



Type: Magazine Article

Since Cumorah - New Voices from the Dust

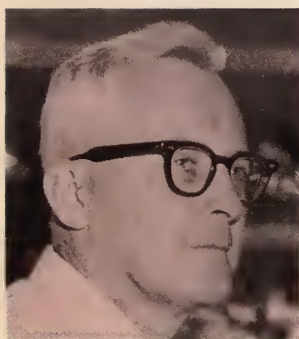
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Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 67, No. 10 (October 1964), pp. 816–818, 820–821, 844–846

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

SINCE CUMORAH

NEW VOICES FROM THE DUST



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Editors of the Era take great pleasure in welcoming Dr. Hugh Nibley back to these pages. His fertile mind and gifted pen have contributed much of deep significance and lasting value through Era pages over the past two decades. Brother Nibley is well qualified to write the current series, *Since Cumorah*. Trained primarily in classics, he has, since joining the staff of Brigham Young University some eighteen years ago, gravitated into the field of religion, which is at present his principal academic concern. While a visiting professor at the University of California in Berkeley in 1959-60 he did intensive work in Egyptian and Coptic and has recently published a study on the newly discovered Coptic Christian writings in *Vigileae Christianae*. He holds bachelor of arts and doctorate of philosophy degrees from the University of California. He has also had long articles on Classic and Semitic subjects appear in the *Classic Journal*, the *Western Political Quarterly*, the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, *Western Speech*, *Church History*, and the *Revue de Qumran*.

Introduction: A clear and complete survey of newly discovered Jewish and Christian manuscript treasures would have to run into thousands of pages. To present the same material in a moderate compass and at the same time do it justice is as hopeless a task as trying to sketch Bryce Canyon by moonlight. Should one try for the details? One quickly discovers the folly of that. But on the other hand, to omit the vast intricacy of the scene is to miss the peculiar and essential quality of it. Yet we cannot simply walk off without comment, for what we are beholding is of immense significance.

The purpose of the somewhat labored pages that follow is to lead up to better things by giving the reader some idea of what we are

dealing with, of the scope and nature of the writings that are now being read with wonder and amazement by students of religion, and of the strange doctrine and baffling problems they present. The rather tedious preliminary survey that follows cannot be avoided: One cannot enjoy the pageant that follows without a program, no matter how dull the program itself may be. If the reader is somewhat bemused at the outset, he should bear in mind that all the scholars are more or less floundering around today in the rising flood of parchments and papyri that has caught everyone by surprise. If we cannot swim or wade in these waters, we can at least venture down to the shore line to see what all the excitement is about.

The time has come for Latter-day Saints to turn their attention to those ancient Jewish and Christian documents the discovery of which in recent years, and especially since World War II, has brought about a radical reappraisal of all established views about the nature of the two religions and their scriptures. The significance of these findings can best be demonstrated by reference to a number of propositions set forth in the Book of Mormon, the first of which we take from the thirteenth chapter of 1 Nephi. Of these, proposition number one is that the Bible has come down to the world in a mutilated form:

"... for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most

precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away. . . .

“ . . . because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceeding great many do stumble. . . .” (1 Nephi 13:26, 29.)

Proposition number two is that the Lord will put an end to this state of things by the bringing forth of more information:

“ . . . I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them, in mine

point, whether we see in 1 Nephi 13 reference to the Bible and the Book of Mormon only or to yet more records to come (as is clearly indicated in 14:26), we have at least the clear declaration that certain books and records apart from the Bible are to come forth and change men’s view of the Bible itself, because of whose mutilation “an exceeding great many do stumble.” (*Ibid.*, 29.)

These two propositions more than anything else set the Christian world in fierce opposition to the restored

on which the Protestants stood as firmly as the Catholics, that the Bible was not only the whole revelation of God to man, but that it could not possibly contain the remotest inkling of an error—the scriptures were inerrant and all-sufficient for our instruction. And here was a book not only put forth as holy scripture, but announcing to the world that the Bible contained “mistakes of men!”

We say it is difficult now to imagine how the Christian world reacted to these propositions because today there is hardly a Christian scholar in the world who does not acknowledge that our Bible in its present state leaves much to be desired and who does not look for improvement from new documentary discoveries.⁴ What has brought about this change? Exactly what the Book of Mormon predicted—the coming forth of more books and records. To these we now turn our attention.

The New View of the Old Testament. The change of attitude toward the Old Testament in our day has come suddenly and surprisingly. Up until the present generation the Christian world enjoyed the conviction that it had pretty well taken the measure of the Bible, and that the future could hold little more than an indefinite repetition of familiar sermons and commentaries lubricated by the occasional addition of learnedly specialized and technical footnotes. If the fundamentalists had their “once-for-all” Bible, the higher critics were no less satisfied that their own interpretations were definitive. In the same year (1889) in which Westcott and Hort issued the first edition of what they fondly entitled “The New Testament in the Original Greek,” thereby serving notice that the most formidable of all textual problems had been solved, “Robertson Smith expressed his belief that . . . nothing of vital importance for the study of the Old



Some of the discoveries of ancient records in the Near East were made by desert people such as this Arab pictured with his donkey and little band of sheep.

own power, much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious. . . .” (*Ibid.*, 34.)

