



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

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## Full Issue

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# Insights

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD VOLUME 23 | 2003

Number 6

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## New Book Offers Views of Jerusalem as Lehi Knew It

Nephi and his brothers referred to Jerusalem as “that great city” (1 Nephi 2:13). Their opposing views about it became a point of contention that tore Lehi’s family in two, and their memories of it influenced the cultural perspective of their descendants in the New World for dozens of generations. The people known as Lamanites longed after it as a lost paradise and named one of their lands of settlement in its honor (Alma 21:1). Among the Nephites it exemplified the dire consequences of unbelief (Helaman 8:20). But what was the Jerusalem of Lehi’s day really like?

In its 22 essays, the new volume *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, edited by John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely, examines this question. This anthology gathers the penetrating insights of 19 scholars from varying fields on the political, religious, social, cultural, economic, and legal situation of Jerusalem, Judah, and the nations surrounding them in the decades before the city’s destruction by the Babylonians in 587/586 BC. Setting the stage, the first three articles present a cultural capsule of Jerusalem at the time, the cast of biblical characters Lehi might have known, and a photo essay of the city and its surroundings. From there, a multitude of scholarly tools are brought to bear on the topic, resulting in a composite picture that brings Lehi’s Jerusalem vividly alive.

The reader is presented with a picture of typical home life in Jerusalem for those in the wealthier stratum of society, to which Lehi and his family belonged, with special emphasis on a woman’s life at this time and on the economic concerns of men in its primarily agrarian economy. The book examines the extent and nature of literacy, with particular attention given to inscriptions from this era. These reveal a surprising degree of influence from Egypt that is

not clearly documented in the Bible. Apparently, Lehi’s facility with Egyptian, as well as Hebrew, was not uncommon for educated people in his time and of his social standing. Such conclusions as this from archaeology, paleography, and linguistics enrich the historical record and, more than incidentally, disarm those critics of the Book of Mormon who find no biblical basis for its claims of Egyptian language combined with Hebrew learning. Other influences from Egypt are also evident in the material culture of Judah emerging from archaeological digs dating to the seventh and early sixth centuries BC.

All this portrays Jerusalem as prosperous and cosmopolitan as Laman, Lemuel, and many of its inhabitants could wish, a city favored by heaven and secure enough to stand against any enemy. In contrast, as the first chapters of the Book of Mormon reveal, Lehi and his fellow prophets saw Jerusalem as a hotbed of contention, turmoil, and change—a city rushing toward its doom. Little Judah lay in the midst of the superpowers of its day—Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia—and maintained its relative freedom through a blend of carefully crafted diplomacy and divine aid.

The book introduces the institutions that preserved this delicate balance: the intricacies of Judaic politics and law under the kings on the one hand and, on the other, obedience to the will of God as voiced by the prophets.

### in this issue

- Update: Meaning of *Nephi*
- Project Report: Chiasmus Archive
- Clues to New World Volcanism
- Reader’s Edition of the Book of Mormon
- Hebrew Law in the Book of Mormon

continued on page 7

## “O Ye Fair Ones”: An Additional Note on the Meaning of the Name *Nephi*

An earlier *Insights* article noted a possible wordplay<sup>1</sup> in the first verse of the Book of Mormon that provides internal textual evidence that the name *Nephi* derives from the Egyptian word *nfr*.<sup>2</sup> While *nfr* denotes “good, fine, goodly”<sup>3</sup> of quality, it also signifies “beautiful, fair”<sup>4</sup> of appearance. Assuming that at least some senses of the Egyptian word passed into Nephite language and culture, this second sense of *nfr* may have influenced Nephite self-perception. Several Book of Mormon passages evidence the affiliation.

If the name *Nephi* can be translated “good, goodly, beautiful, fair,” then the term *Nephites* might be substantively rendered “goodly ones” or “fair ones.” Interestingly, Mormon, when lamenting the vast scene of slaughtered Nephites following the battles at Cumorah, addressed them as such:

O ye *fair ones*, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord!

O ye *fair ones*, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you! Behold, if ye had not done this, ye would not have fallen. But behold, ye are fallen, and I mourn your loss.

