 comprises a beautiful psalm written by Nephi. Portions of the psalm suggest that he was contemplating his earlier vision of the tree of life and the future of his people, recorded in 1 Nephi 11–14. Among the elements common to both the psalm and the vision are the appearance of angels in visions, mention of the condescension of God, temptations, the devil (“evil one”) and hell, and the straight path.

In his psalm, Nephi wrote of “visions in the night-time,” noting that “angels came down and ministered unto me” (2 Nephi 4:23, 24). Similarly, an angel appeared to Nephi during his vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 11:14). Nephi clearly indicated that he had the vision in mind as he wrote the psalm: “And upon the wings of his Spirit hath my body been carried away upon exceedingly high mountains” (2 Nephi 4:25), for Nephi “was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceedingly high mountain” (1 Nephi 11:1) when he received the vision in 1 Nephi 11–14.

In the psalm, Nephi wrote that he “was bidden that [he] should not write” some of the things he had seen (2 Nephi 4:25). Similarly, he was also told not to write some of the things he saw in his vision (see 1 Nephi 14:25, 28).

Nephi further wrote in his psalm of how “the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men in so much mercy” (2 Nephi 4:26). Nephi also used the word “condescension” in his description of his vision (see 1 Nephi 11:16, 26). He tied the condescension, symbolized by the tree, to “the love of God” (1 Nephi 11:22), and in his psalm he noted that “He hath filled me with his love” (2 Nephi 4:21). The fact that Nephi employed the word “condescension” only in describing the vision and in his psalm—and nowhere else—again suggests that when he wrote the psalm he had the vision in mind.

In his psalm, Nephi wrote of “temptations” and of “the evil one,” or devil (2 Nephi 4:18, 27). In the vision, he mentioned the “temptations of the devil” (1 Nephi 12:17, see 12:19), and when explaining the vision to his brothers he described “the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary” (1 Nephi 15:24). The only times Nephi used the phrase “temptations of the devil” were in his description of the vision and in his psalm. Similarly, he used the term “hell” only in the account of the vision (see 1 Nephi 12:16; 14:3; 15:29, 35) and in the psalm (see 2 Nephi 4:32).

In his psalm, Nephi wrote of walking “in the path of the low valley . . . in the plain road” and

implored the Lord to “make my path straight before me” (2 Nephi 4:33, 34). It is likely that he had in mind the “strait and narrow path” that both he and his father saw, though he does not describe it (see 1 Nephi 8:20–23; 11:1).

In the concluding words of his psalm, Nephi praised “my rock and mine everlasting God” (2 Nephi 4:35). The words remind us of part of his explanation of the vision to his brothers, in which he spoke of “their everlasting God, their rock and their salvation” (1 Nephi 15:15).

The connections between Nephi’s psalm and his vision reflect the experiences of Nephi. The key words and vocabulary of the psalm draw us back to the account of the vision, confirming that Nephi truly was reporting “the things of the Lord . . . the things which I have seen and heard” (2 Nephi 4:16). Nephi used the phrase “seen and heard” only in reference to divine revelation (see 1 Nephi 1:18; 17:45).

That angels, condescension, temptation, mention of the “evil one” and hell, and the straight path are present in both Nephi’s vision and his psalm adds evidence that they are the real experiences of a real person rather than the imagination of an untrained farm boy such as Joseph Smith.

By John A. Tvedtnes

FARMS online

## FARMS Web Site Offers Video Lectures, Periodicals in Member Services Section

The newly designed FARMS Web site is divided into three major sections: Free Services, FARMS Member Services, and Catalog. In the Member Services section, FARMS subscribers can access lectures on video, plus articles from the three periodicals published by FARMS, the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, *FARMS Review of Books*, and *INSIGHTS*. Member Services also contains all the items offered in the Free Services section but includes more content for each item.

The lectures on video can be viewed right on your computer screen. Eight lectures are currently featured, five of which are from the 1999 Abraham Lecture Series that was given at Brigham Young University and in Salt Lake City. The Abraham video lectures include "Abraham's Creation Drama," by Hugh Nibley; "A History of the Joseph Smith Papyri and Book of Abraham," by John Gee; "The Ancient Owners of the Joseph Smith Papyri," by John Gee; "Abrahamic Lore in Support of the Book of Mormon," by John Tvedtnes; and "Appreciating Hypocephali as Works of Art and Faith" by Michael Lyon. Three other lectures focus on the Book of Mormon, the atonement, and Jesus' most famous sermon: "Evidence of the Book of Mormon," by Daniel C.

