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## Editor's Introduction

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**Abstract** Introduction to the current issue.

## Editors' Introduction

We are pleased to present here the first issue of *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity*. *Studies* is dedicated to Latter-day Saint research on the Old Testament, New Testament, and other texts or topics that illuminate our understanding of the Bible and religion in antiquity. It is the first LDS periodical devoted exclusively to these subjects and will serve as a companion to the other periodicals of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship dedicated to the study of the scripture and faith of the Restored Gospel.

*Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* serves the needs of two constituencies. Like its sister publications, *Studies* serves a broad community of general LDS readers who study and teach the Bible and who wish to better understand both the biblical text and its world. Yet *Studies* is also a journal by LDS scholars for LDS scholars, as well as for our academic colleagues who have an interest in LDS approaches to the Bible and religion in antiquity. Therefore, many of the articles published here will be technical in nature. But to serve our general readership, we will work with authors of more technical studies to ensure that even the most specialized articles are as accessible as possible to nonspecialists.

This inaugural issue of *Studies* contains five excellent articles. In "A Comparison of the Communal Lament Psalms and the Treaty-Covenant Formula," Daniel Belnap examines the communal lament psalms within the context of the Hittite covenantal formula. Belnap aptly demonstrates through many examples from the lament psalms that the relationship between Israel and Jehovah fits comfortably within the ancient Hittite treaty-covenant formula, which provides insight into how the Lord taught the Israelites about repentance and forgiveness within the context of their own time. This article has implications for our understanding of LDS covenant making, covenant breaking, and the restoration of covenantal blessings through repentance.

David Bokovoy's article, "From the Hand of Jacob: A Ritual Analysis of Genesis 27," analyzes the element of ritual in Jacob's deception when receiving a blessing from Isaac. Insights gleaned from Hebrew and other ancient practices suggest that hand placement, exchange of clothing, and the seeking of blessing probably relate to rituals associated with the temple. Bokovoy believes that the deception of Jacob may be better understood as a ritual act common to his environment, giving insight into a difficult-to-understand part of the book of Genesis.

In "And the Word Was Made Flesh: An LDS Exegesis of the Blood and Water Imagery in the Gospel of John," Eric D. Huntsman examines a number of Greek words and phrases that illuminate how the Gospel of John presents the symbolic nature of blood and water. It is commonly known that John, more than the other three evangelists, employed symbolism very extensively, and Huntsman has illustrated this fact well with his discussion of blood and water as symbols of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Julie M. Smith's "Pointing Our Souls to Christ: Lessons from Leviticus" examines the Book of Leviticus analogically and shows how the ritual laws of Leviticus pointed the Israelites towards Christ and the atonement. Smith's rereading of Leviticus, informed by contemporary exegetical method, will help readers see Leviticus not as a "dry and irrelevant" legal code, but as a witness to Christ as Savior and Redeemer.

Finally, Gaye Strathearn in "The Valentinian Bridal Chamber in the *Gospel of Philip*" examines whether the "bridal chamber" in the *Gospel of Philip* may be seen as providing evidence of a primitive practice like modern LDS temple marriage. Some LDS scholars have suggested that this is the case. Strathearn carefully describes the issues and provides an accurate and insightful assessment to help readers draw informed conclusions.

We now present this debut issue of *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* with our hope that readers will find in its original and carefully researched articles a greater understanding and appreciation of the Bible and the biblical world.