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Neal A. Maxwell Institute Hosts Conference on Avicenna

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INSIGHTS

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

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Messiah DVD Now Available

The long-anticipated DVD set, *Messiah: Behold the Lamb of God*, is now available for purchase. For the first time ever, teachings of the restoration, sound academic views from faithful Latter-day Saint scholars, and state-of-the-art documentary production have been combined in this seven-part series on Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

The documentary is produced by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute, BYU Broadcasting, and Religious Education and is marketed by Deseret Book. The two-DVD set features all seven episodes hosted by S. Kent Brown (executive producer of the documentary and professor emeritus of ancient scripture), Gaye Strathearn (associate professor of ancient scripture), John Tanner (professor of English and BYU's

Academic Vice President), and Andrew Skinner (professor of ancient scripture). This documentary is the result of over 200 hours of interviews with LDS experts in various fields. Filming was done on-site in Israel, Egypt, and Denmark, and on a specially built stage at the LDS motion picture studio. Special features of the DVD include a "making of" featurette, extra scholar commentary, translations into Spanish and Portuguese, and *Through His Eyes: Exploring the Landscape of Christ*, which includes new footage of many areas filmed while making the documentary.

Episodes may be viewed on the Internet at messiah.byu.edu, using the "watch episodes" link to BYU Television. *Messiah: Behold the Lamb of God* is available for purchase at www.byubookstore.com and Deseret Book. ♦

Neal A. Maxwell Institute Hosts Conference on Avicenna

There are few figures in the history of Islamic thought whose stature can rival that of Ibn Sina (980–1037), or Avicenna, as he came to be known in the Latin West. Educated at Bukhara, in modern-day Uzbekistan, Avicenna was, by his own admission, a prodigy and recognized as such early on. If there is a certain lack of modesty in his making that claim, there is no disputing that he had the credentials to back it up. He was forced by the turbulent politics of his day to move a number of times, but through it all he never stopped practicing medicine or writing treatises in his native Persian, as well as in Arabic. Avicenna's output was massive, and his many contributions to fields as diverse as medicine, philosophy, and mysticism were groundbreaking and precedent setting and remain influential (and sometimes controversial) to this day.

Recently, a group of specialists on Avicenna gathered under the auspices of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute to assess aspects of Avicenna's natural and metaphysical philosophies and their historical influence. The occasion for the conference, which was

funded by a generous donation from Brent Beesley, was the publication, in two large volumes, of the complete text and translation of Avicenna's *Physics of "The Healing"* in the Islamic Translation Series—part of the Institute's Middle Eastern Texts Initiative (METI). Jon McGinnis, the translator of the *Physics* and professor of philosophy at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, joined with other colleagues for three days of presentations and discussions, moderated by Daniel C. Peterson, editor in chief of METI, and D. Morgan Davis, who serves as its director. The list of other presenters included scholars from the Netherlands, Malaysia, Egypt, Finland, the UK, and the US, including James Siebach from Brigham Young University's Department of Philosophy.

The conference took place in the mountain setting of Park City, Utah, and at the BYU campus. By all accounts the meetings were stimulating and productive, so much so that on the concluding day of the conference all in attendance agreed that the various presentations should be compiled for publication, with Peterson and Davis as the volume editors. Discussions are now under way with a major academic publisher to bring that plan to fruition in the coming year. ♦

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