



1-31-2000

## Synagogues in the Book of Mormon

William J. Adams Jr.

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### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Adams Jr., William J. (2000) "Synagogues in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*: Vol. 9 : No. 1 , Article 3.

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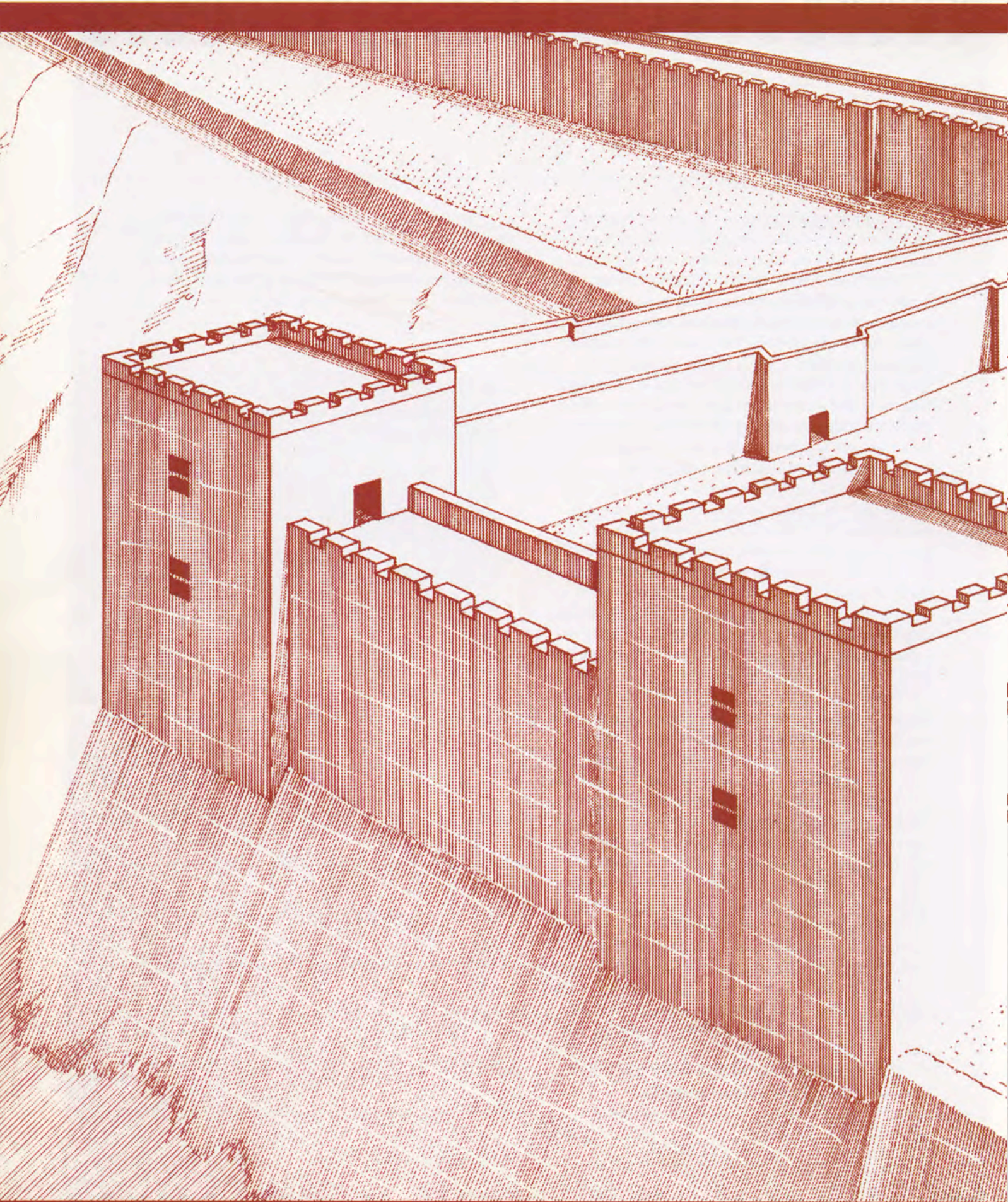
**Title** Synagogues in the Book of Mormon

