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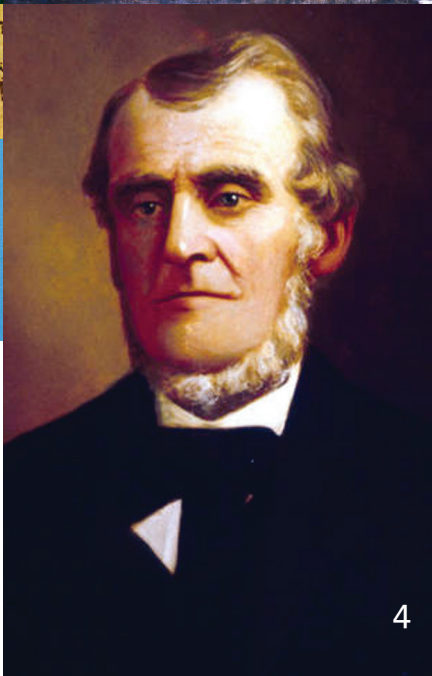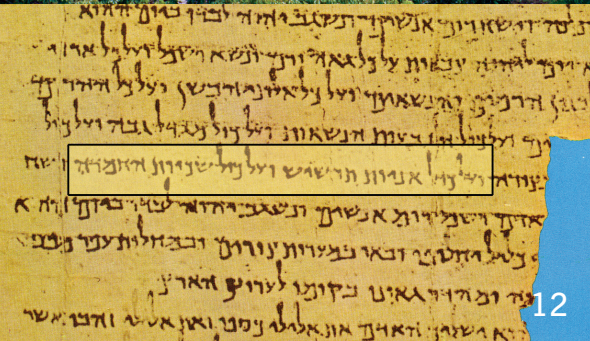*God in History? Nephi's Answer*

Archaeology, Relics, and Book of Mormon Belief   "For the Sum of Three Thousand Dollars"

"Upon All the Ships of the Sea, and Upon All the Ships of Tarshish": Revisiting 2 Nephi 12:16 and Isaiah 2:16

Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life: Understanding the Dream as Visionary Literature

ON THE COVER: *Nephi's Vision*
Oil on canvas, by Robert T. Barrett

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Charles Swift

THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

With this issue the *Journal* returns to a shorter format. Whether this will become the norm I cannot say. But there is good reason for publishing the enclosed articles without waiting for the full maturation of other studies that we now happily aim for the next two issues. Those that appear herein bring tangible, added light to the Book of Mormon and its story.

One of the continuing issues that face students has to do with archaeological evidence for the Book of Mormon. (Even the Bible does not escape serious questions about the relationship between text and artifact, often suffering because, given our present state of knowledge, evident connections do not exist.) The Book of Mormon makes certain "predictions" about civilizations in ancient America, predictions that looked silly in 1830. But as John E. Clark demonstrates, the picture of the New World that has begun to emerge from serious study is beginning to look a lot like descriptions in the Book of Mormon. As in all archaeological work, the picture remains incomplete in many of its parts because excavators never uncover a whole city nor recover all of its artifacts nor expose completely all of its layers. But the picture is growing clearer.

The founding narrative of Nephi continues to draw the attention of authors to its treasures. The majority of our studies in this issue—three—touch on Nephi's work. Roy A. Prete tackles the challenge of filling out God's role in historical events when seen through the lens of Nephi's report. This issue, which is as relevant as a person's experiences today, has puzzled the best philosophical minds through the centuries. Prete draws together the strands of Nephi's account that offer an answer to whether God intervenes in human affairs.

In a different vein, Charles L. Swift gracefully leads us back to Lehi's vision of the tree of life and examines it against the broad backdrop of visionary experiences that are recorded in literature. It is in both tiny details and wide panoramas that the wealth of Lehi's visionary view is exposed to our sight. The whole report about the vision of the tree of life exhibits remarkable care in its conception and composition.

From a fresh angle, Dana M. Pike and David Rolph Seely draw on their shared backgrounds in Old Testament studies to examine a single passage copied by Nephi from his beloved Isaiah, in whose words "[Nephi's] soul delighteth" (2 Nephi 11:2). With important consequences for how we understand the plates of brass, the question that Pike and Seely lay before us is whether these plates preserve an ancient, unattested reading in Isaiah 2:16, "and upon all the ships of the sea."

The *Journal* welcomes to its pages a study by two well-known Latter-day Saint historians, Susan Easton Black and Larry C. Porter. They are in the midst of a major work on Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon and the underwriter of the costs of publishing it. With their usual care, they examine what can be learned of the circumstances that finally compelled Martin Harris to make good on his pledge to meet the expenses incurred when the Book of Mormon appeared in print.

In sum, these pages of the *Journal* continue to add to the store of knowledge about this wondrous book. The fact that Martin Harris stuck with his pledge to underwrite the costs of publishing the Book of Mormon in the face of substantial opposition offers a glimpse into how deeply one of Joseph Smith's intimate associates valued the Prophet's efforts and the resulting scripture.
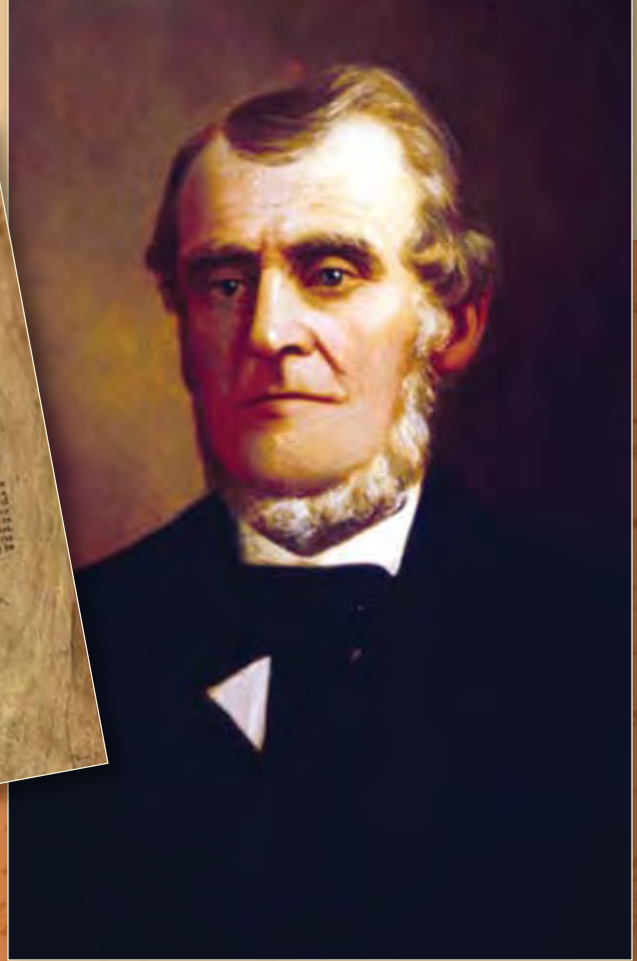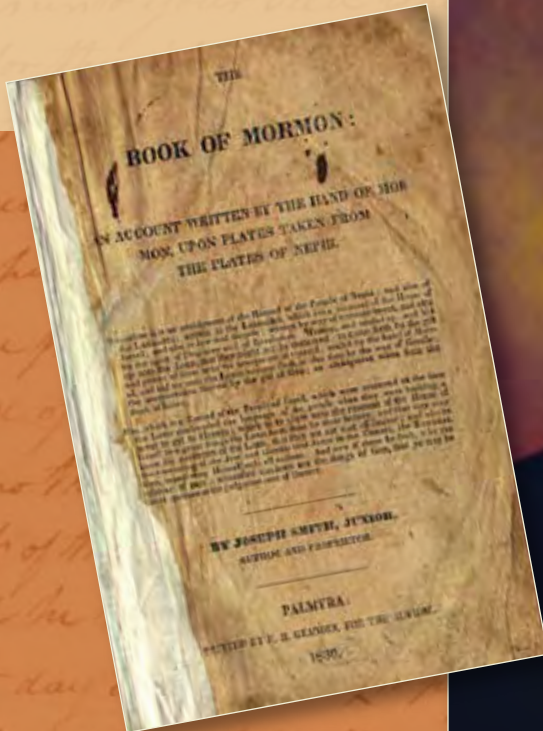
"For the Sum of Three Thousand Dollars"

BY SUSAN EASTON BLACK

AND LARRY C. PORTER

Clockwise from bottom: Pressroom in the historic Egbert B. Grandin Building, in Palmyra, New York, where the first copies of the Book of Mormon were printed in 1830; title page from an 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, © Maxwell Institute; painting of Martin Harris, © Brigham Young University; Joseph translating the plates, a motion picture still from *Remembering Nauvoo*, © IRI. Background: Page from the printer's manuscript at 3 Nephi 21. Courtesy of Community of Christ Library–Archives, Independence, Missouri. Photo by Nevin Skousen.

"Our Translation

drawing to a close, we went to Palmyra, Wayne county, New York, secured the copyright, and agreed with Mr. Egbert B. Grandin to print five thousand copies for the sum of three thousand dollars," penned Joseph Smith.[1] Much has been written on the closing days of the translation and the process of securing the copyright, but acquiring the sum of $3,000 has not received the same mention and, if mentioned, has lacked a proper description. Most accounts are like that found in *Joseph Smith and the Restoration:*

> Martin Harris mortgaged his farm to Grandin; and on August 25, 1829, the contract was drawn up. Martin agreed to pay Grandin three thousand dollars within eighteen months after the printing began. Were he to default, Grandin was authorized to have the Harris farm sold at public auction and allow Martin the excess of the amount stipulated in the contract.[2]

Although such accounts state the basic facts, they lack the details that show what a unique and valuable contribution Martin Harris, one of Joseph's first confidants outside his family, made to the Restoration.

Neither young Joseph nor his father—a wheat farmer, cooper, and day laborer struggling to pay a mortgage—was in a position to secure the agreement with Grandin. Oliver Cowdery, schoolteacher and scribe of the Book of Mormon translation, likewise lacked the necessary means or real wealth needed for collateral. The same could be said of 16-year-old Orrin Porter Rockwell, who likely made a considerable sacrifice when he proffered $50 toward the publication of the Book of Mormon. But what of Joseph Knight Sr., who provided foolscap paper and commodities during the translation; Peter Whitmer Sr., who gave place and sustenance for Joseph in the final days of translation; and Josiah Stowell, a man of some substance who had earlier befriended and employed Joseph? They were all landowners like Martin, but it appears that none was in a domestic or financial position to provide the kind of security that Martin had offered to Grandin. Knight and Whitmer both owned considerably less land than Martin, while Stowell was hampered by obligations to a decidedly unsympathetic family. In addition, none of the three men lived in Palmyra, which, because it was only a few miles from the Smith farm, was clearly the best place to publish the Book of Mormon (both in terms of preserving the manuscript and saving time and expense). Though they were respected in their own communities, Whitmer, Knight, and Stowell naturally lacked associations and prominence in Palmyra—both of which could be important in funding a substantial publishing project.

Martin Harris, on the other hand, was a landowner and longtime Palmyra resident with a solid reputation among local businessmen—as well as a witness to the Book of Mormon—and he therefore seems to have been in a unique position to secure the publisher's note and relieve the awkward financial tension of the situation.[3] Would Martin be willing to step forward and provide the security when past associations with the translation had made him the target of public ridicule and marital strife? Then again, if he did offer to secure the financial obligation, could Joseph trust the man? Pomeroy Tucker, former editor of the *Wayne Sentinel*, gave his personal assessment of the financial crisis thus created: "Harris was the only man of property or credit known in all Mormondom; and, as will appear, he happened to be exactly the appropriate subject for the prophet's designs; for without his timely aid and

pecuniary sacrifice the Golden Bible would probably have remained forever an unpublished romance."[4]

Martin Harris, like scores of early believers, felt inspired to assist the Prophet Joseph—to put his "all" on the line to help spread the word of the Restoration. But unlike those who would later be called to spread the good news, Martin was called to give freely of his considerable means, knowing full well that external consequences could further place his reputation, financial standing, and already-strained marriage in harm's way. His acceptance of that call placed Martin Harris side by side with Joseph Smith in a negotiating role that proved vital to the Restoration. It also placed the Prophet in the uncomfortable position of having to revitalize his trust in a man the Lord had labeled "wicked" because of his compromise of sacred covenants in the loss of the 116-page manuscript (see Doctrine and Covenants 3:12–13; 10:1, 7).

We pause to remember that the Restoration was not a single event but a series of sacred moments that often placed the Prophet in need of the assistance of early believers. One such moment was securing the publication of the Book of Mormon.

Sketch of the Palmyra area showing location of the Harris farm at the top. Courtesy of *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, 21 March 1998 (www.democratandchronicle.com).

The Financial Standing of Martin Harris

When the time came to publish the Book of Mormon, Martin was an astute 46-year-old businessman and prosperous farmer in Palmyra. He had been living in the community since age 10, when he and his parents moved to the area, then known as Swift's Landing. In that year, 1793, his father, Nathan Harris, was induced by town founder John Swift to settle in "Township No. Twelve in the Second Range of Towns in Phelps and Gorham Purchase." Within a year, Martin's father had purchased 600 acres, nearly a square mile, for 50¢ an acre from Swift, no small sum at the time.[5]

On 27 March 1808, 24-year-old Martin married his 15-year-old first cousin, Lucy Harris, at Palmyra, Ontario County.[6] A few years after their marriage, in 1813 and 1814, Martin was deeded

146 acres by his father and an additional 4 acres by his brother Emer.[7] Over a period of years, Martin acquired a total of 320 acres, which were primarily north of Palmyra but did include a 4-acre lot in the village. By 1825, the year the Erie Canal was completed, the enterprising Martin was in a position to transport produce and livestock raised on his lands to eastern markets along the new waterway. In addition, Martin enjoyed much personal satisfaction from producing woven materials for use largely within his own household. His expertise in this venture was recognized by the Ontario Agricultural Society. In 1822 the *Ontario Repository* reported that "Martin Harris, Palmyra," was awarded five dollars from the society for producing "the best cotton and woollen coverlet" in the area. For 20 yards of bleached linen, he received a four-dollar prize. By 1823 he had won eight additional monetary prizes from the society, and he won three more in 1824.[8]

One resident later described Martin as "an industrious, hard-working farmer, shrewd in his business calculations, frugal in his habits, and what was termed a prosperous man in the world."[9] He had definite ideas about finance, and because of his abundance, townsfolk expressed willingness to listen. Martin spoke of the importance of making business transactions in gold and silver. He "distrusted banks, Federalists, and authoritarians."[10] Regardless of whether all listeners concurred with his financial leanings, it appears, as one historian put it, that "none in all that neighborhood were more promising in their future prospects than [Martin]."[11]

However, that respectability was questioned again and again as he gave of his means to young Joseph Smith. "In the midst of our afflictions we found a friend in a gentleman by the name of Martin Harris, who came to us and gave me fifty dollars to assist us on our journey [of 125 miles to Harmony, Pennsylvania]," wrote Joseph.[12] Lucy Smith recalled that this much-needed assistance was given inside a public house in Palmyra, when Martin approached Joseph and said (as recorded by Lucy), "How do you do mr smith?" He then took "a bag of silver from his pocket" and thrusting it in Joseph's direction said, "Here Mr smith is $50 I give it to you to do the Lords work with."[13] When Joseph sug-

for her to finish before "she commenced urging me to receive a considerable amount of money which she had at her own command" to help with the translation. Polly also desired to "help me to 75 dollars in money" to get the record translated, reported Mother Smith. Although Mother Smith refused the money on that occasion, Lucy Harris spoke with Joseph Smith about the matter. His comment, "I always prefer dealing with men rather than their wives," displeased her.[16] However, following a dream in which she claimed to see the gold plates, she offered Joseph a gift of $28, an inheritance acquired at the passing of her mother, which gift was accepted. Thus, Martin's wife became the first recorded donor to the Book of Mormon translation.[17]

The Inescapable Issue of Trust

In days past, Martin had shown fervor for more religious causes than what young Smith espoused. Antagonist E. D. Howe stated, "[Martin] was first an orthodox Quaker, then a Universalist, next a Restorationer, then a Baptist, next a Presbyterian, and then a Mormon."[18] Although Howe's claims are exaggerated to a degree, Palmyra Episcopal minister Rev. John A. Clark did say, "If I mistake not, at one period [Martin was] a member of the

Where did Martin stand on his testimony of Joseph Smith's translating gold plates? Did he have the faith necessary to secure the obligation with Grandin, or would he vacillate as he had in days gone by?

gested that he would sign a note for the silver, Martin motioned to all present to witness that he freely gave him the money and would not accept a note or compensation of any kind. On another occasion, viewing Joseph's wardrobe as inappropriate for a man called of God, Martin reportedly insisted that the best pattern in a local store be used to make him a black suit that Martin promptly paid for.[14]

It was not just Martin's generosity to Joseph that was questioned but also the financial offerings of his wife, Lucy, and her sister, Mrs. Polly Harris Cobb, who lived in the Harris household.[15] Mother Smith recalled that while sharing with Lucy Harris and Polly the story of the gold plates, Lucy could not wait

Methodist Church, and subsequently had identified himself with the Universalists."[19] If the minister's remembrances are closer to the truth, it appears Martin was not above leaving one religious persuasion for another. To friend Pomeroy Tucker, he was a searcher and scripturalist of sorts. He read "the Scriptures intently, and could probably repeat from memory nearly every text of the Bible from beginning to end, giving chapter and verse in each case," reported Tucker.[20] Where did Martin stand on his testimony of Joseph Smith's translating gold plates? Did he have the faith necessary to secure the obligation with Grandin, or would he vacillate as he had in days gone by?

Then, of course, there was the issue of the lost 116 pages of the book of Lehi translation. Sometime during an eventful three-week period in June and July 1828 in which Martin had possession of the manuscript, he took his wife to visit her relatives, attended to business, and served on jury duty. But of greater consequence was his showing the manuscript pages to others. "By stratagem," reported Joseph, "they got them away from [Martin.]"[21] Lucy Mack Smith recorded that Joseph cried out, "Oh! Martin have you lost the manuscript? have you broken your oath and brought down condemnation upon my head as well as your own[?]"

"Yes," replied Martin, "it is gone and I know not where[.]"

"Oh! my God my God[,]" said Joseph as he clenched his hands together, "all is lost is lost what shall I do[?] I have sinned[;] it is me that tempted the wrath of God."[22]

Mother Smith added: "I well remember that day of darkness, both within and without: to us at least the heavens seemed clothed with blackness, and the earth shrouded with gloom."[23]

Martin had confronted his wife about the missing manuscript. Lucy adamantly denied any responsibility for the loss, although many believed her responsible for the theft, including Lucy Mack Smith.[24] As for Joseph, he believed that the loss was a direct "consequence of my having wearied the Lord in asking for the privilege of letting Martin Harris take the writings."[25] The Lord confirmed

Waiting for Martin, by Glen S. Hopkinson

his lamentations: "And when thou deliveredst up that which God had given thee sight and power to translate, thou deliveredst up that which was sacred into the hands of a wicked man" (D&C 3:12; 10:1, 7). Martin had "set at naught the counsels of God, and [had] broken the most sacred promises which were made before God, and [had] depended upon his own judgment and boasted in his own wisdom" (D&C 3:13).

Perhaps it was not a coincidence that (according to Lucy Mack Smith) soon after the loss "a dense fog spread itself over [Martin's] fields, and blighted his wheat while in the blow, so that he lost about two thirds of his crop; whilst those fields, which lay only on the opposite side of the road, received no injury whatever."[26] Not surprisingly, marital discord reached new heights for Lucy and Martin during the nine months that followed.

Of their growing differences, none was more directly aimed at stopping the coming forth of the Book of Mormon than the complaint Lucy lodged against Joseph Smith in March 1829 before a magistrate in Lyons, New York. The charge against young Joseph was attempting to defraud her husband out of money and property.[27] Lucy reported that when the court met, one witness testified that Joseph had nothing more than a box filled with sand, another stated it was filled with lead, and yet another solemnly testified that Joseph had confided in him that "there was nothing at all in the box . . . all he wanted was to get Martin Harris's money away from him." Lucy Harris spoke of Joseph's attempt to defraud her husband out of all his property. Then stood Martin Harris, who testified, "I can swear that Joseph Smith has never got one dollar from me by persuasion. . . . I have never seen in Joseph Smith, a disposition to take any man's money without giving him a reasonable compensation in return."[28] The judge, apparently swayed by Martin's testimony, told those in the courtroom to trouble him no more with such ridiculous folly. The case against Joseph Smith was closed.

Was Joseph willing to open the issue again and subject himself to perhaps another court case or worse by having Martin secure the note with Grandin? Was it worth the risk, especially when

prejudice against the publication went unchecked in Palmyra? Would it open anew wounds in the relationship of Martin and Lucy that were slow to heal? How pivotal was the publication of the Book of Mormon to the Restoration? These questions and others needed to be resolved.

The Lord's Directive to Martin Harris

An early account of Martin Harris's willingness to secure the Book of Mormon publication comes from John H. Gilbert, who became the compositor for the project:

> In the forepart of June 1829, Mr. E. B. Grandin, the printer of the "Wayne Sentinel," came to me and said he wanted I should assist him in estimating the cost of printing 5000 copies of a book that Martin Harris wanted to get printed, which was called the "Mormon Bible." It was the second application of Harris to Grandin to do the job.—Harris assuring Grandin that the book would be printed in Rochester if he declined the job again.[29]

Thurlow Weed, former publisher of the *Rochester Daily Telegraph* and then editor of the Rochester *Anti-Masonic Enquirer*, also verified Martin's early declaration to stand as security for the printing from the very outset. Weed wrote that Joseph Smith first came alone to his office wanting to get a book published. Weed declined, and Joseph came a second time with Martin Harris, "a substantial farmer residing near Palmyra." Weed claimed that Martin "offered to become security for the expense of printing." Weed again declined.[30] His competitor, Elihu F. Marshall of Rochester, agreed to publish the book but at an exorbitant price. Hoping that Grandin might relent on his previous refusal and that a better price might yet be obtained, Joseph and Martin again met with E. B. Grandin, publisher in Palmyra.

According to Pomeroy Tucker, he and Grandin sought "to divert Harris from his persistent fanaticism in that losing speculation."[31] Failing to do so, Grandin agreed to publish the book if Martin would secure the note with his valuable property as collateral. Grandin and Martin reached an agreement on 17 August 1829. Eight days later, on 25 August, Martin Harris put his guarantee upon an official mortgage note for the land.[32] Mother Smith said that Martin was to initially pay half of
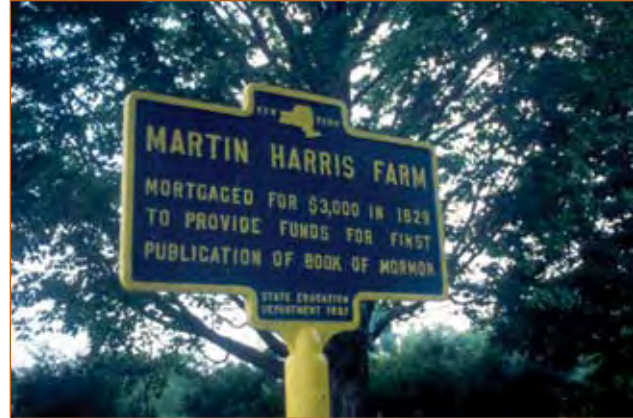
Sign in Palmyra, New York. Photo courtesy of D. Kelly Ogden.

the printing cost of the Book of Mormon and that Joseph and Hyrum would pay the residue. This financial arrangement, however, did not materialize as planned. Before January 1830, Martin became aware that the Smith brothers were unable to meet their share of the obligation. Joseph had applied for a loan with George Crane, a Quaker living in Macedon. His application was denied. Joseph then contacted friends, asking them to pre-purchase copies of the publication to finance the undertaking. Martin encouraged these contacts, hoping that a community effort of believers would provide the needed finances. One such believer was Josiah Stowell. Joseph Smith reported to Oliver Cowdery in October 1829 that Stowell had a "prospect of getting five or six hundred dollars" for copies of the book. Stowell was unable to help, however.[33] As one prospective financial outlet after another dried up, Martin realized more and more that the full weight of the obligation fell upon his shoulders and his alone.

Before the first copies of the Book of Mormon rolled off the press, rumors flew as if on eagles' wings that Martin would be unable to sell a portion of his farm and pay the cost of printing. Grandin was concerned. Adding to Martin's growing fears, citizens of Palmyra passed a resolution calling upon all residents to refuse purchase of the Book of Mormon and to use their influence to stop others from making such a purchase. The rumors, coupled with the resolution, caused E. B. Grandin to suspend printing in January 1830. It was not until 26 January, when Martin secured from Joseph Smith an agreement that he would have an equal opportunity

with the Prophet and others to sell the Book of Mormon until sufficient copies had been sold to pay the printing costs, that Grandin's fears were calmed and the printing commenced anew.[34]

Knowing it would be a few months before the Book of Mormon was ready for sale, Martin applied for a short-term loan of $1,300 to tide him over. He approached Charles Butler, a lawyer and regional loan officer for the New York Insurance and Trust Company in Geneva, New York, for the loan. According to Butler, Martin presented him with a letter of introduction from Henry Jessup, an elder in the Presbyterian Church in Palmyra. As Butler expressed it, Jessup was a man "on whose judgment I depended in respect to the character of the borrower and the value of the property."[35] Jessup's letter told of Martin's business savvy and well-kept farm, but, believing the loan was for the purpose of publishing the Book of Mormon, Butler refused.

With the refusal and with mounting pressure from his wife to default on his obligation with Grandin, Martin began to vacillate. Knowing something of Martin's hesitation to pay the debt and questioning his determination to sell the required acreage should the necessary sales of the book not materialize, Hyrum Smith urged his brother Joseph to raise the money by preselling the Book of Mormon in Canada. Joseph agreed. In the winter of 1829–1830, the Prophet directed Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Knight Sr., Hiram Page, and Josiah Stowell to go to Canada and there find someone who would purchase the copyright to the Book of Mormon for the stipulated price of $8,000. They journeyed to Kingston, Upper Canada, and were slated to go to York (Toronto), but the circumstances of their arrival at the latter place remains uncertain. In Canada, the men were unable to find anyone to facilitate the purchase.[36] Their efforts provided no additional funding. The burden of payment remained with Martin. He was capable of meeting the obligation, but would he?

In the village of Palmyra, Martin was known as a man of considerable wealth and property. Some suggest that he could have paid the expected sum without embarrassment had he chosen. Instead, Martin dickered, bargained, and handled the transaction in his own way, seemingly unmindful of the Lord's directive to "not covet thine own property, but impart it freely to the printing of the Book of Mormon, which contains the truth and the word of

Lucy Harris home in Palmyra, New York. Before selling his farm, Martin Harris gave his wife 80 acres, and she built this home on that property. Photo courtesy of Kenneth R. Mays.

God" (D&C 19:26). In the same revelation, he was forewarned that "misery thou shalt receive if thou wilt slight these counsels, yea, even the destruction of thyself and property" (D&C 19:33). Then in no uncertain terms, the Lord said, "Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage" (D&C 19:35).

Martin renewed his determination to meet the divine directive, and a relieved Grandin announced that the Book of Mormon would be available for public sale at his bookstore on 26 March 1830.[37] The release of the volume, mounting financial pressures, and other interpersonal concerns between Martin and Lucy created an irreconcilable schism in the Harris household. Lucy left Martin, taking their children and locating on the 80-acre farm acquired from Martin through a previous land transaction with Peter Harris, who had then deeded the same to his sister in a November 1825 settlement.[38]

Martin made every attempt to presell copies of the Book of Mormon in advance of its availability to the public. However, he dejectedly reported to Joseph Smith and Joseph Knight upon their March arrival from Harmony, "The Books will not sell for no Body wants them." The Prophet tried to console him with the response, "I think they will sell."[39] Because of the boycott of the volume by certain of the citizens, "the book . . . fell dead before the public. . . . It found no buyers, or but very few," Pomeroy Tucker recalled."[40] Albert Chandler, an apprentice in Luther Howard's book bindery, recorded: "Martin Harris . . . gave up his entire time to advertising the Bible to his neighbors and the public

generally in the vicinity of Palmyra. He would call public meetings and address them himself."[41] Rev. Ancil Beach received correspondence from Canandaigua, New York, bearing the signatures of six prominent individuals who attested, among other things, that "Harris became very boisterous on the subject of the book and preached about the country in endeavoring to make sale of it—Harris is by some considered a deluded man partially insane, and by others as a cunning speculator in publishing this book for the sake of gain."[42]

As Martin struggled to ease his financial obligation, a Palmyra businessman, Thomas Lakey, offered to buy some of Martin's property.[43] Martin Harris made the transaction for the requisite 151 acres in a private sale to Lakey on 7 April 1831. Lakey was to reimburse Martin in a series of payments extending to October 1832.[44] However, what was to have been a more protracted payment period was conveniently adjusted after several months' time. John Graves came to the Wayne County area from England in 1831, locating at Walworth, just north of Palmyra. He and his wife, Jane, had with them a widowed daughter, Christina Graves Grainger, and her four children. Christina had with her some $3,000 in gold coins, which she secured in a money belt around her waist. She provided the capital to her father, John, who then made the purchase of the specified 150¼-acre tract from Thomas Lakey on 28 January 1832. Lakey's price for the sale was $3,300, a markup of $300.[45] Lakey then paid Martin the outstanding amount required for their $3,000 agreement, and Harris compensated Grandin that same amount. Thomas Rogers, second assignee on the original mortgage agreement between Martin Harris and Grandin, certified before the commissioner of deeds for Wayne County, Truman Hemingway, on 28 January 1832 that "said mortgage is redeemed paid off, satisfied and discharged."[46] The long-standing debt was duly retired.