Peterson; "Zion and the Spirit of At-one-ment," by M. Catherine Thomas; and "Illuminating the Sermon at

the Temple and Sermon on the Mount," by John W. Welch.

In "Evidence of the Book of Mormon," Peterson discusses recent research that supports a spiritual witness for the Book of Mormon. He focuses on Joseph Smith's lack of schooling, his supposed misnaming of Jesus' birthplace, the translation process, chiasmus, possible locations for Book of Mormon events, and ancient manuscripts that are consistent with Book of Mormon accounts about document practices and beliefs of past civilizations.

In "Zion and the Spirit of At-one-ment," Thomas emphasizes that a condition of peace is necessary in order for us to experience the companionship of the Spirit. We sometimes experience troubled relationships, but we can elect to develop a satisfying sense of at-one-ment with our associates. Thomas cites the example of Nephi, who experienced dysfunctional family relationships but understood, as he explains

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in his psalm (2 Nephi 4), that how we are judged will not be based on what others do to us, but on how we react to them. This understanding of our freedom to choose in Christ can set us free from old contentious patterns.

Each month Member Services offers a featured article or video publication. This month you will find video lectures of all the presentations given at the recent FARMS symposium on temples. These video lectures include "Temples: Then, Now, and Forever," by Elder Hugh W. Pinnock; "Temples Everywhere," by Hugh W. Nibley; "He That Hath Clean Hands and a Pure Heart: Three Biblical Temple Entrance Hymns," by Donald W. Parry; and "Prayer with Uplifted Hands in the Ancient World," by Stephen D. Ricks.

Be sure to take notice of the Events Calendar, which shows the dates and locations of upcoming lectures and firesides.

Member Services is available to all Internet users free of charge until 1 March 2000. After that time it will be available only to FARMS members.

Visit the FARMS Web site at  
[www.farmsresearch.com](http://www.farmsresearch.com)  
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Scripture insight

## Why Is Esther Missing from the Qumran Scrolls?

The book of Esther is conspicuously absent from the biblical Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in the Judean Desert caves. It is the only book of the Bible for which there are no scroll fragments. Martin Abegg Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich, three of the world's foremost Dead Sea Scrolls scholars, propose several possible reasons why Esther might have been deliberately excluded from the Dead Sea Scroll community at Qumran.

They first look at the calendar texts found at Qumran that chart the festivals and holy days observed there. All the festivals one would expect to find are noted—Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles—but Purim is absent. Purim celebrates the deliverance of the Jews exiled in Persia from the wicked Haman.

Haman planned to destroy the Jews on a specific date that he chose by drawing lots (Hebrew, *purim*; see Esther 3). At great personal risk, Esther sought audience with the king, her husband, and successfully pleaded the case of the Jews (see Esther 5–7). Haman was hanged on his own gallows (see Esther 7:10), the enemies of the Jews were thwarted (see Esther 9:12–16), and the resulting feast took place on the “fourteenth . . . day of the month Adar” (Esther 9:17). The festival of Purim has since been celebrated on the fourteenth day of Adar. But not at Qumran.

The authors offer several explanations of why the community at Qumran may have rejected Purim and the book of Esther:

- The festival was a late addition to Jewish tradition and therefore absent from the Pentateuch.
- Esther, a Jew, married a Persian king. The conservative community at Qumran may have found that repugnant.
- Esther is the only biblical book that makes no reference to God.
- The emphasis on retaliation in Esther 9:15–16 is contrary to teachings in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

—Adapted from Martin Abegg Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich, “Why Is Esther Missing from Qumran?” *Bible Review*, August 1999, 2.

## Travel Study to Greece and Turkey

Continuing the research they presented at last November's FARMS conference on the apostle Paul, Professors John F. Hall and John W. Welch have organized a scripture-based study tour to the lands of the apostles John and Paul. The tour is from 21 May through 4 June 2000. For further information or reservations, contact Robyn at BYU Travel Study (801-378-3909). The deadline for reservations is 8 March 2000.

## New Audiotapes Feature Book of Mormon Research

FARMS has recently released two new audiotape sets on the Book of Mormon. The first, *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, is read by Lloyd D. Newell, voice of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's weekly “Music and the Spoken Word” broadcast. It features selections from the recent FARMS book of the same title, highlighting some of the most significant Book of Mormon research from the past decade. The audiotape set combines the *INSIGHTS Updates of the 1990s* with some similar short notes from the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*.