O ye *fair* sons and daughters, ye fathers and mothers, ye husbands and wives, ye *fair ones*, how is it that ye could have fallen! (Mormon 6:17–19)<sup>5</sup>

Mormon uses the expression *O ye fair ones* in anaphora (i.e., a literary device in which a word or phrase is repeated at the beginning of consecutive clauses),<sup>6</sup> and the word *fair* occurs four times in his lament, his rhetoric clearly suggesting that the quality of being “fair” once distinguished the Nephites from every other people.

Another passage demonstrates an etymological connection between Nephites and “fair ones.” Following the fulfillment of the prophecies con-


cerning Christ’s birth, Mormon records that the Lamanites, apart from those who were Gadianton robbers, underwent a change in appearance, effectively becoming Nephites:

And their young men and their daughters became exceedingly *fair*, and they were numbered among the *Nephites*, and they were called *Nephites*. (3 Nephi 2:16)

Here a wordplay on *fair* and *Nephites* occurs in epistrophe (i.e., repetition of a word or phrase at the end of successive clauses). The parallelism of the phrasing further suggests the approximation of Nephites to “fair ones.”

The language of a third passage suggests the same connection. Mormon reports that following Christ’s appearance, the people of Nephi (Nephites and Lamanites together) had all become a “fair and delightsome people”:

And now, behold, it came to pass that the people of *Nephi* did wax strong, and did multiply exceedingly fast, and became an exceedingly *fair* and delightsome people. (4 Nephi 1:10)

The phrase *fair and delightsome* stands in stark contrast to descriptions such as “filthy” and “loathsome,” as the Lamanites are often described during periods of degeneracy and unbelief (compare 1 Nephi 12:23; 2 Nephi 5:22; Mormon 5:15). It must be noted that Book of Mormon prophets invariably taught that being “fair and delightsome” has everything to do with righteous living and very little to do with perceived cultural or racial superiority (see 1 Nephi 1:17:33–40; Jacob 3; Helaman 15). 

By Matthew L. Bowen

### Notes

1. “I, *Nephi*, having been born of *goodly* parents.” This subject is treated at length in Matthew L. Bowen, “Internal Textual Evidence for the Egyptian Origin of Nephi’s Name,” *Insights* 22/11 (2002): 2.
2. See John Gee, “A Note on the Name *Nephi*,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 189–91. It is possible that the connection consists of folk etymology rather than cognates.

3. Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1999), 131.
4. *Ibid.*
5. The Hebrew verb meaning “to fall” (*naphal*) resembles the Egyptian term for “fair,” and the use of the Hebrew term

here may be due to folk etymology. See also 1 Nephi 13:15 and 3 Nephi 9:2.

6. See Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 445.

## Project Report: Chiasmus Archive

Over three decades ago, John W. Welch’s publication of “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon” opened a new chapter in Mormon studies. The 1969 article in *BYU Studies* announced his 1967 discovery of the presence of this literary form in the Book of Mormon. From that time to the present, the significance of Welch’s extraordinary observation has been discussed at many levels by Latter-day Saint lay readers as well as career academicians.

Welch has continued to contribute to this area of research, including authoring several dozen publications (articles, books, book reviews, and bibliographies) concerning chiasmus exegesis and methodology. His conspicuous position as a pre-eminent chiasmus scholar has made him a magnet for material on the subject. In addition to the sources he collects in his own research, he continues to receive a number of unsolicited articles and inquiries each year from authors around the world. This material ranges from proposed chiasms found by enthusiastic dilettantes intrigued by the pleasing symmetry of the form to rigorous critical analyses performed by renowned scholars.

For many years Welch has envisioned a way to catalog all these studies and proposals—covering canonical and extracanonical literature—so that this material could be organized in one location by scripture reference and made available to interested inquirers via the Internet or in a library archive.

Last summer Welch enlisted the help of John D. Payne, a student at Yale University and amateur chiasmus enthusiast. “I had been an admirer of Welch’s work for some time,” Payne says. “When we worked out an agreement for a summer internship, I couldn’t think of anything I’d rather be doing. I came into the project *in medias res*, on the heels of another intern who had begun a cataloging system and processed about a fourth of Welch’s materials. The ‘chiasmus archive’ consisted of sev-

eral filing drawers and shelves full of books inside one of the FARMS trailers on BYU campus.”