This home is situated on the site of the Martin Harris Farm, in Palmyra, New York; the original home no longer stands. Photo courtesy of Kenneth R. Mays.

"Who Would Have Thought?"

Martin Harris, once a respected businessman and entrepreneur of sorts, walked the streets of Palmyra with arms full of expensive leather-bound copies of the Book of Mormon. Decades later, the *Palmyra Courier* recalled that he had been seen daily "inviting his friends and neighbors to buy. His form was conspicuous, with a grey suit of homespun, his head surmounted by a large stiff hat, while under his arm he carried several copies of the book."[47] Instead of envying his circumstances as they once had, neighbors said that he was "crazy." Grandin reported that Martin had "a large circle of acquaintances and friends to pity his delusion" as he followed the pursuits of the Prophet and the Church to Kirtland, Ohio, in 1831.[48]

None of the early residents of Palmyra, with the exception of the Smith family, "received so many rebuffs" and endured "so many unfeeling comments" from near neighbors as Martin did.[49] Let it be remembered that no other early believer in the Restoration contributed more financial support to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon than Martin. Without his willingness to meet the publisher's financial requirements, the printing of the Book of Mormon would have been delayed if not postponed for an indeterminate season. Without Joseph Smith's willingness to accept and trust Martin when wisdom might suggest another course of action, the great written proof of the Restoration may have awaited another day. The financial support of Martin Harris, too often forgotten in the abyss of history and the personal struggles of the man, was very significant. Martin was raised up to help a prophet of God secure the first publication of the Restoration, and he fulfilled that important role at great personal cost.

Martin Harris, one of Joseph's first confidants outside of his family circle, stepped forward and met the financial obligation incurred by the publication of the Book of Mormon. It was not until years later that he caught a glimpse of what his financial sacrifice had meant to the restoration of the gospel. Upon gazing at the temple and tabernacle in beautiful Salt Lake City, he exclaimed, "Who would have thought that the Book of Mormon would have done all this?"[50]

"Upon All the Ships of the Sea,

and Upon All the Ships of Tarshish":

Revisiting 2 Nephi 12:16 and Isaiah 2:16

■ ■ ■

Readers of the Book of Mormon soon realize that a large number of passages from the book of Isaiah are quoted therein.[1] In fact, 21 chapters, as well as many shorter passages from the book of Isaiah, appear in the Nephite record.[2] These Isaiah passages have long challenged and intrigued students of the Book of Mormon.[3] In this study we focus on one verse from Isaiah 2 in order to thoroughly explore the differences between this verse as it occurs in the Bible and in the Book of Mormon.

Isaiah 2:10–22 proclaims that the "day of the Lord" will bring devastating effects upon a variety of people and things, including

upon all the ships of Tarshish,
and upon all pleasant pictures. (Isaiah 2:16 KJV)

Some students of Latter-day Saint scripture place a great deal of significance on the wording of Isaiah 2:16 because it occurs in 2 Nephi 12:16 with an additional line:

and upon all the ships of the sea,
and upon all the ships of Tarshish,
and upon all pleasant pictures.

While a few Latter-day Saint commentators on the book of Isaiah and 2 Nephi 12 make no mention of this variation,[4] most consider the extra line found in 2 Nephi 12:16 to be significant, claiming, for example, that this is "incidental evidence that the Book of Mormon had the complete original text [of Isaiah 2:16] from the plates of brass"[5] and that "the Book of Mormon contains the most complete retention of the original structure of this verse."[6]

Left: Ancient shipyard, by Joseph Brickey.
Bottom left: Portions of the Great Isaiah Scroll
and (right) Leningrad Codex.

By Dana M. Pike and David Rolph Seely

Sidney B. Sperry presented the first and fullest expression of this perspective, basing his observation on the King James Version of the Hebrew Bible (the Christian Old Testament) and on the Septuagint, the earliest Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, originating in the third to second centuries BC. Sperry claimed that

> in 2 Nephi 12:16 (compare Isaiah 2:16) the Book of Mormon has a reading of remarkable interest. It prefixes a phrase of eight words not found in the Hebrew or King James versions. Since the ancient Septuagint (Greek) Version concurs with the added phrase in the Book of Mormon, let us exhibit the reading of the Book of Mormon (B.M.), the King James Version (K.J.), and the Septuagint (LXX) as follows:
>
> B.M. And upon all the ships of the sea,
> K.J. — — — — — — —
> LXX And upon every ship of the sea,
>
> B.M. and upon all the ships of Tarshish
> K.J. And upon all the ships of Tarshish
> LXX — — — — — — —
>
> B.M. and upon all pleasant pictures.
> K.J. and upon all pleasant pictures.
> LXX and upon every display of fine ships.
>
> The Book of Mormon suggests that the original text of this verse contained three phrases, all of which commence with the same opening words, "and upon all." By a common accident, the original Hebrew (and hence the King James) text lost the first phrase, which was, however, preserved by the Septuagint. The latter lost the second phrase and seems to have corrupted the third phrase. The Book of Mormon preserved all three phrases.[7]

Sperry thus proposed that the Masoretic Text (MT)—the traditional Hebrew Bible, which is the basis for the Old Testament in the King James Version (KJV) and most other English translations—and the Greek Septuagint (LXX) both contain *portions* of an "original" version of Isaiah 2:16, but that both are incomplete, each having lost a different phrase in transmission. His observation that "the Book of Mormon preserved all three phrases" indicates his understanding that 2 Nephi 12:16 represents a more complete form of this verse than the one preserved in Isaiah 2:16.

Sperry's analysis is included in the Church Educational System student manual for the Old Testament[8] and is quoted or at least cited by many Latter-day Saint commentators on the book of Isaiah.[9] It also appears to be the basis for the following statement in 2 Nephi 12:16 footnote 16a in the current English edition of the Book of Mormon, which de facto bestows a seemingly official status on it: "The Greek (Septuagint) has 'ships of the sea.' The Hebrew has 'ships of Tarshish.' The Book of Mormon has both, showing that the brass plates had lost neither phrase."[10]

Since Joseph Smith did not know Hebrew or Greek prior to 1830 (the year the Book of Mormon was published), he obviously did not check ancient versions of Isaiah as he produced the Book of Mormon.[11] Latter-day Saints therefore accept that the text of 2 Nephi 12:16 must have come from the plates Joseph Smith received from Moroni. Thus Isaiah 2:16 // 2 Nephi 12:16, a short verse of no real
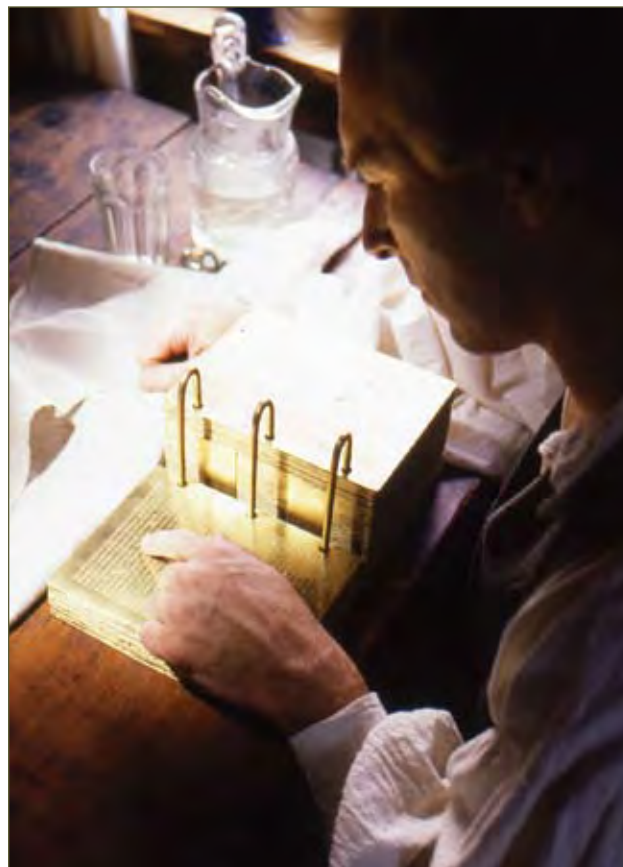
Joseph translating the plates, a motion picture still from *Remembering Nauvoo*. © IRI

doctrinal significance, has been assigned a great deal of weight by many Latter-day Saints since it seems to provide tangible support for the divine calling of Joseph Smith and the revealed nature of his translation of the Book of Mormon. However, the issues and challenges involved in dealing with the ancient Hebrew and Greek versions of the Bible as they impact our understanding of Isaiah 2:16 in 2 Nephi 12:16 are much more complex than Sperry's explanation suggests.[12]

In this study we aim to demonstrate that the relationship between Isaiah 2:16 and 2 Nephi 12:16 is not nearly as simple or clear-cut as some publications by Latter-day Saints have suggested. We also explain why Latter-day Saints who accept the divine nature of the Book of Mormon will always provide an explanation different from that of other people for the relationship between Isaiah 2:16 and 2 Nephi 12:16. To accomplish this, we will review the relationship between Isaiah 2:16 and its broader context in Isaiah chapter 2, analyze the Hebrew and Greek texts of Isaiah 2:16, and relate these data to the text of 2 Nephi 12:16 in the Book of Mormon.

The Literary Context of Isaiah 2:16

Some initial comments on the literary context of Isaiah 2:16 are necessary to appreciate the form and content of this verse. Isaiah 2 begins with the well-known, lyric prophecy that the temple of the Lord will be built in the tops of the mountains and "all nations shall flow unto it" and that eventually nations will not "learn war any more" (vv. 1–4). Verses 5–9 contain the Lord's invitation to the "house of Jacob" to "walk in the light of the Lord" rather than in the ways of the world.[13] These worldly ways are represented by symbols of false religion, wealth, power, and pride.

Isaiah 2:10–22. Isaiah 2:10–21 powerfully relates the resultant fear of, and the effects upon, those involved in the ways of the world when the "day of the Lord" arrives. Latter-day Saints understand that ultimately this "day" is Jehovah's/Jesus's second coming, when the Lord's power will be unleashed against the wicked.[14] Verses 10–12 and 17–21 bracket this block of text, emphasizing that Jehovah's glory will humble and destroy the arrogant ones of the earth, who will be casting aside their worthless idols

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Chart 1: Isaiah 2:13–16 and 2 Nephi 12:13–16

- Words in 2 Nephi 12:13–16 that do not occur in the NRSV or KJV are rendered in **bold**.
- Words in the NRSV or KJV that occur in a different phrase in the Book of Mormon are underlined.[15]
- Dashed lines (-----) indicate a lack of text in the Bible where text occurs in the Book of Mormon.

NRSV Isaiah 2	KJV Isaiah 2	2 Nephi 12
13 ----- against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan;	13 ----- And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan,	13 **Yea, and the day of the Lord shall come** upon all the cedars of Lebanon, **for they** are high and lifted up; and upon all the oaks of Bashan;
14 against all the high mountains, and against all the <u>lofty</u> hills; ----- -----	14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills <u>that are lifted up</u>, ----- -----	14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills, **and upon all the nations** <u>which are lifted up</u>, **and upon every people**;
15 against every high tower, and against every fortified wall;	15 And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall,	15 And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall;
16 ----- against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft.	16 ----- And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.	16 **And upon all the ships of the sea**, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.

and seeking to hide in "the clefts of the rocks" and "in the dust" (note the similarity between these two passages). Verse 22 reiterates the content of verse 5 from a different perspective and provides one last encouragement to not follow the ways of mortals, who are devoid of any real power to save.[16]

Isaiah 2:13–16. Amid this larger block of text (vv. 10–22), verses 13–16 recount representative items symbolizing the human pride that the Lord will destroy "in that day" (v. 17) when he comes in glory to cleanse and redeem the earth. For purposes of comparison, chart 1 presents Isaiah 2:13–16 as found in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV; employed here as a representative modern English translation), the King James Version (KJV), and 2 Nephi 12:13–16 (1981 English edition of the Book of Mormon).[17] While the NRSV and KJV exhibit some differences in English word choice, they are generally the same since both are based on the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT).

Isaiah 2:13–16 displays an obvious symmetry of form and content. Each of these four verses specifies a pair of items symbolizing the earthly power and pride that will be destroyed by the Lord. Each pair is a synonymous parallelism (although verse 13 does contain some descriptive amplification).[18] For example, verse 14 pairs "high mountains" with "hills that are lifted up," repeating a similar topographic feature in somewhat different words. Likewise, verse 15 pairs "every high tower" with "every fenced wall," both examples of fortifications.[19] This pattern implies that the pair of items cited in verse 16 will be synonymous as well (this point is discussed below).

The pattern of synonymous couplets in Isaiah 2:13–16 is somewhat altered in 2 Nephi 12:13–16. The latter contains an introductory line that reiterates the idea, expressed at the beginning of verse 12, that "the Lord" is the agent of the action against the items mentioned in verses 13–16. Verse 14 contains an extra synonymous couplet that has the effect of shifting the perspective from naturally occurring symbols of pride to nations and their creations (the fortifications and ships cited in verses 15–16). And, as noted above, verse 16 contains three lines of text, the first two of which are a parallel pair. The significance of this latter discrepancy is discussed below.

Isaiah 2:16 in the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT)

Having reviewed the basic literary context of verse 16, we now address issues involving the Hebrew text of Isaiah 2:16 and its translation. The two English translations of Isaiah 2:16 cited above (KJV and NRSV) derive from the standard Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible, the oldest surviving manuscripts of which date to the end of the first millennium AD.[20]

Since the documents known as the Dead Sea Scrolls preserve copies of most books of the Hebrew Bible from the last two centuries BC, and since some of these biblical texts differ from what later became the normative Hebrew text (the Masoretic Text), they provide an important resource for checking the status of biblical texts at the turn of the era. Remnants of 21 copies of the book of Isaiah have been discovered

Ruins of Qumran. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in caves near this site. © Maxwell Institute

Dead Sea Scrolls text 1QIsaᵃ (Great Isaiah Scroll), with wording at Isaiah 2:16 boxed.

in caves around Qumran, but most are quite fragmentary. Isaiah 2:16 is fully preserved on only one of these, 1QIsaᵃ, known as the "Great Isaiah Scroll."[21] As preserved thereon, Isaiah 2:16 is essentially the same as in the later Masoretic Text.[22] Additionally, a few letters from Isaiah 2:16 are preserved at the bottom edge of 4QIsaᵇ fragment 2, and they also match the Masoretic Text.[23] These earlier textual witnesses thus provide no alternative information regarding the form or content of Isaiah 2:16. The textual tradition from which the traditional Hebrew Masoretic Text developed is the only Hebrew version available for analysis.

Although all English translations of Isaiah 2:16 based on the Hebrew text of Isaiah use the Masoretic Text, the NRSV renders the second line of verse 16 (designated 16b) much differently from the corresponding translation in the KJV (see chart 2).

in the Masoretic Text and its English translations: "against all the ships of Tarshish, and all . . ." Given this pattern, one expects the last element of verse 16b to be similar to the "ships [ŏnîyôt] of Tarshish"

Chart 2: Isaiah 2:16 in Hebrew and English

MT[24]	NRSV	KJV
wĕ al kol- ŏnîyôt taršîš [a]	against all the ships of Tarshish [a]	And upon all the ships of Tarshish [a]
wĕ al kol-śĕkîyôt ha emdâ [b]	and against all the beautiful craft [b] [i.e., watercraft, boats]	and upon all pleasant pictures [b]

The difference between verse 16b in most recent English translations, represented here by the NRSV, and the KJV is the result of two important decisions: how much interpretive influence the poetic form should have on the translation and how to best render the rare Hebrew word   kîyôt.[25]

The repetitive, formulaic nature of the synonymous parallelisms in verses 13–15 ("against all/every . . . and all/every . . .") clearly continues into verse 16

mentioned in 16a in order to complete the parallel form. Harold Cohen thus confidently asserted: "That śĕkîyôt [translated 'pictures' in the KJV] must refer to some kind of ship is indicated by the parallelism śĕkîyôt // ŏnîyôt."[26] The KJV's "pleasant pictures," however, brings to mind a collection of paintings, not something analogous with "ships of Tarshish."[27]

In addition to this pattern-based expectation of synonymous phrases in Isaiah 2:16a+b, the key difference between the King James translation of

Isaiah 2:16 and most modern ones is the translation of the Hebrew word *śĕkîyôt*. This feminine plural noun occurs only once in the Masoretic Text, here in Isaiah 2:16b. The singular form *śĕkîyâ*, from which *śĕkîyôt* derives, does not occur at all in the Masoretic Text, nor is any form of *śĕkîyâ* attested in known Israelite inscriptions from before 600 BC (about the time the Lehites left Jerusalem with the brass plates). In cases such as this, scholars seek help in determining the meaning of rarely attested Hebrew words by examining cognates in other languages in the Semitic language family, of which Hebrew is a part.

Dating to AD 1008, the Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) Codex is the oldest complete copy of the Hebrew Bible. Text at Isaiah 2:16 is boxed. Photo by Bruce and Kenneth Zuckerman, West Semitic Research, with the collaboration of the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center. Courtesy of the Russian National Library (Saltykov-Shchedrin).

Prior to the mid-20th century, English translations of the Bible often rendered the Hebrew noun *śĕkîyôt* as "pictures," as in the Geneva Bible (1st ed., 1560) and the King James Version (1st ed., 1611).[28] There is a Semitic root *ŚKH*, which has the general meaning of "to look out for, to hope for," and a rare Hebrew noun *maśkît*, presumably connected with this linguistic root, which is often translated "figure, image."[29] Lacking other comparative data, earlier translators supposed that the rare Hebrew noun *śĕkîyôt* in Isaiah 2:16b was related to these words; thus the translation "pictures"—something to look at—occurs in the KJV.

However, the discovery of alphabetic cuneiform texts in a Semitic language preserved on clay tablets from ancient Ugarit near the coast of Syria that date to the 14th and 13th centuries BC has provided a valuable cognate resource.[30] These texts, the first of which were discovered in 1929, indicate that the Ugaritic word *kt* designates a type of ship. One particular text lists *kt*–ships under the heading of *anyt mi d*, "ships of Ma adu."[31] The Ugaritic word *anyt*, "ships," is cognate with Hebrew *ŏnîyôt*, which occurs in Isaiah 2:16a in the phrase "ships of Tarshish" and elsewhere in the Masoretic Text. The Ugaritic word *kt* appears to be cognate with Hebrew *śĕkîyôt*, which occurs only in Isaiah 2:16b.[32] This correlation is strengthened by the fact that a related Egyptian word, *sktw*, means "ship."[33]

The Hebrew noun *śĕkîyôt* in Isaiah 2:16b is in a genitival relationship with the following feminine singular noun *emdâ* (usually translated adjectively in English), which means "desirable things, pleasant things."[34] Accepting Hebrew *śĕkîyôt* as cognate with Ugaritic *kt*, as most Bible translators now do, the phrase in Isaiah 2:16b literally reads, "and against/upon all ships of pleasantness/desirableness/beauty."

The translation of the rare Hebrew word *śĕkîyôt* in modern English versions of Isaiah 2:16b as "ships," or the like, instead of "pictures" is thus based on two main considerations: the expected synonymous parallelism in Isaiah 2:16 itself—that is, the presumption that the object mentioned in verse 16b will be similar to the "ships" mentioned in 16a; and the insight that the Ugaritic word *kt*, which designates a type

Example of an ancient Canaanite tablet from Ugarit. Photo by Bruce and Kenneth Zuckerman, West Semitic Research. Courtesy Schøyen Collection.

of ship, is cognate with the Hebrew *śĕkîyôt* in Isaiah 2:16b. The Greek Septuagint rendition of this verse is an additional consideration in such translations (see below). Thus this data does not support Sperry's proposal, quoted above, in which he understood the line "and upon all pleasant pictures" in Isaiah 2:16b as distinctly different from two lines mentioning ships in 2 Nephi 12:16a+b ("ships of the sea," and "ships of Tarshish").

Isaiah 2:16 in Its Ancient Greek Translation: The Septuagint (LXX)

The Septuagint is an ancient Jewish translation of the Hebrew biblical books into Greek, produced during the third and second centuries BC. Even though the best manuscripts come from several centuries later, this old Greek translation provides early evidence for the text of the Hebrew Bible. Eventually, Jews and Christians alike used the Septuagint as scripture, though many Jews came to reject it when Christians adopted it.

As a group, textual critics have attempted to construct the original Greek text, in part to determine the Hebrew text that lies behind the Septuagint translation. But this has proven to be very difficult for a number of reasons. First, differences in translation style (literal, free-style, etc.) and in the vocabulary used to translate the same Hebrew words indicate that there were different translators for different biblical books. And the process of translating the biblical books spanned a century or more. Second, numerous revised translations into Greek were made in later centuries. Throughout the transmission history of these texts, various scribes occasionally altered the Greek translations they had available to better suit a particular audience. In some cases the scribes also had Hebrew texts before them and attempted to reflect those texts more accurately by retranslating a particular Greek passage they were copying. Thus through the centuries various Greek translations came into being.[35]

In order to address these complexities, modern editions of the Septuagint are often eclectic texts—that is, they are texts created by editors who attempt to provide the best reading from the various Greek text traditions for each passage. Significant textual variants are then collected and cited in a set of notes, called an apparatus, at the bottom of the page, along with suggestions concerning the most likely Hebrew text behind the Greek translation.

Until the mid-20th century, most scholars assumed that the Septuagint was translated from the forerunner of the Hebrew Masoretic Text. Variations between the Masoretic Text and the Greek translations were often assumed to have resulted from errors, such as misunderstandings of the Hebrew, theological discrepancies, or inaccurate copying or translations. However, with the discovery and publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls from 1947 onward, it became evident that a significant number of the differences between the Greek and the Hebrew biblical texts are best explained as differences in the ancient Hebrew texts employed by the Greek translators. An instructive example of this phenomenon is the book of Jeremiah, which is 15 percent longer in the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text than in the Greek Septuagint.[36]

Some Hebrew fragments of the book of Jeremiah discovered at Qumran closely match the Masoretic Text, while others are similar to the Septuagint translation of Jeremiah, demonstrating

that many of the differences in the ancient Greek are best attributed to differing Hebrew texts of Jeremiah.[37] This situation illustrates how any discussion of variants between biblical texts in Hebrew and Greek is tentative. Since none of the original Hebrew or Greek biblical texts have survived, we cannot always be sure whether differences between the Greek Septuagint and the Hebrew Masoretic Text resulted from the translation process itself or from the use of a different Hebrew base text by the translators of the Septuagint. Thus we cannot certify whether the Septuagint preserves an accurate translation of the Hebrew text employed by the translators, nor know what other forms of this verse may have existed in antiquity.

With these challenges in mind, we now turn to the Greek text of Isaiah 2:16. The most authoritative modern edition of the Septuagint is the Göttingen series, which collates the many different Greek manuscripts of the Septuagint in order to ascertain the best possible reading for each verse of the Bible. In this edition Isaiah 2:16 reads as found in chart 3:

Two major differences are observable. In the first line of the Septuagint (16a) the Greek reads "sea" (*thalassēs*) instead of "Tarshish." The second line has "every display of fine ships" (*pasan thean ploiōn kallous*), similar to the translation of the Hebrew found in the NRSV, instead of "all pleasant pictures" as found in the KJV.

Rather than postulating the original existence of two different lines—like "ships of the sea *and* "ships of Tarshish" as in 2 Nephi 12:16—Bible scholars have attempted to explain the difference between the first line of the Greek version (16a: "and upon every ship of the sea") and the first line of the Masoretic Text (16a: "and upon all the ships of Tarshish") in two different ways. On the one hand, it is possible that a translator or a scribe simply made an error between the similar Greek words for "sea," *thalassē*, and "Tarshish," *Tharsēs*. Isaac Seeligmann, a prominent scholar of the Septuagint of Isaiah, indicated "it is probable that *thalassēs* should be regarded as nothing more than a thoughtless error on the part of the copyists, instead of an actually intended *Tharsēs*."[40]

Chart 3: Isaiah 2:16 in the LXX

LXX[38]	English Translation of LXX[39]
Kai epi pan ploion thalassēs [a]	and upon every ship of the sea [a]
kai epi pasan thean ploiōn kallous [b]	and upon every display of fine ships [b]

According to the variants cited in the Göttingen apparatus, there is no known evidence for the existence of three lines in the Greek text tradition of this verse, as are found in 2 Nephi 12:16.

Chart 4 compares Isaiah 2:16 in the Septuagint with the English translations in the NRSV and KJV, both of which are based on the Hebrew Masoretic Text:

On the other hand, some scholars have identified a plausible reason for the difference between the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Septuagint translation that is not based on error. As James Barr observed, "It is clear that there was a school of thought [in antiquity] which consistently interpreted [Hebrew] *taršîš* as 'sea.' Jerome maintained that *taršîš* was the 'proper' word for 'sea' in Hebrew."[41]

Chart 4: Isaiah 2:16 in Greek, Hebrew, and English

LXX	MT/NRSV	MT/KJV
Kai epi pan ploion thalassēs [a]	*wĕ al kol- ŏnîyôt taršîš* [a]	*wĕ al kol- ŏnîyôt taršîš* [a]
kai epi pasan thean ploiōn kallous [b]	*wĕ al kol-śĕkîyôt ha emdâ* [b]	*wĕ al kol-śĕkîyôt ha emdâ* [b]
And upon every ship of the sea [a]	against all the ships of Tarshish [a]	And upon all the ships of Tarshish [a]
and upon every display of fine ships [b]	and against all the beautiful craft [b]	and upon all pleasant pictures [b]

Daniel 10:6, in which Hebrew *taršîš*/Tarshish is rendered "sea" in the Septuagint, supports this explanation.[42] First- and second-century-AD translators of Isaiah and other prophetic books demonstrate this same propensity for rendering the Hebrew word for Tarshish as "sea."[43] This conflicts with Sperry's explanation of 2 Nephi 12:16, in which he assumed the Septuagint preserved a text that read "sea" but not "Tarshish."

The Hebrew text of Isaiah 2:16b apparently challenged ancient Greek translators, just as it did later English translators. In the Septuagint this line is rendered "and upon every display of fine ships" (*kai epi pasan thean ploiōn kallous*). However, later ancient Greek translations of this passage differ from the Septuagint. For example, Aquila rendered Isaiah 2:16b as "upon all views of pleasantness/desirable views" (*epi pasas opseis tēs epithumias*). Symmachus and the *kaige*-Theodotion text similarly render the phrase as "upon all desirable views" (*kai epi pasas theas epithumētas*).[44] These alternative Greek translations of the Hebrew text of this phrase suggest that the translators were unsure of what the unique Hebrew term *śĕkîyôt* in verse 16b meant. The Greek translators all understood verse 16b to refer to a view of desirable or pleasant things. The Septuagint renders "display of fine ships": either translating *śĕkîyôt* as "ships" since in Hebrew it is a plural noun or translating it as "display" and adding the word *ships* to create a line parallel to the one before. Aquila, Symmachus, and the *kaige*-Theodotion texts apparently translated *śĕkîyôt* as "views."[45] This resulted in differing Greek translations, similar to the situation in English: "and against all the beautiful craft" (NRSV) and "and upon all pleasant pictures" (KJV).