**Author(s)** William J. Adams Jr.

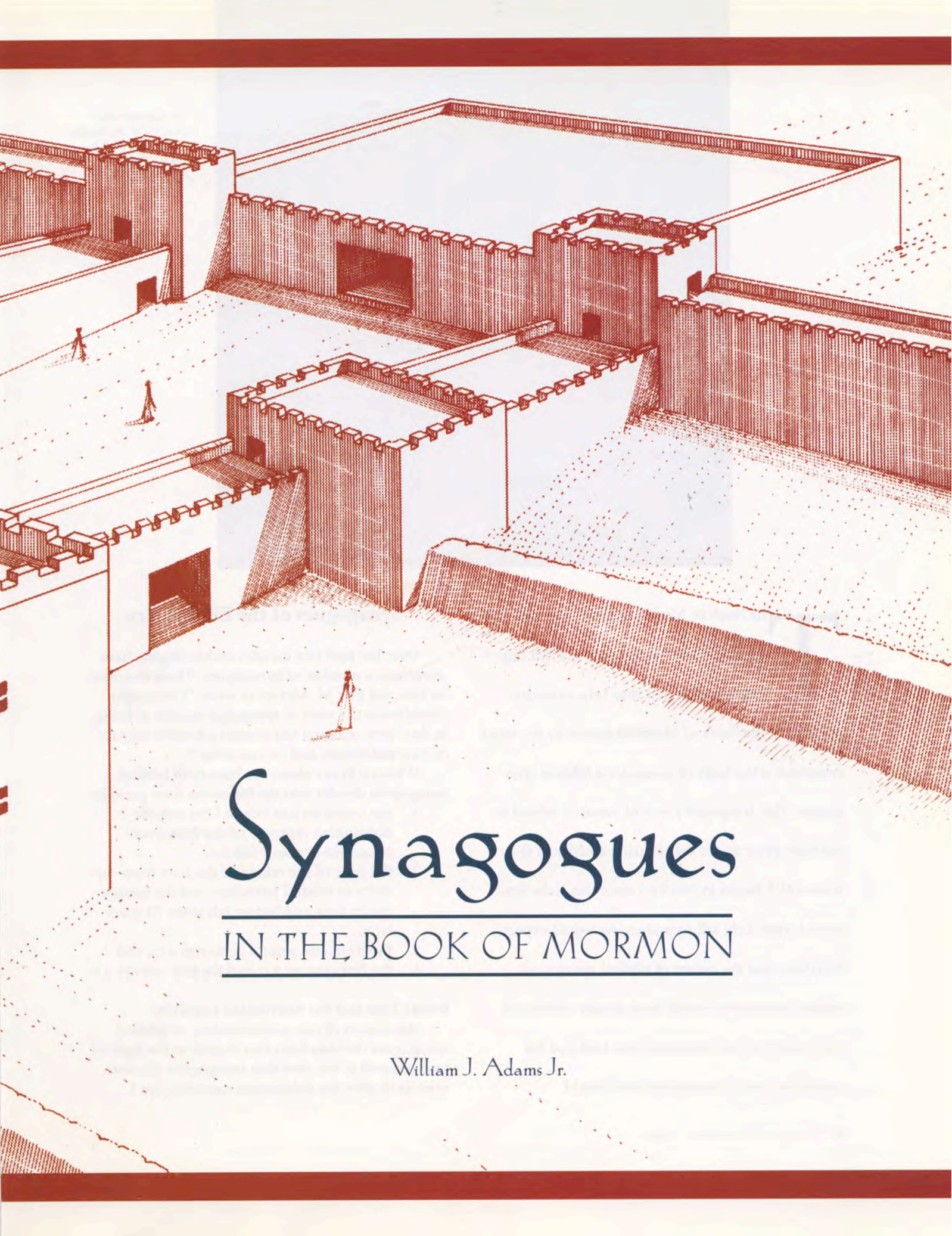
**Reference** *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000): 4-13, 76.

**ISSN** 1065-9366 (print), 2168-3158 (online)

**Abstract** The Book of Mormon mentions synagogues in twenty-five passages. An important resource that may help us understand what the Book of Mormon means by the word *synagogue* is the body of research on biblical synagogues. This is especially true of research related to the years prior to the Babylonian captivity of the Jews, which began in 586 BC, since this is the time period when Lehi left Jerusalem. We would expect, therefore, that the nature of biblical synagogues before the captivity would have greatly influenced the concept of the synagogue that Lehi and his family took with them to the New World. In this article, William J. Adams Jr. details the historical development, nature, and cultural function of synagogues of the biblical era and relates them to the history, form, and religious function of synagogues in the New World.



Judith Dekel's reconstruction of the Lachish gateway. The fortress dated to Lehi's day. © Courtesy Biblical Archaeology Society.



# Synagogues

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IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

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William J. Adams Jr.



The Gamla Public Building or Synagogue from about 65 B.C.  
© Courtesy Biblical Archaeology Society.

**T**he Book of Mormon mentions synagogues in twenty-five passages. An important resource that may help us understand what the Book of Mormon means by the word *synagogue* is the body of research on biblical synagogues. This is especially true of research related to the years prior to the Babylonian captivity of the Jews, which began in 586 B.C., since this is the time period when Lehi left Jerusalem; we would expect, therefore, that the nature of biblical synagogues before the captivity would have greatly influenced the concept of the synagogue that Lehi and his family took with them to the New World.

## Synagogues of the Biblical Era

Over the past two decades archaeologists have unearthed a number of synagogues. These discoveries have led Eric M. Meyers to write, “One might characterize the state of synagogue studies as being in flux. New material has created a healthy climate of reconsideration and reevaluation.”<sup>1</sup>

What we know about the history of biblical synagogues divides into the following time periods:

1. the centuries just before Lehi and the Babylonian captivity of the Jews from Jerusalem at about 586 B.C.,
2. the time of the return of the Jews from captivity to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple under Ezra and Nehemiah some 70 years later,
3. the third and second centuries B.C., and
4. the first century B.C. and the first century A.D.

### Before Lehi and the Babylonian Captivity

One aspect of our understanding of biblical synagogues that has been reevaluated in the light of new research is the view that synagogues did not exist until after the Babylonian captivity. Lee I.