Payne cross-checked the scriptural citations against the massive chiasmus index created several years ago by Robert Smith and others, then against the chiasmus bibliography published by Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay, adding to each source whatever was missing. Payne then photocopied each instance of chiastic analysis in the articles and organized them in another filing drawer by scripture reference, all in anticipation of the next intern who will scan this voluminous material for inclusion in an online database.

The articles are written in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Latin, Hebrew, and Greek, and they date from the early 1800s to the present. This library ranges from chiastic analysis to criticism of chiastic analysis to metacriticism of chiastic analysis. “Some of the articles were extremely technical and intricate, proposing chiastic structures on all levels—from verse to chapter to scripture book to the entire Torah,” Payne says. “Others put forth radical doctrinal proposals on the meaning of chiasmus itself, some claiming that the phenomenon was a key to the organization of all human history, some to the very mind of God.”

The need among Latter-day Saints and religion scholars in general for a chiasmus database is evident. As a continually expanding resource containing all known research on chiasmus from many angles, it would help dispel common misconceptions, foster greater understanding, and encourage further interest and study in this fruitful area of scriptural and literary scholarship.

As Welch now envisions it, the database would be available to the public via the Internet and would contain numerous items, including statistical models on how to test for probability of authorial intentionality in chiastic composition; studies on what was known about chiasmus at the time of the Book of Mormon’s publication; and extensive

*continued on page 4*

## Chiasmus continued from page 3

analyses of thousands of passages throughout the standard works, enabling anyone proposing a new chiasm to see what might already be written on it. With adequate time and resources, all of this could be made available with the click of a mouse.


When completed, the online chiasmus database will be a unique resource. Its sheer size will make it an important center for further chiasmus research and exploration for interested people all around the world.

## Investigating New World Volcanism at the Time of Christ's Death

A recent article in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* reported that ice cores taken from Greenland and Antarctica yield evidence broadly consistent with the 3 Nephi 8 account of cataclysmic New World events—presumably including a violent volcanic eruption—at the time of Christ's death (Benjamin R. Jordan, "Volcanic Destruction in the Book of Mormon: Possible Evidence from Ice Cores," *JBMS* 12/1 [2003]: 78–87). What other methods might yield corroborating evidence of such an eruption? Two possibilities are the analysis of tree rings and sea and lake sediments.

Tree-ring records are abundant and easy to date. By merely counting tree rings, very accurate dates can be determined. A tree ring that shows damage or is very thin relative to adjacent rings indicates environmental stress, such as drought or frost. Evidence of frost damage in tree rings may indicate volcanic events because the environmental cooling following volcanic eruptions often results in very severe winters and extended periods of frost. However, the great difficulty in trying to use tree rings to identify volcanic events is that frost-damaged tree rings "vary considerably from one event to another in the severity of cell damage, in their frequency of occurrence at a particular site, and in their range of distribution."<sup>1</sup>

"Interest in chiasmus has not waned," says Welch. "In fact, at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Atlanta this past November, several new books, papers, or chapters appeared utilizing chiasmus in analyzing various biblical texts. I am grateful to many people who have contributed over the years to building the makings of this chiasmus archive. J. D. Payne and several others are to be thanked especially."

To submit materials or to volunteer services in furthering the Chiasmus Archive, please contact M. Gerald Bradford, codirector of research at the Institute. 

Many environmental factors influence the growth of tree rings, yet there are no direct measurements taken from tree rings that can indicate volcanism, such as the detection of ash or the measurement of sulfate ions. Thus, tree rings are really only useful in the study of volcanic eruptions if a known, dated eruption is compared to the tree-ring record to see if the eruption coincides with tree-ring damage or thinning.

It might be worthwhile to examine tree rings from trees in Mesoamerica for the time period around AD 30–40. However, I am not aware of any living trees in Mesoamerica that are 2,000 years old; and even if there are, I doubt if approval would be given to cut one down or even to take a core sample for examination. A frost ring at AD 119 preserved in trees from the White Mountains of California is attributed to the Ilopango eruption,<sup>2</sup> so maybe other examples can be found that would cover the required time period. Wood found at archaeological sites might yield a useful record, but wood does not preserve well in Mesoamerica. Even if such well-preserved wood were found with evidence of damage or thinning for the time period in question, that would not independently confirm an eruption.