Thus many scholars deduce that the Septuagint version of Isaiah 2:16 comes from a Hebrew text very much like the Masoretic Text. Early Greek translators may have erred in rendering "sea" for Hebrew *taršîš*/Tarshish in verse 16a, or they may have followed a translation practice, preserved later by Jerome, that Tarshish meant "sea." And at least some Greek translators were unsure of what Hebrew *śĕkîyôt* meant in verse 16b. The simplest explanation for this data is that the translators of the Greek Septuagint worked from a Hebrew text similar to that from which the Hebrew Masoretic Text derives. This review of the Greek textual tradition of Isaiah 2:16 highlights the complex nature of reconstructing the original text behind the translation in 2 Nephi 12:16. It also tends to undermine Sperry's theory about the form of Isaiah 2:16 in the Septuagint.

Comparing Isaiah 2:16 with 2 Nephi 12:16

Having surveyed the difficulties in dealing with Isaiah 2:16 in Hebrew and Greek, we now turn to the challenge of analyzing the relationship between Isaiah 2:16 and 2 Nephi 12:16. We preface this analysis with three qualifying observations that impact the following discussion:

1. There are inherent, insurmountable limitations to dealing with textual questions regarding passages in the Book of Mormon given that we must work with the English translation only, rather than the original language of the passages.

2. Presuming there was an original text of Isaiah 2:16 (by about 700 BC), there is no way to determine whether this was accurately transmitted onto the brass plates, which left Jerusalem about 600 BC,[46] nor whether Nephi accurately transferred this passage from the brass plates onto his small plates some 30 years later (see 2 Nephi 5:28–33; remember the cautions in such passages as 1 Nephi 19:6 and Mormon 8:17). Thus while many Latter-day Saints accept 2 Nephi 12:16 as the "original" form of Isaiah 2:16, we cannot know this for sure at the present time. We do not encounter the oldest preserved text of Isaiah 2:16 in Hebrew (1QIsaᵃ, from among the Dead Sea Scrolls) until about 450 years after Nephi, and the form of the verse at that time is similar to its form in the later Masoretic Text tradition.

3. No one knows much about Joseph Smith's translation procedure for the Book of Mormon vis-à-vis the KJV in passages in which the English is similar.[47] Commenting on the Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon, Royal Skousen has stated that "witnesses who observed Joseph Smith dictating the Book of Mormon claimed that Joseph Smith used no book at all."[48] This would seem to rule out his use of the Bible for the Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon. However, Daniel Ludlow, for example, has contended that

> there appears to only be one answer to explain the word-for-word similarities between the verses of Isaiah in the Bible and the same verses in the Book of Mormon. When Joseph Smith translated the Isaiah references from the small plates of Nephi, he evidently opened his King

James Version of the Bible and compared the impression he had received in translating with the words of the King James scholars. If his translation was essentially the same as that of the Kings James Version, he apparently quoted the verse from the Bible. . . . However, if Joseph Smith's translation did not agree precisely with that of the Kings James scholars, he would dictate his own translation to the scribe [while generally utilizing the language of the KJV]. This procedure in translation would account for both the 234 verses of Isaiah that were changed or modified by the Prophet Joseph and the 199 verses that were translated word-for-word the same.[49]

With these challenging limitations in mind, we can now discuss 2 Nephi 12:16 in relation to Isaiah 2:16. In the following chart, we note again the differences in form and content:

more plausible that it occurred only once, with the Hebrew. It appears that the Greek Septuagint was translated from a Hebrew text that had the same two poetic lines for verse 16 that the Hebrew Masoretic Text does.

Interpretive Possibilities. Those who do not accept the Book of Mormon as ancient scripture brought forth by divine power provide a few basic explanations for the differences between the text of Isaiah 2:16 in the Hebrew Masoretic Text, the Greek Septuagint, and 2 Nephi 12:16. Two recent publications employ such explanations, so we refer to them here as illustrations. We do not provide a full, interactive analysis of either author's claims in this context.

David P. Wright attempted in a lengthy study to provide a detailed response to the question of "whether the several chapters or passages of Isaiah cited and paraphrased in the book [Book of Mormon] derive from an ancient text or whether they

Chart 5: Isaiah 2:16 and 2 Nephi 12:16

----- against all the ships of Tarshish [a] and against all the beautiful craft [b] (Isaiah 2:16 NRSV)	----- And upon all the ships of Tarshish [a] and upon all pleasant pictures [b] (Isaiah 2:16 KJV)	And upon all the ships of the sea [a] and upon all the ships of Tarshish [b] and upon all pleasant pictures [c] (2 Nephi 12:16)

In contrast to the KJV rendition of Isaiah 2:16, 2 Nephi 12:16a+b preserves a synonymous couplet ("ships of the sea" // "ships of Tarshish"), followed by a third, concluding line of text (16c).

If they are original, the three poetic lines preserved in 2 Nephi 12:16 could have become the two lines preserved in the standard Hebrew Masoretic Text through a well-attested process in which scribes accidentally omitted words, phrases, or even whole passages because their eyes skipped to similar wording elsewhere in the text.[50] In this case, a scribe could have omitted one of the three phrases, all of which began with the same "and against/ upon every . . ." (*wĕ al kol . . .*). This process is the "common accident" to which Sperry made reference in his proposal. He suggested it happened twice, once with the Hebrew text and once with a different line in the Greek translation. However, if this "accident" actually happened, we consider it much

have been copied with some revision from the King James Version of the Bible."[51] His interpretation of the "internal textual evidence" led him to assert that the Isaiah material in the Book of Mormon "is a revision of the KJV and not a translation of an ancient document."[52]

In another recent study, Ronald V. Huggins undertook to demonstrate the "possible sources" for the "changes" Joseph Smith made in two biblical verses when he rendered them in the Book of Mormon (Isaiah 2:16 > 2 Nephi 12:16 and Matthew 5:22 > 3 Nephi 12:22), since Joseph Smith did not know Hebrew or Greek before the publication of the Book of Mormon and thus could not have found support for such revisions through his own acquaintance with Hebrew or Greek texts.[53] Huggins's orientation is clear: "One point that seems obvious is that we should look for the source of these two variants in an influence on Joseph Smith at the time of his

first use of them . . . in the Book of Mormon."[54] Huggins concluded that certain English-language resources or people familiar with such resources were sufficiently accessible to Joseph Smith so as to demonstrate that he could have obtained these alternative readings in the Book of Mormon from those resources.[55]

From these two examples, it is evident that those who study the Book of Mormon but deny it is ancient scripture analyze its text against the only comparative sources available to them: the surviving ancient versions of the Bible, in particular the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Septuagint, and potential modern influences on Joseph Smith. Of course, none of these authors' assertions can be established as fact. Indeed, Huggins in his concluding remarks carefully used qualifiers such as *likely* and *perhaps* more than a dozen times in the course of two pages. He does not claim that his theory is fact, just that it "might" be.[56]

For those who do accept the Book of Mormon as ancient scripture translated "by the gift and power of God,"[57] there are likewise a few interpretive possibilities available to help explain the difference between Isaiah 2:16 and 2 Nephi 12:16. It is conceivable, for example, that an ancient scribal accident in copying Isaiah 2:16 affected the form of 2 Nephi 12:16 *before* Joseph Smith translated this verse, or that a modern scribal error in dictation or transcription occurred as Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery produced the English translation manuscripts of this verse.[58] However, most Latter-day Saints not only accept the divine origins of the Book of Mormon but expect that the text of 2 Nephi 12:16 represents an original form of Isaiah 2:16, as opposed to what is preserved in the Bible. Working from this perspective, we cite three possible explanations for this discrepancy. One is Sidney B. Sperry's well-known proposal.

Sperry's approach looks neat and convincing because it is presented only with English translations, including the KJV translation of the Hebrew. However, the above review of the available Hebrew and Greek texts of Isaiah 2:16 demonstrates that Sperry's proposal glosses over several complexities. He posited that 2 Nephi 12:16a ("ships of the sea") is preserved in the Greek Septuagint but is missing from the Hebrew and KJV. However, "ships of the sea" in the Septuagint can be explained as an error or as an intentional, interpretive translation from Hebrew ("ships of Tarshish") to Greek, not necessarily as a witness for an original textual reading.

Also, Sperry assumed that the second line in the KJV ("all pleasant pictures") represents an acceptable rendition of the unique Hebrew phrase *śĕkîyôt ha emdâ*. But accepting Sperry's approach requires one to discount the Ugaritic cognate *kt*, "ships" (plus the related Egyptian form). Finally, Sperry stated that the second of the two lines in the Greek Septuagint ("upon every display of fine ships") is a misrepresentation of an original third line of the verse, preserved in 2 Nephi 12:16c as "all pleasant pictures." However, Isaiah 2:16b in the Septuagint translates quite similarly to Isaiah 2:16b in the Hebrew Masoretic Text, if one renders Hebrew *śĕkîyôt* as "ships," as opposed to "pictures" (KJV).

Chart 6: 2 Nephi 12:16 Compared to the Hebrew and Greek of Isaiah 2:16

	MT	LXX
	wĕ al kol- ŏnîyôt taršîš [a]	*Kai epi pan ploion thalassēs* [a]
	wĕ al kol-śĕkîyôt ha emdâ [b]	*kai epi pasan thean ploiōn kallous* [b]
2 Nephi 12:16	**NRSV**	**English LXX**
And upon all the ships of the sea [a]	against all the ships of Tarshish [a]	and upon every ship of the sea [a]
and upon all the ships of Tarshish [b]	and against all the beautiful craft [b]	and upon every display of fine ships [b]
and upon all pleasant pictures [c]		
	KJV	
	And upon all the ships of Tarshish [a]	
	and upon all pleasant pictures [b]	

Thus the apparent simplicity of Sperry's solution relies upon an oversimplification of the Hebrew and Greek textual situation.

An alternative explanation to the relationship between Isaiah 2:16 and 2 Nephi 12:16 includes accepting that Hebrew śĕkîyôt should be translated "ships," and that Isaiah 2:16 in the Hebrew Masoretic Text ("all the ships of Tarshish" // "all the beautiful craft") and in the Greek Septuagint ("every ship of the sea" // "every display of fine ships") consists of a synonymous couplet deriving from the same textual tradition. Theoretically, this couplet would have to somehow correlate with the first two lines of 2 Nephi 12:16a+b ("all the ships of the sea . . . all the ships of Tarshish"), which is problematic. 2 Nephi 12:16c ("all pleasant pictures") would then function as a third, summary line preserved only in the translation of 2 Nephi 12:16c, having been lost in antiquity from the text of Isaiah before the Septuagint was produced and before the Masoretic Text became the standard Hebrew text.

In light of Isaiah 2:13 // 2 Nephi 12:13, where an additional phrase stands at the beginning of 2 Nephi 12:13 and helps introduce the series of parallel couplets in verses 13–16 (see chart 1 above), 2 Nephi 12:16c ("all pleasant pictures") may have served as a summary phrase at the end of this series of parallel couplets (verses 13–16): the Lord "in that day" will be against everything that is desirable or precious from a worldly perspective.[59] As noted, however, neither the additional phrase at the beginning of 2 Nephi 12:13 nor this extra phrase at the end of 12:16 is preserved in the Hebrew Masoretic Text of Isaiah 2:13 or 2:16.

According to this second approach, the KJV language "pleasant pictures" in Isaiah 2:16b that appears in 2 Nephi 12:16c would have been employed by Joseph Smith to render 2 Nephi 12:16c because it adequately expressed the meaning of the language on the plates in front of him. It could therefore be argued that 2 Nephi 12:16 preserves an earlier form of Isaiah 2:16, although not one (contra Sperry) that is partially preserved in the Hebrew Masoretic Text and partially preserved in the Greek Septuagint. This alternative explanation makes better sense of the available Hebrew and Greek texts but does not fully account for the phrase "ships of the sea" in 2 Nephi 12:16a (as distinct from "ships of Tarshish"). Nor does it fully explain how the phrase "all pleasant pictures," which some older commenta-

tors accepted as a possible translation of the Hebrew in Isaiah 2:16b (śĕkîyôt ha emdâ), came to represent a third line of text (2 Nephi 12:16c) different from two lines that refer to ships. Therefore, this explanation has challenges in its own right, although in different ways than Sperry's proposal.[60]

A third possible approach to the relationship between Isaiah 2:16 and 2 Nephi 12:16, implied in some recent Latter-day Saint publications, is that 2 Nephi 12:16 originally consisted of three synonymous lines referring to ships. This approach requires accepting that an initial line mentioning "ships of the sea" (2 Nephi 12:16a) was lost from the ancient textual tradition before the standardization of the Masoretic Text, and that Hebrew śĕkîyôt originally meant "ships" but was somehow misrendered in 2 Nephi 12:16c, presumably under the influence of KJV Isaiah 2:16b. The verse would thus have theoretically read: "upon all the ships of the sea, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all beautiful craft/vessels." Unfortunately, the authors of these recent Latter-day Saint publications have not provided any explanation of their rendition of Isaiah 2:16 // 2 Nephi 12:16, how they arrived at it, or what its implications are.[61]

We are thus not presently aware of any solution that satisfactorily accounts for all the questions regarding 2 Nephi 12:16 in its relation to the preserved text of Isaiah 2:16. Given the limitations of the available textual data, Latter-day Saints must continue to deal with proposals of how to best explain the formal relationship between Isaiah 2:16 and 2 Nephi 12:16.

Concluding Thoughts

As demonstrated in the preceding discussion, any explanation of the form and content of 2 Nephi 12:16 depends on a number of factors, including (1) whether one accepts or rejects the Book of Mormon as divinely revealed scripture, (2) the likelihood that 2 Nephi 12:16 preserves an "original" form of this verse, (3) whether one accepts or rejects the modern translation of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 2:16 as two synonymous lines referring to ships, and (4) how one deals with the Greek Septuagint text of Isaiah 2:16a ("sea" from Hebrew taršîš/Tarshish?).

As expressed above, we accept that the earliest Greek rendition of Isaiah 2:16 is similar to the Hebrew preserved in the Masoretic Text (two lines

Assyrian bas-relief from the palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad, in northern Iraq (late 8th century BCE, contemporary with the prophet Isaiah). It depicts Phoenician vessels transporting cedar timbers. Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY (ART64987).

referring to ships). We also accept the rendering of the Hebrew word *śĕkîyôt* in Isaiah 2:16b as "ships," thus making it synonymous with the content of 16a. But our view of 2 Nephi 12:16 is largely dictated by our acceptance of the Book of Mormon as ancient scripture. And this is a most significant consideration.

Any conclusion about the relationship between Isaiah 2:16 and 2 Nephi 12:16 is for most people a matter of faith—as is acceptance of the Book of Mormon in general—not just a matter of textual analysis. People who accept the authenticity of the Book of Mormon typically favor an explanation for the form of 2 Nephi 12:16 that other people reject, although Latter-day Saint explanations regarding this matter cannot now be substantiated by the available comparative biblical textual evidence alone.

People who do not accept the authenticity of the Book of Mormon will likely accept the primacy of the synonymous couplet found in the Masoretic Text and Septuagint over the three-line form of 2 Nephi 12:16 and will suggest that Joseph Smith erred or accepted outside influences when he "composed" this verse. Huggins, for example, asserted that "Joseph could not have avoided coming into

contact with Methodist books," especially Adam Clarke's commentary on the Bible.[62] This may be true. But even if Joseph Smith did have such contact, this does not prove he rendered 2 Nephi 12:16 under the influence of Clarke or anyone else other than the Holy Spirit. Our conclusion differs from Huggins's in this case because we start from a different perspective, not because we dismiss outright the possibility of Joseph Smith's encountering someone or something other than the gold plates during the translation process. Indeed, it would seem very odd if at least some people had not approached Joseph Smith with all sorts of religiously oriented questions, suggestions, and challenges. However, we seriously doubt the plausibility of Huggins's proposal and question the effect such incidents had on Joseph Smith and his translation, especially given the rather inconsequential nature of the doctrinal content of Isaiah 2:16. (Our use of the word *translation* in the preceding sentence indicates our faith-based approach to this question.)

In conclusion, we have observed that some Latter-day Saints blithely cite 2 Nephi 12:16 as a tangible vindication of Joseph Smith's prophetic call without sufficient consideration of the complexities involved in dealing with the ancient Hebrew and Greek versions of this verse. Furthermore, we are concerned that Sperry's explanation has been too readily and uncritically accepted by Latter-day Saints and that 2 Nephi 12:16 footnote 16a in the current edition of the Book of Mormon continues to encourage the oversimplification of this issue. All students of the Book of Mormon should understand the challenges of translating Isaiah 2:16 (and ancient texts in general), the complex relationship between the Hebrew and Greek texts of Isaiah 2:16 and 2 Nephi 12:16, and the role that one's faith plays in one's approach to and interpretation of textual evidence. We hope that this article serves as a cautionary note concerning such issues and as food for thought on similar matters in other Book of Mormon passages.[63] ▓
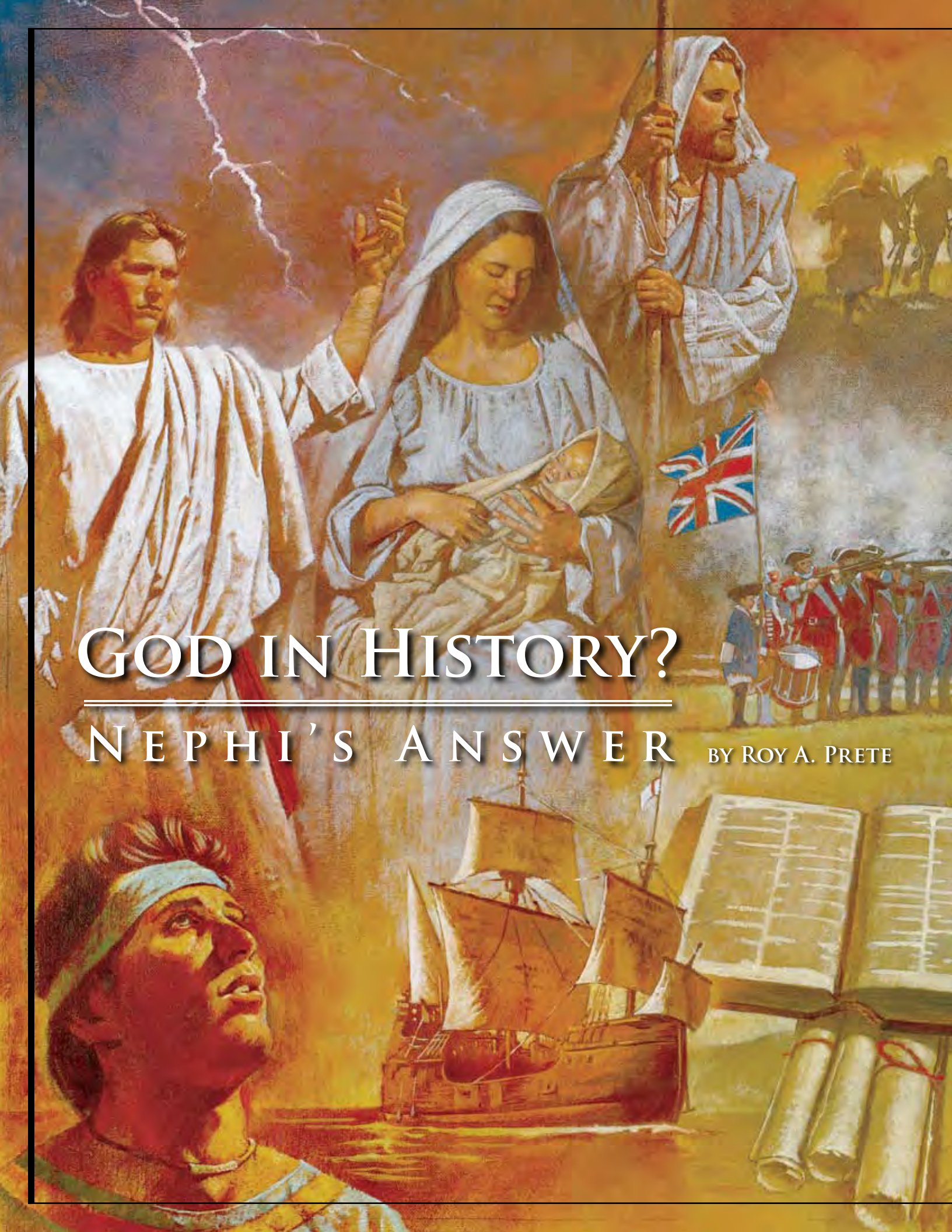
God in History?
Nephi's Answer

by Roy A. Prete

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776

A DECLARATION
BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED

LATTER-DAY SAINTS have long believed that God has played a significant role in preparing the world for the restoration of the gospel. They recognize his guiding hand in such European movements as the Reformation, the discovery of the New World, and the founding of the American colonies, as well as in the rise of freedom in America.[1] As The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints faces the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century, faithful Saints acknowledge the Lord's hand in the Church's rapid expansion, the internationalization of its membership, and the world's preparation for the preaching of the gospel.[2] Nephi, author of the first two books of the Book of Mormon, offers a significant contribution to our understanding of the concept of God's role in the unfolding of history for the accomplishment of divine purposes.[3]

Providential History

Since the late 19th century, professional historians, trained in their discipline to accept only material evidence, have with relatively few exceptions excluded the divine role from their historical treatments.[4] As Brian Q. Cannon has shown, successive small groupings of providential historians, while believing in the sovereignty of God and his involvement in human affairs, have been at a loss to relate divine intervention to the course of human events beyond the broad outlines of divine purpose contained in the Bible. This problem is particularly acute in the time span between the ministry of Christ and his apostles and his promised second coming, during which there has been no revelation accepted into the canon of mainstream Christianity.[5] The dilemma of the faithful Christian historian, functioning in the absence of continuing revelation, is eloquently described by Ronald A. Wells, a noted historian among those Christian historians who have attempted to include God in the historical process.

> In order to have an acceptable dialogue, all historians must discuss the same reality. Reality includes all past human activity. . . . Much "Christian history," i.e., the Bible, is a testimony to the acts of God. But, as historians, we study past human activity. Here is the contentious point: We historians study humans, not God. . . .
>
> As historian Stanford Reid (1973) has suggested, we study humans rather than God because of the radical break between time and eternity. God, who is in eternity, is inexplicable in human terms. We simply cannot reason from our time-space to God's infinite space. We who can only partially comprehend what we call time can scarcely comprehend the One who clearly transcends time. . . . Thus, for historians to discern God's actions in modern history seems a sterile task because of the hidden nature of the subject.[6]

Though committed Christians, such historians are at a loss to include the "unknowable" God and his purposes in the unfolding of history or to determine his immediate role as part of the historical process. Several have thus lamented the absence of continuing revelation, which prevents them from integrating God into their historical accounts. As Christian historian C. John Sommerville acknowledges, "Knowledge of providence comes through inspiration, to prophets. . . . We don't get there through study, as scholars."[7]

This fits in well with the Latter-day Saint view. As the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob pointed out, no one can know the works of God and his ways "save it be revealed unto him" (Jacob 4:8). But Latter-day Saints enjoy the additional light of modern revelation, which provides at least some guidance about God's role in history. While God has not chosen to speak on every matter, and statements on his role in history have been fragmentary and incomplete, the additional scriptures of the Restoration and the statements of modern prophets and apostles

provide Latter-day Saints with fresh insights into the role of God in the shaping of modern history. The problem nonetheless persists for Latter-day Saints to ascertain what are reliable prophetic texts.[8] In that regard, the Book of Mormon, scripture written by prophet-historians, is a particularly rich source for the Latter-day Saint historian seeking to understand the divine role in human affairs. While interpretations may vary, there can be little question of the validity of the Book of Mormon as a divinely approved text. The authenticity and correctness of the record has been affirmed by the Lord himself—"as your Lord and your God liveth it is true" (Doctrine and Covenants 17:6).

This brief article will attempt to delineate the views of Nephi, the first prophet-historian of the Book of Mormon, on God's role in Nephite history and that of subsequent generations. Nephi's historical views, it must be observed, came not from study at a great university but from the scriptural tradition of the ancient Jewish people, the revelations of God to his father Lehi, and his own powerful revelatory experiences. As might be expected, Nephi does not follow the practice of modern scholars of differentiating between the historical, doctrinal, and philosophical components of his interpretation, but presents an approach that integrates past events and his own experience with prophetic insight and understanding.[9] As a result of his prophetic visions of the future, he is able to transcend the limitations of the here and now and to see future historical developments as part of the unfolding plan of God for the salvation of his children. In defining God's plan for the salvation of his children as it relates to world history, in identifying specific instances in which God has intervened for the accomplishment of his purposes, and in outlining principles that govern his intervention, Nephi makes a major contribution to modern Latter-day Saint understanding of the role of God in history.[10]

The Relationship between God and Man in History

Nephi's approach to history is based on his understanding of the relationship between man and God over time. This is clearly indicated in the first verse of 1 Nephi: "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days." The first few lines of the verse summarize Nephi's earthly experience, while the last few describe his relationship with God, which gives meaning to the events of his life. The phrase "having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days" indicates the didactic purpose of his record. "For the fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved," he later writes (1 Nephi 6:4; see 2 Nephi 25:26).

Nephi Writing on the Gold Plates. © Paul Mann—do not copy

Fundamental to Nephi's view of the relationship between God and man in history is the covenant relationship between God and the house of Israel. Nephi had knowledge of Israel's covenants through the brass plates of Laban, which contained the five books of Moses, the "record of the Jews," and other prophetic books down to the reign of King Zedekiah (see 1 Nephi 5:10–13; 13:23).[11] Within this paradigm, history unfolds with alternate blessings or cursings, according to the obedience or disobedience of the house of Israel to its covenants with God (see Deuteronomy 26–31). A subset of the larger history of the house of Israel, the history of Lehi's descendants, members of the tribe of Joseph (see 1 Nephi 6:2), is a history in which specific blessings and curses are linked to a special covenant that includes obtaining the promised land. This is defined early in the narrative, as Nephi recorded the following revelation from God:

> And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands. And inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee, they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord. . . . For behold, in that day that they [descendants of Nephi's brothers] shall rebel against me, I will curse them even with a sore curse, and they shall have no power over thy seed except they shall rebel against me also. And if it so be that they [Nephi's posterity] rebel against me, they [his brothers' posterity] shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in the ways of remembrance. (1 Nephi 2:20–24)

In the above passage much of the history of the Nephites and Lamanites is foreshadowed. This passage not only ties the prosperity of the people to keeping the commandments of God, but indicates that if the Nephites should rebel against God, the Lamanites will be the means to stir them up "in the ways of remembrance" through numerous wars. In Book of Mormon history, the repeating cycle of righteousness followed by pride, wickedness, chastisement, and finally repentance is thus foreshadowed (see Helaman 12:2–4). Thus Nephi beheld in vision many future generations of Nephites in the promised land "pass away, after the manner of wars and contentions" (1 Nephi 12:3).

Quoting his father Lehi, Nephi defines a further blessing related to keeping the commandments in the promised land—namely, that "it shall be a land of liberty unto them; . . . [and] they shall never be brought down into captivity . . . [unless] iniquity shall abound." And for the accomplishment of divine purposes, "this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations," as long as the posterity of Lehi did not fall into transgresssion (2 Nephi 1:7, 8).

Divine Deliverance after the Israelitish Pattern

Nephi fully understood that his father's revelatory experiences, coupled with his own revelations in which God had covenanted with him directly regarding the promised land, represented new covenant relationships for their posterity, ushering in a new dispensation of the gospel.[12] The people at Jerusalem had broken their covenants with God through "their wickedness and their abominations," their rejection of "the coming of a Messiah," and their rejection of the words of the prophets, including Lehi, whom they had attempted to kill. As a result they would soon be destroyed (1 Nephi 1:4, 13, 18–20; 2:1–4; 3:17–18). Following Lehi's divinely ordained flight from Jerusalem, Nephi realized that it was essential to obtain the scriptural records contained on the brass plates of Laban. This would enable them to preserve the language of the people and the words "spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets" as they sought to establish a faithful offshoot society in the promised land (see 1 Nephi 3:19–20).

Nephi identified strongly with Moses, who delivered the house of Israel from bondage in Egypt by the power of God. To his doubting brothers, Nephi reaffirmed the divine purpose in obtaining the brass plates: "Let us be strong like unto Moses; for he truly spake unto the waters of the Red Sea and they divided hither and thither. . . . Let us go up; the Lord is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians" (1 Nephi 3:31; 4:1–3). In a later exposition, Nephi again drew parallels between Moses, who led the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt by the power of God, and Lehi, who led his group by divine command from the impending destruction of Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 17: 17–44). Both Lehi and

I Did Obey the Voice of the Spirit, by Walter Rane. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

Nephi's understanding of the significance of his family's future destiny strengthened him in his resolve to obtain the brass plates of Laban as he went forth in the night "led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which [he] should do" (1 Nephi 4:6). Finding Laban drunk with wine and fallen to the earth near his own house, Nephi was "constrained by the Spirit" to kill him (see vv. 4:7–10). As he struggled with that command, Nephi was strengthened by the promise given earlier that "inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise" and the realization that his descendants would need to have the law of Moses, contained on the brass plates, to be able to keep the commandments. He thus obeyed the voice of the Spirit and slew Laban with his own sword (see vv. 4:14–18).

