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Moses, Captain Moroni, and the Amalekites

by Matthew Roper



Joseph Brickey, © IRI

After Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage and crossing of the Red Sea, another enemy, the Amalekites, attacked the camp on its pilgrimage to worship God at Sinai.¹ Moses, in response to this cowardly act, directed Joshua to fight them. For his part, Moses would stand atop a nearby hill holding the rod of God. “And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.” Moses, however, was tired and could not always keep his hands up, so “Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands *were steady* until the going down of the sun” (Exodus 17:8-12, emphasis added), allowing Joshua and the men of Israel to prevail in the battle.

In the Book of Mormon, the narrative in Alma 43-44 evokes the biblical story of the Amalekites. The shared elements, likely more

than mere coincidence, make for an interesting comparison.

Deuteronomy records that the Amalekite offensive was particularly heinous because the attackers “smote the hindmost of [Israel], even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and [the Amalekites] feared not God” (Deuteronomy 25:18). Like their biblical counterparts, the Amalekites in Alma’s narrative led massacres of unsuspecting people. In these attacks, the Amalekites and their supporters killed thousands of converted Lamanites in the land of Nephi. Because they refused to take up arms against their attackers (Alma 24:20-23; 27:2-3), the surviving converts migrated to the land of Jershon for safety, where Lamanites, led by Amalekites and Zoramites, unsuccessfully tried to repeat the earlier atrocities. Thwarted by Nephite armies, they went over to the land of Manti, “that they might commence an attack upon the weaker part of the people” (Alma 43:19-24).

In both Exodus and the book of Alma, when the battle’s outcome was in doubt, the Lord, through his representative, encouraged his people and inspired them to victory. Whereas Aaron and Hur held up Moses’s arms so Israel could prevail over Amalek’s army (Exodus 17:11-12), when the Nephites were frightened by the ferocity of their enemies, “Moroni, perceiving their intent, sent forth and inspired their hearts . . . and they cried with one voice unto the Lord their God, for their liberty and their freedom from bondage. And they began to stand against the Lamanites with power” (Alma 43:48-50). In an apparent allusion to the steadying of Moses’s arms, Captain Moroni credits “God, who has *strengthened our arms*” (44:5).

(Moses to page 8)

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"Another Holy Land"

Maxwell Institute Development Council Visits Turkey

by Kristian Heal



The development council in front of the Library of Celsus

In September, Morgan Davis, Daniel Peterson, and I led a development council tour through some of Turkey's most remarkable religious sites. In doing so, we followed in the footsteps of a fifth-century abbot called Daniel, who was told not to go to Jerusalem as he had planned, but instead to "go to Byzantium and you will see a second Jerusalem!" Daniel did indeed go to Byzantium, or Constantinople as it was called then, and found a city filled with Christian sites. Fifteen hundred years later, Maxwell Institute friends and scholars descended on Turkey to explore the ancient ruins and religious sites of this other holy land.

The tour began and ended in Istanbul, the ancient city of Byzantium, and site of the new Roman capital built by Constantine the Great between AD 324 and 330. Though almost nothing survives from the first two centuries of the city, we were able to stand on the site of the first Council of Constantinople (381), which was held in the old Hagia Irene (now in the grounds of the splendid Topkapi Palace). The original Hagia Irene and the original Hagia Sophia were burned to the ground in 532 during the Nika riots. Justinian I (527-65) eventually put down the riots decisively and brutally (a story we recalled as we walked the site of the hippodrome) and found in the smoldering ruins of his city the determination to restore the glory of Constan-

tinople through an ambitious building program.

The greatest monument to Justinian's labors is the magnificent Hagia Sophia, which took just five years to build. This iconic building transported us back through time as we stared up into its enormous open nave and saw the undimmed splendor of Justinian's golden ceiling, marveled at the awesome cherubim, and wondered at the many other gorgeous mosaics added in later centuries. Hagia Sophia was converted to a mosque by Mehmet the Conqueror shortly after he captured Constantinople in 1453, and just under 400 years later it was made a national museum.

Other delights we saw in Istanbul include the evocative Basilica Cistern, the stunning mosaics of the Chora Church, splendid and peaceful mosques, the incredibly rich Archeological Museum, the Topkapi Palace, and the Dolmabahçe Palace, which represents the last effervesce of the Ottoman Empire. We could have spent weeks exploring Istanbul and still have only scratched the surface of this remarkable city.

From the Topkapi Palace we were able to look over the Bosphorus toward ancient Chalcedon, the site of the fourth ecumenical council. During the rest of the tour we visited the ancient city of Nicea, where the first and seventh ecumenical councils took place, and Ephesus, home to the third ecumenical council.