This knowledge is to be imparted by written documents, including some of the writings of Nephi’s own descendants, “hid up to come forth unto the Gentiles.” (*Ibid.*, 35.) But aside from them we are told of “other books . . . these last records” (39-40, both in the *plural*) which are to come forth to and circulate among the gentiles before their conversion to the gospel. Since it is made very clear throughout the chapter that the gentiles referred to are *not* the Church, it would appear that the books and records which are “seen among the Gentiles” (40) may be other writings besides the Book of Mormon.¹ Not to labor the

gospel from the beginning. Before the Book of Mormon had even come from the press, the headlines of the Rochester *Daily Advertiser* screamed forth the world’s first recorded reaction to the mission of the Prophet: “Blasphemy! Book of Mormon, Alias the Golden Bible!”² No blasphemy could compare with that of declaring that there could be other scriptures besides the Bible, unless it was the declaration on the title page of the Book of Mormon that the revealed Word of God might contain “the mistakes of men.” It is difficult for us today to imagine the shock and horror with which these two propositions were received by the Christian world.³ Since the days of Saint Augustine it had been the cornerstone of the Christian faith,

Testament remained uncertain.”⁵ As in so many other fields, the neat and easy rule of evolution, that greatest of time and work-savers, explained everything: “Owing until recently to the lack of any real control of their views from external sources, biblical scholars have been forced to construct their systems in a historical vacuum,” Professor Albright reminds us, and since they lacked solid information, “to redeem their constructions from pure subjectivity the ablest of them were forced to em-

the great discoveries of our time were heralded by impressive preliminary rumblings. In 1886, according to Eduard Meyer “not a single document existed to attest the authenticity of the Old Testament as history.” A year later the Amarna Tablets, a whole library of correspondence between the kings of Egypt and the princes of Palestine and Syria in the days of the Patriarchs, came forth.⁸ But the great and revolutionary discoveries came with the finding of two other libraries,

SOME IMPORTANT MANUSCRIPT DEPOSITS IN THE OLD WORLD

Knossos, where Sir Arthur Evans in 1900 discovered the library of the Palace of Minos, between 3,000 and 4,000 tablets from the 15th century BC, written in the Minoan Linear Script B. In the 1950's a young British architect, Michael Ventris, deciphered the writing and showed it to be Greek. This has altered the whole picture of ancient Near Eastern civilization and brought the Patriarchs of Israel into contact with people speaking languages related to our own.

Modern *Pylos* in Messenia, where C. Blegen in 1939 discovered 600 tablets of a Mycenaean palace archive. More tablets were discovered after 1952 when work was resumed after World War II. These tablets, in Linear B script, showed that the Mycenaeans were Greeks, and that Greeks (whose language is often surprisingly close to our own) were busy in the Near East as early as the times of the Patriarchs.

Karatepe where since 1946 have been discovered inscriptions in Phoenician and Hittite, telling how people migrated and founded cities in the century before Lehi.

Constantinople, where in 356 the Emperor Constantius founded the Imperial Library, from which a vast number of ancient mss. came to Europe in 1453ff. The city had a very ancient patriarchal library and many monastic libraries. There, in the library of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, the Greek P. Bryennius in 1872 discovered among many valuable early Christian Apocrypha the only known text of the *Didache*, which describes the organization and function of the church cir. 140 AD.

Boghaz Keui, where beginning in 1906 H. Winckler excavated the royal archives of the Hittites—more than 10,000 cuneiform tablets from the 14th and 13th centuries BC, mostly written in Hittite, a language related to our own. Scholars had formerly maintained that the Hittites, with whom Abraham has intimate dealings in the Old Testament, were either a myth or a scribal mistake—that they never existed!

Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit), where C. Schaeffer beginning in 1929 brought forth thousands of tablets from a temple archive of the Canaanites going back to the 14th century BC. They are in a language closely related to Hebrew and contain many expressions and concepts that are close to those of the Old Testament, making it possible to solve many Bible mysteries and brightly illuminating certain phases of the early history of Israel. Thirty more boxes of tablets were excavated in 1960.