The second method uses the actual physical evidence of an eruption. It might be possible to identify an ash layer from sediment cores obtained from the seafloor around Mesoamerica. Unfortunately, analyzing core samples collected near the coasts of Mesoamerica and Central America would

be a difficult and expensive endeavor for a number of reasons.

Through the International Deep Sea Drilling Project and the Ocean Drilling Program, 33 cores have been drilled off the coasts of Mesoamerica.<sup>3</sup> Each of these cores contains ash layers that record volcanism over the last several million years up to the present. In fact, almost all of the cores furnish evidence for volcanism in the region over the recent past in the form of distinct ash layers—obvious evidence that the area has been volcanically active through geologic time and up to the present. The problem is that these layers have not been accurately dated to within the time period of the last 2,000 years. These layers need to be radiometrically dated, but this has not been successfully done for any layers younger than a few tens of thousands of years.

Even if these cores were dated, the error factor would be at least as large as, and most likely larger than, that of the ice cores. In addition, because burrowing creatures disturb the seafloor sediment, any layer from an eruption would need to be fairly thick in order to be preserved. A thin ash layer would be completely obliterated. My own work indicates that it is possible to geochemically correlate ash layers off the coasts of Mesoamerica with volcanic deposits on land, but only if there is good preservation of the layers and the source on land is already known, sampled, and geochemically characterized.<sup>4</sup>

Two studies have attempted to correlate geologically recent tephra layers (those deposited less than a few hundred thousand years ago) from the seafloors on either side of Mesoamerica with land deposits, but strong correlation has not been successful except in the case of one layer. That layer deals with an eruption that occurred at least 62,000 years ago and was large enough to produce a substantial ash layer in the ocean sediments. There are only three identified layers younger than this correlated layer, but all appear to be much older than the time of Christ's death.<sup>5</sup>

Another possibility for obtaining direct evidence of a volcanic eruption is taking sediment cores from lakes. These cost much less to acquire than deep-sea cores; and unlike deep-sea cores,

they often show, due to seasonal changes, annual layers that can be counted like the layers in ice cores and tree rings. This makes it possible to more precisely date any ash layers within the lake sediments. Although Mesoamerica is in the tropics, it still has a wet season and a dry season each year. However, even if annual layers cannot be determined, lake sediments usually contain biotic material that can be radiometrically dated.

The next step in researching whether or not the destruction in 3 Nephi 8 was caused by a volcanic eruption could be to collect core samples from lakes within Mesoamerica, such as Lake Managua in Nicaragua, in order to identify an ash layer that dates to the same time period. Geochemically, these could also be compared to the Tacaná volcanic eruption, which is discussed in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* article. Lakes with high sedimentation rates or low-oxygen conditions (which would reduce or prevent disturbance by animals) would be the best choice. Research of this kind would contribute information to other fields as well, such as climate study. 📖 —reported by Benjamin R. Jordan

#### Notes

1. Valmore C. LaMarche Jr. and Katherine K. Hirschboeck, "Frost Rings in Trees as Records of Major Volcanic Eruptions," *Nature* 307 (1984): 124.
2. *Ibid.*, 125.
3. Space does not allow a complete listing of reports that discuss cores taken from areas near Mesoamerica and Central America. For a recent report, see Haraldur Sigurdsson et al., "History of Circum-Caribbean Explosive Volcanism: <sup>40</sup>Ar/<sup>39</sup>Ar Dating of Tephra Layers," *Proceedings of the Ocean Drilling Program, Scientific Results* 165 (2000): 299–314.
4. See Benjamin R. Jordan et al., "Geochemical Correlation of Volcanic Ash Layers in the Caribbean Sea with Ignimbrites of Nicaragua and Honduras," *GSA Abstracts with Programs* 33 (2001): A-85.
5. See Frederick A. Bowles, Robert N. Jack, and I. S. E. Carmichael, "Investigation of Deep-Sea Volcanic Ash Layers from Equatorial Pacific Cores," *Geological Society of America Bulletin* 84 (1973): 2371–88; and John W. Drexler et al., "The Los Chocoyos Ash, Guatemala: A Major Stratigraphic Marker in Middle America and in Three Ocean Basins," *Quaternary Research* 13 (1980): 327–45.