Levine, a leading scholar on the history of the synagogue, has suggested that synagogues did exist before the Babylonian captivity in the form of chambers in the city gates.<sup>2</sup> Such gates have been excavated by archaeologists at such important Old Testament sites as Beersheba,<sup>3</sup> Gezer,<sup>4</sup> Lachish,<sup>5</sup> and Megiddo.<sup>6</sup> Each of these has

1. at least one chamber (which is nearly square) lined with stone benches around the interior walls (the benched chamber at Lachish has two tiers of benches),
2. a single doorway, and
3. where there is enough of the original wall left to determine it, a niche. I suggest that these niches were used for storing special ritual items, perhaps even sacred scrolls.

Levine concludes that since later synagogues closely mirror the architecture of the gate chambers, these chambers may well have been the original synagogues. This conclusion is supported by a number of biblical passages that indicate that the city gate and its vicinity were the hub of a community's

life. The gate area served as

1. the market place (see 2 Kings 7:1),
2. the general court (see Genesis 23:10, 18; Deuteronomy 17:5, 21:19 and 22:24; Ruth 4:1–12; Jeremiah 38:7; Daniel 2:48–49; and Esther 5:9, 13; 6:10),
3. the royal court (see 2 Samuel 18:4 and 19:8; and 1 Kings 22:10, which equals 2 Chronicles 18:9), and
4. a place of worship (see 2 Kings 23:8 and Nehemiah 8:1).<sup>7</sup>

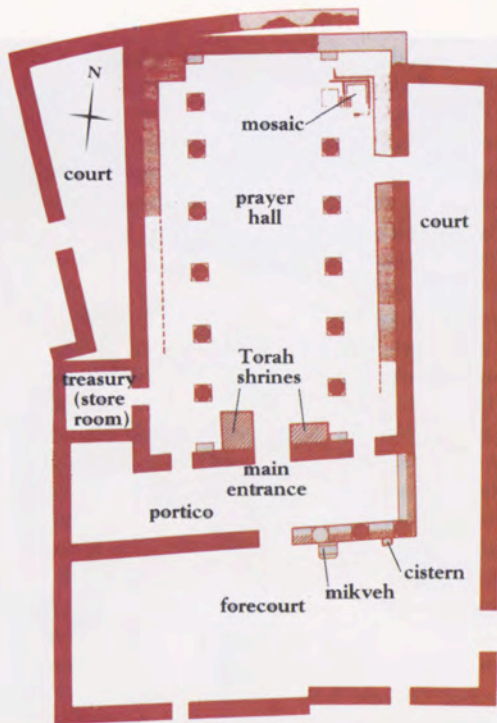
Support for Levine's conclusion is also found in the Old Testament terminology for worship service. Several Old Testament writers (see Hosea 2:11; Jeremiah in Lamentations 2:6; Ezekiel 44:24) link Sabbath worship with the Hebrew word *mo'ed* which means "assembly, meeting."

If Levine is correct, then, before the captivity, a town's or city's social activities centered around the city gate, and it seems reasonable that these social activities included Sabbath worship in a chamber of the gate that resembled later synagogues and functioned similarly.

### The Return under Ezra and Nehemiah

The Babylonian captivity was a time of crisis for the Jewish people, chiefly because the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. But the captives knew the prophecies of Jeremiah wherein they were promised that they would return to Jerusalem in seventy years (see Jeremiah 29:10). At the end of that period, Jews did return under Ezra and Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. Concerning this time, we find two pieces of information that may help us to understand the nature and function of synagogues. The first is a note written in Hebrew in the sixth century B.C. on a broken piece of pottery (an ostrakon). On one side is a list of four names and on the other are the words "house of assembly at Jerusalem."<sup>8</sup> *House of assembly* is a Hebrew term for synagogue.

The second is a reference in Nehemiah 8:1–12 to people assembling at a city gate. The walls of Jerusalem in this time were thin and the gates were simply openings in the wall, without chambers. As a result the assembly "gathered . . . into the street that was before the water gate." To this assembly, Ezra read the Law of Moses from the top of a wooden platform, and the Levites helped the people understand what was read. Next, Ezra blessed the Lord in



Floor plan of the Meroth synagogue (late fourth or early fifth century A.D.). © Courtesy Biblical Archaeology Society.

prayer and the people raised their hands saying, "Amen, Amen." The reference does not specify that this was a Sabbath service, but what occurs in this passage is close to what went on later in Sabbath synagogue worship.

### The Third and Second Centuries B.C.

The apocryphal record 1 Maccabees tells us that synagogues were used at this time for public reading from the Law of Moses (see 1 Maccabees 3:48). Ben Sira says: "Draw near to me, you who need instruction, and lodge in my house of learning" (Ben Sira 51:23). If "house of learning" refers to a synagogue, and it appears to, then "lodge" indicates that the synagogue functioned as a hostel as well as a place for study. In Egypt, Jewish centers were referred to not only as synagogues but also as "places of prayer." Thus prayer was an additional function of these locations. From descriptions in texts from Egypt, we learn further that people donated doors, pillars, and special seats (thought to represent the Seat of Moses) to structures at these locations<sup>9</sup> that had long-standing leaders<sup>10</sup> and consumed large volumes of water.<sup>11</sup> Water was likely provided for the comfort of visitors in hostels and for ritual washings, which in later Judaism preferred a constant flow of fresh water.<sup>12</sup>

### The First Century B.C. and the First Century A.D.

The next era brings us to the time just before and during the New Testament. Synagogues from this period have been excavated on Delos (a Greek island),<sup>13</sup> and at Gamla,<sup>14</sup> Capernaum,<sup>15</sup> Herodium, and Masada.<sup>16</sup> These discoveries lead us to conclude that synagogues of this period tended to

1. be nearly square,
2. be a part of the city wall,
3. feature one or more tiers of stone benches around the interior,

4. include a niche in the wall for storing sacred scrolls,
5. feature a platform (or podium) raised about a foot high in the center of the room,
6. possess one doorway, and
7. include pillars to support the roof.