Qumran and the surrounding area, where since 1947 hundreds of caves have been explored, many of them yielding written documents comprising tens of thousands of fragments and more than 400 separate works. The most valuable of



The valuable Pyramid Texts were discovered at Gizeh near ancient Memphis in Egypt.

ploy some philosophical scheme as a frame of reference.” That was where evolution came in, a “unilateral evolution from the materialistic, sensuous, and disorderly to the spiritual, the ideal, and the orderly,” which “formed a bed of Procrustes into which all facts and generalizations had to be fitted.”⁶

The sudden acquisition of vast amounts of solid factual information where only speculation was known before has left many scholars standing at the post: “Though Bible scholars live in an age of unprecedented discovery,” Cyrus Gordon notes, “they stand in the shadow of 19th century higher criticism . . . even though archaeology has rendered it untenable.”⁷

There is no excuse for this, since

those of Ugarit and Qumran.⁹ The former was first discovered at Ras Shamra (“Fennel Cape” on the Syrian coast) in 1928, but it is still yielding documents, thirty boxes of tablets, “a whole new archive,” having been found in 1960.¹⁰ Here is a temple archive from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries BC, kept by Israel’s closest neighbors, the Canaanites. From these records we learn for the first time how close the ancient Hebrews were in culture and religion to those Canaanites and can appreciate the force of Lehi’s remark to his sons that the one real difference between their own ancestors and the earlier inhabitants of the land was a moral one: “Do ye suppose that our fathers would have

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been more choice than they [the Canaanites] if they had been righteous? I say unto you, Nay." (1 Nephi 17:34.)

The Ras Shamra fragments opened up a whole new world to biblical study by putting Israel in a new world setting. "It is now realized that Israel was no more isolated in her language than she was in her religion and culture, and that Hebrew . . . borrowed freely from other languages."¹¹

Hence it can be "no longer assumed that if a Hebrew passage is unintelligible it must be corrupted."¹² An example of puzzling Bible words explained by these records is the word *khashmal*, which is now known to mean "brass"—a word which this writer long thought to be an anachronism in the Book of Mormon.¹³

Ideas and words go together, of course, and the Ugaritic ritual texts cast a flood of light on early Jewish cult practices, particularly the Year Rite and the Coronation patterns

which today are "the centre of interest in the study of the relation between the religions of the Near East and the Old Testament."¹⁴ The ritual picture that emerges conforms in detail to the long description of an Old World coronation rite that meets us in the pages of the book of Mosiah.¹⁵

It was the Ras Shamra texts more than anything else which showed that the Old Testament must be studied in an ever larger context to be properly understood. "The Bible strikes root into every ancient Near Eastern culture, and it cannot be understood until we can see its relationship to its sources in true perspective," according to Albright.¹⁶

"One hundred years ago," writes A. Parrot, "in Mesopotamia was discovered that history lies behind the Old Testament. . . . Today the Old Testament itself is being discovered," to wit, in the Ras Shamra documents, in the Mari Tablets (a huge collection of tablets discovered on the upper Euphrates by Parrot himself), and in the Nuzi Tablets, vast private archives which "make frequent mention of the Habiri," and the Dawidum, and even tell of the use of fire-signals by the Benjaminites as described in the Old Testament.¹⁷

"The beginnings of Israel are rooted in a highly cultural Canaan," where we now know "Mesopotamians, Egyptians and branches of the Indo-Europeans [our own ancestors] mingled their cultures and their blood"—as we learn from our own book of Abraham. Hence "the notion that early Israelite religion and society were primitive is completely false."¹⁸

If the Book of Mormon reflects the culture of the whole Near East of its day, so does the Bible.¹⁹ Cyrus Gordon would now even bring the Greeks into the Hebrew picture (as we did in the portrait of Lehi), by showing that "the people of ancient Greece and Israel have a common Semitic heritage based on the flow



In a monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai, from whose summit this picture was taken, the manuscript of the Codex Sinaiticus was discovered in a wastebasket in 1844.

of Phoenician culture. . . . We were brought up to believe that the Jews gave us ethics and religion, that the Greeks willed us science and philosophy. Yet, we now see a similar tradition running through both cultures, and we can't be sure which culture gave us what."²⁰

It was the Ugaritic texts that put the brakes on the higher critics, to use Speiser's expression, by demonstrating the futility of their favorite game, namely cutting every book of the Bible up into numerous separate sections which they claimed were the work of various interpolaters and commentators.²¹ Whenever a scholar thought he could discern within a book of the Bible the slightest peculiarity of language or change of mood, outlook, or attitude, he would proudly announce the discovery of a new author or corrupter of the text. "A generation ago," writes H. H. Rowley, "we could speak of 'critical' as over against 'traditional orthodoxy' . . . we knew exactly where one 'document' ended and another began. . . ."²²

True, "the unedifying conclusion of all such study is," as Gordon notes, "that nothing is authentic"; but this loss of reality was compensated for by the warm satisfaction of all playing the same game and wearing the same "badge of inter-confessional academic respectability."²³ But today numerous texts on closer examination show that it was common practice in the East to introduce a variety of styles and even dialects into a single composition.²⁴

"No Egyptologist (or other Orientalist in parallel disciplines) is such a fool," writes K. A. Kitchen, "as to see 'sources' behind such texts . . . or to scissor up these stone stele" as Bible students have scissored up the Bible every time an author hits a change of pace.²⁵

So now the trend of higher criticism has been reversed, and there is "a growing emphasis on the unity

of the Old Testament . . . a significant perception that beneath all its variety of forms and of ideas, the Old Testament has a deep unity."²⁶ Important in this shift has been the new view of the prophets.