The Nephites' preservation of sacred artifacts may be cited as a further evidence of Lehi and Nephi's awareness that their deliverance followed a pattern similar in many regards to the Israelites' deliverance from the Egyptians. The sword of Laban and the Liahona, which symbolized God's deliverance from evil and oppression, occupied somewhat the same role as the budding staff of Aaron and the preserved bowl of manna in Israelite history. Here were sacred relics that bore a continuing witness to God's power of deliverance. The Liahona, "a round ball of curious workmanship," the compass or director that Lehi discovered at his tent door just as he was to begin his long journey in the wilderness, deserves special consideration. An instrument prepared by God to guide his people to the promised land, it worked according to their faith, one of the two spindles within pointing the way they should go (see 1 Nephi 16:10, 16; Alma 37:38–40). Also, on occasion, as during the crisis in the wilderness when Nephi broke his bow, it displayed words of instruction or reproof, and for a time it conveyed frequent instructions (see 1 Nephi 16:25–29). Later writers interpreted the Liahona as a figure of the simpleness of the way to Christ—requiring only obedience in order to ensure divine favor (see Alma 37:38–46). The conscious preservation of the Liahona as a sacred relic is similar to the preservation of other symbols of God's direct involvement and deliverance in Israelite history.

In the case of the Israelites, God instructed Moses to place the two tablets of the law, written by the hand of God, in the most holy of places, within

Nephi thus became Moses figures in the deliverance of their people from spiritual bondage and physical destruction.[13] The degree to which Lehi as a prophet found favor with God may be inferred from his later statement that he had obtained by covenant from the Lord "a land of promise . . . choice above all other lands"—the land of America—for "the inheritance of [his] seed . . . forever," along with those "who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord" (2 Nephi 1:5).

The ark of the covenant held sacred relics betokening God's merciful deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt. The Nephites similarly witnessed God's direct involvement in their own history by preserving sacred artifacts such as the brass plates, the sword of Laban, the Liahona, and the gold plates.

the ark of the covenant (see 1 Kings 8:9), along with the golden bowl filled with manna and Aaron's rod that had miraculously budded, in witness of God's mercy in the deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt (see Exodus 16:32–34; 25:16; 40:3; Numbers 17:10; Hebrews 9:4). Beside the ark was placed a copy of sacred scrolls, constituting the "book of the law," which was delivered to Moses as a testimony against the people (see Deuteronomy 31:26). The parallels to Nephi's disposition of sacred artifacts are striking. The writings of Nephi attest to his preservation of the brass plates of Laban, the Liahona, and the sword of Laban in his flight from his brothers to the land of Nephi (see 1 Nephi 5:12–14). These objects as well as the large and small plates of Nephi were transmitted to succeeding kings and prophets (see Mosiah 1:16; Alma 37: 2–5, 38, 47; D&C 17:1). The transmission of sacred artifacts to each new prophet-leader was intended to keep him and the Lord's covenant people in remembrance of God's mercy in delivering their forebears from the prophesied destruction of Jerusalem (see Alma 36:28–29).

A New Beginning with Christ as Focus

While Nephi recognized that the new society in the promised land was derivative of the old, he had a profound sense of creating a new social order. As observed, associated with obtaining the land of promise was a new covenant and a new dispensation of the gospel, the Jews having rejected "the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world" (1 Nephi 1:19). In this new society, the law of Moses would be taught, but its deeper meaning as an instrument pointing to Christ would also be fully taught. The doctrine of Christ and his atonement, the principles of faith and repentance, and the attendant ordinances of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost would thus occupy center stage in the religious practice, with observance of the law of Moses seen as a necessary part of the old covenant, but ultimately to be replaced by a higher law when Christ came (see 2 Nephi 5:10; 25:23–27; 31:4–21; compare 1 Nephi 11:1–28). The centrality of Christ in the religious observance of the Nephites was emphasized. "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies," wrote Nephi, "that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26). Thus, though antedating the advent of Christ by approximately six centuries, Nephi, with prophetic insight, devoted *several* chapters in his two books to explaining and interpreting the doctrine of Christ's atonement (see 1 Nephi 11; 19; 2 Nephi 2; 9; 31).

Nephi retained the utmost respect for the prophets, citing in particular Zenock, Neum, and Zenos—by all evidence, prophets of the tribe of Joseph whose writings were on the brass plates of Laban but are not in our Bible—with regard to events surrounding Christ's life and crucifixion (see 1 Nephi 19:10–12).[14] But to "more fully persuade" his people "to believe in the Lord their Redeemer," he turned to Isaiah (see 1 Nephi 19:23). Said Nephi, "My soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah" (2 Nephi 25:5). Both he and his brother Jacob, consecrated as a priest and teacher among the people, expounded at great length the texts of Isaiah. Isaiah reinforced the Christian focus of Nephi's teaching and provided one of three witnesses, along with Nephi himself and his brother Jacob, of Christ's divine mission. Of Isaiah, Nephi wrote, "He verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him. And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him" (2 Nephi 11:2–3). Isaiah thus figured as an integral part of Nephi's teaching.

Isaiah also spoke "concerning all the house of Israel" (2 Nephi 6:5), which necessitated, as Christ would later explain, that he "must speak also to the Gentiles" (3 Nephi 23:2). Using Isaiah's writings, Nephi reinforced his own appreciation of the

The Temple of Nephi, by Michael Malm. © 1999—do not copy

unfolding destiny of the house of Israel and the unfolding scenes of broad future developments. Numerous chapters of Isaiah are thus quoted in full and many others in part in Nephi's two books.[15] But the "manner of the Jews," whose works Nephi considered to be "works of darkness," he did not teach to his people, and he therefore found it necessary, when expounding Isaiah, to speak with "plainness" so that his people could understand those parts of Isaiah "which were hard for many of my people to understand" (see 2 Nephi 25:1–7).

Though Nephi did not explicitly spell it out, this new dispensation of the gospel would function under the Melchizedek Priesthood (see Alma 13). According to Joseph Fielding Smith, "The Nephites did not officiate under the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood. They were not descendants of Aaron,

and there were no Levites among them. . . . The Book of Mormon tells us definitely, in many places, that the priesthood which they held and under which they officiated was the Priesthood after the *holy order,* the order of the Son of God. This higher priesthood can officiate in every ordinance of the gospel, and Jacob and Joseph, for instance, were consecrated priests and teachers after this order."[16] After his hegira from the original land of promise, Nephi built a temple patterned after the one in Jerusalem constructed by Solomon (see 2 Nephi 5:16). The temple and its ordinances would thus complete the religious observance of his people (compare D&C 124:37–39).

The Grand Design

As did most of the Old Testament prophets, Nephi devoted considerable attention in his writings to various aspects of the scattering and promised gathering of the house of Israel, quoting and expounding several chapters of Isaiah in that regard (see 2 Nephi 6–8; 10–30) and adding his own and his brother Jacob's prophetic interpretations. These insights provide an important key for understanding Isaiah, particularly God's merciful gathering of the house of Israel in the latter days, both to their lands of inheritance and into the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Nephi was fully conscious of his father Lehi's heritage as a descendant of Joseph who was sold into Egypt (see 1 Nephi 6:1–2). He knew that the presence of Lehi's descendants in the promised land was more than an incident in their temporal salvation, but would have a special role in the divine plan. Knowing the broad sweep of future history regarding his posterity and that of his brothers in the promised land, Nephi continually reaffirmed the critical nature of God's covenant that the land would be a land of promise only for those who would keep the commandments of God, that those who would become wicked would be "scattered and smitten" and the land would then be given to other nations (see 2 Nephi 1:9–11; also 1 Nephi 2:20; 4:14; 2 Nephi 1:20, 31–32; 4:4).[17]

Having seen in vision the future history of his descendants, Nephi was sorely afflicted by the knowledge that his own people, after receiving a multitude of divine blessings, would be destroyed when they departed from righteousness into wickedness (see 1 Nephi 12:1–23; 15:4–5). But he understood that the descendants of Lehi (including a "mixture" of Nephi's seed with

that of his brethren), after being chastised by the Gentiles who would possess the land, would in fact be blessed by receiving the fulness of the gospel in a "marvelous work and a wonder" of the latter days (see 1 Nephi 13:30–31, 38–41; 14:7; 15:13–17).

Nephi thus quoted in detail Lehi's reiteration of the prophecy of Joseph of old about the future destiny and role of his (i.e., Joseph's) posterity, the coming forth of their scriptural record in the latter days, and the Lord's raising up of a "choice seer" who, like his father, would bear the name of Joseph (see 2 Nephi 3:6–15). The precision of Joseph's prophecy is remarkable:

But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins—and not to the bringing forth my word only, saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them. Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord. (2 Nephi 3:11–12)

The divine plan would thus require the merging of the scriptures of Lehi's posterity, who are descendants of the house of Joseph, with the record of the Jews for the accomplishment of the divine plan. In his second book, drawing on the texts of

Isaiah, Nephi returned to this theme and prophesied at length about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and its special mission in the latter-day "marvelous work and a wonder," associated with the restoration of the gospel, in which "the deaf [shall] hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness" (2 Nephi 27: 26, 29). In line with this emphasis, Nephi devoted several chapters to prophesying about events in the latter days, when the gospel would be restored, detailing conditions that would prevail and giving appropriate warnings (see 1 Nephi 13–14; 2 Nephi 26:14–33; 27–30).[18] The precision with which Nephi described prevailing conditions, including the multitude of churches and their varied teachings that would exist in the latter days at the moment when the restoration of the gospel would take place, adds further evidence to the veracity of his prophecies.[19]

Nephi thus appreciated fully that the history of his people was not only derivative of Israelite history but part of the larger development of world events at a future date. Nephi's vision of the role of God in history thus extended beyond the descendants of Lehi and beyond the several branches of the house of Israel to include all the peoples of the earth, including latter-day Gentiles. Nephi's vision of the tree of life, in which the love of God for all his children was manifested in the atonement of Christ, beautifully set the stage for Nephi's prophetic integration of traditional sacred themes with the broader themes of world history (see 1 Nephi 11:4–24; 12–14).

All mankind thus become heirs of salvation, and as such are the recipients of God's special favor. For as Nephi states in 2 Nephi 29:7, "Know ye not that there are more nations than one?

Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth?" God, the ruler of the universe, thus has an interest in the affairs of all people and works actively for their salvation. And further: "For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written" (2 Nephi 29:11).[20] In that light, God guides the destiny not only of the house of Israel but also of those outside the house of Israel for the accomplishment of divine purposes. The Gentile nations thus figure in the Lord's plan for the unfolding of his purposes (see 3 Nephi 23:1–2).

That the Gentiles (in this context, all non-Jewish people) are under divine influence and are to play a significant role in the divine purpose is demonstrated in Nephi's vision of the latter-day future of America:

The angel said unto me: Behold, the wrath of God is upon the seed of thy brethren. And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land. And it came to pass that I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out

of captivity, upon the many waters. And it came to pass that I beheld many multitudes of the Gentiles upon the land of promise; and I beheld the wrath of God, that it was upon the seed of my brethren; and they were scattered before the Gentiles and were smitten.

And I beheld the Spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the Gentiles, and they did prosper and obtain the land for their inheritance. . . .

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them.

And I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them. And I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle. And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that they did prosper in the land; and I beheld a book, and it was carried forth among them. (1 Nephi 13:11–20; paragraphing modified)

Major chapters in the history of the development of America are thus transcribed in advance, with a clear indication that God has played a major role in them. According to the above passages, God not only influences the development of human history relating to two continents but guides the activities of various people and, in the case of the Revolutionary War, the success of the revolutionaries.

In a similar vein, Nephi's vision captures the divine origin of the Bible and its partial corruption by the "great and abominable church" (1 Nephi 13:6). While Nephi decries that plain and precious parts have been taken from the Bible, causing many of the Gentiles to stumble, he nevertheless views the Bible as an important means by which God will eventually bring knowledge of the truth to his posterity, in conjunction with the revelation of additional scriptural records (see 1 Nephi 13:20–41).

The blending of Nephite history with this wider vision of world history paints in broad strokes for the providential historian—at least for the historian who believes in the Restoration—a significant part of the canvas depicting God's designs and purposes in modern history. It also brings into full focus Nephi's affirmation of God's love for all his children and desire to work with every people in behalf of their salvation: "He inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile" (2 Nephi 26:33). Thus God not only is viewed as an active participant in human affairs, but his influence extends to all people (see Alma 29:8). God, from the point of Nephi's revelatory experience, plays a major role in the destinies of all nations.

Nephi, in fact, was privileged early in his ministry to see in vision the entire future history of the world, though he was not permitted to write it, that task being reserved for the apostle John (see 1 Nephi 14:18–28). He nevertheless was privileged to write of a time somewhat future to our own when "the Church of the Lamb of God" was upon "all the face of the earth" (1 Nephi 14:12). While it is not my purpose here to relate Nephi's prophesying to current or future conditions of the world, his insight that the conflict between the forces of good and evil would grow in intensity

in the last days seems particularly appropriate to our times (see 1 Nephi 14:10–17; D&C 1:35–36).

Prophetic Perspectives

As a truly great prophet with an unusually clear view of future developments, Nephi provides a vast sweep of God's role in human affairs for the accomplishment of divine purposes. In his inspired writings, Nephi reaffirms what is central in human history—the need to believe in Christ and obey his commandments in order to receive the blessings that flow from that obedience (see 2 Nephi 33:9–15). With the prophets of ancient Israel, Nephi shared the view, derived from Israel's covenant relationship with God, that obedience to God's commandments assures prosperity and divine favor, while disobedience carries with it dire consequences. This view, emphasized in Nephi's writings and echoed throughout the Nephite record, sets the stage for the repeated cycle of righteous living, prosperity, pride, and chastisement so prominent in the history of the Nephite nation.

But Nephi's historic-prophetic perspective extended beyond a cyclical to a linear and teleological view of history as he elaborated broader themes in the divine plan. This becomes apparent as he discusses a second major theme in his writings—the accomplishment of God's purposes through the scattering and gathering of the house of Israel. As he established his people in the promised land, Nephi, through his own experience with Deity, was able to comprehend the divine plan for the future blessing of all the house of Israel and the entire Gentile world that would come with the blending together of the scriptures of the Jews and the scriptures of his branch of the tribe of Joseph. He thus viewed divinely orchestrated future events in America that paved the way for the coming forth of the scriptural records of his people and for the latter-day restoration of the gospel as necessary steps in the unfolding of God's plan for the salvation of all his children. While having "written but a small part" of the great future unfolding of events that he saw (see 1 Nephi 14:28), Nephi nevertheless recorded his appreciation of the universality of God's love and His concern for the salvation of all mankind, and hence His providential dealings with all peoples.

God, from the point of Nephi's revelatory experience, plays a major role in the destinies of all nations.

Because Latter-day Saints accept the Book of Mormon as scripture, and hence the words of Nephi as divine revelation, his powerful prophetic interpretation of God's role in world history is a fundamental building block for a Latter-day Saint perspective on world history. In defining God's plan for the salvation of his children as it relates to world history, Nephi has filled a major gap in our understanding of providential history, particularly with regard to the modern world. His identification, by revelation, of specific instances in which God has intervened in human affairs to accomplish his purposes, and his discussion of principles that govern that intervention, add immeasurably to our understanding. His judicious blending of a cyclical view of history with a longer, linear, and teleological view will be of interest, not only to Latter-day Saints, but to secular historians as well.

ARCHAEOLOGY, RELICS,
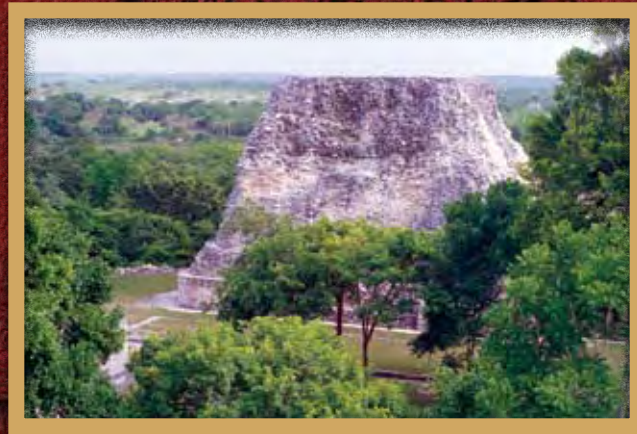
AND BOOK OF MORMON BELIEF

BY JOHN E. CLARK

The wee hours of 22 September 1827 found Joseph Smith climbing the western slope of a prominent hill near his home to keep his annual appointment with the angel Moroni.[1] After four years of probation, the 21-year-old prophet was finally entrusted with the golden plates and the sacred stones needed to translate them. The consequences of this event have been earthshaking. The Book of Mormon, translated from this ancient record, is now available in 105 languages, and close to 130 million copies have been printed.[2]

The Book of Mormon challenges the world to take it seriously as an account of God's dealings with ancient New World peoples. Nothing less than salvation is at stake. The world has not taken this challenge lying down; it pushes back by denying the book's miraculous delivery and authenticity. While billions of people in fact remain indifferent to the book, as they do to the Bible, a vociferous cadre of critics clamor that the Book of Mormon is a fabrication, an ignorable fiction, but one they can't seem to leave alone.[3]

Since 1829 critics have attempted to discredit the Book of Mormon by claiming that it was written by Joseph Smith—not translated—and that its history has no grounding in the real world. They believe they are winning the day, but 175 years of falsehoods and weak arguments has not scratched the book's credibility. Because of what is at stake, let us agree that charges against the book are serious and require response. The critical question concerns Book of Mormon authorship. Did Joseph Smith Jr. write the book, or was it revealed through divine means? This is where archaeology steps in as the only scientific means of gathering independent evidence of authenticity, and hence authorship. The Book of Mormon is unique in world scripture because its claimed divine origins can be evaluated by checking for concrete evidence in the real world. Prove the existence of Zarahemla, for example, and the validity of the rest follows. The logic is simple and compelling for both sides.[4]

Let us consider the anti-Mormon position first. If Joseph Smith made the book up, then its peoples did not exist, its events did not happen, and there should be no trace of them anywhere. If, after a reasonable period of diligent searching, material evidence is not found, then the Book of Mormon would be shown to be imaginary, and by implication Joseph Smith would be exposed as a liar and the church he founded unveiled as a hoax.

The Latter-day Saint position is the near opposite. Confirmation of historic details of the Book of Mormon would substantiate Joseph Smith's account of how it came to be and thus validate his seership and the divine origin of both the book and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This brings us to the astonishing possibility of being able to test Joseph Smith's claims through science, a possibility that critics have long tried to exploit. The Book of Mormon is the keystone of Mormonism; destroy this stone and all that it supports will come crashing down. Given the stakes involved, the very possibility of testing the book's historicity and authenticity becomes a moral obligation to do so.

Space precludes a review of full Latter-day Saint involvement with these issues; one example will have to do. Let's revisit Provo's Academy Square the morning of 17 April 1900. The assembled student body of Brigham Young Academy bade farewell to their president, 15 fellow students, and others as they rode off for South America. Academy president Benjamin Cluff Jr. hoped "to discover the ancient Nephite capital of Zarahemla . . . [and] in this way . . . to establish the authenticity of the Book of Mormon."[5] The expedition began with the blessing of the Church but not its financial backing, and its blessing was withdrawn before the group even made it out of the United States. Of the original 24 men, 9 crossed into Mexico and 6 made it to Colombia. After the group had boated 630 miles up the Magdalena River, a point that was 632 days' journey from Academy Square, Colombian officials halted the anxious explorers' progress just days short of their destination.[6] Cluff and his students

Opposite page: The Maya site of Becán, in Campeche, Mexico. Photo courtesy of John E. Clark. Background: Maya monument sketch by Frederick Catherwood.

Clockwise from top: *Moroni Delivering the Golden Plates,* by Gary Kapp; portrait of Benjamin Cluff Jr.; embarkation of Cluff expedition.
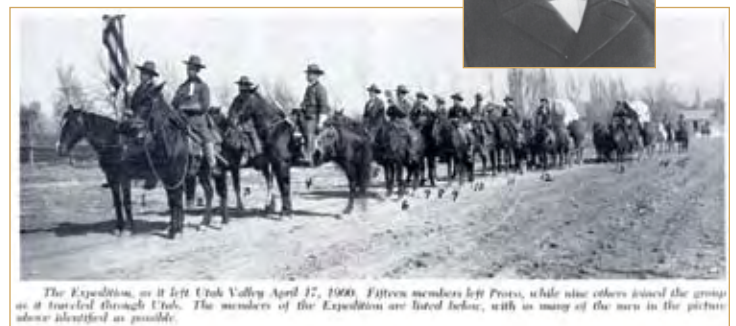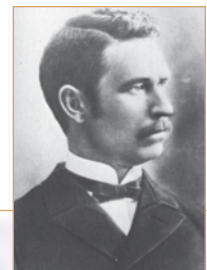
The Expedition, as it left Utah Valley April 17, 1900. Fifteen members left Provo, while nine others joined the group as it traveled through Utah. The members of the Expedition are listed below, with as many of the men in the picture above identified as possible.

Route of BYA Zarahemla Expedition

The ill-fated Cluff expedition began in Provo, Utah, and ended prematurely in Colombia.

never reached Zarahemla. Latter-day Saint scholars and tourists have been trying to get there ever since, but it is not clear where they should look, how they should look, or how they will know Zarahemla when they find it.

Cluff returned to become the first president of Brigham Young University (the new name of the academy).[7] His proposal for the location of Zarahemla was apparently a popular one among Mormons at the time. He presumed that Book of Mormon lands included both North and South America, a theory known as the hemispheric model.[8] That it took nearly two years to meander to Colombia should have given him pause. The longest trip specified in the Book of Mormon took 40 days, and that group was lost and on foot (see Mosiah 7:4).[9]

An argument against the hemispheric model was provided by Joseph Smith. The year 1842 in Nauvoo had been hectic as the Prophet moved the work along on the Book of Abraham and the temple, all the while dodging false arrest. He even assumed editorial responsibility for the *Times and Seasons*, the Nauvoo newspaper.[10]

In the 1840s Stephens's book (cover from 1969 edition by Dover) provided compelling evidence for the Book of Mormon. Far right: Map from the book.
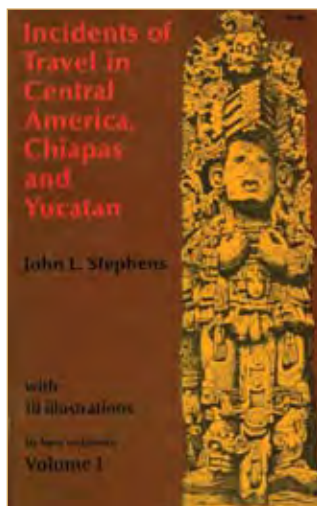
Months earlier he received a copy of the recent best-seller by John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, the first popular English book to describe and illustrate Maya ruins.[11]

This book amazed the English-speaking world with evidence of an advanced civilization that no one imagined existed—no one, that is, except Latter-day Saints. The Prophet was thrilled, and excerpts from the book were reprinted in the *Times and Seasons* with unsigned commentary, presumably his. What Joseph recorded is significant for the issues at hand:

> Since our "Extract" [from Stephens's book] was published . . . we have found another important fact relating to the truth of the Book of Mormon. Central America . . . is situated north of the Isthmus of Darien and once embraced several hundred miles of territory from north to south. The city of Zarahemla . . . stood upon this land. . . . It will not be a bad plan to compare Mr. Stephens' ruined cities with those in the Book of Mormon.[12]

TIMES AND SEASONS.

"Truth will prevail."

Vol. III. No. 23.]   CITY OF NAUVOO, ILL. OCT. 1, 1842.   [Whole No. 59

ZARAHEMLA.

Since our 'Extract' was published from Mr. Stephens' 'Incidents of Travel,' &c., we have found another important fact relating to the truth of the Book of Mormon. Central America, or Guatimala, is situated north of the Isthmus of Darien and once embraced several hundred miles of territory from north to south.—The city of Zarahemla, burnt at the crucifixion of the Savior, and rebuilt afterwards, stood upon this land as will be seen from the following words in the book of Alma:—'And now it was only the distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful, and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea; and thus the land of Nephi, and the land of Zarahemla was nearly surrounded by water: there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward.' [See Book of Mormon 3d edition, page 280-81.]

It is certainly a good thing for the excellency and veracity, of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, that the ruins of Zarahemla have been found where the Nephites left them: and that a large stone with engravings upon it, as Mosiah said; and a 'large round stone, with the sides sculptured in hieroglyphics,' as Mr. Stephens has published, is also among the left remembrances of the, (to him,) *lost and unknown*. We are not agoing to declare positively that the ruins of Quirigua are those of Zarahemla, but when the land and the stones, and the books tell the story so plain, we are of opinion, that it would require more proof than the Jews could bring to prove the disciples stole the body of Jesus from the tomb, to prove that the ruins of the city in question, are not one of those referred to in the Book of Mormon.

It may seem hard for unbelievers in the mighty works of God, to give credit to such a miraculous preservation of the remains, ruins, records and reminiscences of a branch of the house of Israel: but the elements are eternal, and intelligence is eternal, and God is eternal, so that the very hairs of our heads are all numbered. It may be said of man he was and is, and is not; and of his works the same, but the Lord was and is, and is to come and his works never end; and he will bring every thing into judgment whether it be good, or whether it be evil; yea, every secret thing, and they shall be revealed upon the house tops. It will not be a bad plan to compare Mr. Stephens' ruined cities with those in the Book of Mormon: light cleaves to light, and facts are supported by facts. The truth injures no one, and so we make another

EXTRACT

From Stephens' "Incidents of Travel in Central America."

"On a fine morning, after a heavy rain, they set off for the ruins. After a ride of about half an hour, over an execrable road, they again reached the Amates. The village was pleasantly situated on the bank of the river, and elevated about thirty feet. The river was here about two hundred feet wide, and fordable in every part except a few deep holes. Generally it did not exceed three feet in depth, and in many places was not so deep; but below it was said to be navigable to the sea for boats not drawing more than three feet water. They embarked in two canoes dug out of cedar-trees, and proceeded down the river for a couple of miles, where they took on board a negro man named Juan Lima, and his two wives. This black scoundrel, as Mr. C. marks him down in his notebook, was to be their guide. They then proceeded two or three miles farther, and stopped at a rancho on the left side of the river, and passing through two cornfields, entered a forest of large cedar and mahogany trees. The path was exceedingly soft and wet, and covered with decayed leaves, and the heat very great. Continuing through the forest toward the northeast, in three quarters of an hour they reached the foot of a pyramidal structure like those at Copan, with the steps in some places perfect. They ascended to the top, about twenty-five feet, and descending by steps on the other side, at a short distance beyond came to a colossal head two yards in diameter, almost buried by an enormous tree, and covered with moss. Near it was a large altar, so covered with moss that it was impossible to make anything out of it. The two are within an enclosure.

Retracing their steps across the pyramidal structure, and proceeding to the north about three or four hundred yards, they reached a collection of monuments of the same general character with those

As is evident in his comments, Joseph Smith believed Maya archaeology vindicated the Book of Mormon. His placement of Zarahemla in eastern Guatemala implied that the Land Southward described in the Book of Mormon was north of Darien, as Panama was then called; thus his commentary presupposed a smallish geography that excluded South America. The Prophet regarded the location of Book of Mormon lands as an open question, and one subject to archaeological confirmation. In the past 50 years, friends and foes have adopted Joseph's "plan" of comparing "ruined cities with those in the Book of Mormon." Both sides believe archaeology is on their side.

Archaeology and Book of Mormon Arguments

Consider the argument against the Book of Mormon circulated recently by an evangelical group in a pamphlet:

> The Bible . . . is supported in its truth claims by the corroborating evidence of geography and

archaeology. That assertion cannot be said for *The Book of Mormon*. Several decades of archaeological research, funded by LDS institutions, concentrating in Central America and Mexico, have yielded nothing that corroborates the historic events described in *The Book of Mormon*.[13]

The only things wrong with this clever argument are that its claims are false and its logic faulty. Archaeology and geography support the Book of Mormon to the same degree, and for the same reasons, that they support the Bible.[14] Both books present the same challenges for empirical confirmation, and both are in good shape. Many things have been verified for each, but many have not. Critical arguments specialize in listing things mentioned in the Book of Mormon that archaeology has not found. Rather than cry over missing evidence, I consider evidence that has been found.