The second audiotape set, *Insights and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, features 14 essays by noted Latter-day Saint scholars, including Daniel C. Peterson, Stephen D. Ricks, and John L. Sorenson, who share some of the best evidence available in favor of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The essays come from four publications: *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, *Book of Mormon Authorship*, *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited*, and the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*.

Both *Pressing Forward* and *Insights and Evidences* can be purchased through the enclosed order form, by telephone, or on the FARMS Web site.



# FARMS Order Form

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F-A2	John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., <i>Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s</i> , 1999, 4-audiotape set, 240 min., vinyl case. Retail <del>\$14.95</del>		\$12.00	
F-A1	<i>Insights and Evidences of the Book of Mormon</i> , 2000, 6-audiotape set, 360 min., vinyl case. Retail <del>\$19.95</del>		\$16.00	
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PIN-99	Hugh W. Pinnock, <i>Finding Biblical Hebrew and Other Ancient Literary Forms in the Book of Mormon</i> , 1999, 201 pp., hardbound. Retail <del>\$19.95</del>		\$16.00	
SOR-98	John L. Sorenson, <i>Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life</i> , 1998, 249 pp., hardbound, large format, fully illustrated, full color. Retail <del>\$39.95</del>		\$32.00	
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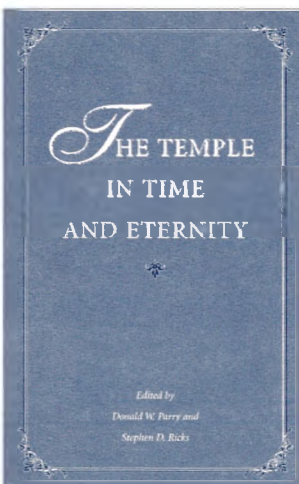
## Recent FARMS publications

The first section of *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, "Temple and Ritual," features papers on Abraham, oaths, baptism for the dead, and temple prayer in ancient times.

The second section, "Temples in the Israelite Tradition," discusses the development of the temple through the ages, temple symbolism, and insights into modern temple worship.

The third section, "Temples in the Non-Israelite Tradition," addresses the heavenly

gatekeeper, the Great Mosque and ancient Near Eastern temples.



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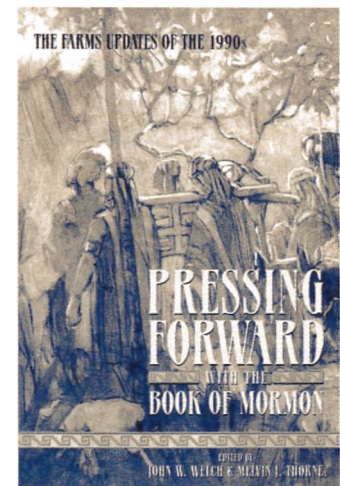
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*Knowing you are supporting Book of Mormon research may be the greatest subscription benefit of all.*

*Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s* features Research Updates from *INSIGHTS* that report on ideas and developments that have emerged during the last 10 years of scholarly effort.

Geography, proper names, Semitic texts, tents, swords, speeches, and laws are but a few of the book's fascinating focuses.

This handy collection of insightful studies will help readers better understand and appreciate many interesting aspects of the Book of Mormon.



## New Book on Book of Mormon Geography (continued from page 1)

different Book of Mormon peoples, and the final retreat of the Nephites into the land northward.

*Mormon's Map* answers such general questions as, What is the overall shape of the Book of Mormon lands? and What can we learn about distances and directions? It also answers more specific questions like, Why were Moroni and Pahoran even more angry and concerned over the dissenters who seized power in the center of Nephite lands than they were over the powerful Lamanite armies on the periphery? and How was geography central to the defeat of the robbers of Giddianhi?

One example of detailed discussion relates to the river Sidon. Sorenson explains, "When Moroni drove Lamanite inhabitants out of the area along the east sea and established garrison cities (see Alma 50:7, 9–11), he focused on fortifying along a defense 'line' against anticipated Lamanite attacks. That line logically had a physical basis; it could well have been one of the branch distribution channels by which the waters of the Sidon reached the sea."

Sorenson also notes that "quite surely the Sidon did not flow to the west sea, because to the west a mountain range ran—the one that protected the land of Melek. This means that the continental divide was also on the west side. The divide separated streams—likely quite steep and small—that drained into the sea west from tributaries of the Sidon."