As noted above, because of the similarities between these structures and the form of the pre-captivity city-gate chambers, Levine argues that the design of the chambers is mirrored in these later synagogues. Unfortunately, this is a leap of five centuries in time. To accept his proposal fully, it would now be desirable to discover synagogue structures scattered through those centuries to confirm a continuous tradition. There are at least two that appear to do so. The key will be to identify synagogues earlier than the one at Gamla, which lies east of the Sea of Galilee and was built about 65 B.C.

A recent discovery has revealed a synagogue in the Hasmonean winter palace near Jericho. The date of its construction was around 70 B.C. There is also a second discovery. Roland de Vaux, who excavated Qumran near the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls



The Capernaum Synagogue (fourth century A.D.).  
© Courtesy Biblical Archaeology Society.

were found, suggested that two of the rooms at Qumran (built around 140 B.C.) were for assemblies.<sup>17</sup> One room (location 4) is nearly square, includes stone benches around the interior, and features two “recessed cupboards” or niches in one wall. With these discoveries, the gap between city-gate chambers and later synagogues is narrowed to about four centuries. But it remains large.

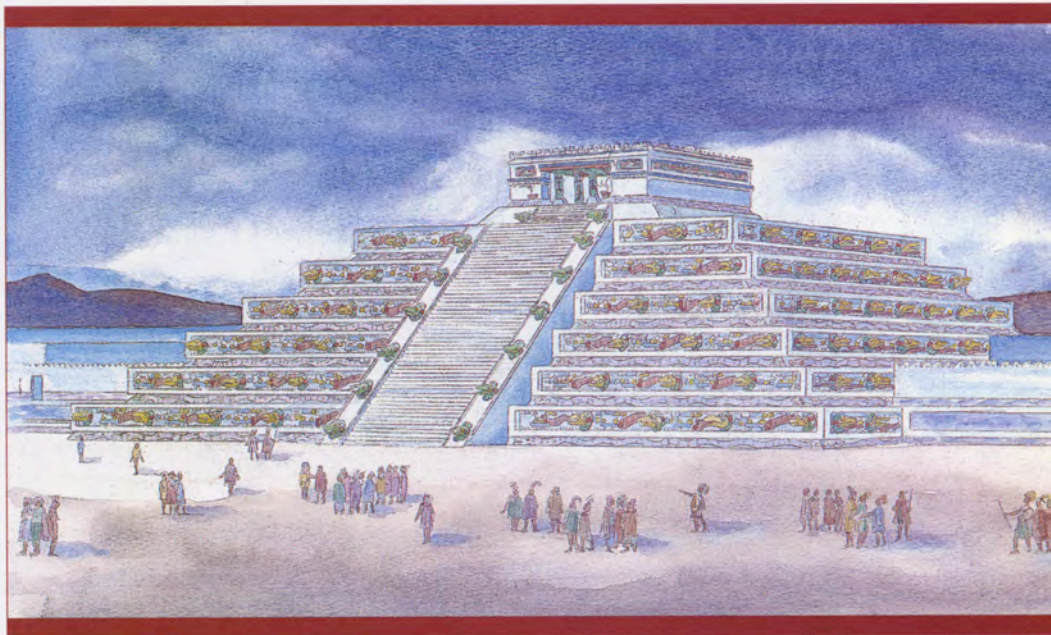
For the latest time frame (first centuries B.C. and A.D.) two sources help us understand what occurs at a synagogue: the New Testament, and a stone inscribed in Greek that was found at Jerusalem. These sources tell us that synagogues of this time were used for

1. Sabbath worship, which included “reading the law and the prophets” followed by a discussion of the reading (see Luke 4:14–21; Acts 13:14–16),
2. a school for study,
3. hostels for “itinerants” including water for their comfort,
4. judicial actions (see Matthew 10:17; Luke 12:11; 21:12), and
5. leaders of long standing.<sup>18</sup>

In A.D. 70 Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. After this destruction, the synagogue became the primary religious and social institution in Judaism and took on new functions. The sacrifices previously performed at the temple were replaced by prayers in each local synagogue.

Table 1 summarizes the information from the above discussion. Unfortunately, some Bible scholars have tended to mix evidence and speculation and have failed to keep up-to-date with new research.<sup>19</sup> For the sake of clarity, any speculation on my part is followed by a question mark in the table.

