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Lehi's Epic Journey Detailed in New Book

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Insights

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD VOLUME 26 | 2006

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<http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu>

Making the Case for Cultural Diffusion in Ancient Times

Old theories die hard in academia, at least when they are entrenched and have been defended intellectually with fervor. Only with overwhelming evidence to the contrary does the institutional status quo crumble and make way for new theories to find legitimacy within the academic mainstream. Illustrative of this struggle for acceptance in the academy has been the contest between the establishment position that ancient American civilization evolved in complete independence from the Old

World and the “cultural diffusion hypothesis.” The latter proposes that American societies did not arise and develop in total isolation but were stimulated by connections from the Old World.

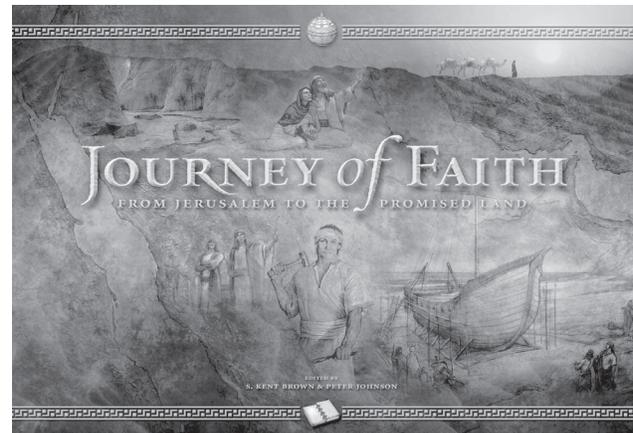
For years John L. Sorenson and a non-LDS colleague, Carl L. Johannessen, have been collecting evidence for interhemispheric contact in pre-Columbian times, a matter that readers of the Book of Mormon are quite at home with. Having amassed a veritable boatload of hard evidence, Sorenson and Johannessen (professors emeriti of anthropology at BYU and geography at the University of Oregon,

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Lehi's Epic Journey Detailed in New Book

The seamless blend of scholarship and artistry of the Maxwell Institute's DVD documentary *Journey of Faith* continues in expanded form in the new book *Journey of Faith: From Jerusalem to the Promised Land*. Complemented by numerous additional threads of historical detail and scholarly insight, this visually stunning look at Lehi's trek through the harsh Arabian desert reflects a synergistic collaboration of talented scholars, artists, and photographers seeking to illuminate an epic event in scriptural history and situate it in a real-world setting.

The popular DVD version generated much interest as well as numerous requests to publish the original artwork that was featured in the documentary. That response and the fact that a lot of excellent content had to be left out of the film argued for essentially publishing the documentary in book form. As a result, the book contains commentary and many images from the DVD but also much more: a foreword by the editors, FARMS director S. Kent Brown and movie producer Peter



Johnson; Brown's and Johnson's reflections on the project in two separate chapters; additional commentary by scholars; an appendix on the famed Incense Trail across the Arabian Peninsula; a bibliography; and for the first printing of the book a free DVD: *A Filmmaking Odyssey: The Making of Journey of Faith*.

The evocative artwork of Joseph Brickey and Howard Lyon is combined with the superb photographs of Justin Andrews and David Lisonbee to

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the founding inhabitants of the New World likely originated in Mongolia or in a “geographic location common to both contemporary Mongolians and American aboriginals” (the latter possibility, which Stewart sees as congenial to a theory of common origin in ancient Israel, is ignored by critics). Stewart goes on to show that attempts to use DNA evidence to discredit the Book of Mormon fail to meet rudimentary scientific standards and that “a careful examination of existing DNA data demonstrates that the teachings of Latter-day Saint prophets are fully consistent” with that

data. His paper is scheduled for publication in the forthcoming issue of the *FARMS Review*.

Among the other speakers were Michael R. Ash (“Book of Abraham 201: Papyri, Revelation, and Modern Egyptology”), Matthew B. Brown (“Revised or Unaltered? Joseph Smith’s Foundational Stories”), and Brant A. Gardner (“Defenders of the Book: Surveying the New World Evidence for Book of Mormon Historicity”), all of whom have written for the *FARMS Review*. Many of the presentations will soon be available at the FAIR Web site: <http://fairlds.org/>. 📄

Lehi’s Epic Journey cont. from page 1

create page after page of stunning color layouts. And the contributing scholars’ insightful observations, not only those included in the film but many more now available for the first time, bring rewarding perspectives on the great faith and sacrifice of Lehi’s party as they journeyed in the desert in obedience to God’s command. With all this information now in book form, the reader can better contemplate and absorb the ideas and images presented.

“It helps us to visualize the story of Lehi and Sariah,” says Brown. “Whether we are talking about the challenges inside the family or about the territory through which they passed, it places these experiences in a vivid, real setting.”

The documentary was filmed in the Middle East at locations that scholars believe mark or approximate the route that took

Lehi’s party across Arabia to reach the seaside location where they eventually embarked by ship to the New World. *Journey of Faith: From Jerusalem to the Promised Land* will enrich your study of the opening chapters of the Book of Mormon. To order a copy, go to the FARMS Web site and, at the bottom of the notice for this book, click on the “more” link to the BYU Bookstore. 📄



Steve DeVore, producer of the *Journey of Faith* documentary, and film director Peter Johnson meet new friends in the old city of Sana'a, Yemen.