The pamphlet lists eight deficiencies: first, that "no *Book of Mormon* cities have been located," and last, that "no artifact of any kind that demonstrates *The Book of Mormon* is true has been found."[15] This last assertion is overly optimistic in suggesting that such material proof is even possible.

No artifact imaginable, or even a roomful, could ever convince dedicated critics that the Book of Mormon is true. The implied claim that the right relic could prove the book's truth beyond all doubt

is too strong and underestimates human cussedness. Moroni could appear tomorrow with the golden plates, the sword of Laban, and the Liahona in hand and this would not satisfy public demands for more proofs.[16]

The logical challenges with the first assertion, that no "cities have been located," are more subtle. Book of Mormon cities have been found, they are well known, and their artifacts grace the finest museums. They are merely masked by archaeological labels such as "Maya," "Olmec," and so on. The problem, then, is not that Book of Mormon artifacts have not been found, only that they have not been recognized for what they are. Again, if we stumbled

Above: *How They Till the Soil and Plant*, copper plate engraving by Theodore De Bry (1528–98). Below: *The Towne of Pomeiock*, by John White (1550–93). Nineteenth-century Americans familiar with Native American lifeways as depicted in these two illustrations could no longer dismiss the Book of Mormon's claim of city-level societies once the advanced civilizations in Central America came to light.
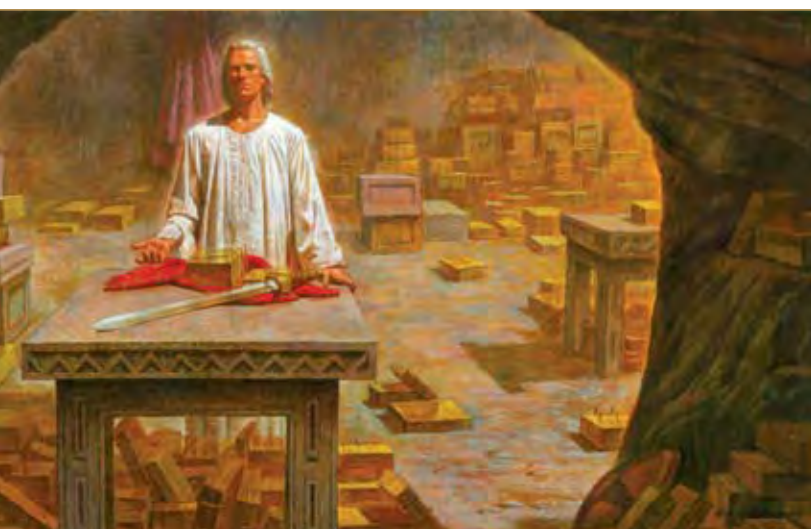
Cumorah's Cave, by Robert T. Barrett. Early accounts relate that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery returned the Book of Mormon plates to a cave filled with such records. Preserving records on metal plates is an attested Old World practice that supports the Book of Mormon's authenticity.

onto Zarahemla, how would we know? The difficulty is not with evidence but with epistemology.

One last point about significant evidence. The hypothesis of Joseph Smith's authorship of the Book of Mormon demands that truth claims in the book be judged by what was believed, known, or knowable in Joseph's backyard in the 1820s. The book's description of ancient peoples differs greatly from the notions of rude savages held by 19th-century Americans.[17] The book's claim of city societies was laughable at the time, but no one is laughing now.

As the city example shows, the lower the probability that Joseph Smith could have guessed a future fact, the stronger the likelihood he received the information from a divine source. Consequently, the

most compelling evidence for authenticity is that which verifies unguessable things recorded in the Book of Mormon, the more outlandish the better.[18] Confirmation of such items would eliminate any residual probability of human authorship and go a long way in demonstrating that Joseph could not have written the book. This is precisely what a century of archaeology has done.

I consider only a few items. The one requirement for making comparisons between archaeology and the Book of Mormon is to be in the right place. For reasons I will explore below, Mesoamerica is the right place.

1. Metal Records in Stone Boxes

The first archaeological claims related to the Book of Mormon concern the purported facts of 22 September 1827: the actuality of metal plates preserved in a stone box. This used to be considered a monstrous tale, but concealing metal records in stone boxes is now a documented Old World practice.[19] Stone offering boxes have also been discovered in Mesoamerica,[20] but so far the golden plates are still at large—as we would expect them to be.

2. Ancient Writing

Another fact obvious that September morning was that ancient peoples of the Americas knew how to write, a ludicrous claim for anyone to make in 1827. We now know of at least six Mesoamerican writing systems that predate the Christian era.[21] This should count for something, but it is not enough for dedicated skeptics. They demand to see reformed Egyptian, preferably on gold pages, and to find traces of the Hebrew language. There are promising leads on both, but nothing conclusive
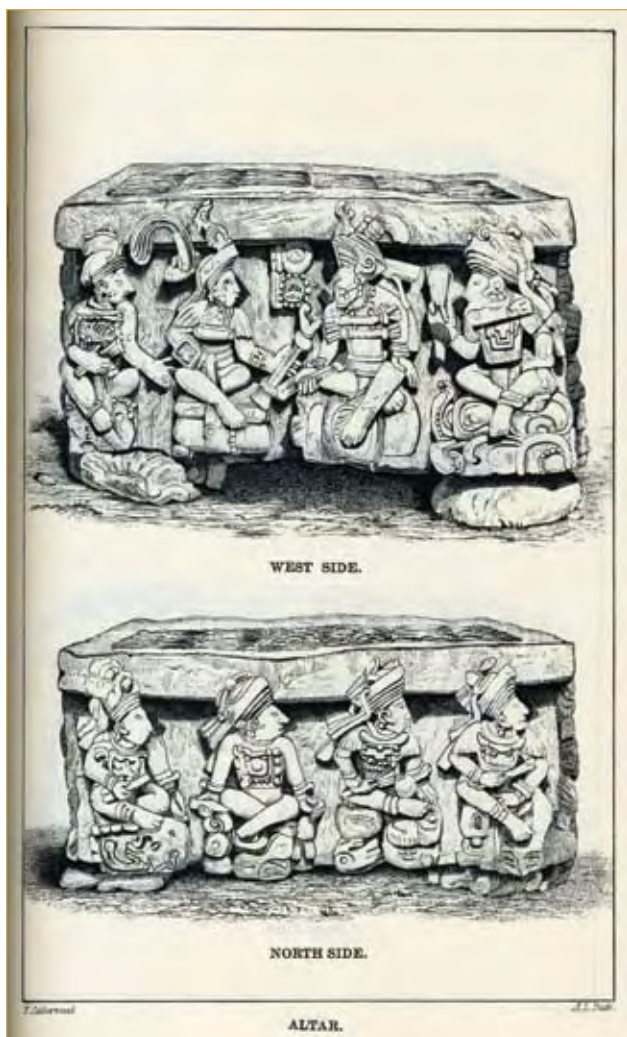
Altar from Copan, sketched on the spot by Frederick Catherwood for Stephens's book *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* (1841).
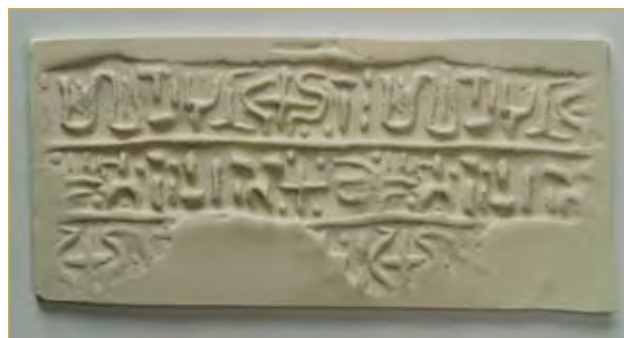
The impression made by a roller seal from ancient Mesoamerica (see photo on next page) displays a sophisticated writing system. Photo courtesy of John L. Sorenson.

This roller seal was found at the site of Tlatilco, just west of Mexico City. The writing appears to date between 400 and 700 BC.

yet.[22] New scripts are still being discovered, and many texts remain undeciphered. One example was recovered 56 years ago and qualifies as America's earliest writing sample, but so far nothing much has been made of it, and most scholars have forgotten it exists.[23]

3. The Arts of War

The golden plates and other relics ended up in New York in the final instance because the Nephites were exterminated in a cataclysmic battle. The Book of Mormon brims with warfare and nasty people. Until 20 years ago the book's claims on this matter were pooh-poohed by famous scholars. Now that Maya writing can be read, warfare appears to have been a Mesoamerican pastime.[24]

The information on warfare in the Book of Mormon is particularly rich and provides ample opportunity to check Joseph Smith's luck in getting the details right. The warfare described in the book differs from what Joseph could have known or

Clockwise from below: The Maya site of Becán, in Campeche, Mexico; artist's rendering of Becán, which dates to Nephite times; drawing of dry moat and fortified wall based on excavations at Becán.

imagined. In the book, one reads of fortified cities with trenches, walls, and palisades. Mesoamerican cities dating to Nephite times have been found with all these features.[25]

The Book of Mormon mentions bows and arrows, swords, slings, scimitars, clubs, spears, shields, breastplates, helmets, and cotton armor—all items documented for Mesoamerica. Aztec swords were of wood, sometimes edged with stone knives.[26] There are indications of wooden swords in the Book of Mormon—how else could swords become stained with blood?[27] Wooden swords edged with sharp stones could sever heads and limbs and were lethal. The practice of taking detached arms as battle trophies, as in the story of Ammon, is also documented for Mesoamerica.[28]

Another precise correspondence is the practice of fleeing to the summits of pyramids as places of last defense and, consequently, of eventual surrender. Conquered cities were depicted in Mesoamerica by symbols for broken towers or burning pyramids. Mormon records this practice.[29] Other practices of his day were human sacrifice and cannibalism, vile behaviors well attested for Mesoamerica (see Mormon 4:14; Moroni 9:8, 10).

The final battle at Cumorah involved staggering numbers of troops, including Nephite battle units of 10,000. Aztec documents describe armies of over 200,000 warriors divided into major divisions of 8,000 warriors plus 4,000 retainers each. One battle involved 700,000 warriors on one side.[30] The Aztec ciphers appear to be propagandistic exaggeration; I do not know whether this applies to Book of Mormon numbers or not.

In summary, the practices and instruments of war described in the Book of Mormon display

multiple and precise correspondences with Meso-american practices, and in ways unimaginable to 19th-century Yankees.

4. Cities, Temples, Towers, and Palaces

Mesoamerica is a land of decomposing cities. Their pyramids (towers), temples, and palaces are all items mentioned in the Book of Mormon but foreign to the gossip along the Erie Canal in Joseph Smith's day. Cities show up in all the right places and date to time periods compatible with Book of Mormon chronology.[31]

5. Cement Houses and Cities

One of the more unusual and specific claims in the Book of Mormon is that houses and cities of cement were built by 49 BC in the Land Northward, a claim considered ridiculous in 1830. As it turns out, this claim receives remarkable confirmation at Teotihuacan, the largest pre-Columbian city ever built in the Americas. Teotihuacan is still covered with ancient cement that has lasted over 1,500 years.[32]

6. Kings and Their Monuments

All Book of Mormon peoples had kings who ruled cities and territories. American prejudices against native tribes in Joseph's day had no room for kings or their tyrannies. The last Jaredite king, Coriantumr, carved his history on a stone about 400 BC, an event in line with Mesoamerican practices at that time. A particular gem in the book is that King Benjamin "labored" with his "own hands" (Mosiah 2:14), an outrageous thing for Joseph Smith to have claimed for a king. It was not until the 1960s that anthropology caught up to the idea of working kings and validated it among world cultures.[33]

View of Teotihuacan's Sun Pyramid from the pyramid of Quetzalcoatl. Photo courtesy of Val Brinkerhoff.

Above: Hieroglyphic text from La Mojarra Stela 1 describing a ruler's accession to power. Left: Carved throne from the Olmec site of La Venta.

More specifically, we consider Riplakish, the 10th Jaredite king, an oppressive tyrant who forced slaves to construct buildings and produce fancy goods. Among the items he commissioned about 1200 BC was "an exceedingly beautiful throne" (Ether 10:6). The earliest civilization in Mesoamerica is known for its elaborate stone thrones.[34] How did Joseph Smith get this detail right?

Right: Re-created mural from Oxtotitlan Cave, in Guerrero, Mexico, depicts an Olmec ruler dressed in a bird costume and seated on a throne. Courtesy of John E. Clark.

Hieroglyphic writing graces the pages of the Dresden Codex, a Maya book from the Yucatán Peninsula dating to AD 1200–1250. The highlighted image shows a tree growing out of the heart of a sacrificial victim (note the tree's entwined roots at the bottom).

7. Metaphors and the Mesoamerican World

Not all evidence for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon concerns material goods. A striking correspondence is a drawing from the Dresden Codex, one of four surviving pre-Columbian Maya books. It shows a sacrificial victim with a tree growing from his heart, a literal portrayal of the metaphor preached in Alma, chapter 32. Other Mesoamerican images depict the tree of life. The Book of Mormon's metaphors make sense in the Mesoamerican world. We are just beginning to study these metaphors, so check the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* for future developments.

8. Timekeeping and Prophesying

A correspondence that has always impressed me involves prophecies in 400-year blocks. The Maya were obsessed with time, and they carved precise dates on their stone monuments that began with the count of 400 years, an interval called a *baktun*. Each

baktun was made up of 20 *katuns*, an extremely important 20-year interval.[35] If you permit me some liberties with the text, Samuel the Lamanite warned the Nephites that one *baktun* "shall not pass away before . . . they [would] be smitten" (Helaman 13:9). Nephi and Alma uttered the same *baktun* prophecy, and Moroni recorded its fulfillment. Moroni bids us farewell just after the first *katun* of this final *baktun*, or 420 years since the "sign was given of the coming of Christ" (Moroni 10:1).[36] What are the chances of Joseph Smith guessing correctly the vigesimal system of timekeeping and prophesying among the Maya and their neighbors over 50 years before scholars stumbled onto it?

The list of unusual items corresponding to Book of Mormon claims could be extended. The Latter-day Saint tendency to get absorbed in specifics has been characterized as a method for distracting attention from large problems by engaging critics with endless, irrelevant details,[37] much as a mosquito swarm distracts from the rhinoceros in the kitchen. Let's take up the dare to consider big issues, namely, geography and cycles of civilization and population.

9. Old World Geography

As is clear from the Cluff expedition, if the geography is not right, one can waste years searching for Zarahemla and never reach it. Book of Mormon geography presents a serious challenge because the only city location known with certitude is Old World Jerusalem, and this does not help us with locations in the promised land. However, geographical correspondences are marvelous for the Old World portion of the narrative. As S. Kent Brown and others have shown, the geography of the Arabian Peninsula described in 1 Nephi is precise down to its place-names. The remarkable geographic fit includes numerous details unknown in Joseph Smith's day.[38]

10. New World Geography

For the New World, dealing with geography is a two-step exercise. First an internal geography must be deduced from clues in the book, and this deduction must then become the standard for engaging the second step, matching the internal geography with a real-world setting. John Sorenson has done the best work on this matter.[39] The Book of Mormon account is remarkably consistent throughout.

Nephite lands included a narrow neck between two seas and lands northward and southward of this neck. The Land Southward could be traversed on foot, with children and animals in tow, in about 30 days, so it could not have been much longer than 300 miles. The 3,000 miles required for the two-hemisphere geography is off by one order of magnitude. Nephite lands were small and did not include all of the Americas or all of their peoples. The principal corollary of a limited geography is that Book of Mormon peoples were not alone on the continent. Therefore, to check for correspondences, one must find the right place and peoples. It is worth noticing that anti-Mormons lament the demise of

Map of Book of Mormon lands based soley on internal evidence from the text itself.

the traditional continental correlation because it was so easy to ridicule. The limited, scriptural geography is giving them fits.

Sorenson argues that Book of Mormon lands and peoples were in Central America and southern Mexico, an area known as Mesoamerica. We notice that the configuration of lands, seas, mountains, and other natural features in Mesoamerica are a tight fit with the internal requirements of the text. It is important to stress that finding any sector in the Americas that fits Book of Mormon specifications requires dealing with hundreds of mutually dependent variables. So rather than counting a credible geography as one correspondence, it actually counts for several hundred. The probability of guessing reams of details all correctly is zero. Joseph Smith did not know about Central America before reading Stephens's *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, and he apparently did not know where Book of Mormon lands were, so a Book of Mormon geography correlation becomes compelling evidence that he did not write the book.

11. Cycles of Civilization in Mesoamerica

I mentioned that the Book of Mormon's claim of civilized peoples was verified in Joseph's lifetime. This claim is actually twofold because the book describes an earlier Jaredite civilization that overlapped a few centuries with Lehite civilization. The dates for the Nephite half of Lehite civilization are clearly bracketed in the account to 587 years before Christ to 386 years after. But those for the earlier civilization remain cloudy, beginning sometime after the Tower of Babel and ending before King Mosiah fled to Zarahemla. Jaredites were probably tilling American soil in the Land Northward at least by 2200 BC, and they may have endured their own wickedness until 400 BC.

The two-civilizations requirement used to be a problem for the Book of Mormon, but it no longer is now that modern archaeology is catching up. I emphasize that I am interpreting "civilization" in the strict sense as meaning "city life." In checking correlations between the Book of Mormon and Mesoamerican archaeology, I focus on the rise and decline of cities. The earliest known Olmec city was up and running by 1300 BC, and it was preceded by a large community dating back to 1700 BC.[40] Most Olmec cities were abandoned about 400 BC, probably under duress.[41] In eastern Mesoamerica, Olmec
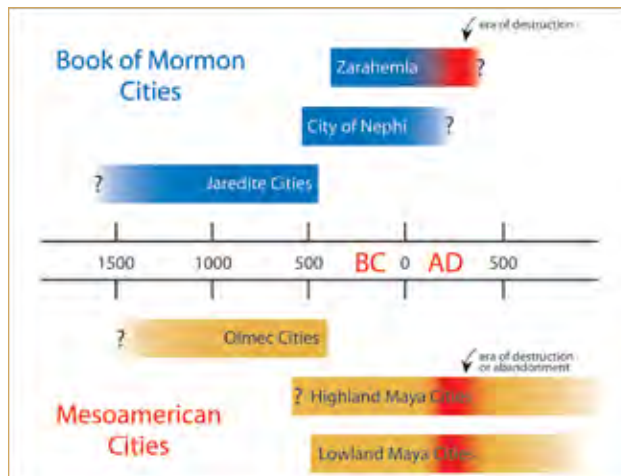
Possible correspondences between the histories of Book of Mormon peoples and the histories of Mesoamerican peoples.

civilization was replaced by the lowland Maya, who began building cities in the jungles of Guatemala about 500 to 400 BC. As with Olmec civilization, Maya civilization experienced peaks and troughs of development, with a mini-collapse about AD 200.[42] In short, the correspondences between the Book of Mormon and cycles of Mesoamerican civilization are striking.

12. Mesoamerican Demographic History

Reconstructing ancient demography requires detailed information on site sizes, locations, dates, and frequencies. It will take another 50 years of active research to compile enough information to reconstruct Mesoamerica's complete demographic history. The Nephite and Lamanite stories are too complicated to review here; I will just consider the Jaredite period. To begin, the earliest developments of Jaredites and Olmecs are hazy, but from about 1500 BC onward their histories are remarkably parallel. The alternations between city building and population declines, described for the Jaredites, correspond quite well with lowland Olmec developments. Olmec cities were abandoned by 400 BC,[43] and the culture disappeared—just as the Book of Mormon describes for the Jaredites (see Ether 13–15). This is a phenomenal correlation. Much more research in southern Mexico is needed to check the lands that Sorenson identifies as Nephite. The little I know of the region looks promising for future confirmations.

Rough Assessment of Population Histories
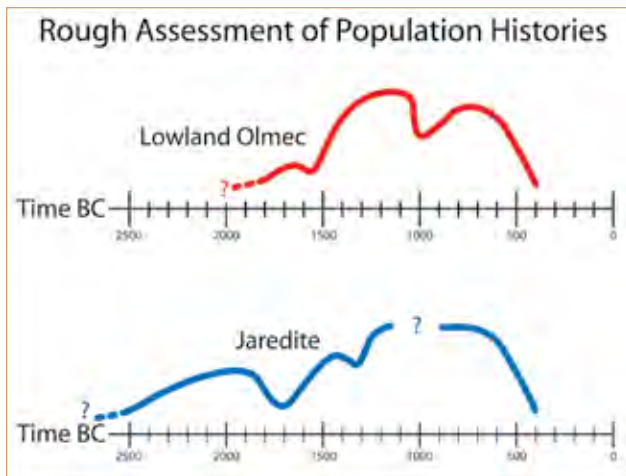
Fluctuations in population for the Jaredites and Olmecs are striking.

Before leaving this issue, it is important to make one observation on a global question that troubles some Latter-day Saints. Could millions of people have lived in the area proposed as Book of Mormon lands? Yes, and they did. Mesoamerica is the only area in the Americas that sustained the high population densities mentioned in the Book of Mormon, and for the times specified.

A Trend of Convergence

To this point, I have shown that the content of the Book of Mormon fits comfortably with Mesoamerican prehistory, both in general patterns and in some extraordinary details. Many things mentioned in the book still have not been verified archaeologically, but this was true just a few years ago for some items just reviewed. The trend over the last 50 years is one of convergence between the Book of Mormon and Mesoamerican archaeology. Book of Mormon claims remain unaltered since 1830, so all the accommodation has been on the archaeology side. If the book were fiction, this convergence would not be happening. We can expect more evidence in coming years.

Coming back to the original question: Did Joseph Smith write the Book of Mormon? He did not. It has been obvious since 1829 to those who knew him best that Joseph Smith could not have written the Book of Mormon.[44] Recent findings simply make the possibility of his authorship that much more inconceivable. The accumulating evidence from archaeology and the impressive internal evidence demonstrate that the Book of Mormon is an authentic ancient book of New World origin. The only plausible explanation for the book's existence is that supernatural agencies were involved in its coming forth in our day.

The Book of Mormon still presses the world to take it seriously, and now science is lending a hand. The archaeology that has been undertaken in Mesoamerica is confirming historical, geographical, and political facts mentioned in the text. Archaeology is powerless, however, to address the book's central challenge—the promise that its doctrine leads to Christ. Although the Book of Mormon does not provide clear directions for reaching Zarahemla, its instructions for coming to Christ are unsurpassed, and this is the infinitely more important destination. If we are ever to reach this destination, we must keep the relationship between external Book of Mormon evidences and belief in proper perspective. President Gordon B. Hinckley sums up the matter in his testimony:

> The evidence for [the Book of Mormon's] truth, for its validity in a world that is prone to demand evidence, lies not in archaeology or anthropology, though these may be helpful to some. It lies not in word research or historical analysis, though these may be confirmatory. The evidence for its truth and validity lies within the covers of the book itself. The test of its truth lies in reading it. It is a book of God. Reasonable people may sincerely question its origin; but those who have read it prayerfully have come to know by a power beyond their natural senses that it is true, that it contains the word of God, that it outlines saving truths of the everlasting gospel.[45]

LOOKING FOR ARTIFACTS AT NEW YORK'S HILL CUMORAH

The following account of artifact hunting in the fields surrounding Hill Cumorah, near Palmyra, New York, is from a letter by Langdon Smith of New Haven, Vermont, and addressed to John E. Clark, professor of anthropology at Brigham Young University and director of the BYU New World Archaeological Foundation, based in Chiapas, Mexico. The letter has been slightly edited and is used with the author's permission. Mr. Smith wrote the letter in response to Dr. Clark's article "Archaeology and Cumorah Questions" (JBMS 13/1–2, 2004), which presents evidence that the archaeology of New York does not support the idea that Book of Mormon peoples lived in that region or that New York's Hill Cumorah was the scene of the final battles between the Nephites and the Lamanites. —Ed.

On my dairy farm in Vermont in the mid-1950s, while harrowing in the spring, I saw a black, pointed object. It was a black chert "knife." Wow! I have always been interested in historical things. So I looked all around, but that was it. Several years ago I found another point. My farm efforts were winding down, so I had more time to look.

Since retiring, I have worked on some state site digs with professionals. By myself I have also found over 378 new Native American sites, obtaining Vermont State site numbers for all of them. I have made out all the required survey forms and sent the relevant information to the state offices.

At this time, I have close to 5,000 arrowheads with all the other tools—bifaces, preforms, knives, scrapers, and so on. Altogether I have 17,000 pieces. Each piece has been traced, with the site number and catalog numbers painted on. Maps are made of each site with X marks locating where each piece was found.

In working with the state, I get to see things that I'm probably not supposed to see—like a New York State site map. Around Syracuse and the areas in eastern New York State there are many sites

recorded, as there are around and south of Rochester in western New York. But around the Hill Cumorah area, the closest site numbers are about 60 miles away.

Wherever early American sites are, collectors will find them, plowed fields being the best place to look. Having been to the Hill Cumorah Pageant at other times, I knew that there were plowed fields nearby. Since I had the experience of searching and finding sites, my interest in finding sites of possible Nephite/Lamanite arrowheads was high. There were also stories of how Brother Willard Bean found arrowheads by the basketful around the hill and sold them to tourists. If battles took place at the hill, and a lot of people took part—everything sounds about right—the area should be covered with all kinds of artifacts.

I have made the seven-hour drive twice in the past few years. Both times I traveled to Palmyra during the early planting season—fields just plowed and harrowed, following a good rain to wash the dirt off any artifacts.

There are some areas that are not plowed and cannot easily be hunted, including the seating area

west of the hill and the car parking area on the west side of the highway. North of the hill there is a gully going west to east with trees growing along it, circling from west of the road past the north end of the hill to the east side. Along the whole east side of the hill is a large plowed field. To the north of the gully with trees is the farm that is owned by the Clark family. They have several plowed fields in the area.

Arriving at Cumorah, I have asked workers on the grounds around the visitors' center and people inside the center about arrowheads. Their comments were: "Oh yes, people find them around here all the time." I would ask, "Have you found any yourself?" "Well, no." "Do you know anyone who has found some?" "No." "Have you seen any actual pieces found by others?" "No."

I have walked to the big meadow east of the hill. I have searched it thoroughly. I was thinking, "There have to be remains here, but where?" No artifacts—not even flint chips of any kind. So I went north to the Clark farm. I stopped and asked the owner's wife if I could walk over the corn field. "What are you looking for?" "Looking for arrowheads—is it okay?" "Well, sure." "You must get pestered a lot by people wanting to go out there looking around." "We've been here over 40 years, and you're the first to come and ask to hunt for arrowheads."

If there are artifacts out there, collectors will find them, and they and their friends will be all over that area. The Clarks' fields yielded the same as the one east of the hill: not one single arrowhead and not one single piece of flint chipping. Crisscrossing all those plowed fields, which are hundreds of acres, I found no evidence of any kind. If a large group of people came to this hill and had a big battle, they would have been making and sharpening more tools—artifacts. If there are no arrowheads, what about all of the broken pieces, the chips, the flakes—leftovers from making and sharpening? Some of these pieces would be smaller than a little fingernail. Where are these pieces? People do not generally pick up this trash.

There is an old pond in our area of Vermont which has old sites around it. The University of Vermont has created a chart that pictures 26 different styles of points found in this area (the points date from 11,000–12,000 BC up through the time of European contact). I have found at least one, usually many, of each type from that site. When I first started looking, I made the friendship of nine

gentlemen who had large collections (5,000 to 6,000 pieces each). On asking these men, "Where do you get most of them?" their answer was something like, "Oh, half from around the pond." That half would include 2,000 pieces for each of the nine persons, or about 18,000 pieces. I look each year and find 25 to 30. Plus, there are other people hunting there—they're finding stuff too. It's more than just a good place to take a walk. But when that spot is put up against the history of events at "Cumorah," it should pale into insignificance.

On this old site in Vermont, even if all of the arrow points were picked up, there are still all of the chipping areas—big or small, they are present. In these areas a person should find broken arrowheads that were damaged while being made. Then we should also find the flakes, slabs, and chips in the various work areas that can be seen throughout the plowed parts.

Before my first trip to Palmyra, I received the name from a friend of a Mr. J. Sheldon Fisher, who lived in the small town of Fishers, about 10 miles southwest of the hill (he passed away in 2002). He owned what is called the Valentown Museum. The museum barn has one floor devoted to early American artifacts; the second floor is full of all types of antiques. He was a great historian of the happenings down through time in that area. He supplied most of the early-1800s furniture used in the area's visitors' centers. There was an article about him in the 3 March 2001 *Church News* on his finds about an old Brigham Young home (Shaun D. Stahle, "Excavating Brigham Young's mill site"). He worked as a professional archaeologist for the state of New York for over 30 years. So he knew what he was doing.