From our itinerary it is clear that we were interested in exploring Turkey's role in the formation of the Christian church and the making of the creeds. Of course, this story begins with the apostolic ministry of Paul (legends also place John and Mary in Ephesus) and the spread of Christianity in Asia Minor. Following in Paul's footsteps, we visited Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis, and Pergamum, home to four of the primitive Christian communities referred to in the book of Revelation.

Ephesus is justly celebrated, and we gladly waded through the endless river of tourists to

explore and enjoy the magnificent ruins of this ancient city, ending up in the grand theater, where we imagined the crowds praising (the rather hideous looking) Diana of the Ephesians (Acts 19). The other sites were less crowded, though no less evocative, and we all enjoyed the ruins of the ancient markets of Smyrna with their stone arches and the Acropolis of Pergamum towering high above the plains.

Turkey's varied landscape was always interesting and often stunning, no more so than among the stark geological wonders found in Cappadocia. The highlands of central

Turkey are not just home to geographical wonders, however. There we found evidence of centuries of Christians living in the harshest of environments, with homes, churches, and monasteries hewn out of volcanic rock formations. The frescoes in these rock-hewn churches were far simpler and less elegant than



The Göreme Valley of Cappadocia, Turkey

the fine urban mosaics we saw in Istanbul, but the devotion was no less obvious. Even in the Byzantine period, Christians in these regions lived precarious lives and were often forced to find refuge in large underground cities as advancing armies crossed the region heading for

wealthier areas in the west. Although the Christian population of Turkey today is miniscule, the magnificent cathedral churches and humble rock-hewn monastery bear witness to centuries of earnest devotion in this other holy land. It was this personal aspect of the history of Christianity lived in

rural, unstable, and harsh conditions that struck us, just as much as the steady decline and loss of plain and precious truths that we, as Latter-day Saints, see in the development of the creeds formulated in this remarkable country.

Kristian Heal, PhD, is director of advancement at the Maxwell Institute.

Lectures & Events

Laura F. Willes Book of Mormon Lecture

BYU Professor James Faulconer will give the Laura F. Willes Book of Mormon Lecture for 2012-13 on "Sealings and Mercies: Moroni's Final Exhortation in Moroni 10." The lecture will be held on Tuesday, January 15, 2013, at 7:00 PM in the Gordon B. Hinckley Alumni and Visitors Center at Brigham Young University.

Neal A. Maxwell Lecture

The Neal A. Maxwell Lecture for 2013 will be given by James S. Jardine of the law firm Ray Quinney & Nebeker on Wednesday, March 20, in the Gordon B. Hinckley Alumni and Visitors Center. Exact time to be announced.

Lectures by Royal Skousen

BYU Professor Royal Skousen, editor of the Book of Mormon critical text project, will present a series of three illustrated lectures on "25 Years of Research: What We Have Learned about the Book of Mormon Text" at the Gordon B. Hinckley Alumni and Visitors Center.

- Tuesday, February 26, 2013, 7:00 PM:
"The Original and Printer's Manuscripts"
- Tuesday, March 5, 2013, 7:00 PM:
"The Printed Editions"
- Tuesday, March 12, 2013, 7:00 PM:
"The Nature of the Original Text"

Maxwell Institute Announces Nibley Fellows

Named in honor of the late Latter-day Saint scholar Hugh W. Nibley, the Maxwell Institute's Nibley Fellowship Program is intended to help foster the next generation of faithful scholars by providing financial aid to students enrolled in accredited doctoral programs in areas of study related to the work and mission of the institute, including study of the Bible, early Christianity, the Book of Mormon and other restoration scriptures, and Mormon studies.

Those interested in applying for the first time or who wish to renew their fellowships for the 2013-14 academic year should submit a completed application form and all supporting documentation by July 31, 2013. The Nibley Fellowship guidelines and an application form are



Hugh W. Nibley, PhD

available at mi.byu.edu/nibleyfellowships or by emailing nibleyfellowships@byu.edu. Applicants cannot be employed at the Maxwell Institute or be related to an institute employee.

