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The Mother's Role in Teaching Religious Values—Jerusalem, 600 BC

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history of religion in ancient Israel, particularly the time of the Judean Monarchy 2,600 years ago.”

The scrolls were worn as amulets whose words were “intended to provide a blessing that will be used to protect the wearer from some manner of evil forces,” said the researchers. Of additional interest is the fact (not noted in the *Times* article) that this confirmed early date refutes the theories

of many biblical scholars that the Pentateuch was composed much later.

These findings were documented in the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* and will be discussed in greater detail in *Near Eastern Archaeology*. The *New York Times* article, “Solving a Riddle Written in Silver,” can be found by searching the archives at <http://nytimes.com> [registration required]. 📖

The Mother’s Role in Teaching Religious Values—Jerusalem, 600 BC

In ancient Israel, the household was the center of a woman’s life and the place in which she held the most power. Even though a child was born into “the house of the father” (*bet ’ab*, the ancestral household), the mother was the first and most abiding influence upon the child’s life from the day of birth, instilling in the child the most basic sociocultural values, modes of behavior, and religious beliefs. In Proverbs, the mother is seen as both a nurturer and educator whose teachings are complementary to those of the father (1:8; 6:20).

Children learned the proper observance of important features of ancient Israelite religion by watching their mother’s daily ritual of washing herself, offering sacrifice with her husband, and praying. A good deal of this religious teaching would also have taken place on the Sabbath, when both women and men laid aside their daily chores to worship. The Sabbath was a day of rejoicing and rest, particularly for the labor-weary woman. Both she and her husband spent the day reading from the Torah, singing hymns of praise, and teaching their children the beliefs and rituals of their religion (see Deuteronomy 6:7; this requirement that children be taught the Mosaic law presumably applied to both parents, for the law was read to the entire population).

Children living in Jerusalem around 600 BC would probably have observed their mothers

attending local assemblies or gatherings to worship alongside their fathers. Women participated in religious festivals and national celebrations (Deuteronomy 16:9–15; 31:12), singing and dancing, and brought sacrifices of thanksgiving to the temple, teaching their children through their example.

Nephi makes it clear from the first verse of his account that he was grateful to both of his parents for his upbringing. “I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father” (1 Nephi 1:1). Apparently his education was given to him by these “goodly parents,” righteous and devoted people who had taken the time to teach him reading, writing, the language of the scriptures, and the learning of his father. But the implication of Nephi’s statement is even deeper than that. He also refers to an inherited spiritual knowledge and a familiarity with religion and the God whom his parents worshipped.

In his account of obtaining the brass plates, Nephi recalls the powerful words of Sariah, who had been extremely troubled and anxious for her sons’ safety during their absence: “Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness; yea, and I also know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons, and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and given them power whereby they could accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them” (1 Nephi 5:8).

Against all odds, Sariah’s sons had succeeded, and her testimony became a sure knowledge that

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God's hand was directing the family's course. Sariah and Lehi then offered sacrifice and burnt offerings in thanks for the safety of their sons. Sariah's fervent statement of belief obviously made an impression on Nephi, who painstakingly inscribed the account in considerable detail. This manifestation of Sariah's faith was probably one of many others that served as religious teaching devices to her children and influenced their own belief systems. (*Adapted from Ariel E. Bybee, "A Woman's World in Lehi's Jerusalem," in Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely [Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004], 139–44.*)

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Journal of Book of Mormon Studies (vol. 13, nos. 1–2), edited by S. Kent Brown, is a special double issue devoted to the Hill Cumorah. Studies include the geologic history and archaeology of the area, early accounts of a cave in the hill, the Hill Cumorah Pageant (its history, music, and costuming), Latter-day Saint poetry, the Hill Cumorah Monument, a linguistic analysis of the name *Cumorah*, and the earliest photographs of the hill. Available December 2004.

Apostles and Bishops in Early Christianity, by Hugh W. Nibley, edited by John F. Hall and John W. Welch, represents an edited, expanded version of Hugh Nibley's lecture notes from a class he taught in 1954. This volume explores the offices of apostle and bishop, the priesthood authority associated with them, and questions of succession in the early church and in Rome. Copublished with Deseret Book, it will appear as volume 15 in the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley. Available early 2005.

Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant, edited by John Gee and Brian Hauglid, is the third volume in the Book of Abraham Series. It includes papers from a FARMS-sponsored conference on the Book of Abraham and covers such topics as Abraham's vision of the heavens, commonalities between the Book of Abraham and noncanonical ancient texts, and the significance of the Abrahamic covenant. Available early 2005.

Forthcoming METI Publications

Theodore Abu Qurrah, translated and introduced by John C. Lamoreaux of Southern Methodist University, includes first-ever English translations of a substantial portion of Theodore Abū Qurrah's writings, which treat such issues as the characteristics of true religion and the nature of free will. Abū Qurrah (fl. AD 810), the bishop of Haran (in modern-day southern Turkey), was one of the first Christians to write in Arabic and to mount a sustained theological defense of Christianity against Islam. Available early 2005.

Insights

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