He said that he had a standing agreement with all of the bulldozer and backhoe people in the county. They would call him when they were about to start jobs in the area. Many times, he said, "I'd beat them to the site—I'd get there before they would." He always watched the soil as they dug it or pushed it around. But he never found any artifacts of any kind. I have spent evenings on both trips to Palmyra talking with him about the area and its history. His comment on my last trip was, "Oh, I hope this doesn't shake your faith." I answered, "No, it doesn't. The Church is still true. The Book of Mormon is true. And those plates came out of that hill. 'The battle'—well, it must have been at some other hill."

Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life:

Understanding the Dream as Visionary Literature

BY CHARLES SWIFT

"**B**ehold," Lehi tells his family while in the wilderness, "I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision" (1 Nephi 8:2). With these promising, personal words the prophet introduces one of the most beautiful and significant passages of the Book of Mormon—a passage that has been called "a literary masterpiece and a doctrinal gem."[1] It has even been considered a type for the entire book, particularly its depiction of the tree of life: "The Book of Mormon is itself a tree of life—a work of beauty and purity, with its words to be feasted upon."[2]

Even with such enthusiastic endorsements, we often read Lehi's account of his dream in terms of its content alone, studying what it has to say about his family in particular and, when read in the light of Nephi's later interpretive vision, about the world in general. As part of such a study we usually rely on Nephi's elucidating account to help us understand the specific meanings of particular symbols in Lehi's vision. But if we step back and take a wider view, exploring Lehi's account in light of what may be called *visionary literature*, we can better appreciate its literary quality and glean insights that may have eluded us before.

Examples of literary forms such as narrative, poetry, and epistles appear throughout the Book of Mormon. But visionary literature is a different form with its own set of characteristics. Leland Ryken, a noted scholar in the field of the Bible as literature, has defined visionary literature as "pictur[ing] settings, characters, and events that differ from ordinary reality. This is not to say that the things described in visionary literature did not happen in past history or will not happen in future history. But it does mean that the things as pictured by the writer at the time of writing exist in the imagination, not in empirical reality."[3] Ryken continues in his book to identify characteristics of visionary literature, and in the process he shows this literary form to be worthy of serious scholarly attention in the analysis of ancient texts. Other scholars in his field tend to treat visionary parts of the Bible as distinctive, identifiable pieces rather than view them collectively as a broad literary form with particular elements.[4] My purpose in looking at Ryken's work is not to suggest that there was a predetermined format for accounts of visions to which Lehi's dream had to conform, but rather to help us better gauge its literary richness and see important aspects of his dream that we might otherwise miss.

Otherness

The first element of visionary literature Ryken discusses is "the element of otherness." Visionary literature, he explains, "transforms the known world or the present state of things into a situation that at the time of writing is as yet only imagined. In one way or another, visionary literature takes us to a strange world where ordinary rules of reality no longer prevail."[5] For instance, Lehi's vision depicts a world that is other than our own, a world in which simply eating fruit fills one's "soul with exceedingly great joy"—not with the momentary pleasure of having hunger abated, but with a powerful emotion that is intimately connected to "the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men" and is "the most desirable above all things" and "the most joyous to the soul" (1 Nephi 8:12; 11:22, 23). It is a world in which a rod of iron exists not in the center of a city or as a railing in some large building, but in the middle of a wilderness. Grasping it guides one along a narrow path to the tree that bears the miraculous fruit. Mists are described not as mists of water or fog but as mists of darkness and are

"the temptations of the devil" (1 Nephi 12:17).[6] Also improbably situated in a wilderness, a "great and spacious building" apparently stands "in the air, high above the earth" (1 Nephi 8:26).[7]

In Lehi's dream most components are imaginative, which is not to say fantastic, or completely separated from reality.[8] Of course, there are men in white robes, as well as trees, fruit, wildernesses, paths, and even rods of iron. But these elements as parts of Lehi's vision are not intended to correspond to specific objects in the time and space we call reality. They are symbols. And, as is often the case with symbols, they have their counterparts in reality. This vision, however, is concerned with the meaning conveyed by the symbols. For example, the mist of darkness in Lehi's dream may very well resemble the "heavy mists and fog [that] at times blanket the coasts of Arabia during the monsoon season,"[9] and knowing this adds to our appreciation of the dream's imagery—yet the mist that is in the dream conveys the temptations of the devil rather than any climatic phenomenon. By contrast, when Lehi sees his family in his vision, he is seeing something whose meaning is directly and irrevocably dependent upon the reality of the individuals actually existing in his family. The image of Laman that Lehi sees in his dream gets its meaning from the Laman who is his son. If there were no mists along the coasts of Arabia, then the symbolic mist of Lehi's vision would still retain its meaning; if, however, Lehi had no family in reality, then the image of Laman that he saw would completely change in significance and meaning, and we would lose the power of Lehi's fatherly concern and love for his son.

Low-lying mists reminiscent of Lehi's dream blanket the mountain landscape in Yemen. Photo courtesy of Kim Clark.

Transformation and Reversal

"The motifs of transformation and reversal are prominent in visionary literature, and they lead to this principle of interpretation: *in visionary literature, be ready for the reversal of ordinary reality.*"[10] Ryken's second element does not mean that reality itself is reversed, that up is down and white is black. Instead, what seems to be the event that will naturally take place actually does not. For example, a powerful army is unexpectedly defeated, or a beautiful, appealing scene ends up being a terrible place full of horrors.

An excellent example of reversal occurs when Lehi finds himself in "a dark and dreary wilderness," a guide in a white robe appears, and Lehi follows him to "a dark and dreary waste" (see 1 Nephi 8:4–7). We expect Lehi's guide to bring him to a place of light and safety, but instead the prophet is taken to yet another dark and dreary place. What kind of deliverance figure, clothed in the powerful symbol of a white robe, would take a prophet from one dark place to another? An additional reversal happens when Lehi, apparently without leaving the dark and dreary waste, beholds the tree and the beautiful fruit that brings great joy. We would not normally think that such a scene of hope and salvation could be viewed from within such a foreboding locale.

Later in the dream, it makes sense that some people appear, yet they never make it to the tree, and they end up wandering off and getting lost. It is quite a reversal, however, to learn that there are others who partake of the fruit but still lose their way: "And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost" (1 Nephi 8:28). Up to this point in the vision, all those who have partaken of the fruit—namely, Lehi, Sariah, Sam, and Nephi—have not fallen away, yet these other people do.

Above: People holding fast to the iron rod as they approach the mist of darkness. Illustration by Jerry Thompson, © IRI. Left: *Lehi in the Wilderness*, by Marwan Nahle, © IRI. Courtesty of the Museum of Church History and Art.

Another reversal of people being lost takes place when the mist of darkness arises: "It came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost" (1 Nephi 8:23). We assume that people who are making their way along the path are carefully holding on to the iron rod (otherwise, there would be no purpose for it). Note that the path is visible; people do not need the rod to guide them. The rod becomes necessary when the mist arises because people can no longer see the path. Yet despite our expectation that people will make it safely through the mist by holding on to the rod, somehow they become lost.

When we examine it closer, we see that the entire dream, in fact, is one extended reversal because what begins with a solitary man in a dark and dreary waste—a bleak, empty setting with absolutely nothing to picture other than the man—ends up as a dream full of images: a large building crowded with people in "exceedingly fine" clothing, a path, a rod of iron, a mist of darkness, bodies of water, forbidden paths, a tree with its sweet white fruit, and "numberless concourses" of people.

Transcendental Realms

While visionary literature often deals with "the other"—with people and events not of this world—it frequently portrays this otherness as transcendent. This literature puts forth a place that is not simply different but above and beyond the here and now of the person seeing the vision. Ryken explains:

> The element of transcendence is pervasive in visionary literature, and it, too, can be formulated as a principle: *when reading visionary literature, be prepared to use your imagination to picture a world that transcends earthly reality.* Visionary literature assaults a purely mundane mindset; in fact, this is one of its main purposes.
>
> The strangeness in visionary literature extends to both scenes and actors. The scene is cosmic, not localized.[11]

Top: *The Vision of Ezekiel*, by Paul Falconer Poole. Tate Gallery, London/Art Resource, NY. Bottom: *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*, by Robert Barrett. © 1986 Robert Barrett—do not copy

In fact, the world of the vision of the tree of life is cosmic. This is not just a tree with delicious fruit; it is the tree of life whose fruit can bring "exceedingly great joy" to a person's soul. The path in Lehi's dream represents the way to eternal life, the rod stands for the word of God, and one body of water symbolizes the depths of hell. The great and spacious building is not merely an edifice, but "the world and the wisdom thereof" (1 Nephi 11:35) and the "vain imaginations and the pride of the children

of men" (1 Nephi 12:18). In light of Nephi's vision, which came to him after he asked to see what his father, Lehi, had seen, Lehi's dream of the tree of life can be seen as much more than the journey of one man who is concerned for his two rebellious sons. The vision is of cosmic significance, entailing the rise and fall of a great civilization and extending from Lehi's camp to the entire world and its ultimate future. Above all, the vision reveals the Son of God—his birth, life, and death.

The Imagination

The "visionary strangeness" of this type of literature leads to "a related rule for reading it: *visionary literature is a form of fantasy literature in which readers must be willing to exercise their imaginations in picturing unfamiliar scenes and agents.*"[12] While the imagery of the tree of life vision is much less fantastic than that of the book of Revelation, it nonetheless invokes the reader's imagination. For example, readers know that the tree may look somewhat like trees with which they are familiar, but the image of Lehi's tree is not limited by their experience. What shape does the tree of life take? Specific trees are mentioned in the Book of Mormon, such as fir trees and cedars (see 2 Nephi 24:8) and olive trees (see Jacob 5), but the tree of life is not identified as a specific type of tree found in the real world. And what about the tree's purely white fruit? What is its texture, and how does it taste? Once again, we are not given any details or names of fruit with

Lehi partakes of the white fruit, which "filled [his] soul with exceedingly great joy" (1 Nephi 8:12). Illustration by Jerry Thompson, © IRI.

which we are familiar, but we are left to exercise our imagination. Most of us know what a mist of water looks and feels like, but what is a mist of darkness? And how does a building stand with no foundation under it?[13] If the building is not touching the ground, how do people enter it? The vision asks us to imagine things and events and places that may have some relationship to what we experience but remain fundamentally unfamiliar.

Kaleidoscopic Structure

One of the most striking aspects of the tree of life vision is how it is not confined by any smooth continuity of images. Such visions typically do not begin at the beginning and then seamlessly flow through the middle to the end, but they are disconnected at times, with distinct components. As Ryken notes:

> The element of the unexpected extends even to the structure of visionary literature. I will call it a kaleidoscopic structure. It consists of brief units, always shifting and never in focus for very long. Its effects are similar to those of some modern films. . . . Visionary elements, moreover, may be mingled with realistic scenes and events.
>
> This disjointed method of proceeding places tremendous demands on the reader and is the thing that makes such literature initially resistant to a literary approach. The antidote to this frustration is a basic principle of interpretation: *instead of looking for the smooth flow of narrative, be prepared for a disjointed series of diverse, self-contained units.*
>
> Dream, and not narrative, is the model that visionary literature in the Bible follows. Of what do dreams consist? Momentary pictures, fleeting impressions, characters and scenes that play their brief part and then drop out of sight, abrupt jumps from one action to another. This is exactly what we find in visionary literature.[14]

"The ancients recognized both dreams and visions but frequently used the terms interchangeably."[15] It is not surprising, then, that Lehi calls this vision a *dream*, and it is the qualities of dream, rather than those of narrative, that dominate the account.

Lehi's dream can be divided into three fundamental experiences: that of Lehi (see 1 Nephi

Lehi beckons others to taste the precious fruit of the tree of life.
Lehi's Dream, © David Lindsley—do not copy.

8:5–13), his family (see vv. 14–18), and the world (see vv. 19–33). However, the dream can be further studied in terms of individual components that dominate the structure of the vision (see accompanying chart).[16]

Elements of the vision often seem to suddenly appear, without any hint of prior awareness of them and with no foreshadowing in the text. For example, Lehi is standing next to the tree of life but does not see the river until he is looking for his family, even though the river is next to the tree by which he is standing: "As I cast my eyes round about, that perhaps I might discover my family also, I beheld a river of water; and it ran along, and it was near the tree of which I was partaking the fruit" (1 Nephi 8:13). Also, after Lehi, Sariah, Sam, and Nephi partake of the fruit, and Laman and Lemuel do not, Lehi sees the rod of iron: "It came to pass that I saw [Laman and Lemuel], but they would not come unto me and partake of the fruit. And I beheld a rod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river, and led to the tree by which I stood" (1 Nephi 8:18–19). The rod, which is such a crucial element

of the vision from that point on, does not even exist for Lehi and his family when they are making their way to the tree. (One might argue that perhaps the rod exists but Lehi simply does not see it. However, this is a dream—a vision—not reality. If the viewer of the vision does not see something in the vision, then it does not exist as a part of the vision.)

Though Lehi earlier saw the river, he apparently did not see the rod of iron that runs alongside it nor the "strait and narrow path, which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which [he] stood" (1 Nephi 8:20). In the real world it would be difficult to stand beside a tree and miss a river that is next to it as well as the rod and path that lead up to it. But considering the kaleidoscopic nature of a dreamlike vision, it makes sense that elements of the experience would appear at different times regardless of how close they are to one another in this visionary world.

The groups of people in the vision are also like separate scenes from a movie. They never overlap—we do not see some of one group making it to the tree while others in the same group fall away. Everyone in the first group wanders off before arriving at the tree. Everyone in the second group completes his or her journey to the tree, partakes of the fruit, and then falls away after being negatively influenced by people in the building. Even the final cluster of people is composed of separate, distinct groups that never mingle with one another. One group holds to the rod and partakes of the fruit, one group feels its way to the building, one group drowns in the fountain, and one group wanders in strange roads. It is as though each group is in a separate scene, independent of one another yet part of the same dream.

The chart not only illustrates how the vision can be divided into components, but also indicates their structure. Though the vision itself has a cinematic feel to it at times, moving from one component to another, each component possesses standard narrative elements:

> Individual units normally consist of the usual narrative elements of scene, agent, action, and outcome. The corresponding questions to ask of individual passages are:
>
> 1. *Where* does the action occur?
> 2. *Who* are the actors?
> 3. *What* do they do?
> 4. What is the *result*?[17]

No.	Verse	Setting	People	Action/Outcome
1	4–6	a dark and dreary wilderness	Lehi, man in white robe	Lehi sees the wilderness, and a man in a white robe tells the prophet to follow him.
2	7–8	a dark and dreary waste	Lehi, man in white robe	Lehi follows the man and finds himself in a dark and dreary waste. He travels for many hours in darkness and eventually prays to the Lord for mercy.
3	9–12	a large and spacious field, near a tree	Lehi	After he prays, Lehi sees a large and spacious field. He goes to a tree and eats its fruit. The fruit fills his soul with great joy, and he wants to share it with his family.
4	13–16	near a tree, at the head of a river	Lehi, Sariah, Sam, Nephi	As he looks for his family, Lehi sees a river near the tree. He then sees Sariah, Sam, and Nephi and invites them to partake of the fruit. They go to him and eat the fruit.
5	17–18	at the head of a river	Lehi, Laman, Lemuel	Lehi wants Laman and Lemuel to partake of the fruit, but they neither go to him nor eat the fruit.
6	19–23	a rod of iron, a riverbank, a path	Lehi, numberless concourses of people	Lehi sees a rod of iron and a strait and narrow path. The rod leads to the tree and by the head of the fountain to a large and spacious field that is like a world. He sees large numbers of people trying to make their way to the path. They commence along the path, but a mist of darkness arises and they wander off the path and become lost.
7	24–28	a path, a tree, a great and spacious building, forbidden paths	Lehi, other people	Lehi sees others hold to the rod, make their way through the mist of darkness, and eventually partake of the fruit. Afterward, they look about and are ashamed. He sees the great and spacious building on the other side of the river, apparently high above the earth, full of prideful people who mock those who have partaken of the fruit. The people who have partaken of the fruit fall away into forbidden paths and are lost.
8	29	Nephi's place of writing	Nephi, Lehi	Nephi records that he is not writing everything his father recounted.
9	30	a path, a tree	Lehi, group of people	Nephi records that Lehi saw people hold to the rod and make it to the tree, where they partook of the fruit.
10	31	a great and spacious building	Lehi, group of people	Nephi records that Lehi saw people pressing[1] their way to the building.
11	32	the depths of a fountain, strange roads	Lehi, group of people	Nephi records that Lehi saw people who drowned in the fountain and others who were lost from his view as they traveled strange roads.
12	33	a great and spacious building	Lehi, group of people	Nephi records that many people entered into the building and mocked those who had partaken of the fruit.

COMPONENTS OF LEHI'S VISION OF THE TREE OF LIFE
1 NEPHI 8

The components listed in the chart are not incoherent slices of the vision; they possess distinct story elements. For example, it may not make narrative sense to us why the rod of iron is not apparent throughout the vision, but it works perfectly in the scenes in which it does occur. And the distinct groups that Lehi sees, within their own isolated scenes of finite action structured around key story elements, make sense to us even though we live in a world of infinite combinations of people who do an infinite number of things.

Symbolism

Another important component of visionary literature is symbolism. While such literature borrows its story qualities from narrative, Ryken notes that "it makes even more use of the resources of poetry" by adopting "the technique of symbolism. In fact, it is symbolic through and through, a point that cannot be overstated."[18] Just as symbolism is the "basic literary mode used in Revelation,"[19] so is it in the literary account of Lehi's vision of the tree of life. That vision has been called "one of the richest, most flexible, and far-reaching pieces of symbolic prophecy contained in the standard works."[20] As we would expect, Lehi does not refer to what he sees as symbols and does not explain their meanings. However, from Nephi's account of his own vision of the tree of life, we know that Lehi's vision features many symbols, such as the tree representing the love of God, the path symbolizing the way to eternal life, the rod corresponding to the word of God, and the mist depicting the temptations of the devil.

It should be remembered, though, that visionary literature is "heavily symbolic but rarely pictorial."[21] The symbols are meant to convey images of meaning, not necessarily pictures. For example, when we read the story of Nephi breaking his bow, it is not difficult to create a mental picture that appears realistic. However, when we attempt to picture Lehi's vision of the tree of life, we quickly become confused about where things are supposed to be and what they should look like. How many bodies of water are there? Which body of water runs alongside what other element of the vision? How does the building hover in the air? Is the path straight, or does it meander as we would imagine the river doing? What makes a path "forbidden," and how is it marked or portrayed so that people know it is

forbidden? Or does Lehi simply know intuitively of the forbidden nature of these paths? Though Lehi's vision is full of imagery that we can see in our minds, we can conclude that the purpose of the vision is not chiefly pictorial. We can imagine what we need to imagine, but if we try to be too precise we lose the sweeping grandeur of the vision and are caught up in details that cannot be worked out.

How symbolism corresponds to reality is also important to consider. Many may suppose that if a passage is visionary, it contains meaning but does not correspond to actual people, places, objects, or events, now or in the future.[22] This is understand-

Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life, Aberlardo Lovendino. Courtesy of the Museum of Church History and Art.

able since it makes sense, for example, to accept the meaning of the tree of life as the love of God while rejecting the notion that there is an actual tree of life somewhere whose fruit literally fills the partaker with joy. But the fact that visionary literature is symbolic does not change its possible relationship with reality. Individual symbols may not correspond directly to artifacts in time and space, but

the meaning assigned to them may. The events may even be historical, and then the question becomes how the writer describes history.[23] As Ryken suggests, the "corresponding question we need to ask of visionary literature in the Bible is a further principle of interpretation: *of what historical event or theological reality or event in salvation history does this passage seem to be a symbolic version?*"[24]

In Lehi's dream, the fruit of the tree symbolizes the love of God and the Atonement, both of which actually exist. The path represents a way of life that leads to eternal life—a way of life that actually exists. While the images in Lehi's dream certainly represent these important meanings, it is mainly through studying Nephi's vision of the tree of life that we can best understand how specific historical events are symbolized in his father's dream.

In his study of the vision of the tree of life, Corbin T. Volluz explains how Nephi's account of his own vision may confirm that Lehi's vision corresponds to actual events.[25] Of course, his approach to Lehi's dream is not the only possible interpretation of how the dream and Nephi's vision may relate to each other, but it is a careful study that warrants serious attention. The elements of Lehi's vision, which include the tree of life, fruit, river of water, rod of iron, different groups of people, and the great and spacious building, can be seen in Nephi's vision of the Lord's mortal ministry and the apostasy that follows (see 1 Nephi 11). In succeeding chapters (see 1 Nephi 12–14), the vision's elements are somewhat separated from one another and linked to different future events. The first group of people in Lehi's dream (those who make some progress but then lose their way after the mists of darkness arise) may correspond to the Nephites who are destroyed for their wickedness before the Savior visits their civilization (see 1 Nephi 12:1–4). The second group (those who hold to the rod, partake of the fruit, but fall away because of the mocking of the people in the great and spacious building) may represent the Nephites who survive the mist of darkness and destruction at the Savior's crucifixion and partake of the spiritual fruit when the risen Savior ministers to them but whose descendants eventually fall away because of pride (see 1 Nephi 12:5–23). While there does not seem to be any element in Lehi's vision that corresponds to the next segment of Nephi's vision—the establishing of the abominable church, removing important parts of the scriptures, the founding of the United States, and the coming forth of latter-day scripture (see 1 Nephi 13)—Volluz believes the lack of corresponding scenes could be because a portion of Lehi's vision was not recorded: "I, Nephi, do not speak all the words of my father" (1 Nephi 8:29). And the third group of people in Lehi's dream, who are divided between the righteous who partake of the fruit and remain faithful and the wicked who feel their way toward the building, drown in the depths of the fountain, or become lost on forbidden paths, may relate to Nephi's vision of the division in the last days between the two churches: the church

of the Lamb of God and the church of the devil (see 1 Nephi 14).

Volluz's reading of Lehi's vision of the tree of life, in light of the corresponding chapters of Nephi's vision, clearly supports the argument that the vision possesses a key attribute of visionary literature: a symbolic representation of important historical events, theological realities, or events in salvation history. We can interpret Lehi's vision as being concerned with his immediate family, his descendants, the house of Israel, and, in fact, the entire world and the last days.

One more future historical event is part of the vision of the tree of life but is not included in either account: the end of the world. In his vision, Nephi sees John the Revelator and is told that John "shall see and write the remainder of these things; yea, and also many things which have been. And he shall also write concerning the end of the world" (1 Nephi 14:21–22). In other words, Nephi is stopped from giving a complete account of his vision because it includes the end of the world, and the Savior has chosen John to write about that in the book of Revelation.[26]

The presence of John the Revelator in Nephi's vision adds another element of historical reality to the vision. The way in which Nephi describes his vision of John is significant to the beginning of Lehi's vision: "I looked and beheld a man, and he was dressed in a white robe" (1 Nephi 14:19). Nephi's prophetic vision, which forms an interpretation of his father's dream, drawing out its apocalyptic nature, now comes full circle, ending where his father's dream began (see 1 Nephi 8:5). Though there have been other interpretations of whom the man in the white robe represents in Lehi's dream, from a messenger to a Christ-figure to Moses, I believe that John the Revelator is one important possibility.

Pursuing this idea, we find John greeting Lehi at the beginning of his vision and serving as his guide, taking him to the point when Lehi can turn directly to the Lord and see a vision that can be understood to concern not just his family, or even his descendants, but also the entire world and its ultimate destiny. Thus, when reading 1 Nephi 14:25—"The Lord God hath ordained the apostle of the Lamb of God [John] that he should write [of the apocalypse]"—we are not surprised that the Lord would appoint the man he ordained for that

Lehi's Dream, by David Hyrum Smith. Courtesy of Community of Christ Archives, Independence, Missouri.

purpose to begin and end the vision of the tree of life in the Book of Mormon. Lehi and Nephi may have experienced more in their visions than they recorded. For example, perhaps they both saw the man in the white robe at the beginning and end of their respective visions. However, if we consider what we do know from the record the Book of Mormon offers, it becomes significant that the man who appears at the beginning of Lehi's account could also be the one appearing at the end of Nephi's, thus emphasizing the relatedness of the two accounts.

The Book of Mormon is a work of sacred literature. In particular, the vision of the tree of life is a striking example of visionary literature, with most of its elements pointing to the very heart of the vision, Jesus Christ. It is significant that this important vision is related early in the book, for, as Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has written, "at the very outset of the Book of Mormon, in its first fully developed allegory, Christ is portrayed as the source of eternal life and joy, the living evidence of divine love, and the means whereby God will fulfill his covenant with the house of Israel and indeed the entire family of man, returning them to all their eternal promises."[27]

Ancient Steel Sword Unearthed

The November/December 2005 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* contains a summary of the final reports of excavation work at biblical Ekron (see Seymour Gitin, "Excavating Ekron: Major Philistine City Survived by Absorbing Other Cultures," 40–56).

Ekron, located only some 22 miles southwest of Jerusalem, was last destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 604 BC. Thus it predates the Book of Mormon record. Of special interest is an ivory-handled "dagger" or short sword. By the size of the adult hand holding it (see the accompanying photo), the blade is 12 to 16 inches in length. This metal must technically be described as steel rather than iron. Smelting anciently relied upon charcoal, which infused substantial amounts of carbon into the iron as the ore was smelted and the bloom was worked, producing a carbon steel. (Compare 1 Nephi 4:9, although "most precious" here might well indicate meteoric iron/nickel. Forged steel was more common in the ancient Near East in general and in Israel by Lehi's time than many have imagined.)

While at one time Israelites apparently were restricted from or dependent upon the Philistines for iron tools (see 1 Samuel 13:19–22), attempts to maintain such a monopoly over technologies such as iron metallurgy inevitably gave way through the process of cultural diffusion. The article's author acknowledges that such cultural processes existed between Philistine and Israelite communities:

> There is no evidence that olive oil had been produced at Ekron prior to the seventh century B.C.E., indicating that the industrial know-how had to be imported. The most obvious source was Ekron's neighbor Judah, where the technology for producing olive oil had been well known for centuries. As we have come to expect, Ekron Philistines absorbed their olive-oil production expertise from their neighbor but adapted it to their own methods, thereby developing a new economic culture. (pp. 53–54)

Reported by Gordon C. Thomasson

Philistine short sword from ancient Ekron. © 2006 Corbis

Another Gold Book Found

In October 2005, police in Tehran, the capital of Iran, recovered a number of artifacts that a farmer had found while plowing a field and then had sold to smugglers. Among the objects was a book comprising eight gold sheets inscribed in cuneiform script, which was used in much of the ancient Near East. The sheets were bound by four small rings passing through holes in the sheets, in the same fashion as an ancient Etruscan gold book found in Bulgaria in 2003 (see "Etruscan Gold Book from 600 BC Discovered," *Insights* 23/5, 2003) and the plates of the Book of Mormon (see the description in *History of the Church*, 4:537).

The book is from the Achaemenid period, which began in the mid-sixth century BC. One of its most prominent rulers was Cyrus the Great, who conquered the Babylonian Empire in 539 BC and allowed the Jews taken captive by the Babylonians to return home two years later. The Etruscan book has been dated to the time of Lehi, circa 600 BC. For a report on this latest find, go to http://www.cais-soas.com/News/2005/October2005/11-10.htm (accessed 21 February 2006).

Similar in format and date to the Book of Mormon record, the two ancient records shown here are written on gold plates held together by rings. Above: A diminutive gold book from Bulgaria dating to 600 BC. It comprises six pages (5 x 4.5 cm each, 23.82 karat gold) and contains text written in Etruscan characters. AFP/Getty Images. Left: The gold book recovered in Tehran features cuneiform script and dates to the mid-sixth century BC. © 1998 CAIS (www.cais-soas.com).

