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The Editor's Notebook

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Title The Editor's Notebook

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Abstract Summary of current issue.

THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

After forty years of its influence, it seems appropriate to celebrate Jack Welch's initial publication on chiasmus as a literary device in the Book of Mormon. The *Journal* welcomes to its pages Professor Welch's recollections of how he came to find passages that feature this notable a-b-b-a structure. The very selective bibliography assembled by Scot Hanson and Daniel McKinlay stands as a shining "Exhibit A" of the significant breakthrough that Welch's effort has led to. It is as though a huge plug has been removed that dammed a large stream of water. So sweeping has been the influence of Welch's study, and that of others who have followed a similar path, that Robert F. Smith can write of the muting of critics' cries against the Book of Mormon, even cajoling them into admitting that the volume possesses a notable value as a literary work. Smith then shows that the world out of which the Book of Mormon grew, most likely ancient Mesoamerica, demonstrates a firm acquaintance with chiasmus in its literature.

The other authors who have dealt with subjects internal to the Book of Mormon text include Heather Hardy who allows us a glimpse into her long and intense study of this book. Identifying subtle nuances in a series of passages that go back to Mormon's hand, rather than trying to lay bare his overall plan, she lifts to view one of the brightened rooms of his message to readers, that of the grand, illuminated hallways of the Messiah's work.

In quite another vein, after readers thought that King Benjamin's speech had received all the attention that it could absorb, Donald Parry walks readers carefully through the paths of the king's speech and uncovers one of its subtle dimensions, that of service. But this time he does not offer comment on service for others, which stands as a prominent part of the speech, but on priestly service as it was practiced in the ancient Jerusalem temple and as it became ingrained in the worship life of Nephite peoples. Remarkably, the two go hand in hand, with little to distinguish them.

The fourth study that touches on the text itself is Jonathan Curci's vigorous treatment of the name *Liahona*. A Swiss legal scholar, Curci's study also

shows his thorough grasp of ancient Hebrew patterns of language, which he brings to bear on this intriguing name. He concludes that the elements of the name reflect a probable Hebrew origin, a pattern that people in Joseph Smith's world could not have known or guessed.

Of studies that examine the world of the Book of Mormon, Wm. Revell Phillips offers an engrossing approach to a recently completed excavation season in southern Oman. The archaeology team, of which Phillips was a part, began a systematic investigation of a pair of sites that sit at the mouth of Wadi Ashawq next to Mughsayl. This system of canyons drains the largest area in the south of Oman and, remarkably, fits nicely the description of Nephi's Bountiful, adding another possible candidate from this region of the world.

Jared Ludlow's study, which rests on his thorough acquaintance with the history of the fifth-century Jewish colony that situated itself on Elephantine Island in Upper Egypt, brings forward the different responses to the loss of Jerusalem and its religious centrality after the Babylonians overran the city and its temple in 587 BC. Among the efforts to carve out a new life, religiously and otherwise, stand those of the Nephites. But others were also trying to patch meaning into their existence, including those who moved to Upper Egypt and built a temple, and those who returned from exile in Babylonia and struggled to make a life among the burned out remains of Jerusalem.

By itself, Donald Cannon's study discusses the only contemporary set of issues dealt with in this issue of the *Journal*, namely that of how newspaper articles responded to the publication of the Book of Mormon. As expected, the tenor of articles was largely negative, and ill informed. But he finds aspects that point to fair-mindedness on the part of some writers. They all become part of the pattern that Moroni outlined in his first visit to the boy Prophet: "that [his] name should be had for good and evil among all nations" (JS—H 1:33).