## New Reader's Edition of the Book of Mormon

With the recent publication of *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition*, Grant Hardy has provided the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with a remarkable new version of their founding text. Although Hardy gears his book to a broad readership, those who truly love the Book of Mormon, seek to be serious students of it, or both will find *A Reader's Edition* well worth owning. Why? Because in this edition the text is displayed not in verse format but in discrete, sub-headed sections of greater length with ease of reading the end in view.

We are familiar with the Book of Mormon printed with the verses separated sequentially and appearing in double columns. We forget that the first editions of the Book of Mormon did not appear this way. Although the versification added later is very useful, allowing the reader to locate specific passages that would otherwise be difficult to find, it decoys us into thinking that Mormon and the authors whose work he redacted thought and wrote in that format.

The very appearance of the text in our sacred texts lures us into thinking of each verse as a separate, unconnected thought—as a “scripture” that can be wrenched from its context in the larger whole and then mixed and matched with any other verse. *A Reader's Edition* makes doing this much more difficult by drawing our attention back to the context in which each sentence and verse is set.

The way the Book of Mormon, as well as the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price, is currently formatted is obviously an attempt to imitate the format of the familiar King James Version of the Bible. But the Bible has been formatted differently over time, and now a host of competing modern translations of the Bible exhibit strikingly different and remarkably more useful formatting than that of the KJV (though they maintain the versification). These modern translations attempt to visually identify larger literary units, to indicate where quoted material appears, to distin-

guish poetic forms from prose, and so forth—all to aid the reader.


In similar fashion, Hardy provides readers of the Book of Mormon with a much different (and, I believe, much improved) formatting. While retaining the chapters and versification, he has removed the sometimes distracting headnotes and cross-referencing apparatus, which were not part of the sacred text itself, and added headings that identify the start and finish of lengthy “multichapters,” as well as topics within chapters, enabling the reader to better grasp the original narrative structure. He also includes eight highly informative appendices—for example, chronologies of the translation of the Book of Mormon and of key events in the book's narrative, a list of 50 significant textual changes in various authorized editions of the Book of Mormon, a list of Hebraisms underlying the text, charts and maps, and the testimonies of the Three and Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon plates along with historical background. His introduction to the book is carefully crafted and well worth reading and pondering. It contains, among other topics, a brief summary of the Book of Mormon, a history of how it originated, and an explanation of its religious significance.

Readers familiar with Donald W. Parry's book *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), a very useful study aid, will find that Hardy's edition moves in somewhat different directions. Hardy has not duplicated Parry's work by providing the intensive formatting intended to identify all of the literary devices found in the Book of Mormon. Rather, to promote readability, he has been selective in presenting poetic passages in appropriate formats. The University of Illinois Press is to be congratulated for making available *A Reader's Edition*, which will make a fine addition to the libraries of those with a serious interest in the Book of Mormon. 📖 —by Louis Midgley

## BYU Journal Explores Hebrew Law in the Book of Mormon

In February 2001, a conference titled “Hebrew Law in the Book of Mormon” was held at Brigham Young University under the sponsorship of FARMS (see “BYU Conference on Hebrew Law a Success,” *Insights* 21/4 [2001], available on the FARMS Web site). Among the papers presented there were studies by seven BYU students on aspects of ancient law that might be reflected in the Book of Mormon. These papers are now available in a special issue, copublished by FARMS, of the student journal *Studia Antiqua*. They treat such topics as slavery, the Noachide laws (minimum standards of social and moral conduct revealed through Noah and thus binding on all humanity), false prophecy, blasphemy and reviling, the status of women in ancient

Jewish law, and legal protections for widows and the fatherless.

The journal features an introduction by John W. Welch, a BYU professor of law who organized the conference and spoke at two of its three sessions. He summarizes the proceedings, highlights important issues, and provides helpful context for understanding the approaches taken in the student papers. He observes: “Law was extremely important in the ancient world, especially among the Israelites. Although it is often difficult to know exactly what the substantive and procedural rules of Israelite courts might have been in the seventh century BC and how much of that jurisprudence was carried over into the New World on the plates of brass and through the customs of Lehi and his descendants, reasonable reconstructions of Hebrew law in biblical times can be made, and those studies shed interesting light on possible meanings of many words and deeds reported in the Book of Mormon.” 