It was the fashion "a generation ago . . . to suppose that in the Old Testament we have a dualism of two irreconcilable concepts of religion, the prophetic and the priestly," emphasizing "a contrast between bad priests and good prophets."²⁷ The evolutionary formula required

Ancient marketplace in Aleppo in Northern Syria.



that the prophets, being spiritually advanced, should have a deep antipathy to the primitive formalities of the temple.

But now we know that there is "no definite line of demarcation" between the various aspects of Old Testament religion, and "that the evolutionary view of the Old Testament prophets cannot be accepted . . . every stress must be laid on continuity."²⁸ That is to say, from the beginning Israel has had only one gospel.

An important illustration of this is the case of Isaiah, of particular interest to students of the Book of Mormon, where the prophecies of Isaiah are put forth as the writings of a single man. By the time the higher critics had done their work on Isaiah "there remained very few

long passages of unchallenged authority. . . . It seemed that the entire book was best described as an anthology of the work of many writers."²⁹ But with the discovery that prophets and prophetic societies were closely bound to the temple, it becomes apparent that the actual teachings of Isaiah were preserved by such a society, "called to a special task of guarding and witnessing to Yahweh's revelations vouchsafed in the first place to Isaiah"; that is, that the writings of Isaiah are really

one;³⁰ for example, "in 1880 there was hardly a scholar alive who did not believe that Isaiah lifted the passage (Isaiah 2:2-4) from Micah (4:1-3)," the two being almost word for word the same.

But a study of ritual texts shows that the language of these passages "is not the language of prophecy but occurs often in the archaic ritual texts,"³¹ from which all prophets were free to borrow.

The Patriarchs Come to Life. "One of the remarkable results of archaeological research during the period between the two wars," G. E. Wright informs us, "was the sudden emergence of the Patriarchal Age" as real history.³² The kind of world described in the pages of Genesis really existed, and was therefore not,

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as the higher critics had assumed, the invention of men writing many centuries after the times they are supposed to be describing; the Old Testament gives a vivid and accurate picture of the very world in which the patriarchs are said to have moved, and of no other.³³

Eduard Meyer and Ed. König were right when they insisted that the Old Testament narratives, unlike the dry annals of the Babylonians or the fairy stories of the Egyptians, were real history: “. . . this respect for fact and historical perspective in the records of the race finds no parallel in the whole literature of the ancient Near East until the time of Herodotus.”³⁴

The theory that Genesis was not intended as history but as “poetic media for the conveyance of divine truth,” must now be discarded.³⁵ For “none of the Pentateuchal and other early historical sources of the Old Testament invented its material . . . [they] cannot be charged with any kind of fabrication.”³⁶ And not long ago it was thought to be *all* fabrication!

“It is clear,” writes Albright, “that the substantial historicity of biblical tradition has been vindicated to an extent which few unprejudiced bystanders could have deemed possible a generation ago.”³⁷ In commenting on this, Albright observes that the peculiar genius of the Jewish and Christian religions, as over against all other religions, is the total involvement of their teachings with a real historical background; he also notes that this background has been largely lost today, but has its clearest expression in the Book of Mormon, which commits the Mormons, whether they like it or not, to a literal and historical interpretation of the story of salvation.³⁸

At present, attention is being called to the distinctly epic nature of the earliest patriarchal stories, “a distinctive epic attitude,” showing that the “pre-Solomonic Hebrew history [has] been conditioned by a specific epic standard.”³⁹ Some years ago this writer pointed out at considerable length that the oldest part of the Book of Mormon, the book of Ether, depicts the purest epic milieu in the fullest epic detail. Is it mere coincidence that Joseph Smith hit upon the epic device for his oldest stories? Nobody even knew there was a genuine epic milieu until Chadwick pointed it out in the 1930’s.⁴⁰

When a hundred years ago late Babylonian parallels to the Hebrew flood story were discovered in the library of Assur-bani-pal at Nineveh (first of the great library discoveries), it was instantly concluded that the Old Testament version had been lifted from this Babylonian “original.” But as still older versions of the flood story were found in Mesopotamia, they were noted to be more like the Genesis story the older they were, indicating that the Bible story might be the oldest one after all.⁴¹ And now comes the Atra-khasis Epic of great antiquity, showing that the Babylonian flood story which has long been accepted as the original source, “has been wrenched from its context,” which here appears for the first time, offering “proof . . . that the whole framework of Hebrew tradition in Genesis I-X, and not just the episode of the flood, has its counterpart in Sumero-Babylonian legend.”⁴²

A perhaps even more striking vindication of the possible priority of much Bible material over the sources from which it is supposed to have come is the discovery by Drioton that a famous monument of Egyptian Wisdom literature, which is supposed to have been the source and inspiration of Hebrew Wisdom literature, “is actually an indifferent Egyptian translation from a Semitic

—Hebrew—original. . . . This would be the ‘Words of the Wise’ on which Proverbs also subsequently drew.”⁴³ The idea that the Babylonians and Egyptians might be dependent on the Hebrews for ideas found in the Bible instead of the other way round is indeed a revolutionary one.

