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The Editor's Notebook

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Abstract Introduction to the current issue.

THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Some people see great potential for research to turn up new ways of seeing and thinking about the world. Others tend to feel that everything important must already have been discovered. For the latter, “research” means finding authorities who offer a confident answer to each question that occurs to us to ask. For the former, the best part of any question is the *quest* part.

Brigham Young once observed, “A spirit and power of research is planted within [humans], yet they remain undeveloped.”¹ He also said, “If I do not learn what is in the world, from first to last, somebody will be wiser than I am. I intend to know the whole of it, both good and bad.”²

Book of Mormon studies is one special manifestation of that general curiosity that Brother Brigham recommended. Simply treading the same mental and spiritual ground year after year as we examine the scripture may not advance our understanding as much as it puts us to sleep. For us to read scripture doggedly time after time may yield little new insight or appreciation of what the text contains that might inspire. We might well gain more by pausing to ask, “Why did the Lord make this statement at this historical moment?” or, more specifically, “Why did Book of Mormon writers use the name Jehovah only twice in the entire text—and one of those in the last verse of the book?” Just as challenging is seeking new depth in a word we have read so many times that we no longer think about its meaning—for example, what does it mean to “harrow up” a person’s soul (2 Nephi 9:47; Mormon 5:8)?

All the authors whose work we publish offer us new views of expressions that may have become commonplace in our reading. That is what research is about—to crack open previously closed windows of our minds. This issue of the *Journal* offers a new tool to help us do so. Dr. Cynthia Hallen, a linguist at BYU, starts a new department entitled “What’s in a Word?” As she pursues her own quest for new understanding, she will share items of interest that will extend and enrich our grasp of scripture.

Submitting Articles to the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*

Guidelines for preparing and submitting articles for publication in the *Journal* are available on the FARMS Web site (farms.byu.edu), by e-mail request to jbms@byu.edu, or by mail from FARMS. In general, authors should submit a detailed outline or abstract to the editors for approval before submitting a completed manuscript.

ENDNOTES

The Editor's Notebook

1. *Journal of Discourses*, 7:1 (3 July 1859).
2. *Ibid.*, 2:94 (6 Feb. 1853).

"What Meaneth the Words That Are Written?" Abinadi Interprets Isaiah
Ann Madsen

1. For an in-depth study of Hebrew law in Abinadi's trial, see John W. Welch, "Judicial Process in the Trial of Abinadi" (FARMS, 1983).
2. The brass plates version of Isaiah pre-dates the earliest extant version of Isaiah, the Dead Sea Scrolls document called the *Great Isaiah Scroll*, by about 450 years and the Masoretic Text by about 1,500 years. This latter text is what we call the Hebrew Bible, from whence came the KJV Old Testament. So the writings of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon become the earliest text of Isaiah available to us.
3. 1 Nephi 3:17–20 implies that the record on the brass plates would have perished if Nephi had not recovered it. On the importance of this record, see 1 Nephi 5:17–19. 3 Nephi 10:17 offers an example of other precious material found in the brass plates concerning the "seed of Joseph."
4. Hugh W. Nibley, in *Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 2* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1993), 67–68, 75 passim, cleverly describes the relationship he sees between Abinadi and Noah, comparing it to other prophet-king confrontations.
5. In my edition of the scriptures, Abinadi's response runs for nearly five pages, including the last half of Mosiah 12 and the entirety of Mosiah 13–16.
6. See Matthew 10:19–20.
7. For more on this see David R. Seely, "The Ten Commandments in the Book of Mormon," in *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon: The 1991 Sperry Symposium on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Bruce A. Van Orden and Brent L. Top (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992).
8. Until now was he reciting? He may have turned to read at that moment from a scroll, plates, or book of some kind containing Exodus. The brass plates contained this material.
9. See Moses 1:6, 32; 5:9; 6:57–59.
10. From this point on in the dialogue, I quote rather than paraphrase Abinadi's powerful words.
11. In *Journal of Discourses*, 2:248.
12. Joseph Fielding Smith also refers to the "seed of Christ"; see *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 1:25–26. Also see Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 360–61, wherein McConkie states that an awareness of who Christ's seed are "is essential to a full understanding of what Isaiah and Abinadi really mean."
13. Hugh W. Nibley offers an additional view: "Why would help come from the mountains? That is explained very well in those wonderful verses of Isaiah which the prophet Abinadi uses so effectively, Isaiah 52:7. . . 'How beautiful upon the mountainside are the feet of