To conclude this section on biblical synagogues, the local center of Jewish life before the Babylonian captivity was the area of the city gate. It has been plausibly argued that community assembly for worship also occurred at the city gate, and after the Babylonian captivity this concept of a local center



A reconstruction of what the original Temple of Quetzalcoatl at Teotihuacan looked like (second century A.D.). Nephite synagogues might have been merely outside areas demarcated for sacred assembly. In Mesoamerica religious gatherings were typically in the open.

continued on in the form of synagogues. However, some of the functions carried out earlier at the gate area, such as royal courts and markets, were now moved elsewhere. Later worship centers took on new functions, such as that of a hostel. It appears that when Lehi and Nephi left Jerusalem shortly after 600 B.C. they would have taken with them the older, pre-exilic concept of a synagogue according to which it served as a social center for each community where certain religious activities were also carried out.

## What Is the Nature and History of Synagogues in the New World?

We turn now to a consideration of the term *synagogue* and related terms found in the Book of Mormon. Like the Bible, the Book of Mormon mentions synagogues only in passing, since the purpose of each record is not to give cultural details but to encourage righteous living.

### The Meaning of Synagogues among Lehi’s Descendants

As mentioned earlier, the term *synagogue* (including the plural) occurs twenty-five times in the Book of Mormon. The first is found in a sermon



**Table 1. Development of the Synagogue in Palestine**

<i>Time Frame</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Key Evidence</i>
The centuries just before Lehi (600 B.C.)	<i>mo'ed</i> , "assembly, meeting"	Chambers in the city gates with benches, niches, and one doorway	Sabbath worship and judgment	Hosea 2:11, Lamentations 2:6, and Ezekiel 44:24; various gate-area functions; niche may store sacred scrolls (?)
The return under Ezra and Nehemiah (from about 520 B.C.)	<i>bet kenesah</i> , "place of assembly"	Area of city gate	Reading of the Law of Moses, plus explanation, prayer, and commitment	Inscription from Elath (Ezion-Geber), Nehemiah 8:1–12
Third to second centuries B.C.	synagogue, "assembly"; <i>proseuche</i> , "place of prayer"	With doors, pillars, seats, long-standing leaders; using large volumes of water	Reading of the Law of Moses, hostel (?), school (?), ritual washings (?), prayer	Documents from Jewish settlements in Egypt, I Maccabees 3:46–48, Ben Sira 51:23 (?), location 4 at Qumran
First centuries B.C. and A.D.	synagogue, "assembly"	Nearly square, pillars to support roof, may be part of a city wall, stone benches around the interior, niche in wall to store scrolls, raised podium, one doorway	Reading and discussion of the Law and the Prophets, school, hostel, adjudication, prayer, almsgiving	Inscription found in Jerusalem, New Testament, archaeological finds

Note: After the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70, local synagogues continued with the above list of functions and added prayers to take the place of sacrifices previously performed only in the Temple.

by Nephi: "Behold, hath he commanded any that they should depart out of the synagogues, or out of the houses of worship? Behold, I say unto you, Nay" (2 Nephi 26:26).

This verse appears in Nephi's long sermon (see 2 Nephi 25–32), which was prompted by reading Isaiah 2–14 as found in 2 Nephi 12–24. In this section, Nephi prophesies about the future as far as the last days. In verse 23 he shifts the time frame from the future to the present and assures readers about what Christ does in any age (see 2 Nephi 26:23). One thing the Lord does not do, Nephi says, is order people out of synagogues. The additional words "or

out of the houses of worship" are revealing. They appear to be an appositive, which helps to define the term *synagogues* and reemphasizes what the Lord does not do. The expression also suggests that synagogues are structures (houses) and that one function of a synagogue is worship.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, closely connected to the concept that synagogues may have been buildings are prepositional phrases such as *out of* and *into* with reference to synagogues.

A structural feature of the apostate Zoramites' synagogue was the Rameumptom, a raised platform with room for only one person at a time to stand and recite a fixed prayer (see Alma 31:12–14 and

21). As noted above, the first century B.C. and A.D. Jewish synagogues had a slightly elevated podium in the center. However, the earlier gate-chambers with benches did not have raised platforms. Furthermore, Alma and his companions were surprised by the Zoramite arrangement. This suggests that the Rameumptom was a Zoramite innovation differing from the normal Nephite pattern.

Most Bible scholars have supposed that syna-

true followers of the Law of Moses (see 2 Nephi 26:26; Alma 16:13) including Nephite Christians (see Moroni 7:1). Also, at the request of King Lamoni, Lamanites built synagogues (see Alma 21:20; 23:2). Moreover, we find that apostate groups such as the Amalekites, Amulonites, and Zoramites built synagogues (see Alma 21:4, 5; 31:12).

In several passages, synagogues appear in a list of locations where missionaries met with and

## Public discussions of scripture topics in the synagogues were evidently a part of that teaching and preaching.

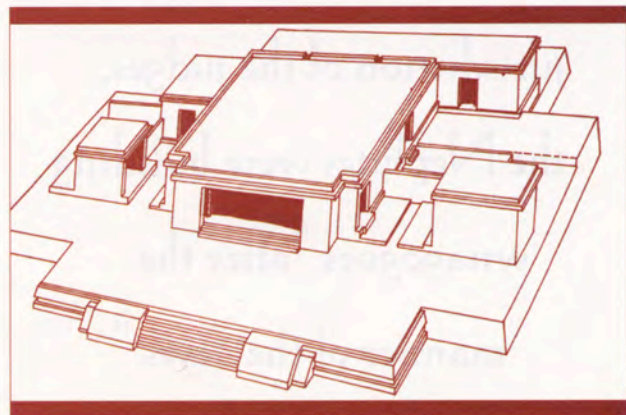
gogues did not come into existence until the Babylonian captivity, after Lehi had left Jerusalem and the temple had been destroyed.<sup>21</sup> We might then wonder whether synagogues could have arisen separately as a parallel development in the New World. But the passage at 2 Nephi 26:26 is only a few decades from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem. Hence it appears that he and his family brought the already existing concept with them to America. That would have been the case, of course, if Levine's theory of the gate-chamber origin of the synagogue is correct.