## New Book [continued from page 1](#)


Through the examination of key aspects and events, the growing imbalance between those elements during Lehi’s lifetime becomes clear. The bearing of international politics on Judah’s situation, the calling and authority of the prophets and the Judahites’ expectations of them, Israelite religion as practiced before the exile, the importance of the temple, the effects of the religious reforms enacted by King Josiah and the Deuteronomists, the trial of Jeremiah—all are part of the panorama in which the prophets foresaw disaster. The destruction decreed by heaven came, but not before Lehi and his family had escaped their city’s fall by fleeing into the wilderness (an action not without precedent in that time period) and traveling to southern Arabia along well-used commercial routes to continue their epic journey to the New World land of promise.

Given that this volume examines a time of significant complexity—a crucial moment in the history of the world documented only by ancient

writings that sometimes contradict each other and the serendipitous findings of archaeology that represent only a small fraction of the whole picture—the writers have constructed a remarkably full and detailed picture of life in Jerusalem as Lehi might have known it. As one might still expect, the incompleteness and ambiguities inherent in the evidence surface in the occasionally differing opinions expressed in these essays. For example, some take at face value the seemingly approving descriptions of Josiah’s religious reforms found in the book of 2 Kings; others note the less flattering comments about Josiah in 2 Chronicles and Jeremiah and wonder if the reforms added to the tension in negative ways. The reader therefore becomes a discernor, participating in the exciting task of reconstructing Jerusalem before the exile and deciding which aspects and events may have shaped the contrasting viewpoints of Lehi’s family members as they recalled their former home.

As the first book ever to deal exclusively with life in Jerusalem in the days of Lehi, this work is [continued on page 8](#)



a welcome and timely publication for Latter-day Saints as they begin a year's study of the Book of Mormon. However, its value will certainly extend beyond a few weeks of supplementary reading as it continues to present solid, scholarly context for the words of Nephi, Jacob, and subsequent Book of Mormon prophets in reference to their Israelite origins. It will add depth and perspective to Old Testament studies as well, and its list of suggested readings provides a starting point for further research of a fascinating yet understudied period of scriptural history. As in the metaphors of Joseph of Egypt, it will enhance the reader's understanding of both the branches that run over the wall and the root from which they sprang (Genesis 49:22). 

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

***The FARMS Review*** (vol. 15, no. 2), edited by Daniel C. Peterson, features reviews and articles on DNA issues, the Mountain Meadows massacre, and secret combinations, as well as responses to a so-called insider's view of Mormon origins. Available February 2004.

***Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem***, edited by John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann Seely, will help readers to imagine what Jerusalem was like around 600 BC, before much of the city was obliterated by the Babylonians in fulfillment of prophecy a few years after Lehi's departure. Subjects include culture, family life, agriculture, politics, religious practices, inscriptions, law, and international relations. Available February 2004.

FROM OTHER PUBLISHERS

***Dead Sea Scrolls Reader***, edited by Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov, presents all of the nonbiblical Qumran texts along with English translations. Published by Brill Academic Publishers of the Netherlands, this six-part edition of the nonbiblical scroll fragments is an outgrowth of the FARMS Dead Sea Scrolls database. Parts 1 (religious law), 2 (exegetical texts), and 4 (calendrical and sapiential texts) are available now; parts 3 (parabiblical texts), 5 (poetic and liturgical texts), and 6 (additional genres and unclassified texts) will be available in spring 2004.

# Insights

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Noel B. Reynolds      *Executive Director*

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FARMS is part of Brigham Young University's Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts. As such, it encourages and supports research on the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham, the Bible, other ancient scripture, and related subjects. Under the FARMS imprint, the Institute publishes and distributes titles in these areas for the benefit of scholars and interested Latter-day Saint readers.

Primary research interests at FARMS include the history, language, literature, culture, geography, politics, and law relevant to ancient scripture. Although such subjects are of secondary importance when compared with the spiritual and eternal messages of scripture, solid research and academic perspectives can supply certain kinds of useful information, even if only tentatively, concerning many significant and interesting questions about scripture.

FARMS makes interim and final reports about this research available widely, promptly, and economically. These publications are peer reviewed to ensure that scholarly standards are met. The proceeds from the sale of these materials are used to support further research and publications. As a service to teachers and students of the scriptures, research results are distributed in both scholarly and popular formats.

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