ENDNOTES

"For the Sum of Three Thousand Dollars"
Susan Easton Black
 and Larry C. Porter

1. *History of the Church*, 1:71.
2. Ivan J. Barrett, *Joseph Smith and the Restoration: A History of the Church to 1846* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 1973), 114. For a more complete account of this sequence, see Larry C. Porter, "Book of Mormon, Printing and Publication of," in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 134–39.
3. Martin Harris, son of Nathan Harris and Rhoda Lapham, was born on 18 May 1783 in Easttown, Saratoga County, New York.
4. Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1867), 49–50.
5. Ontario County New York Deeds, book 6, 45.
6. Lucy, daughter of Rufus and Lucy Harris, was born on 1 May 1792 in Palmyra (Deposition of Martin Harris, Service Pension, War of 1812, 24 April 1871, National Archives, Washington DC).
7. Ontario County New York Deeds, 5 October 1813, book 19, 506–8; 4 January 1814, book 20, 327; 9 December 1814, book 10, 514–15; see "Old Newspapers—No. 24," *Palmyra Courier*, 24 May 1872. This particular 150 acres became significant in Martin's later settlement of the debt owed Grandin for publishing the Book of Mormon. Pomeroy Tucker stated: "The main farm and homestead, about one hundred and fifty acres of land, was retained by himself, the mortgage covering only this portion. . . . The farm mortgaged was sold by Harris in 1831 at private sale, not by

foreclosure, and a sufficiency of the avails went to pay Grandin—though it is presumed Harris might have paid the $3,000 without the sale of the farm" (Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism*, 54–55).
8. *Ontario Repository*, 29 October 1822; see *Ontario Repository*, 11 November 1823 and *Wayne Sentinel*, 10 November 1824.
9. *Palmyra Courier*, 24 May 1872.
10. Rhett S. James, "Harris, Martin," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:574.
11. Thomas Gregg, *The Prophet of Palmyra* (New York: J. B. Alden, 1890), 37.
12. *History of the Church*, 1:19.
13. Lucy Mack Smith, History rough manuscript, 1844–1845, book 6, 6, MS, Family and Church History Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter Church Archives); Lucy Mack Smith, "The History of Lucy Smith Mother of the Prophet, 1844–1845," 121, MS, Church Archives.
14. See Madge Harris Tuckett and Belle Harris Wilson, *The Martin Harris Story* (Provo, UT: Press Publishing, 1983), 20. David Aldrich was reported to have sold Joseph Smith "his first decent suit of clothes" while employed as a clerk in a Palmyra dry goods store (Thomas L. Cook, *Palmyra and Vicinity* [Palmyra, NY: Press of the Palmyra Courier-Journal, 1930], 125).
15. Polly was the widow of Freeman Cobb, who drowned on 19 December 1821 in Lake Ontario. She and her children lived in the home with Martin and Lucy Harris until she remarried in July 1828. See *Geneva Gazette*, 3 June 1812.
16. Smith, History rough manuscript, book 6, 4, MS; see Smith, "History of Lucy Smith Mother of the Prophet,"

118–19, MS. Lucy Mack Smith wrote of Lucy Harris: "Her husband permitted her to keep [a private purse] to satisfy her peculiar disposition."
17. William H. Homer, "The Passing of Martin Harris," *Improvement Era*, March 1955, 146.
18. E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 261.
19. John A. Clark, *Episcopal Recorder* 18 (1840): 94, as cited in Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 169.
20. Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism*, 40.
21. *History of the Church*, 1:21.
22. Smith, History rough manuscript, book 7, 6, MS.
23. Smith, "History of Lucy Smith Mother of the Prophet," 134, MS.
24. Lucy Smith spoke of the missing manuscript with some certainty. She declared, "The manuscript has never been found; and there is no doubt but Mrs. Harris took it from the drawer, with the view of retaining it, until another translation should be given, then, to alter the original translation, for the purpose of showing a discrepancy between them" (Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* [Liverpool: Published by O. Pratt, by S. W. Richards, 1853], 123). There were also rumors that Lucy Harris burned the manuscript. "[Lucy Harris] says she burned them up," reported Lorenzo Saunders, a neighbor of the Smith family. "And there was no mistake, but she did. They never was found; never came to light. . . . & she never denied of burning the papers" (E. L. Kelley Papers, Community

of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri). This rumor has persisted. Hugh W. Nibley, for example, related that Rebecca Neibaur Nibley, daughter of Alexander Neibaur, was very close to Martin Harris's second wife, Caroline Young Harris. Caroline told Rebecca that "Lucy Harris was so mad that she took the 116 pages and threw them in the fire." Rebecca related this event to Hugh Nibley's mother, Agnes Sloan Nibley, who then repeated it to Hugh (statement by Hugh Nibley in a personal interview with Larry C. Porter, Provo, Utah, 11 December 1997).
25. *History of the Church*, 1:21.
26. Smith, "History of Lucy Smith Mother of the Prophet," 134, MS.
27. Lucy Mack Smith wrote, "This was the first time that a suit was ever brought before any court which affected any of my Children." Smith, History rough manuscript, book 8, 6, MS; Smith, "History of Lucy Smith Mother of the Prophet," 146, MS. Apparently, at this writing she failed to recall an Ontario County Court of Common Pleas case, May Term 1819, in which Jeremiah Hurlburt, plaintiff, brought suit against Joseph Smith Sr. and Alvin Smith, defendants, recorded 26 June 1819, photocopy in Church Archives. There was also an 1826 hearing in South Bainbridge, Chenango County, New York, involving Joseph Jr. See bill of Justice Albert Neely to Chenango County for conducting the 20 March 1826 hearing, "same [i.e., The People] vs Joseph Smith," located in the office of the county supervisor, Chenango County Office Building, Norwich, New York. See also Gordon Madsen, "Joseph Smith's

1826 Trial: The Legal Setting," *BYU Studies* 30 (Spring 1990): 91–108.

28. Smith, "History of Lucy Smith Mother of the Prophet," 147–48, MS; see Smith, History rough manuscript, book 8, 6–7, MS.

29. John H. Gilbert, "Memorandum, made by John H. Gilbert Esq, Sept 8th, 1892," King's Daughters' Free Library, Palmyra, New York.

30. Harriet A. Weed, *Autobiography of Thurlow Weed* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1884), 1:359; see Paul Benton, "Rochester Journalism," in *Centennial History of Rochester, New York: Volume 2, Home Builders*, ed. Edward R. Foreman (Rochester, NY: Board of Trustees of the Rochester Public Library, 1932), 108.

31. Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism*, 4.

32. Wayne County Mortgages Book, 3:325–26. Stephen S. Harding, later territorial governor of Utah, recalled that it was "truly phenomenal" that Martin "should abandon the cultivation of one of the best farms in the neighborhood, and change all his habits of life from industry to indolence" (S. S. Harding to Thomas Gregg, February 1882, as cited in Gregg, *Prophet of Palmyra*, 37).

33. Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery, 22 October 1829, Joseph Smith Papers, Church Archives.

34. Agreement between Joseph Smith Jr. and Martin Harris, 16 January 1830, Simon Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Some have supposed that this 1830 agreement was between Harris and Joseph Smith Sr. rather than Joseph Jr.; however, Richard Lloyd Anderson and Scott H. Faulring have conclusively demonstrated that the agreement was indeed with Joseph Smith Jr. (see volume 1 of Anderson and Faulring's forthcoming publication *The Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery: Witness of the Second Elder*).

35. Manuscripts of Charles Butler, Library of Congress, as cited in Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 101.

36. Hiram Page to "Wm" (apparently William E. McLellin), 2 February 1848, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri; see David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ, By A Witness to the Divine Authenticity of The Book of Mormon* (Richmond, MO, 1887), 30–31. Several details related to the trip to Canada are unclear, such as the exact date and who actually made the journey. David Whitmer indicated decades later that Oliver Cowdery and Hiram Page went by themselves. Hiram Page did not mention Martin's debt as a factor in the attempt to sell the copyright in Canada.

37. *Wayne Sentinel*, 19 March 1831.

38. Wayne County New York Deeds, 29 November 1825, book 5, 530–32. No records of any divorce proceedings have been found. According to her grave marker in Palmyra, Lucy Harris died at age 44 (sometime between 1 May 1836 and 30 April 1837). Martin married Caroline Young on 1 November 1836 (presumably after Lucy's death). Caroline, the daughter of John and Theodocia Young, was born on 17 May 1816 at Hector, Schuyler County, New York.

39. Dean C. Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," *BYU Studies* 17/1 (1976): 36–37.

40. Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism*, 60–61.

41. William Alexander Linn, *The Story of the Mormons* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), 48.

42. N. W. Howell and others to Rev. Ancil Beach, January 1832, Walter Hubbell Collection, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ; copy in Church Archives.

43. Thomas Lakey owned a blacksmith shop and a wagon shop and often bought and sold real estate. A cursory survey of the Index to Grantees, Wayne County, New York, 1823–1869, indicates that Lakey was involved in some 68 land purchases and 45 sales, with additional sales being handled by his heirs after his death.

44. Wayne County New York Deeds, 7 April 1831, book 10, 515–16.

45. Wayne County New York Deeds, 28 January 1832, book 11, 128–29.

46. Certification of Thomas Rogers, 28 January 1832, recorded 8 February 1832 by Cullen Foster, Wayne County deputy clerk. See Minor T. Patton, "How it was that my great-grandmother's gold paid for the printing of the first edition of the Book of Mormon," typescript, Church Archives, 1–6; Wayne Cutler Gunnell, "Martin Harris—Witness and Benefactor to the Book of Mormon" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1955), 37–39; Tuckett and Wilson, *Martin Harris Story*, 49–50; and Wayne County New York Deeds, book 11, 128–89. A copy of this agreement was obtained from Carl Lakey, son of Thomas Lakey, by Willard Bean. Bean sent the agreement to William Pilkington Jr. sometime after 24 July 1935.

47. *Palmyra Courier*, 31 May 1872.

48. *Wayne Sentinel*, 27 May 1831.

49. *Palmyra Courier*, 24 May 1872.

50. Edward Stevenson, "The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, 21 June 1886, 390.

"Upon All the Ships of the Sea, and Upon All the Ships of Tarshish": Revisiting 2 Nephi 12:16 and Isaiah 2:16

Dana M. Pike and
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1. We began discussing the topic of this article many years ago. Our determination to finish and publish this article was motivated, in part, by two relatively recent publications that employ Isaiah 2:16 // 2 Nephi 12:16 as part of their authors' efforts to raise questions about the means by which the Prophet Joseph Smith brought forth the Book of Mormon. These are David P. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 157–234; and Ronald V. Huggins, "'Without a Cause' and 'Ships of Tarshish': A Possible Contemporary Source for Two Unexplained Readings from Joseph Smith," *Dialogue* 36/1 (2003): 157–79. Compare David P. Wright, "Joseph Smith's Interpretation of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," *Dialogue* 31/4 (1998): 181–206.

2. For a convenient review of this data, see Victor L. Ludlow, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 344–45.

3. Recently published study aids for those who want to broaden and deepen their understanding of the content and function of the Isaiah quotations in the Book of Mormon include the entries on Isaiah in Dennis L. Largey, ed., *Book of Mormon Reference Companion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 340–400; and Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch, eds., *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998).

4. See for example, George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1955 [reprinted 1961]), 325–26; Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 141–42; Keith A. Meservy, "God Is with Us," in *1 Kings to Malachi*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Studies in Scripture, vol. 4; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 92; and Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, and Tina M. Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 32.

5. Ellis T. Rasmussen, *A Latter-day Saint Commentary on the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 505.

6. Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 91. Compare 91n3: "The Book of Mormon proves to be a valuable resource in restoring a more correct version of the original material." See similarly, W. Cleon Skousen, *Isaiah Speaks to Modern Times* (Salt Lake City: Ensign, 1984), 159, who states that 2 Nephi 12:16 "contains a remarkable demonstration of the integrity of the brass plates." See note 9 below for additional representative citations.

7. Sidney B. Sperry, *Our Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Steven & Wallace, 1947), 172–73. Compare *The Voice of Israel's Prophets* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1952), 90–91 (later reprinted with "1965" on the title page); *The Problems*

of the *Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 92–93 (republished by Bookcraft as *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions* [1967], 92–93); and *Book of Mormon Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 508. Sperry's first published note on the difference between Isaiah 2:16 and 2 Nephi 12:16, with no discussion, seems to have been in "The 'Isaiah Problem' in the Book of Mormon, Part II," *Ensign*, October, 1939, 594.

While Sperry's suggestion seems to neatly explain the discrepancy between Isaiah 2:16 and 2 Nephi 12:16, it is highly improbable from a text-critical perspective that the accidents of transmission he proposed for the verse in the MT and LXX would have worked out so nicely.

8. *Old Testament: 1 Kings–Malachi* (CES student manual for Brigham Young University's Religion 302 class), 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 140. Similarly in the third edition of this manual (2003), 140.

9. See, for example, Monte S. Nyman, *Great Are the Words of Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 33; and *I, Nephi, Wrote this Record* (Orem, UT: Granite, 2003), 550–51; Hoyt W. Brewster Jr., *Isaiah Plain and Simple: The Message of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 20; K. Douglas Bassett, comp., *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (American Fork, UT: Covenant, 1999), 131.

10. See also the similar statement in footnote 16a for Isaiah 2:16 in the Latter-day Saint edition of the KJV. Sperry's name is not cited in these footnotes to scripture, but we assume the footnotes were generated based on Sperry's publications.

11. Joseph Smith's study of Hebrew began in Kirtland, Ohio, in late 1835 (perhaps at least partially motivated by the acquisition in July 1835 of Egyptian mummies and the papyri with which the Book of Abraham is connected). Professor Joshua Seixas was hired to teach biblical Hebrew in Kirtland, Ohio, from 6 January to 29 March 1836. References to the study of Hebrew in Kirtland by Joseph Smith and other Church leaders are found in *History of the Church*, e.g., 2:385, 390, 396–97, 428. D. Kelly Ogden, "The Kirtland Hebrew School," in Milton V. Backman, ed., *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History, Ohio* (Provo, UT: BYU Department of Church History and Doctrine, 1990), 63–87, provides a convenient summary and discussion of this activity.

12. See also the assessment of John A. Tvedtnes, "Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah and the Prophets*, ed. Monte S. Nyman (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1984), 170, who, in speaking of Isaiah 2:16 // 2 Nephi 12:16, observed that "the matter is a very complex one." This publication by Tvedtnes is based on an earlier FARMS paper, "Isaiah Textual Variants in the Book of Mormon."

13. The verses in Isaiah 2:1–5 are generally thought to constitute the first portion of Isaiah 2, following the traditional paragraph break after verse 5 in the MT. However, the prophecy of the future temple and the millennial imagery ends in verse 4. Verse 5 serves as a transition and begins a multiverse invitation to the Lord's people to (re)turn from their worldly ways to the Lord's ways.

14. The name Jehovah is derived from the unvocalized Hebrew form *yhwh*, usually written YHWH in English. This name is vocalized as "Yahweh" by scholars. Latter-day Saints are essentially unique in the Christian world in claiming that most biblical references to Jehovah designate Jesus (God the Son), *not* God the Father: "Jehovah is the premortal Jesus Christ and came to earth as a son of Mary" (Guide to the Scriptures, s.v. "Jehovah," at http://scriptures.lds.org/gsj/jehovah, accessed 10 March 2006).

Scriptures and statements by latter-day Church leaders indicate that the expression "the day of the Lord" usually (ultimately) designates Jesus's second coming. In addition to the citations in the Topical Guide in the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Bible, s.v. "Day of the Lord," see, for example, Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 1:173: "Elijah was to bring back to the earth his priesthood and restore to men the power to seal on earth and in heaven, so that mankind might have means of escape from the destruction which awaited the wicked in that great and dreadful day of the Lord. This great and dreadful day can be no other time than the coming of Jesus Christ to establish his kingdom in power on the earth, and to cleanse it from all iniquity." Compare Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 4:367–68.

15. There is not sufficient space here to deal with the several differences between the KJV and the Book of Mormon in this block of text. For a discussion of these differences see the various Latter-day Saint commentaries on Isaiah (cited above, notes 2–9). See also, Tvedtnes, "Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon," 169–70; and Royal Skousen, "Textual Variants in the Isaiah Quotations in the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 369–90.

16. See the poetic format of these verses suggested by Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted According to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992), 77–78.

17. 2 Nephi 12 is not preserved on what survives of the original manuscript. The current printed text is based on the printer's manuscript. See Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001), 185–86; and *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001), 188. The JST of Isaiah 2:16 is essentially the same as the text of 2 Nephi 12:16. See Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2004), 787.

18. In its simplest form, "parallelism" designates a relationship between two poetic lines. When they are "synonymous," the lines say essentially the same thing using different words. With antithetic parallelism, an opposition is expressed between the content of the two lines (see, e.g., Proverbs 15:5).

19. Note how the first two sets of parallel pairs—cedars//oaks and mountains//hills—are part of the natural world (vv. 13–14), while the second two pairs—tower//wall and ships//pictures—are human-made (vv. 15–16) but sourced from materials that come from the first two pairs. The order of the natural elements is inverted when they are represented in forms of human manufacture.

20. For a discussion of these issues, see Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 21–79. See also, for example, "Masoretic Text," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:597–99; and "Masoretic Text," in the Bible Dictionary in the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Bible, 729.

21. For a transliteration and photographs, see *The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaᵃ): A New Edition*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Elisha Qimron (Boston: Brill, 1999), 5. In designations such as 1QIsaᵃ or 4Q56, *Q* indicates the document was discovered in one of the caves around Qumran, and the number preceding the *Q* indicates in which cave the document was found (numbered in order of their discovery, 1–11). Each document or fragment thus has a unique designation.

22. The difference between Isaiah 2:16 in the MT and in 1QIsaᵃ is merely orthographic: both instances of *kl*, "all, every," in the MT are written *plene* (full spelling) as *kwl* in 1QIsaᵃ.

23. *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* XV, *Qumran Cave 4, Volume X, The Prophets*, ed. Eugene Ulrich et al. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 23 and plate III. 4QIsaᵇ is also designated 4Q56.

24. The Hebrew text transliterated here is from *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart, Ger.: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1977). This edition is based on the oldest *complete* copy of the Hebrew Bible, the Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) Codex B 19ᴬ, which dates to AD 1008. Compare the handsomely

produced *The Leningrad Codex: A Facsimile Edition*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998). The text of Isaiah 2:16 in this codex matches that preserved in the Aleppo Codex, published in Moshe H. Goshen-Gottstein, ed., *The Book of Isaiah* (Hebrew University Bible; Jerusalem, Magnes, 1995).

25. For other recent renditions of Isaiah 2:16b, see, for example, the New Jewish Publication Society version ("And all the gallant barks"); the New International Version ("and every stately vessel"); the New American Standard version ("And against all the beautiful craft"); and the Contemporary English Version ("and every beautiful boat"). Contrast the New Jerusalem Bible translation, which renders Isaiah 2:16b as "and for everything held precious."

26. Harold R. (Chaim) Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena in the Light of Akkadian and Ugaritic* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1978), 42. The Hebrew words in the quotation were originally printed in Hebrew script, not in transliteration as presented here. See similarly, John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33* (Word Bible Commentary, vol. 24; Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 33.

27. The location of Tarshish is still a matter of debate. Most scholars favor the central or western Mediterranean area, although somewhere along or south of the Rea Sea is also a possibility. The phrase "ships of Tarshish," which occurs several times in the Hebrew Bible, apparently became a figure of speech based on the great size of these ships and the precious cargo they used to carry. See "Tarshish (Place)," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:331–33.

28. See also, for example, the Jewish Publication Society translation found in I. W. Slotki, ed., *Isaiah* (London: Soncino, 1949), 14: "delightful imagery."

29. The noun *maśkit* is rendered as "show-piece, figure," in Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907 [reprint 1974]), 967; and as "image, sculpture, imagination, delusion," in Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, rev. W. Baumgartner and J. J. Stramm (New York: Brill, 1995), 641. The word *maśkit* occurs six times in the Hebrew Bible, for example, Numbers 33:52 (NRSV, "figured stones;" KJV, "pictures"); Proverbs 25:11 (NRSV, "setting;" KJV, "picture"). Of course, alternative derivations and translations of *maśkit* have been proposed. These are conveniently summarized, with further references, in Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena*, 71n133, 72–73n143.

30. Ancient Ugarit, now Tell Ras Shamra, Syria, flourished during the mid-second millennium BC. The site is located near the northern end of the eastern Mediterranean seaboard. The texts are in a West Semitic language with affinities to Hebrew. See "Ugarit," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:695.

31. For the text, see Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places* (KTU [Keilalphabetische Texte aus Ugarit], 2nd ed.; Münster, Ger.: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995), 4.81. This text, the parallelism between Ugaritic *anyt* and *kt*, and its correlation with Isaiah 2:16 are noted in Loren R. Fisher, ed., *Ras Shamra Parallels*, vol. 2 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1975), 8 (I 5). See also Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena*, 41–42.

Most Ugaritic texts, including this one, which was first published in 1940, were not available to Sidney B. Sperry when he first published his interpretation of Isaiah 2:16 // 2 Nephi 12:16 in 1939 (note 7 above). Of course, this data *was* available when he republished it in subsequent years.

32. This correlation requires understanding the initial letter *sín* in the MT as a variant or mistake for a *šin* (= *šĕkíyôt*). Since both letters were represented by the same grapheme, or letter, in antiquity, this detail does not detract from what is accepted as compelling evidence for a cognate connection. This matter is discussed by Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena*, 71n135. See also Gregorio Del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, pt. 2, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson (Boston: Brill, 2003), 904.

33. See, for example, Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1981), 252. Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena*, 71n137, and others cite the connection of Ugaritic *kt* with Egyptian *sktw*, or *śk.ty*, as it is sometimes written. See, for example, Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome: Pontifcium Institutum Biblicum, 1965), 502 #2680.

34. Koehler and Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 325, s.v. *emdâ*. Compare *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 4:452–61, s.v. MD.

35. For a discussion of these issues see, for example, Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 134–48; and "Septuagint," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:1093–1104. See also "Septuagint," in the Bible Dictionary in the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Bible, 771.

36. In addition to the length of the text, there are other differences in the book of Jeremiah as found in the MT and in the LXX. These include a different arrangement of chapters, such that the oracles against the nations, which occur in chapters 46–51 in the MT and most English translations, are chapters 25–31 in the LXX.

37. An exhaustive study of the differences between the two texts is found in J. Gerald Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1973). Janzen concluded that the Hebrew text of Jeremiah is significantly longer than the Greek text because of expansions and conflations. He concluded that in the case of Jeremiah, the shorter text in the LXX was anciently translated from a more pristine edition of the Hebrew text than the one preserved in the MT. This perspective is generally accepted by scholars.

38. *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Gottingensis editum*, vol. 14, *Isaias*, ed. Joseph Ziegler (Göttingen, Ger.: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967).

39. The English translation of LXX Isaiah 2:16 in charts 3, 4, and 6 is from Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint LXX: Greek and English* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, Ltd., 1851).

40. Isaac L. Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah: A Discussion of Its Problems* (Leiden: Brill, 1948), 30.

41. James Barr, "Review of M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, The Book of Isaiah: Sample Edition with Introduction," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 12 (1967): 117. See also E. Y. Kutscher, "Marginal Notes to the Biblical Lexicon," *Leshonenu* 30 (1966): 18–24. In his landmark Latin translation of the Bible, known as the Vulgate (late fourth century AD), Jerome translated the two lines in the Hebrew text of Isaiah 2:16 that he was using in a way that is reminiscent of the later Greek editions and the KJV translation of the MT: *et super omnes naves Tharsis / et super omne quod visu pulchrum est* = and upon all the ships of Tarshish / and upon all that is fair to behold (Douay-Rheims). So Jerome most likely had a Hebrew text similar to the MT, but his observation, cited by Barr, that *Tharsis* is synonymous with "sea" in Hebrew is taken as support for the premise that the earlier Greek translators thought likewise and rendered Hebrew "ships of Tarshish" as "ships of the sea." Tvedtnes, "Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon," 170, claimed that the Vulgate reads "sea" here, like the LXX, but we are unable to find *sea* as a variant in either of the two standard critical editions of the Vulgate. They both read *Tharsis*, "Tarshish." Tvedtnes was apparently relying for his assertion on the apparatus to Isaiah 2:16 in the preliminary edition of Moshe H. Goshen-Gottstein, ed., *The Book of Isaiah* (Jerusalem, 1995; preliminary ed., 1975), in which it is incorrectly noted that the Vulgate reads "sea" here.

42. The Hebrew word *taršîš* in Daniel is actually a homonym of the place-name Tarshish and is the name of a precious stone, "but this made no difference, since

the interpretation of *taršîš* as sea was itself connected with the view of the colour of this stone" (Barr, "Review," 118).

43. Tvedtnes has cited Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, an Aramaic rendition of the Hebrew prophetic books, as further evidence for the originality of the LXX translation "ships of the sea" ("Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon," 170). The Aramaic reads *w l kl nkty spyny ym w l kl dšrn bbyrnyt špr* , "and upon all those who go down in ships of the sea, and upon all those who dwell in palaces of beauty" (Alexander Sperber, ed., *The Bible in Aramaic*, 2nd impression [New York: Brill, 1992], 3:6). However, Tvedtnes's claim is problematic since nearly everywhere else in the Targum the Hebrew *taršîš* is rendered in Aramaic as "sea." Indeed, Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah," 188–89, notes that "in [the Targum of] Isaiah the rendering of 'Tarshish' as 'sea' occurs everywhere the former term occurs [in Hebrew]" and that this pattern is evident in other of the prophetic books as well (e.g., Ezekiel 27:12, 25; Jonah 1:3; 4:2). For a discussion of the Targums and their inherent issues, see, for example, Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 148–51; and "Targum, Targumim," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:320–21.

As an aside, this data demonstrates that *Tarshish* and *sea* are perfect candidates for a synonymous pair in a Hebrew parallelism—though they do not appear as such anywhere else in scripture besides 2 Nephi 12:16.

44. Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion all produced Greek translations of the Bible that are called "revisions" (or recensions) in that they attempted to present the Bible more correctly than the original Old Greek translation. These three "revisions" were columns three, four, and six, respectively, in Origen's *Hexapla* (ca. AD 245). Since the *Hexapla* has only survived in fragments, the revisions are known only from various sources such as early papyrus fragments, vellum fragments from the Middle Ages, and

quotations from the LXX in various ancient writers who had access to these revisions. The surviving fragments are recorded in the Cambridge and Göttingen editions as part of the Hexaplaric evidence. For a useful discussion see Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 143–48; and Karen H. Jobes and Moises Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 45–68.

45. Some scholars believe that the LXX is translating a Hebrew text that had the Hebrew word *sepînôt*, meaning "ships," rather than *šĕkîyôt* (see note in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*). For a review of these possibilities see Barr, "Review," 116–17.

46. See similarly Tvedtnes, "Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon," 166–67.

47. For general comments on what is known and not known about the original translation of the Book of Mormon, see Milton V. Backman, "Book of Mormon, Translation of," in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 158–59; and John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, "Book of Mormon Translation by Joseph Smith," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:210–13.

48. Royal Skousen, "Textual Variants in the Isaiah Quotations in the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 377. See similarly and more fully John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 180–88.

49. Daniel Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 141–42. See similarly B. H. Roberts, "Bible Quotations in the Book of Mormon and Reasonableness of Nephi's Prophecies," *Improvement Era*, January, 1904, 191; and Sperry, *Our Book of Mormon*, 172 (in prefacing his comments on 2 Nephi 12:16 and 20; see also the rest of his publications cited in note 7 above). Skousen, "Textual Variants in the Isaiah Quotations in the Book of

Mormon," 377–78, concluded that, at the very least, the biblical quotations in the Book of Mormon would have been dictated by Joseph Smith, not directly copied from the KJV by his scribe.

50. Sometimes generally called haplography or parablepsis, the technical terms designating the loss of words or phrases between phrases with similar beginnings or similar endings are homoioarcton and homoioteleuton, respectively. For a discussion of this phenomenon and biblical examples, see Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 236–40. This scribal accident is also attested in the printed editions of the Book of Mormon. Alma 32:30 presents a classic example of this accident in the Book of Mormon. This verse is significantly shorter in the 1920 edition compared to the 1981 edition, because a central portion of the verse was "lost" due to the typesetter's eye jumping from one similar phrase to another, eliminating the words in between.

51. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah," 157. Wright studied the text of Isaiah in the MT and the KJV in comparison with the Isaiah material in the Book of Mormon, giving special attention to those passages in which the KJV translators used italicized words to indicate that their English rendition was not based on corresponding words in Hebrew.

52. Wright similarly claimed that the Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon are "connected to the KJV" and "distant" from the Hebrew text. See Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah," 157, 182 (compare 158, 208–11).

53. Huggins, "'Without a Cause' and 'Ships of Tarshish,'" 158.

54. Huggins, "'Without a Cause' and 'Ships of Tarshish,'" 168.

55. Huggins, "'Without a Cause' and 'Ships of Tarshish,'" 177–79. See similarly Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah," 189–90.

56. Huggins, "'Without a Cause' and 'Ships of Tarshish,'" 177–79.

57. *History of the Church*, 1:315.