Second Nephi 26:26 suggests that synagogues were used for worship in Nephi's day. This raises the question: How did Nephites worship? A number of later passages describe visitors preaching and teaching in synagogues (see Alma 16:13; 21:4, 5, 16; 26:29; 32:1; Moroni 7:1). Public discussions of scripture topics in the synagogues were evidently a part of that teaching and preaching (see Alma 21:5, 11). Prayer apparently is also a part of the worship, for in Alma 31:12–14 Alma's astonished reaction was to the form of the Zoramite prayers, not to the fact that they offered prayers in their synagogues. This passage also suggests that synagogue worship was held on only one day of the week and that people had the misconception that God could be worshiped only on that day and only in a synagogue (see Alma 32:2, 5, 9, 10, 12; 33:2). Other aberrant synagogue worship practices are mentioned in a sermon given by Jesus in 3 Nephi wherein he denounced public almsgiving and loud praying both in synagogues and in the streets (see 3 Nephi 13:2, 5).

The Book of Mormon identifies several groups who built synagogues. First of all, there were the

preached to people. I believe that these lists help to put synagogues and their worship into perspective: "And we have entered into their houses and taught them, and we have taught them in their streets; yea, and we have taught them upon their hills; and we have also entered into their temples and their synagogues and taught them" (Alma 26:29). "And it came to pass that they did go forth, and began to preach the word of God unto the people, entering into their synagogues, and into their houses; yea, and even they did preach the word in their streets" (Alma 32:1).

In these two passages the word *houses* suggests that missionaries taught people in their private residences. On the other hand, *streets* and *hills* suggest that they met people in public places. Next, places of worship, *temples* and *synagogues*, are juxtaposed



Little is known about Mesoamerican meetings or assemblies anciently. They could have been convened in buildings such as this nonresidential structure at Chiapa de Corzo (from the time of Christ).

with each other. According to the Law of Moses a person went to a temple to offer sacrifices for special occasions such as the birth of a child or a holy day. In contrast, a person went to a synagogue for instruction and prayer on a weekly basis.

A related term in the Book of Mormon is *church*. When we use this term in modern English, we may be referring to a building (“the church down the street”) or to an organization (“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”). The two hundred plus occurrences of *church/churches* in the Book of Mormon seem to point to a movement or organization rather than a building. The single exception is 4 Nephi 1:41, wherein the word *churches* seems to refer to structures that people could adorn. Thus, in the Book of Mormon, it appears that churches in the sense of organized congregations could have met in buildings or locations called *synagogues*.

In the first century B.C.  
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### The History of Synagogues in the American Promised Land

It is helpful to look at synagogues in the Book of Mormon from the perspective of their historical development.

Nephi’s straightforward use of the term *synagogues* (see 2 Nephi 26:26) around 550 B.C. implies that he was personally familiar with some form of a place of worship in his original homeland. He and his father brought religious practices from Jerusalem to the New World (see 2 Nephi 5:16; 2 Nephi 25:5–6); presumably, the concept of synagogue as well as associated practices had the same source.

On the other hand, there is no mention that the Nephites who lived around the city of Nephi at the time of Jacob built synagogues, though they did build a temple (see Jacob 1:17). Neither do we read about synagogues when the Nephites moved to the land of Zarahemla under Mosiah and joined with the people of Zarahemla. Nor is anything said about such structures during the reigns of King Benjamin and King Mosiah.

In the first century B.C. (some four centuries after Nephi’s mention of synagogues), under the jurisdiction of the judges, the Nephites were building synagogues “after the manner of the Jews” (Alma 16:13). It is from this era that we learn the most about the form and function of synagogues among the Book of Mormon groups. Other Book of Mormon peoples also built and met in synagogues. Lamanites in the land of Ishmael who were converted by the preaching of Ammon began to build and use synagogues under the leadership of King Lamoni (see Alma 21:20). Prior to this time, Lamanites met in mere “assemblies” (Alma 21:16).

Among Nephite dissenters who built synagogues in this era were the Zoramites whose synagogues included the Rameumptom. Other groups include the Amalekites and Amulonites whose doctrines and practices “after the order of the Nehors” (Alma 21:4) spread among Nephites in the land of Zarahemla as well as among Nephite dissidents in Lamanite territory. It appears that these dissenters took the basic concept of a synagogue in both form and function from Nephite worship and modified it to meet their own special demands. On the Nephite side, as the population expanded into the land northward settlers built synagogues (see Helaman 3:9, 14).