Continuing Nibley Fellows for 2012–13

Daniel Beccera, New Testament at Harvard Divinity School
 Jason Combs, New Testament at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
 Ryan C. Davis, Hebrew Bible at University of Texas at Austin
 Jacob Rennaker, Hebrew Bible at Claremont Graduate University
 Avram Shannon, Hebrew Bible at The Ohio State University
 Elizabeth Tracy, Hebrew Bible at University of St. Andrews
 Shirley Wood, Religious and Theological Studies at Iliff School of Theology

New Nibley Fellows for 2012–13

Bryan Bozung, Second Temple Judaism at Yale Divinity School
 Don Bradley, Mormon Studies at Utah State University
 Alexander Douglas, Hebrew Bible at Harvard University
 Lucas Drake, New Testament at Harvard Divinity School
 Alan T. Farnes, New Testament at Duke University
 Lincoln Hale, Mormon Studies at Claremont Graduate University
 Jared Halverson, American Religious History at Vanderbilt University
 Trevan Hatch, History at Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies
 Jason Olson, Christian Zionism at Brandeis University
 Benjamin Park, Early American History at University of Cambridge
 Joshua Sears, Hebrew Bible at University of Texas at Austin
 Andrew Smith, Islamic Studies at Claremont Graduate University
 Michael Stahl, Hebrew Bible at New York University
 Erik Yingling, Liturgical Studies at Yale Divinity School

We congratulate the recipients and wish them well in their studies.

New Issue of *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity*

Articles in the latest issue of *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* range from the study of ancient Mesopotamian art to a contemporary meditation on one of Jesus's most famous parables.

The lead article by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Ronan James Head examines the famous Mari Investiture Panel (c. 1800 BC), which “depicts the endowment of the king of Mari with the divine right to rule.” Their comparative study of similar ancient Near Eastern rites provides “a plausible interpretation of the panel and also a link with the religious practices of the Israelites with which Latter-day Saints are familiar and with which they feel a ritual kinship.” A second study of investiture motifs is then offered by Daniel Belnap, who finds in the Garden of Eden, the tabernacle of Exodus, and teachings

concerning Christ, clothing and investiture symbolism that informs our understanding of the story of Tabitha (Acts 9).

A third article, by Thomas A. Wayment and John Gee, is a pro/con debate concerning a contested point of New Testament scholarship: Is the apostle Paul addressing his wife in Philipians 4:3? The issue concludes with a close reading and commentary on the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) by Robert L. Millet, who finds it to be “a distillation of the Plan of Salvation, a message within the Message, the gospel within the Gospel.”

Studies in the Bible and Antiquity is available by subscription or free of charge online at <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/studies>.

Swensen Mentorships Awarded

The Russel B. Swensen Endowed Mentorship Fund was established by a generous gift from Elder Robert C. Gay to honor the BYU professor who was much beloved by Elder Gay's father, William (Bill) Gay. The Swensen mentorships give students the opportunity to work with faculty at the Maxwell Institute in a mentored research environment. This year, Aubrey Brower and Emily Bateman were awarded mentorships to work on research projects with Kristian S. Heal, PhD, director of the Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts.

Brower is working with Heal on the reception of Genesis in the Armenian tradition as part of Heal's larger project of studying Genesis in the broader context of scripture and ancient tradition. Heal and Brower are also preparing an annotated bibliography of the abundant Armenian sources on Genesis, which will be available on the project's website in spring 2013. Brower is also researching descriptions of Adam, Eve, and the Fall in Armenian sources with the goal of writing a publishable paper. Brower, who is from Maryland, is a senior majoring in Ancient

Near Eastern Studies at BYU. She served in the Armenia Yerevan Mission and plans to pursue graduate work in museum studies.

Bateman is working with Heal on the history of Birmingham University's Mingana Syriac collection—the last great Syriac manuscript collection physically assembled in Europe and North America—to prepare an annotated transcription of related correspondence. The project explores the social and intellectual networks that facilitated the growth of Syriac studies in the United Kingdom and North America in the early twentieth century. Bateman and Heal are producing a full transcription of the correspondence and a glossary with biographical, geographical, and historical information. Ultimately, Heal plans to publish a book on the history of the Mingana Syriac collection and also create a website that includes all of the relevant historical data. Hailing from Tacoma, Washington, Bateman is a senior majoring in music performance at BYU. She served in the Utah Salt Lake City Temple Square Mission and plans to attend graduate school in the near future.

in the Bible (such as *resurrection* and *presence* appearing together). This exploration helps answer these questions: Who uses the word *resurrection* in the Book of Mormon? How is it used? and How is it used differently in the King James Bible?

Andrew C. Smith suggests in “Deflected Agreement in the Book of Mormon” that certain ungrammatical English constructions that occurred in the dictation of the Book of Mormon may have been precipitated by the language on the plates rather than ascribed wholesale to any non-standard English of Joseph Smith’s day. Deflected agreement is a grammatical phenomenon found in Semitic languages—it is ubiquitous in Arabic and found occasionally in biblical Hebrew. Deflected agreement is a plausible explanation for some grammatical incongruities in the original and printer’s manuscripts and printed editions of the Book of Mormon in the grammatical areas of verbal, pronominal, and demonstrative agreement. This finding gives greater credence to the plausibility of the antiquity and historicity of the Book of Mormon.