him who brings good tidings'—literally, are the legs of the runner who brings good news and who causes us to hear that there is peace. . . . Abinadi is announcing that from the other side of the mountain, from the other world, comes the good news. This is revelation. It's the welcome messenger from the other world, the angel who brings us the gospel—who brings us the message of salvation, who brings us the message of peace, which you don't find on this side of the mountain" ("The Mountain of the Lord's House," lecture 16 of *Ancient Documents and the Pearl of Great Price* [series of videotaped lectures from a 1986 honors class at Brigham Young University on the Pearl of Great Price], transcript pp. 8–9).

14. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–20.
15. In Alma 32, Alma expounds the method whereby this change can occur.

How Witnesses Described the "Gold Plates"

Kirk B. Henriksen

The descriptive material for this article was compiled by Kirk Henriksen, of the staff of the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City, who kindly offered it for use in the *Journal*.

1. Joseph Smith Jr., "Church History," *Times and Seasons*, 1 March 1842 (also known as the Wentworth Letter); "The Testimony of Eight Witnesses," Book of Mormon; and Orson Pratt, in a pamphlet titled *An Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, and of the Late Discovery of Ancient American Records* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Ballantyne and Hughes, May 1840), 12–13. The Wentworth Letter, the Prophet Joseph Smith's sketch of the history and faith of the Latter-day Saints written for the editor of the *Chicago Democrat*, utilizes much of the same language found in Pratt's pamphlet. Although Pratt did not see or handle the plates, he learned much about them through his close association with Joseph Smith.
- Nowhere in the documentary evidence did the witnesses or other key participants in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon describe the plates as being made of solid or pure gold.
2. David Whitmer interview, *Kansas City Journal*, 5 June 1881, in *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness*, ed. Lyndon W. Cook (Orem, Utah: Grandin, 1993), 60.
3. William Smith (Joseph's younger brother) interview, *The Saints' Herald*, 4 October 1884, 644.
4. Martin Harris interview, *Iowa State Register*, August 1870, as quoted in Milton V. Backman Jr., *Eyewitness Accounts of the Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 226.
5. William Smith, *William Smith on Mormonism* (Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Steam, 1883), 12.
6. William Smith interview with E. C. Briggs. Originally written by J. W. Peterson for *Zions Ensign* (Independence, Mo.); reprinted in *Deseret Evening News*, 20 January 1894, 11.
7. William Smith interview, *The Saints' Herald*, 4 October 1884, 644.
8. "Interview with Martin Harris,"

Tiffany's Monthly, May 1859, 169.