It is interesting that the ancient Hebrew remains, though not scarce, do not have the impact that the foreign materials do.⁴⁴ The Lachish Letters, containing eyewitness accounts of the desperate state of things in the land of Jerusalem in Lehi’s day,⁴⁵ have excited far less comment than the Elephantine Papyri which show us a Jewish community living far up the Nile, whither they had fled for safety, possibly at the destruction of Jerusalem in Lehi’s day.⁴⁶ In 1954 some of these records, the Brooklyn Aramaic Papyri, were discovered in a trunk, where they had been overlooked for fifty years.⁴⁷ Perhaps the most surprising discovery about these Jews settled so far from home, was their program for building a temple in their new home.⁴⁸ Not long ago learned divines were fond of pointing out that Nephi’s idea of building a temple in the New World was quite sufficient in itself to prove once for all the fraudulence of the Book of Mormon, since, it was argued, no real Jew would ever dream of having a temple anywhere but in Jerusalem. So the Elephantine Papyri score another point for the Book of Mormon.

The portrait of Abraham as a very civilized man who possibly lived in “a sophisticated brick house in a city,” was something “we should never have guessed” until Sir Leonard Woolley discovered it in the 1930’s.⁴⁹ Since then all sorts of information about Abraham has been turning up.⁵⁰ In 1950 were published fragments of a book of Abraham found among the Dead Sea Scrolls; they supply interesting side lights on our own book of Abraham, to which we shall refer below.⁵¹ The

same year saw the publication of the Brooklyn Papyrus, part of an actual record kept at an important Egyptian prison in Joseph's day. It includes a list of seventy-five prisoners' names, of which forty are of West Semitic origin, by which "the genuine antiquity of some patriarchal names is . . . brightly illumined."⁵² Which reminds us that in 1938 Nelson Glueck first showed Lehi to be an authentic West Semitic name, at home in the borders near the Red Sea.⁵³

In 1958 the same authority was able to trace part of Abraham's route through the desert "into the Wilderness of Zin from Palestine to Egypt and back again. . . . After having discovered these Abra(ha)mitic sites," he reports, "the chapters in the Bible describing the journeys of Abraham and his people . . . became clear to us."⁵⁴

"To come forth in their purity. . . ." By far the greatest influence in effecting a new reading of the Old Testament comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls. And the surprising thing that the Scrolls show us is that the text of the Bible has not been so much altered—for actually they show that it has been on the whole preserved with astonishing integrity—as mutilated by the removal of material from the original. As Professor Albright puts it, "Our Hebrew text has suffered much more from

losses than from glosses." And he proceeds to illustrate the point from a number of books, showing that "future translations will have to expand the text substantially—including . . . some [passages] of great importance for their content."⁵⁵

Which brings us back to our original proposition that "they have *taken away* . . . many parts . . . that were most precious . . ." and that these are to be restored by the bringing forth of "other books" and records. There is no better illustration of both these points to date than the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Within a stone's throw of Jerusalem (less than fifteen miles away on the average), is a land that had been examined with care by Christian antiquarians since the days of Origen and Jerome. Hundreds of caves containing thousands of written fragments had escaped detection through the centuries until the desert suddenly came to life in the early 1950's. "Discoveries tread on the heels of discoveries," cried Professor Cross. "The antique riches of this land seem limitless."⁵⁶ By 1960 over 230 caves had been explored, and writings had been discovered in many of them.⁵⁷ The documents that interest us consist of more than 400 manuscripts covering a span of 300 years—from the end of the third century BC until 68 AD.⁵⁷ They in-

clude "the first major biblical manuscript of great antiquity,"⁵⁸ letters of the great leader Simon Bar Kochba written by himself,⁵⁹ the "first known Hebrew documents from the early Rabbinic period,"⁶⁰ and above all the records and teachings of a pre-Christian "Church in the Wilderness."⁶¹

More than a decade ago this writer, following a clue from an apocryphal work called the Assumption of Moses, suggested in the pages of *The Improvement Era* that the documents from the caves of Qumran had not been hastily buried by their owners to preserve them from the ravages of a Roman army but had rather been deliberately buried and sealed up to come forth in a later "dispensation."⁶² Since then, the discovery of a fragment of the Assumption of Moses itself in one of the caves has put scholars on the track of investigation which now leads them to the conclusion that the Scrolls actually were buried "in a solemn communal interment" with the hope of their discovery in a later and better age.⁶³