The scriptures are meant to cause us to "lift up [our] hearts and rejoice" (2 Nephi 11:8), and we do that most fully when we penetrate as thoroughly as possible what was in the hearts and minds of the scripture makers at the time they wrote. We can learn the most from their message when we can empathize with their pains, puzzle over their problems, and join with them in their joys. The maps and explanations in *Mormon's Map* intensify the sense of reality with which we envision the events, scenes, and characters in the Book of Mormon.

## AAR and SBL Annual Meetings (continued from page 1)

with all aspects of religion and biblical studies. Each year FARMS operates a booth in the exhibitors' area.

The FARMS exhibit initially focused on the Dead Sea Scrolls database. Each year, in addition to demonstrating this database, we added more FARMS publications that would be of interest to non-LDS scholars and others who attend those meetings. In 1997 and 1998, following formation of the FARMS Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (CPART), our display featured the work of both CPART and FARMS.

In 1999, which marked the 20th anniversary of FARMS and was also the year FARMS officially became part of Brigham Young University, several other organizations on campus—the Religious Studies Center, BYU Studies, and the Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History—joined forces with FARMS at its exhibit. Publications from each of these university units, along with CPART's *Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Reference Library*, now marketed by E. J. Brill, were prominently displayed and sold, as were copies of the Book of Mormon. LDS literature supplied to us by the church was

distributed free of charge. No doubt due to the prominence and familiarity of the name Brigham Young University, an estimated five times as many people stopped by the booth in 1999 as at the FARMS booth in 1998. This amounted to several hundred inquiries.

At the 1999 meetings, John W. Welch, Robert K. Thomas Professor of Law at BYU and a member of the FARMS board of trustees, delivered a paper entitled "The Sermon on the Mount and Ritual Theory." The paper, growing out of Welch's recent FARMS publication *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount*, was part of the "Social Scientific Criticism of the New Testament" section of the SBL meetings.

Welch's paper was well received. He described his presentation as "one of the more challenging and rewarding experiences of my academic career," and he is planning to work with other scholars, many of whom are not LDS, in developing his views on the subject further. For this audience, he supported his thesis solely out of biblical and Old World sources, analyzed in terms of modern ritual theory. He hopes that the presentation will "open



further doors and reflect well on biblical scholarship at BYU."

In his paper, Welch proposed that the Sermon on the Mount can be seen through the lens of ritual studies. He discussed nine characteristics of ritual functions that are apparent in the Sermon on the Mount. For example, a rite inverts an existing social or religious order, introducing a new order as it sets the old aside. In the Sermon on the Mount, enemies become beloved, deeds done in secret will be rewarded in the open, and mortals become finished as the Father in heaven is perfect.

Another correlation between ritual and the Sermon on the Mount is that ritual texts tell believers how to respond to specific situations and how to believe the ritual itself. The Sermon on the Mount gives guidance on interpreting law, responding to enemies and false prophets, trusting in God, and giving to those in need.

Welch concluded that a ritual reading of the Sermon on the Mount has important implications. Such a reading allows us to reconstruct part of the religious experience of the early Christians in Jerusalem. It also indicates that the Sermon on the Mount is a pre-Matthean source. Such a reading solves the puzzle of the Sermon on the Mount: things that otherwise seem out of place are right at home in a ritual context.

The AAR and SBL meetings provide an opportunity for LDS scholars to visit and exchange views with colleagues, develop new contacts, and learn about the latest developments in scholarship on the Bible and related subjects. They also afford ideal opportunities for others to learn more about BYU, FARMS, and related organizations on campus, as well as show the distinctive contributions Latter-day Saint scholars are making on a variety of fronts.

During the AAR/SBL meetings, scholars associated with FARMS and BYU were invited by local and area authorities to present several firesides in the greater Boston area. S. Kent Brown, John Gee, Daniel C. Peterson, Noel B. Reynolds, Stephen E. Robinson, Stephen D. Ricks, and John W. Welch offered firesides on such topics as the Savior, evidences for the Book of Mormon, personalities in the Book of Mormon, and the parable of the good Samaritan.

FARMS is grateful for the opportunity to have worked with other campus entities at the AAR/SBL meetings and looks forward to expanding this collaboration next year.

# INSIGHTS

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

Published by the  
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at Brigham Young University**

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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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