9. *Ibid.*, 168.
10. Emma Smith interview, published as "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," *The Saints' Herald*, 1 October 1879.
11. I. B. Bell interview with H. S. Salisbury (grandson of Catherine Smith Salisbury), Historical Department Archives, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
12. Joseph Smith Jr., "Church History" (Wentworth Letter), *Times and Seasons*, 1 March 1842, 707.
13. Martin Harris interview, *Tiffany's Monthly*, May 1859, 165.
14. Martin Harris interview, *Iowa State Register*, August 1870, as quoted in Backman, *Eyewitness Accounts*, 226.
15. David Whitmer interview, *Chicago Tribune*, 24 January 1888, in *David Whitmer Interviews*, ed. Cook, 221.
16. Pratt, *An Interesting Account*, 13.
17. Martin Harris interview, *Tiffany's Monthly*, May 1859, 165.
18. Martin Harris interview, *Iowa State Register*, August 1870, as quoted in Backman, *Eyewitness Accounts*, 226.
19. David Whitmer interview, *Kansas City Journal*, 5 June 1881, in *David Whitmer Interviews*, ed. Cook, 64.
20. Pratt, *An Interesting Account*, 13.
21. William Smith, *The Saints' Herald*, 4 October 1884, 644.
22. Emma Smith interview, *The Saints' Herald*, 1 October 1879.
23. Pratt, *An Interesting Account*, 13.
24. Martin Harris interview, *Tiffany's Monthly*, May 1859, 165.
25. The method by which a portion of the record was sealed is not specified in the documentary evidence.
26. David Whitmer interview, *Chicago Tribune*, 24 January 1888, in *David Whitmer Interviews*, ed. Cook, 221.
27. David Whitmer interview, *Deseret Evening News*, 16 August 1878, in *David Whitmer Interviews*, ed. Cook, 20–21.
28. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:347, 13 April 1856. Orson Pratt was not an eyewitness of the plates.
29. *Ibid.*, 19:211–12, 9 December 1877.
30. David Whitmer interview, Edward Stevenson diary, 22–23 December 1877, Historical Department Archives, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Original capitalization and punctuation have been modernized. In Stevenson's interview, Whitmer recounted his mother's description of the rings.
31. David Whitmer interview, *Kansas City Journal*, 5 June 1881, 1.
32. David Whitmer interview, *Chicago Tribune*, 24 January 1888, in *David Whitmer Interviews*, ed. Cook, 221.
33. Martin Harris interview, *Tiffany's Monthly*, May 1859, 165.
34. Pratt, *An Interesting Account*, 13.
35. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:31, 2 January 1859.
36. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:71. One can surmise from Joseph's statement that when the full stack of plates was positioned on a table, the open rings would be located on the reader's right side. The sealed portion would probably be located at the bottom on the left-hand side with the unsealed plates on top so that they would open to the right.

37. Joseph Smith Jr., "Church History" (Wentworth Letter); Pratt, *An Interesting Account*, 13. Pratt's description is slightly different, adding, for example, the following italicized words: "[The plates] were filled on *both sides* with . . . Egyptian characters. . . . The characters or letters upon the unsealed part were small, and beautifully engraved."
38. John Whitmer to Theodore Turley, "in the presence of his anti-Mormon friends." As reported in Richard L. Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 131.
39. "Testimony of the Eight Witnesses."
40. William Smith interview, *The Saints' Herald*, 4 October 1884, 644.
41. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:31, 2 January 1859.
42. Letter from Charles Anthon to E. D. Howe, 17 February 1834, as printed in B. H. Roberts, ed., *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1965), 1:100–101. The version of the letter published in Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism* (New York: D. Appleton, 1867), 44, contains slight variations.
43. Charles Anthon to Rev. T. W. Coit, 3 April 1841, as printed in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:101.
44. From Charles W. Brown, "Manchester in the Early Days," *Shortsville Enterprise* [sic] 35 (ca. 1883), based on Orsamus Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase, and Morris' Reserve* (Rochester, N.Y.: Alling, 1851), 215.

Of What Material Were the Plates?

1. "Were the Plates of Mormon of Tumbaga?" *Improvement Era*, September 1966, 788–89, 828–31; also in Ross T. Christensen, ed., *Papers of the Fifteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures* (Provo, Utah: Extension Publications, BYU Division of Continuing Education, 1964), 101–9. Putnam's findings are summarized in "The 'Golden' Plates," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 275–77.
2. See John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985), 283–84; and his "Metals and Metallurgy Relating to the Book of Mormon Text" (FARMS, 1992).
3. William Smith interview, *The Saints' Herald*, 4 October 1884, 644.
4. "The Testimony of Eight Witnesses," Book of Mormon; and Joseph Smith Jr., "Church History," *Times and Seasons*, 1 March 1842.
5. David M. Pendergast, "Tumbaga Object from the Early Classic Period, Found at Altun Ha, British Honduras (Belize)," *Science* 168, 3 April 1970, 117.
6. Putnam, "Were the Plates of Mormon of Tumbaga?"; and Heather Lechtman, "Pre-Columbian Surface Metallurgy," *Scientific American* 250 (June 1984): 56–63.
7. It is also possible that other metallurgical treatments such as a hammered copper-silver-gold alloy could have fur-