In 1892, when John Gilbert—the compositor (or typesetter) for the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon—was 90 years old, he talked about the process of setting the type for the book at the Grandin Print Shop. Gilbert makes claims about

the number of manuscript pages, the number of copies and the price, the number of ems (a measure of type width) per printed page, a comparison of manuscript versus printed pages, a description of the font, the process of receiving the pages to be typeset, proofreading the title page, the decision not to correct grammatical errors, scribes for the printer’s manuscript, paragraphing and punctuation, capitalization in the manuscript, Gilbert’s taking work home to punctuate, and details about the signatures. Royal Skousen* explores Gilbert’s claims to see how his account matches up with the accounts of others or even with the extant physical evidence. In every aspect, Gilbert’s recollections are either precisely correct or easily explained.

In this issue of the *Journal* we are proud to present two original pieces of art by young LDS artist Annie Henrie: *Abridging the Plates* (pp. 14–15) and *Resurrection Dawn* (p. 34).

Back issues of the *Journal* can be found free of charge online at <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/jbms>.

* The original version of Skousen’s article was published in *The Disciple as Witness: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 383–405.

New BYU Booth Debuts at AAR/SBL Conference



In November, the Maxwell Institute teamed up with BYU Studies and the Religious Studies Center to launch a new booth at the American Academy of Religion/Society for Biblical Literature annual meeting. The booth was designed by students and faculty at the BYU Adlab.

(Moses from page 1)

Additional elements in the Alma narrative may also evoke words and phrases from the Exodus account. The Israelites were attacked while camped at *Rephidim*, a word whose root (*rpd*) can mean “support, help, carry.”² In his speech to the enemy commander Zarahemnah, Moroni emphasized that his people’s victory over their enemies was evidence of the Lord’s help: “Ye see that God will *support*” the Nephites (Alma 44:4). He also speaks of “the sacred *support* which we owe to our wives and our children” (v. 5). In Exodus, Amalek’s attack occurred after Israel had murmured for water, chided the Lord and Moses, and asked, “*Is the Lord among us, or not?*” (Exodus 17:7). In the Book of Mormon, Moroni pointedly observes to his cornered enemies, “But now, ye behold that *the Lord is with us*” (Alma 44:3), a phrase that evokes Israel’s deliverance from Amalek. Moreover, like the biblical Amalekites, the Amalekite- and Zoramite-led army in the Book of Mormon did not “fear God,” but attributed all the success of Moroni’s forces to their superior armor and cunning (Deuteronomy 25:18; Alma 44:9).

The word *steady* in Exodus 17:12 (“his hands *were steady*”) is rendered from the Hebrew *’ēmûnâ*, a word that most often refers to the moral quality of “faithfulness.”³ As if to hammer home to his apostate enemies that it was the Lord and not the Nephites’ own wisdom and weaponry that had delivered them, Moroni observes, “Ye see that God will *support*, and keep, and preserve us, so long as we are *faithful* unto him, and unto our *faith*, and our religion; and never will the Lord suffer that we shall be destroyed except we should fall into transgression and deny our *faith*” (Alma 44:4).

When Israel prevailed in battle under Joshua, the Lord told them to remember what the Amalekites had done and also that “the Lord [would] have war with Amalek from generation to generation” (Exodus 17:14, 16). Israel was eventually commanded to “blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven” (Deuteronomy 25:19). Similarly, Moroni threatened his Amalekite-led enemies with extinction if they did not surrender their murderous purpose (Alma 44:7). By evoking the biblical story of the Amalekite attack,

to be remembered “from generation to generation,” Captain Moroni and Mormon, his admiring narrator, emphasized how the Lord did “great things” for their fathers (Book of Mormon title page).⁴ God supported and delivered them as long as they remained faithful, just as he had delivered the Israelites under Moses from their Amalekite enemies.

Notes

1. Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1999), 489–90. Attacking worshippers on a pilgrimage was a particularly heinous crime in ancient Near Eastern culture.

2. William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 604.

3. Nahum Sarna notes that this is the only passage in the Hebrew Bible in which *’ēmûnâ* is used in a physical sense. Usually it refers to moral quality, such as faithfulness. Nahum Sarna, *Exodus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 96.

4. Mormon likely named his own son after Captain Moroni.

Matthew Roper is a research scholar at the Maxwell Institute.

INSIGHTS

The Newsletter of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute
for Religious Scholarship

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By furthering religious scholarship through the study of scripture and other texts, Brigham Young University’s Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship seeks to deepen understanding and nurture discipleship among Latter-day Saints while promoting mutual respect and goodwill among people of all faiths.



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