In this connection, one find in particular should be mentioned, namely the now famous Copper Scroll from Cave IV. It is a document of first importance: ". . . There is hardly an aspect of Near Eastern archaeology, history, and religion that [it] does not in some way illuminate."⁶⁴ Originally it consisted of copper plates, but these have been riveted together so that they could be rolled up in imitation of a sacred leather scroll.⁶⁵ Why copper? Because this record was more valuable than any of the other Scrolls, being nothing less than a catalog of all the buried treasures of the society. If this record should perish, many if not all of their possessions—all dedicated to the Lord—would be irretrievably lost. Hence it had to be written on an enduring substance and carefully hidden away.⁶⁶ Consider some items from the Copper Scroll:

SPECIAL MOMENT

BY FRANCES HALL

*You can be doing some very simple thing:
Picking beans in a garden,
Making sandwiches for a picnic,
Helping a child put on his galoshes—
And suddenly contentment splashes on your face
Like a first drop of rain in an unexpected shower.
A downpour of gentleness shines around you,
There is an exuberant flash of lightning,
And along the green hills of your life
Resounds a thunderclap of joy.*

Item 4: “. . . tithe vessels, consisting of log vessels and amphorae, all of tithe and stored Seventh-Year produce and Second Tithe . . . in the bottom of the water conduit, six cubits from the north towards the hewn immersion pool.”

Item 26: “. . . buried at three cubits, (hidden) there is a pitcher, in it, one scroll, under it 42 talents.”

Item 34: “In the (drain) pipe which is in the eastern path to the Treasury, which is beside the Entrance: tithe jars and scrolls in among the jars.”⁶⁷

All these were sacred treasures and could only be used for religious purposes.⁶⁸ Note that along with the money are sacred writings, one of them in a clay vessel such as the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in, others packed in among the jars. The “immersion pool” refers to “a ritual bath” according to Allegro’s note, and the “Seventh-Year produce” reminds one of the custom, referred to casually in the Book of Mormon, of the people’s bringing a seven years’ supply to a great gathering.⁶⁹

Pre-Christian baptism and seventh-year produce thus ring familiar bells to the student of the Book of Mormon. But what is of particular interest, of course, is the nature and use of the copper plates. By both precept and example they proclaim from the first time clearly and unequivocally that it was indeed an ancient Jewish custom to conceal sacred records, including records kept on metal plates prized for their durability. The business of writing on such plates was hard and distasteful work: “The scribe, not without reason, appears to have tired toward the end, and the last lines of writing are badly formed and rather small. One can almost hear his sigh of relief as he punched out the last two words in the middle of the final line.”⁷⁰ How clearly this recalls the protests and explanations of our Book of Mormon writers,

“. . . and I cannot write but little of my words, because of the difficulty of engraving our words upon plates” (Jacob 4:1) and “. . . I would write it also if I had room on the plates, but I have not. . .” (Mormon 8:5.) Writing on plates requires a cramped and abbreviated script, Moroni explains (Mormon 9:32), and Allegro also notes that writing on copper plates actually produces a new kind of writing that is peculiarly difficult to read, characterized by mixing forms of letters, ignoring the proper spacing between words, “running-over from one line to the next in the middle of a word,” and general neglect of vowels.⁷¹

“A greater deficiency lies in ourselves,” Allegro concludes, “we simply do not possess a sufficiently comprehensive technical Hebrew vocabulary to deal with a text of this kind.”⁷¹ This should have a sobering effect on those people who fondly suppose that if we could only discover some Nephite plates, the translation could be left to them: this sort of thing needs a Urim and Thummim indeed.

Since the past few decades have brought forth numerous exemplars of ancient writing on metal plates, of which Exhibit A are the gold and silver Darius plates—sacred history deposited in a special stone box by a near-contemporary of Lehi⁷²—it is only too easy to forget that nothing in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon excited louder howls of derision than the fantastic idea of a sacred history being written on gold plates and then buried in the ground. The Copper Scroll and its message, compared carefully with what the Book of Mormon itself has to say about the recording and storing of bronze and gold plates, should give pause to the most skeptical critic of the Book of Mormon.

(To be continued next month)

FOOTNOTES

¹In 1 Nephi 13, verses 3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 38,

42 show that the gentiles and the Church are not to be confused. In verses 25 and 26 the gentiles receive but then lose the pure records. In verses 35 and 36 more records “come forth unto the Gentiles,” and in verse 38 it is the gentiles who convey the Bible to the Indians, while in verse 39 they convey yet “other books” to all the world, convincing themselves, the Indians, and the Jews that the former records are true. This seems much too complicated to refer to the Book of Mormon alone. See especially 1 Nephi 14:23-28.