58. Given that Nephi and Mormon cautioned that human error might be found in their record

(cited above), the possibility that human error occurred in the work of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery cannot be completely discounted. The occurrence of human error in the work in the English editions of the Book of Mormon, resulting from dictation to scribes and other circumstances, has been demonstrated by Royal Skousen in his work on the original and printer's manuscripts. It is significant and challenging that the original manuscript for this portion of 2 Nephi is not extant, only the copy known as the printer's manuscript.

Although we are not aware of anyone having formally made this assertion, it is possible that the "extra" line of text in 2 Nephi 12:16 is the result of dittography (repeating a phrase due to similar wording) on the part of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, especially if Joseph Smith did utilize the KJV (as Ludlow asserted) when translating extended passages of Isaiah from the plates. Dittography is the addition of extra letters, words, or phrases to a text because of the similarity of words and word sounds (contrast haplography and parablepsis, mentioned above). Whether one finds this suggestion plausible or not, it at least needs to be considered as a possibility.

59. Other instances of three poetic lines in conjunction with poetic couplets do occur, for example Isaiah 1:8 and 2 Nephi 30:16–17, but none of these passages are quite like 2 Nephi 12:16 in relation to the preceding verses, 13–15.

60. Alternatively, to argue that the MT/LXX synonymous couplet is preserved in 2 Nephi 12:16b+c still requires one to explain the origins of Nephi 12:16a. See the third explanation, given in the next paragraph, for a proposal that is similar.

61. We are concerned with the translation of Isaiah 2:16 that Parry, Parry, and Peterson provide in *Understanding Isaiah*, 32, wherein the phrase "and upon all [luxury ships]" is provided as a *third* line of text in the verse. This results in three synonymous lines about ships in Isaiah 2:16, which does not at all match the present text

of 2 Nephi 12:16 (no "pleasant pictures"), nor does it follow the preserved Hebrew or Greek texts of Isaiah 2:16. Such a representation implies that these authors think their rendition represents the original form of Isaiah 2:16, but they provide no discussion of this point, a serious omission. This same configuration of Isaiah 2:16 is repeated, again without explanation, in Donald W. Parry, *Harmonizing Isaiah* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001), 45. See somewhat similarly David J. Ridges, *Isaiah in the Bible Made Easier* (Springville, UT: Bonneville, 2002), 140, who explains 2 Nephi 12:16c ("upon all pleasant pictures") as meaning "pleasure ships upon which the wealthy traveled," without further comment. This, again, suggests three poetic lines about ships in 2 Nephi 12:16, for which there is no available textual support. Ridges provides the same explanation for the second line of Isaiah 2:16, altering the "pleasant pictures" in the KJV text (p. 4). This results in a synonymous couplet in Isaiah 2:16 (which we accept), but there is no comment on how this form of Isaiah 2:16 relates to 2 Nephi 12:16 or what has become of the phrase "pleasant pictures."

62. The quotation is from Huggins, "'Without a Cause' and 'Ships of Tarshish,'" 171. His discussion of Clarke's commentary is on pages 172–74. The research of Robert Paul ("Joseph Smith and the Manchester [New York] Library," *BYU Studies* 22/3 [1982]: 333–56) suggests there was no copy of Clarke's commentary in the Manchester, New York, lending library in the late 1820s. But Huggins's claim relates to Joseph Smith's stay in Harmony, Pennsylvania, and he cites a claim that the Rev. Nathaniel Lewis, one of Emma Smith's uncles, had a copy of Clarke's commentary and supposedly mentioned it to Joseph Smith (p. 173).

63. We thank our wives and other reviewers for their suggestions for improving this study. We extend an extra note of thanks to John A. Tvedtnes for his careful reading and comments. As always, all deficiencies are our responsibility alone.

God in History? Nephi's Answer
Roy A. Prete

1. B. H. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History: A Text Book*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), 221–22, 284–86, 289–91; Mark E. Peterson, *The Great Prologue* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975); E. Douglas Clarke, *The Grand Design: America from Columbus to Zion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992). On the special mission of America, see Ezra Taft Benson, Conference Report, April 1948, 82–87; Ezra Taft Benson, "A Witness and a Warning," *Ensign*, November 1979, 31–33.

2. For a recent collection of articles on aspects of the subject, see *Out of Obscurity: The LDS Church in the Twentieth Century: The 29th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000).

3. God's role in history is a vast topic, well beyond the scope of this brief essay. For a fuller discussion, see *Window of Faith: Latter-day Saint Perspectives on World History*, ed. Roy A. Prete et al. (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2005).

4. See Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); also Mark T. Gilderhus, *History and Historians: A Historiographical Introduction*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003).

5. For a nuanced treatment of the historiography of providential history and the issues it faces, see Brian Q. Cannon, "Providential History: The Need for Continuing Revelation," in *Window of Faith*, 143–60.

6. Ronald A. Wells, *History Through the Eyes of Faith: Western Civilization and the Kingdom of God* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1989), 3–4.

7. C. John Sommerville, "*Christain* Historiograpghy? A Pragmatic Approach," *Fides et Historia* 35 (Winter/Spring 2003), 3.

8. For a discussion of methodology in the Latter-day Saint context, see Roy A. Prete, "Merging the Secular and the Spiritual," in *Window of Faith*, 125–42.

9. For a discussion of the premodern practice of integrating revealed text with history, see James E. Faulconer, "Scripture as Incarnation," in *Historicity and the Latter-day Scriptures*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001), 17–61.

10. For an introduction to the subject of God in history that focuses on relevant principles from a Latter-day Saint perspective, see Alexander B. Morrison, "God in History," in *Window of Faith*, 1–12.

11. For a fuller discussion, see Robert L. Millet, "The Influence of the Brass Plates on the Teachings of Nephi," in *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure: Papers from the Third Annual Book of Mormon Symposium*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), 207–25.

12. For discussions of gospel dispensations, including that of the Nephites, see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977–78), 1:160–64; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 200–202; Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel through the Ages* (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, 1945), chaps. 11–13; and "Dispensations," in the Bible Dictionary in the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Version of the Bible, 657–58. The Prophet Joseph Smith stated, "It is in the order of heavenly things that God should always send a new dispensation into the world when men have apostatized from the truth and lost the priesthood." *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 375.

13. See Noel B. Reynolds, "Lehi as Moses," *JBMS* 9/2 (2000): 27–35. See in particular note 1, which references literature pertaining to Nephi as a Moses figure.

14. See Millet, "Influence of the Brass Plates," 210–11, which presents evidence to suggest that these were prophets of the tribe of Joseph.

15. According to Terry B. Ball, Isaiah "is the most quoted prophet in the Book of Mormon, having approximately 35 percent of his Old Testament writings either quoted directly or paraphrased by Nephite prophets." "Isaiah, life and ministry," in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey et al. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 340. Nephi quotes 18 chapters of Isaiah completely: Isaiah 48–51 (1 Nephi 20–21; 2 Nephi 7–8); Isaiah 2–14 (2 Nephi 7–24); and the greater part of Isaiah 29 (2 Nephi 27); plus additional portions, either quoted (such as 2 Nephi 6: 5–7; 30:9, 11–15) or paraphrased (e.g., 1 Nephi 22:6). So powerfully impressed was Nephi with the prophecies of Isaiah that of the 55 chapters in 1 and 2 Nephi, approximately one-third are drawn from Isaiah.

16. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:87.

17. See Alan K. Parrish, "Lehi and the Covenant of the Promised Land: A Modern Appraisal," in *Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure,* 39–41.

18. Nephi must have been personally gratified to receive the Lord's promise that his writings on the small plates would be preserved "as long as the earth shall stand," a point he apparently had not appreciated when he was commanded to prepare them (see 2 Nephi 25:21–23; 1 Nephi 19:3).

19. See Grant Underwood, "Insights from the Early Years: 2 Nephi 28–30," in *Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, 323–36.

20. While the precise titles of such books have not been given in revelation, there is some indication from a 1978 First Presidency letter that Mohammed, among others, was inspired to bring forth truths of God, suggesting that the Qur'an and other sacred texts could be among these. For this interpretation and a discussion of world religions with references to their sacred texts, see Roger R. Keller, "Why Study World Religions?" in *Window of Faith*, 213–30.

Archaeology and the Book of Mormon
John E. Clark

This article was originally a forum address delivered at Brigham Young University, 24 May 2004.

1. See Matthew B. Brown, *Plates of Gold: The Book of Mormon Comes Forth* (American Fork, UT: Covenant, 2003), for a detailed account of the events of that morning.
2. Figures current as of February 2006, Curriculum Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
3. For a concise review of historical positions concerning the origins of the Book of Mormon, see Louis C. Midgley, "Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? The Critics and Their Theories," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1997), 101–39.
4. The most thorough discussion of these points can be found in Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
5. Ernest L. Wilkinson and W. Cleon Skousen, *Brigham Young University: A School of Destiny* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 151.
6. See Wilkinson and Skousen, *Brigham Young University*, 160.
7. See Wilkinson and Skousen, *Brigham Young University*, 179–80.
8. Copies of the Book of Mormon available at the turn of the century would have had the changes added to the 1879 edition by Orson Pratt, and these included footnotes containing geographical information based on a hemispheric geography. These specific identifications were removed for the 1920 edition and have been excluded ever since.
9. For good overviews of Book of Mormon geographies and related issues, see John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1996); Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Sourcebook* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992); and Sorenson, *Mormon's Map* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000).
10. *Times and Seasons* 3 (15 March 1842): 710.
11. John L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1841).
12. *Times and Seasons* 3 (1 October 1842): 927.
13. Tal Davis, *A Closer Look at The Book of Mormon* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1993).
14. Judging supposed deficiencies of Book of Mormon archaeology from the vantage of biblical archaeology is akin to gauging the speed of an oncoming car on the freeway. Neither driver is in a position to make the call. The compelling argument from archaeology requires the reader's faith and indulgence in the soundness of biblical archaeology as an entry fee to evaluate Book of Mormon claims. In truth, biblical archaeology is riven with pitfalls and difficulties. Archaeology has not confirmed the Bible in any nontrivial sense. For a frank assessment of some of the challenges of biblical archaeology, see William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001); Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out: What Archaeology Reveals about the Truth of the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997).
15. The list of archaeological objections to the Book of Mormon was taken from an earlier pamphlet by Hal Hougey, *Archaeology and The Book of Mormon* (Concord, CA: Pacific Publishing, 1983), 12. The full list of objections, as they appear in Davis, *A Closer Look at The Book of Mormon* (see n. 13), is as follows: "1. No *Book of Mormon* cities have been located. 2. No *Book of Mormon* names have been found in New World inscriptions. 3. No genuine inscriptions have been found in Hebrew. 4. No genuine inscriptions have been found in Egyptian or anything similar to Egyptian, which could correspond to Joseph Smith's 'Reformed Egyptian.' 5. No ancient copies of *Book of Mormon* scriptures have been found. 6. No ancient inscriptions of any kind that indicate that the ancient inhabitants held Hebrew or Christian beliefs—all are pagan. 7. No mention of *Book of Mormon* people, nations, or places has been found. 8. No artifact of any kind that demonstrates *The Book of Mormon* is true has been found."
16. For an excellent discussion of what physical evidence can and cannot do for the Book of Mormon, see John W. Welch, "The Power of Evidence in the Nurturing of Faith," in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 17–53.
17. See John L. Sorenson, "How Could Joseph Smith Write So Accurately about Ancient American Civilization?" in *Echoes and Evidences*, 261–306; and John Gee, "The Wrong Type of Book," in *Echoes and Evidences*, 307–29.
18. Hugh Nibley called such improbable confirmations "howlers." Hugh Nibley, "'Howlers' in the Book of Mormon," *Millennial Star* (February 1963): 28–34; reprinted in Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 243–58.
19. See William J. Adams Jr., "Lehi's Jerusalem and Writing on Silver Plates," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 23–26; Adams, "More on the Silver Plates from Lehi's Jerusalem," in *Pressing Forward*, 27–28; C. Wilfred Griggs, "The Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book," in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1982), 75–101; William J. Hamblin, "Metal Plates and the Book of Mormon," in *Pressing Forward*, 20–22; Noel B. Reynolds, "By Objective Measures: Old Wine into New Bottles," in *Echoes and Evidences*, 127–153; Stephen D. Ricks, "Converging Paths: Language and Cultural Notes on the Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Book of Mormon," in *Echoes and Evidences*, 389–419; John L. Sorenson, "Challenging Conventional Views of Metal," in *Pressing Forward*, 187–89; H. Curtis Wright, "Ancient Burials of Metal Documents in Stone Boxes," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:273–334.
20. An early stone box is known for the late Olmec site of Tres Zapotes, Veracruz; see Christopher A. Pool, "From Olmec to Epi-Olmec at Tres Zapotes, Veracruz, Mexico," in *Olmec Art and Archaeology in Mesoamerica*, ed. John E. Clark and Mary E. Pye (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 2000), 146. Many offering boxes have been found in the excavations of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan (present Mexico City) in the Templo Mayor excavations; see Leonardo López Luján, *The Offerings of the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1994).
21. The different scripts currently known include Zapotec, Lowland Maya, Highland Maya at Kaminaljuyú, Tlatilco, Teotihuacan, La Mojarra, La Venta Olmec, and a recent script from the Olmec heartland that has not yet been labeled. For some introductory discussion of these scripts, see Stephen D. Houston, "Writing in Early Mesoamerica," in *The First Writing: Script Invention as History and Process*, ed. Stephen D. Houston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 274–309; David H. Kelley, "A Cylinder Seal from Tlatilco," *American Antiquity* 31/5 (1966): 744–46; John S. Justeson, "The Origin of Writing Systems: Preclassic Mesoamerica," *World Archaeology* 17/3 (1986): 437–58; Justeson and Terrence Kaufman, "A Decipherment of Epi-Olmec Hieroglyphic Writing," *Science* 259 (19 March 1993): 1703–11; Joyce Marcus, "The Origins of Mesoamerican Writing," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 5 (1976): 35–67; Joyce Marcus, *Mesoamerican Writing Systems: Propaganda, Myth, and History in Four Ancient Civilizations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Sylvia Méluzin, *Further Investigations of the Tuxtla Script: An Inscribed Mask and La Mojarra Stela 1* (Provo, UT: Papers of the New World Archaeological Foundation, 1995); Mary E. Pohl, Kevin O. Pope, and Christopher von Nagy, "Olmec Origins of

Mesoamerican Writing," *Science* 298 (6 December 2002): 1984–87; Karl A. Taube, *The Writing System of Ancient Teotihuacan* (Barnardsville, NC: Center for Ancient American Studies, 2000); Javier Urcid Serrano, *Zapotec Hieroglyphic Writing* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001).

22. See John Gee, "Two Notes on Egyptian Script," in *Pressing Forward*, 244–47; Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes, "Semitic Texts Written in Egyptian Characters," in *Pressing Forward*, 237–43; and Brian Stubbs, "Hebrew and Uto-Aztecan: Possible Linguistic Connections," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992), 279–81.

23. See Kelley, "Cylinder Seal from Tlatilco," 744–46.

24. See M. Kathryn Brown and Travis W. Stanton, *Ancient Mesoamerican Warfare* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003); Ross Hassig, *Aztec Warfare: Imperial Expansion and Political Control* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); and Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

25. See John L. Sorenson, "Fortifications in the Book of Mormon Account Compared with Mesoamerican Fortifications," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 425–44; and Sorenson, *Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life* (Provo, UT: Research Press, 1998), 132–33.

26. See William J. Hamblin and A. Brent Merrill, "Swords in the Book of Mormon," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, 329–51; Matthew Roper, "Eyewitness Descriptions of Mesoamerican Swords," in *Pressing Forward*, 169–76; and Sorenson, *Images of Ancient America*, 130–31.

27. For blood-stained swords, see Alma 24:12–13, 15.

28. See Alison V. P. Coutts, "From a Convert's Viewpoint," in *Echoes and Evidences*, 421–52; Bruce H. Yerman, "Ammon and the Mesoamerican Custom of Smiting Off Arms," *JBMS* 8/1 (1999): 46–47; John M.

Lundquist and John W. Welch, "Ammon and Cutting Off the Arms of Enemies," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 180–81.

29. For towers as the last refuge in battle, see Alma 50:4; 51:20; Moroni 9:7. Compare with Fray Diego Durán, *The Aztecs: The History of the Indies of New Spain*, trans. Doris Heyden and Fernando Horcasitas (New York: Orion Press, 1964), 68: "The Tecpanecs, retreating toward their city, intended to use their temple as a last stronghold, but Tlacaelel [an Aztec leader] reached the temple before them and, taking possession of its entrance, ordered one of his men to set it on fire, having made prisoner all those who were within." Durán, p. 89: "When we reach Totoltzinco the king of Texcoco will set fire to the temple and the battle will come to an end."

30. See Durán, *The Aztecs*, 217; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Native Races of the Pacific States of North America* (New York: Appleton, 1875), 2:425; and Sorenson, *Images of Ancient America*, 126–29.

31. See Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting.*

32. Teotihuacan, located just north of Mexico City, was built about this time with massive amounts of cement. In citing this correspondence pointed out by others, I am not claiming that Teotihuacan was indeed the place mentioned in the Book of Mormon account; see Joseph L. Allen, *Sacred Sites: Searching for Book of Mormon Lands* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2003), 89–91. At the moment, no New World city mentioned in the Book of Mormon is known with certainty. Other cities in the region around Teotihuacan engaged in similar practices, so I am drawing attention here to a region, a time period, and a cultural practice, all of which are confirmatory of the Book of Mormon account if one concedes that the Land Southward was south of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. For further references to cement, see John L. Sorenson, "How Could Joseph Smith Write so Accurately about Ancient American Civilization?" 261–

306; and John W. Welch, "A Steady Stream of Significant Recognitions," in *Echoes and Evidences*, 331–87.

33. The notion of working kings or lesser kings came into the anthropological literature with the rise of evolutionary typologies and the concept of chiefdoms. For valuable treatments of chiefdoms, see Elman R. Service, *Primitive Social Organization: An Evolutionary Perspective*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 1971); Morton H. Fried, *The Evolution of Political Society: An Essay in Political Anthropology* (New York: Random House, 1967); Timothy Earle, ed., *Chiefdoms: Power, Economy, and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Robert D. Drennan and Carlos A. Uribe, eds., *Chiefdoms in the Americas* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987); and Allen W. Johnson and Timothy Earle, *The Evolution of Human Societies: From Foraging Group to Agrarian State* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).

34. For information on Olmec thrones, see David C. Grove, "Olmec Altars and Myths," *Archaeology* 26/2 (April 1973): 128–35; Grove, "Olmec Archaeology: A Half Century of Research and Its Accomplishments," *Journal of World Prehistory* 11/1 (1997): 51–101; Grove and Susan D. Gillespie, "Ideology and Evolution at the Pre-State Level: Formative Period Mesoamerica," in *Ideology and Pre-Columbian Civilizations*, ed. Arthur A. Demarest and Geoffrey W. Conrad (Albuquerque: School of American Research Press, 1992), 15–36; Gillespie, "Power, Pathways, and Appropriations in Mesoamerican Art," in *Imagery and Creativity: Ethnoaesthetics and Art Worlds in the Americas*, ed. Dorothea S. Whitten and Norman E. Whitten Jr. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1993), 67–107; and Gillespie, "Olmec Thrones as Ancestral Altars: The Two Sides of Power," in *Material Symbols: Culture and Economy in Prehistory*, ed. John E. Robb (Carbondale, IL: Center for Archaeological Investigations, 1999), 224–53.

35. The classic statements on the Maya calendar are those of Sylvanus G. Morley, *An*

Introduction to the Study of the Maya Hieroglyphics (1915; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1975); and J. Eric S. Thompson, *Maya Hieroglyphic Writing: An Introduction* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960). Most introductory books on Mesoamerican archaeology cover the basics of the calendar. I recommend any edition of Michael D. Coe, *The Maya* (London: Thames and Hudson). Ernst Wilhelm Förstemann is credited with discovering the principles of the Maya calendar in 1887; see his article "The Inscription on the Cross of Palenque," reprinted in *The Decipherment of Ancient Maya Writing*, ed. Stephen Houston, Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos, and David Stuart (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 224–33.

36. See Alma 45:10; Helaman 13:9; Mormon 8:6.

37. See Michael Coe, on the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, quoted in Hampton Sides, "This is *Not* the Place," *Doubletake* 5 (Spring 1999): 46–55, quotation from p. 51: "They're [Mormon apologists] always going after the nitty-gritty things. . . . Let's look at this specific hill. Let's look at that specific tree. It's exhausting to follow all these mind-numbing leads. It keeps the focus off the fact that it's all in the service of a completely phony history. Where are the languages? Where are the cities? Where are the artifacts? Look here, they'll say. Here's an elephant. Well, that's fine, but elephants were wiped out in the New World around 8,000 bc by hunters. *There were no elephants!*" See also Coe, "Mormons and Archaeology: An Outside View," *Dialogue* 8/2 (1973): 40–48.

38. See S. Kent Brown, "'The Place That Was Called Nahom': New Light from Ancient Yemen," *JBMS* 8/1 (1999): 66–68; Warren P. Aston, "Newly Found Altars from Nahom," *JBMS* 10/2 (2001): 56–61; and Brown, "New Light from Arabia on Lehi's Trail," in *Echoes and Evidences*, 55–125.

39. See Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting*; and Sorenson, *Mormon's Map.*

40. The population profile for the Lowland Olmecs is based on

data for the history of the two principal capitals in the area, San Lorenzo and La Venta, as well as on some limited survey around both capitals. I draw from the following sources: Michael D. Coe and Richard A. Diehl, *In the Land of the Olmec* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980); Ann Cyphers, "Reconstructing Olmec Life at San Lorenzo," in *Olmec Art of Ancient Mexico*, ed. Elizabeth P. Benson and Beatriz de la Fuente (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 1996), 61–71; Cyphers, ed., *Población, Subsistencia y Medio Ambiente en San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1997); Rebecca González Lauck, "La Venta: An Olmec Capital," in *Olmec Art of Ancient Mexico*, 73–81; Stacey C. Symonds and Roberto Lunagómez, "Settlement System and Population Development at San Lorenzo," in *Olmec to Aztec: Settlement Patterns in the Ancient Gulf Lowlands*, ed. Barbara L. Stark and Philip J. Arnold III (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 144–73; Symonds, Cyphers, and Lunagómez, *Asentamiento Prehispánico en San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2002); and Christopher von Nagy, "The Geoarchaeology of Settlement in the Grijalva Delta," in *Olmec to Aztec*, 253–77.

41. See John E. Clark, Richard D. Hansen, and Tomás Pérez Suárez, "La Zona Maya en el Preclásico," in *Historia Antigua de México, Volumen 1: El México Antiguo, sus áreas culturales, los orígenes y el horizonte Preclásico*, ed. Linda Manzanilla and Leonardo López Luján (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, 2000), 437–510.

42. For basic information see the entries on El Mirador, Kaminaljuyú, and Chiapa de Corzo in Susan Toby Evans and David L. Webster, eds., *Archaeology of Ancient Mexico and Central America: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2001).

43. For the demise of the Olmec civililzation, see the following: Clark, Hansen, and Pérez, "La Zona Maya," 437–510; John E. Clark and Richard D. Hansen,

"The Architecture of Early Kingship: Comparative Perspectives on the Origins of the Maya Royal Court," in *Royal Courts of the Ancient Maya: Vol. 2, Data and Case Studies*, ed. Takeshi Inomata and Stephen D. Houston (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), 1–45; Richard A. Diehl, *The Olmecs: America's First Civilization* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005); and González, "La Venta: An Olmec Capital," 73–81.

44. See Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion*.

45. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Four Cornerstones of Faith," *Ensign*, February 2004, 6.

Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life: Understanding the Dream as Visionary Literature
Charles Swift

1. Robert L. Millet, "Another Testament of Jesus Christ," in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi, the Doctrinal Foundation*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1988), 163.

2. Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1997), 4.

3. Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 165.

4. See, for example, Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Bernard McGinn, "Revelation," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 523–41; John B. Gabel, Charles B. Wheeler, and Anthony D. York, *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982); and Northrop Frye, *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of the "Bible and Literature"* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990).

5. Ryken, *Bible as Literature*, 166.

6. Admittedly, one might argue

that "mist of darkness" really means "dark mist," the way the "rod of iron" might be called the "iron rod." This may or may not be the case. There are several other instances in this account in which adjectives are used before nouns to modify them (e.g., "dark and dreary wilderness," "white robe," "dark and dreary waste," "large and spacious field," "strait and narrow path"), indicating, at least, that it's reasonable to read "mist of darkness" to be something other than just a dark mist since the words "dark mist" could have been used to convey that latter meaning.

7. On the possible connection of the building of Lehi's dream to ancient South Arabian architecture, see S. Kent Brown, "The Queen of Sheba, Skyscraper Architecture, and Lehi's Dream," *JBMS* 11 (2002): 102–3.

8. On the connections to desert geography and other features of life in Lehi's dream, see S. Kent Brown, "New Light from Arabia on Lehi's Trail," in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 64–69, 102–4.

9. S. Kent Brown, "Lehi, Journey of, to the promised land," in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey et al. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 515.

10. Ryken, *Bible as Literature*, 167; emphasis in original.

11. Ryken, *Bible as Literature*, 167; emphasis in original.

12. Ryken, *Bible as Literature*, 169; emphasis in original.

13. Examples of ancient Arabian houses "built after the Babylonian design of Lehi's day" were 10 and 12 stories high, with their windows starting 20 to 50 feet above the ground for purposes of defense. "At night these lighted windows would certainly give the effect of being suspended above the earth." Early castles of Arabia looked like they stood in the air, high above the earth (see Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988], 257; also see Brown, "Lehi, Journey of, to the promised land," 515). The fact that such ancient

houses existed, however, does not change the argument that the vision of the tree of life demands that the reader deal with unfamiliar images. The Book of Mormon is an ancient book written for modern times—its readers are the people of today, not those contemporaneous with Lehi or anyone else in the book. While there may be images in the vision that correspond with what some people in the book may have actually seen in life, these same images are unfamiliar to readers of the Book of Mormon.

14. Ryken, *Bible as Literature*, 170; emphasis in original.

15. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), s.v. "Dreams, Visions."

16. Of course, we might choose to divide up the vision into components in several different ways. For this chart, however, I have basically chosen to designate a new component when the location of the action changes. Lehi's location does not change once he has partaken of the fruit of the tree, but the location of the events he is observing and talking about does.

17. Ryken, *Bible as Literature*, 170–71; emphasis in original.

18. Ryken, *Bible as Literature*, 171.

19. Leland Ryken, *Literature of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974), 339.

20. Corbin T. Volluz, "Lehi's Dream of the Tree of Life: Springboard to Prophecy," *JBMS* 2/2 (1993): 38.

21. Ryken, *Bible as Literature*, 173.

22. It is interesting that while people are concerned about the historicity of symbols, rarely do they concern themselves with the symbolism of history. Just as symbols can correspond to actual events, actual events can be understood to be symbolic. I do not refer only to ritual and ceremony, such as the sacrament or baptism, which are by definition symbolic actions. I refer to events in everyday life that normally would not be considered anything out of the ordinary but that can actually be seen as pointing to meaning beyond themselves. For example, Elder Boyd K. Packer spoke

of an experience he had years ago in Cuzco, Peru. When Elder Packer was in a sacrament meeting, a small native boy came inside the building off the streets. A woman there "banished him" from the meeting, but the boy later returned. Elder Packer held out his arms, and the boy ran to him and sat on his lap. Then Elder Packer, "as something symbolic," set him in Elder A. Theodore Tuttle's chair. When Elder Packer returned home, he told President Spencer W. Kimball about the event. President Kimball told him that the

experience had "far greater meaning than [Elder Packer had] yet come to know" and that he had held a nation on his lap (see Boyd K. Packer, "Children," *Ensign*, May 2002, 7, 9).

23. Ryken, *Literature of the Bible*, 339.

24. Ryken, *Bible as Literature*, 172; emphasis in original.

25. See Volluz, "Lehi's Dream," 16–29.

26. It is interesting that John warns us not to add or take away from the book of Revelation (see Revelation 22:18–19). If Nephi had been permitted

to write about the end of the world, we would have received his account *after* having received John's, and it would be as though Nephi had added to what John had written. Contrary to what some claim (that John was referring to the Bible and that therefore the Book of Mormon illegitimately adds to it), John could only have been referring to the book of Revelation, and Nephi was expressly forbidden from even appearing as if he were adding to it.

27. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake

City: Deseret Book, 1997), 162.

Chart, page 60

1. The original manuscript of the Book of Mormon reads *pressing* here, but Oliver Cowdery misread it as *feeling* when preparing the printer's manuscript. See Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part One: 1 Nephi 1 – 2 Nephi 10* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 187.

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