The next reference to synagogues appears in the words of Christ as he visited the New World after his

**Table 2. Synagogues in the Book of Mormon**

<i>Time Frame</i>	<i>Context of Mention</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Users</i>
About 550 B.C.	Sermon	House of . . .	Worship	Followers of the Law of Moses
First century B.C.	Historical narrative of missionary preaching	Dissidents had special features (Rameumpton)	Prayer, preaching, discussion, meet on one day of the week	Nephites, Zoramites, Amalekites, Amulonites, Order of Nehors, converted Lamanites
First century A.D.	Sermon	Place of . . .	Prayer, almsgiving, worship	Christians
About A.D. 400	Sermon	Place of . . .	Worship, preaching	Christians

resurrection. He admonished Nephites and Lamanites not to pray loudly nor to make a public display of giving alms for the poor in their synagogues (see 3 Nephi 13:2, 5). Nor were they to cast people out of their “synagogues, or . . . places of worship” (3 Nephi 18:32).

The text of the Book of Mormon then remains silent on the subject until sometime during the fourth century A.D. when we learn that Mormon, a Christian, gave a sermon to his fellow believers in “the synagogue which they had built for the place of worship” (Moroni 7:1). Apparently, the term *synagogue* was broad enough in meaning at that time to include places where Christians were accustomed to worship.

Table 2 displays as much as we can learn about the form, function, and history of synagogues in the Book of Mormon. Ultimately, the Book of Mormon gives us only a glimpse into the form and function

of synagogues. In form, they were structures of unspecified size and shape. Functionally, they were used for worship—including prayer and religious instruction—by people from different religious backgrounds. In short, the term *synagogue* in the Book of Mormon simply means “a place where local congregations meet for worship.”

The other, more cultural functions (which were a part of the city gate and later synagogues in Bible lands) do not appear in the Book of Mormon. It seems that this silence is a result of the purpose of the Book of Mormon, which is to encourage righteous living. As a result of this orientation, the worship aspect of synagogues is mentioned only incidentally, and these incidental references are mostly in a context of sermonizing and missionary work. These other functions were simply not considered germane to the overall objective of Mormon’s record. □

## ENDNOTES

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- Lee I. Levine, "The Nature and Origin of the Palestinian Synagogue Reconsidered," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115 (1996): 425–48.
- Y. Aharoni, ed., *Beer-Sheva I* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1973). Plate 8 shows the bench around one of the gate chambers.
- William G. Dever, "Gezer," in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, ed. E. Stern (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 2:496–506. The photograph on page 503 shows the plan of the Solomonic gate, wherein each of the six gate chambers has benches.
- Olga Tufnell, *Lachish III: The Iron Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953). Figure 4 on plate 15 shows a gate chamber with two tiers of benches and a niche in the wall.
- Robert S. Lamon and Geoffrey M. Shipton, *Megiddo* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 77. Figure 88 shows a gate chamber with benches.
- In contrast to such centers for local activity, of course, the temple was where priests and Levites performed sacrifices. On special occasions, such as the birth of a child or holy day, worshippers would leave their local town or city and travel to the temple to make their offerings.
- The discovery was reported by Nelson Glueck, "Ostraca from Elath," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 82 (April 1941): 7–11. The dating was done by William F. Albright, "Ostracon No. 6043 from Ezion-Geber," *ibid.*, 11. And the translation was reported by Charles C. Torrey, "A Synagogue at Elath?" *BASOR* 84 (December 1941): 4–5. Elath and Ezion-Geber are two names for the same location.
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- An example of this speculation is outlined in Eric M. Meyers, "Synagogue," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:259.
- Other passages that refer to synagogues as buildings are Alma 21:4, 20; 31:12, 13; 32:1, 3, 5, 9, 11, 12; 3 Nephi 13:2, 5; 18:32; Moroni 7:1.
- Good examples of this theory are Meyers, "Synagogue," 251–60; Samuel Sandmel, *Judaism and Christian Beginnings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 143–53. Since this theory sees no synagogues until after the time Lehi left Jerusalem, a number of Book of Mormon critics have cited that view in order to denounce the Book of Mormon. Three of these authors are Latayne C. Scott, *The Mormon Mirage* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1979), 83; William D. Russell, "A Further Inquiry into the Historicity of the Book of Mormon," *Sunstone*, Sept.–Oct. 1982, 23; James R. White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1993), 145. But if one takes into account Levine's argument that before the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C. (1) city-gate chambers served as synagogues and also were the prototype for first-century B.C. synagogues, (2) city gates were the social center of a town or city, and (3) Sabbath services at that time were called a *mo'ed*, the theory expressed by Meyers and Sandmel is far from demonstrating that synagogues did not come into existence until after Lehi's day. As things stand now, Book of Mormon critics lack a factual basis for attacking the mention of synagogues in the Book of Mormon.

### The Book of Mormon in Latter-day Saint Hymnody Karen Lynn Davidson

- Thanks to Sarah Workman for sharing this data. Her list of Princeton First Ward Primary favorites is as follows:
  - Janice Kapp Perry (lyrics and music), "We'll Bring the World His Truth," in *Children's Songbook* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 172–73.
  - Mildred Tanner Pettit (lyrics), Naomi Ward Randall (music), "I Am a Child of God," in *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), #301; *Children's Songbook*, 2–3.
  - Bill N. Hansen Jr. and Lisa T. Hansen (lyrics and music), "Nephi's Courage," in *Children's Songbook*, 120–21.
  - Georgia W. Bello (lyrics and music), "Popcorn Popping on the Apricot Tree," in *Children's Songbook*, 242–43.
  - "Beautiful Savior," in *Children's Songbook*, 62–63, lyrics and music traditional.
  - Beatrice Goff Jackson (lyrics), Michael Finlinson Moody (music), "Faith," in *Children's Songbook*, 96–97.
  - Elizabeth Fetzer Bates (lyrics and music), "Book of Mormon Stories," in *Children's Songbook*, 118, additional

lyrics by Nancy K. Daines Carter.