²See Francis W. Kirkham, *A New Witness for Christ in America* (Independence, Mo.: Zion’s Printing and Publishing Co., 1942), pp. 267-8.

³For a general discussion, see H. Nibley, in *The Improvement Era*, 62 (1959), pp. 147ff.

⁴See Nov. Era, 1964, notes 94 to 99.

⁵J. N. Schofield, in *Expository Times*, 71 (1960), p. 195.

⁶W. F. Albright, in *Cross Currents*, 9 (1959), p. 114.

⁷C. Gordon, in *Christianity Today*, 4 (Nov. 23, 1959), p. 131.

⁸Ed. Meyer, in *Sitzber. der Berliner Akad. d. Wissenschaft*, Hist.-Phil. Klasse, 1908, p. 153.

⁹T. Robinson, in *Zeitschrift für die alt testamentliche Wissenschaft*, 73 (1961), p. 265.

¹⁰W. F. Albright, in *Journal of Bible and Religion*, 31 (1963), p. 110.

¹¹C. S. Rodd, in *Expository Times*, 71 (1960), p. 131.

¹²H. H. Rowley, in *Expository Times*, 71 (1959), p. 97.

¹³T. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

¹⁴J. Schofield, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

¹⁵Compare the latest summary, S. Hooke, Ed., *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship* (Oxford, 1958), with our discussion in *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964), Ch. 23 (pp. 256-268.)

¹⁶W. F. Albright, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 64 (1944), p. 148.

¹⁷A. Parrot, in *Revue de l’Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*, 1950, pp. 1-9. Cf. W. F. Albright, *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 2-9.

¹⁸C. Gordon, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-4.

¹⁹For the Book of Mormon, H. Nibley, *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, Chapters 3-7.

²⁰C. Gordon, *Before the Bible* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 32ff.

²¹E. A. Speiser, in *Contemporary Review*, IV, pp. 214-5.

²²H. H. Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

²³C. Gordon, *op. cit.*, pp. 134, 131.

²⁴“No one questions that Hammurabi’s Code is a single composition in spite of the fact that the prologue and epilogue are not only written in poetry (as against the prose of the laws) but in a different dialect from the laws, because the poetry calls not only for a different style but even for different grammatical forms.” C. Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1949), pp. 6-7, discussing other cases as well. Cf. his article in *Christianity Today*, 4 (1959), p. 132.

²⁵K. A. Kitchen, in *Faith and Thought*, 91 (1959), p. 190. It has been shown

that varieties of style occur within single Egyptian documents as well as Babylonian, *ibid.*, pp. 188f. Cf. S. Mowinckel, *Prophecy and Tradition* No. 3 (Oslo, Norse Academy of Science, 1946), pp. 7-8.

²⁶H. H. Rowley, in S. Hooke, *op. cit.*, p. 260. A generation ago such a thing was unthinkable, H. Torczyner, in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 85 (1931), pp. 287-324.

²⁷H. H. Rowley, in *Expository Times*, 71 (1959), p. 98.

²⁸A. Haldar, *Associations of Cult Prophets among the Ancient Semites* (Uppsala, 1945), p. 199. "Today there is a confident assertion that the prophets of Israel were all cultic officials. . . ." J. Schofield, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

²⁹J. Eaton, in *Vetus Testamentum*, 9 (1959), p. 138.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 149; cf. H. Wildberger, in *Vetus Testamentum*, 8 (1958), p. 81.

³¹H. Wildberger, in *Vetus Testamentum*, 7 (1957), p. 65.

³²G. E. Wright, in *Expository Times*, 71 (1960), p. 292.

³³W. F. Albright, *Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra*, p. 5: ". . . the Patriarchs come alive with a vividness unknown to a single extrabiblical character in the whole vast literature of the ancient Near East." For discussions of the discovery of the Patriarchal Age, J. Reider, in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 27 (1937), p. 349; J. C. L. Gibson in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 7 (1962), pp. 44ff; R. de Vaux, in *Revue Biblique*, 53 (1946), pp. 321-

348; G. E. Wright, in *Expository Times*, 71 (1960), pp. 292-6, and *ibid.*, 72 (1961), pp. 213-6; A. Parrot, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-10.

³⁴J. Gray, in *Vetus Testamentum*, Suppl. Vol. V (1957), p. 218. Cf. Ed. Meyer, *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme* (Halle, 1906), p. 484, and *Geschichte des Altertums*, I, i, 131; and Ed. König, in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 132 (1925), pp. 290ff.

³⁵T. C. Mitchell, in *Faith and Thought*, 91 (1959), p. 48.

³⁶E. A. Speiser, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

³⁷W. F. Albright, in *Cross Currents*, 9 (1959), p. 117. Cf. G. von Rad, in *Expository Times*, 72 (1961), p. 216; H. H. Rowley, *ibid.*, 71 (1960), p. 97.

³⁸Albright, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

³⁹C. Gordon, in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 11 (1952), p. 213; cf. *ibid.*, 13 (1954), pp. 56ff.