- Mirla Greenwood Thayne (lyrics and music), "When He Comes Again," in *Children's Songbook*, 82–83.
- Joseph L. Townsend (lyrics), William Clayton (music), "The Iron Rod," in *Hymns*, #274.
- "Do As I'm Doing," in *Children's Songbook*, 276, lyrics and music traditional.
- Hansen and Hansen, "Nephi's Courage," in *Children's Songbook*, 120–21.
- Teachers and parents are likely to be happy as well. Songs can imprint a child's consciousness in a way that words alone cannot do, as Martin Luther recognized centuries ago. He wrote, "Do not assume that [children] will learn and retain this teaching from sermons alone. When these parts [the catechism] have been well learned, you may assign them also some Psalms or some hymns, based on these subjects, to supplement and confirm their knowledge. Thus our youth will be led into the Scriptures so that they make progress daily." Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *Large Catechism, Shorter Preface, Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 364.
- Robert D. Hawkins, "Nothing but the Blood," *The Hymn* 51/1 (2000): 20.
- Ibid.*, 21.
- When not specified, hymns are from the 1985 hymnbook.
- Isaac Watts's extraordinary talent allowed him to exercise his poetic gifts while remaining remarkably close to the original scripture.
- The question might be asked: "We don't usually think of a hymn as an Old Testament hymn or a New Testament hymn; why do we need hymns that are specifically Book of Mormon hymns?" A first-rate devotional hymn may well be an "Old Testament" or "New Testament" hymn while not calling attention to its source. Many of the outstanding hymns in our hymnal do indeed rest squarely on a specific scriptural inspiration. A few of the many examples are "High on the Mountain Top," #5 (see Isaiah 2:2–3, 5:26); "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," #31 (see Psalms 48:14; 90:1–2; 91:1–2); "Sons of Michael, He Approaches," #51 (see Daniel 7:9–10, 13–14); "Abide with Me, 'Tis Eventide," #165 (see Luke 24:29). We may not immediately tie these hymns to their respective scriptural inspirations, yet it was in each case a scriptural passage that set the author on his creative path. What the Latter-day Saint hymnody lacks today is a comparable group of Book of Mormon hymns.
- Not only have Latter-day Saint poets written inclusive, broadly applicable Christian hymn texts, non-Latter-day Saints have written some of the texts that we think of as our most "Mormon": consider "For the Strength of the Hills" (#35) and "Behold, the Mountain of the Lord" (#54).
- Emma Smith, comp., *A Collection of Sacred Hymns for the Church of the Latter Day Saints* (Kirtland, Ohio: F. G. Williams & Co., 1835).
- Hymns in the 1835 hymnal and the Manchester Hymnal were printed without titles; they will be identified by first line. First lines will also be used for hymns in *The Latter Day Saints' Psalmody* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1889), which in fact printed the tune name above each selection rather than a hymn title. Titles of the kind familiar to us, with word-initial capitalization, are used in twentieth-century hymnals.
- Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, and John Taylor, comp., *A Collection of Sacred Hymns for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in Europe* (Manchester, England: W. R. Thomas, 1840).
- Deseret Sunday School Songs* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1909).
- Latter-day Saint Hymns* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1927).
- Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1948/1950).
- J. Spencer Cornwall, *The Stories of Our Mormon Hymns*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1963), 255.
- Such hymns can achieve great popularity, however; "Master, the Tempest Is Raging," (#105) and "Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd" (#221) have been enthusiastically sung by so many generations of Saints that they did not run much risk of being dropped in 1985. If they had been submitted as newly composed hymns, they probably would not have been selected.
- The text of hymn #74, "Praise Ye the Lord," written by Isaac Watts, is a good example. The source verses are from Psalm 146:3–4: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." These verses become verse 2 of the hymn:
 

Why should I make a man my trust?  
Princes must die and turn to dust.  
Their breath departs; their  
pomp and pow'r  
And thoughts all vanish in an hour.
- Marvin K. Gardner, "Press Forward, Saints," *Hymns of the Church* (1985), #81.
- Michael F. Moody, chairman of the General Music Committee, reports that on 8 June 1987, the Hymn Society held "A Hymn Festival of Recent North American Hymnals" at their annual meeting in Fort Worth. The program was made up of new hymns from recent Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Seventh-Day Adventist, and other hymnals, as well as the then-new Latter-day Saint hymnal. The concluding number on the program—an exciting rendition accompanied by an instrumental group called The Dallas Brass—was Marvin Gardner and Vanja Watkins's "Press Forward, Saints." "The effect," Michael Moody reports, "was almost electric." It was a highlight of the program. He continues, "I remember thinking to myself that here is a message from the Book of Mormon expressed in a way that is meaningful and acceptable to people from many denominations" (conversation with the author, 30 November 1999).
- Since the authorship of some of the hymns is unknown, an exact count of LDS contributions is not possible.
- In the 1985 hymnal these twelve lines