⁴⁰See discussion in *The Improvement Era*, 59 (January 1956), pp. 30ff.

⁴¹Discussed by H. Nibley, in *A Book of Mormon Treasury* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1959), p. 135.

⁴²W. Lambert, in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 5 (1960), p. 116.

⁴³E. Drioton, in *Faith and Thought*, 91 (1959), pp. 191-3.

⁴⁴For a summary of important Hebrew finds, S. Moscati, *L'Epigrafia Ebraica Antica*, in *Biblica et Orientalia*, No. 15 (1951), discussing the Gezer Calendar (pp. 8ff), the Samarian Ostraca (27ff), the Siloam Inscription (40ff), the Ofel Ostraca (40ff), the seals (47ff), bulla

and jar-handles (72ff), inscribed weights (99ff), the Samarian Ivories (106ff), and newly found inscriptions (111ff).

⁴⁵H. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, etc., (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952), pp. 8f, 109.

⁴⁶M. L. Margolis, in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 2 (1911-2), pp. 419f.

⁴⁷C. Torrey, in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 13 (1954), pp. 149-53.

⁴⁸Margolis, *op. cit.*, pp. 430-435.

⁴⁹T. L. Woolley, *Digging up the Past* (Middlesex: Harmondsworth, 1950), pp. 64-66.

⁵⁰"The contracts from Kirkuk and nearby Nuzu confront us with biblical parallels that cluster around the Patriarchs. . . . Abraham was of Mesopotamian origin, and his son and grandson married girls from their kin in Mitanni. At the same time, Egyptian blood was in the Patriarchal household. . . . The Patriarchal Hebrews enjoyed the ideal spot and the ideal time to fall heir to the rich and varied heritage of the entire ancient Near East. . . ." C. Gordon, in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 13 (1954), pp. 56-59, and *ibid.*, 11 (1952), p. 212.

⁵¹Y. Yadin, *A Genesis Apocryphon* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1956), p. 8.

⁵²K. A. Kitchen, in *Faith and Thought*, 91 (1959), pp. 180-4.

⁵³See *The Improvement Era*, March 1956, p. 152.

⁵⁴N. Glueck, in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 100 (1956), pp. 150-5.

⁵⁵W. F. Albright and D. N. Freedman, in *Journal of Bible and Religion*, 31 (1963), pp. 111f.

⁵⁶F. M. Cross, in *The Biblical Archaeologist*, February 1954, p. 17.

⁵⁷G. Kuhn, in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 85 (1960), p. 651. For the latest list of new texts, R. Meyer, *ibid.*, 88 (1963), pp. 19ff.

⁵⁸F. M. Cross, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶⁰R. Brownlee, in *The Biblical Archaeologist*, September 1951, p. 54.

⁶¹We have treated this theme at length in *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, pp. 133-162 (Chapters 13-15).

⁶²*The Improvement Era*, 57 (February 1954), p. 89.

⁶³M. Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (New York: Scribner, 1961), p. 12.

⁶⁴J. M. Allegro, *The Treasure of the Copper Scroll* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), p. 25.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 27; A. Dupont-Sommer, in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 151 (1957), p. 25.

⁶⁶Allegro, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁶⁷Translated by Allegro, with reproductions of text, on pp. 33, 43, 47.

⁶⁸"To use such goods for non-religious purposes was a heinous sin," *ibid.*, p. 61.

⁶⁹3 Nephi 4:4. Note that they only needed the substance for a year and a half; the seven year supply was apparently familiar and traditional.

⁷⁰Allegro, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, pp. 28-30.

⁷²There is a reproduction of these along with a discussion of "Ancient Records on Metal Plates," in Franklin S. Harris, Jr., *The Book of Mormon Message and Evidences* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1953), pp. 95-105.



35TH ANNIVERSARY AT THE NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR

RICHARD L. EVANS

With this thirty-fifth anniversary broadcast today, originating at the New York World's Fair, two themes come uppermost to mind: one is the theme of the Fair, "Peace through Understanding." The other is the theme of our own Pavilion, "Man's Search for Happiness." Life is a search for us all. We all have our unanswered questions. We all have our problems, our disappointments, our difficulties, things to accomplish, things to overcome and improve upon. And in this search every man has an obligation to learn all he can, to know all he can, and to become all that he can become. One of the greatest utterances ever recorded was this: "Let there be light."¹ We all need to come out of the shadows, to search, to think, to learn, to repent and improve, and to find our peace through understanding in our search for happiness. "The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth."² Here at the World's Fair, we see before us the evidences of material progress and limitless possibilities, and the future can be "the best of times . . . the worst of times"³ as we turn the mind and spirit of man to the uses of all that is here in evidence. To this end, "Let there be light."

¹Gen. 1:3.

²D&C 93:36.

³Charles Dickens (1812-1870), English novelist.

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