

The Witness

The Foundation For Research On Ancient America



Winter 1990

Number 71



A New Star

The Witness

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The Foundation for Research on Ancient America is a nonprofit corporation comprised of individuals who desire to advance the knowledge of Jesus Christ and the Book of Mormon. Through instructional materials, archaeological research, testimonies, and related projects, members of FRAA seek to assist in bringing forth the light that is contained in the ancient scriptures of the Book of Mormon. A contribution to the Foundation for Research on Ancient America results in membership.

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Cover...

Wool tapestry belonging to Celia Jeffers of the Three Wise Men bearing gifts and guided by the star.

Photo by Don Beebe.

When I became editor two years ago, Donna Weddle gave me some files. Periodically I check them, looking for ideas and articles. For our Christmas issue, Roy Weldon's "A New Star Did Appear" appeared perfect.

It was obvious from the quotes, the piece had been written in the 1940s or 50s. Not only did we need to verify the bibliographic data, we added more recent sources. Rae Simmons researched and checked all references. In the end, two could not be found. One could be eliminated without adversely affecting the impact of the article, but the words of Isaac Newton quoted from the *Encyclopedia Americana* were, I felt, crucial to Brother Weldon's marvelous way with words and his affirmation that Joseph Smith was a prophet.

The current and just past editions of the encyclopedia did not have the quote. Where could I find an older edition, especially not knowing the year? Libraries discard old editions. If all else failed, I would call the company. I even searched books about Newton and Newton's own writings without success.

Prayer is always a part of our work, but once more I petitioned the Lord for help. That very day the Lord directed me to it.

School would start soon, and our son Aaron needed clothes. In between several appointments, I drove by Independence Center. Because I was running late for my next appointment, I thought I better return that evening. But then I said to myself, "I'm here now. I'll quickly run in and see if the Jones Store has what he wants."

After looking, I decided to let him make his own choices, and left without buying anything. I took a different way out of the store. There in the aisle sat an old railroad flatbed wagon full of dried flowers and odds and ends for a store display. Next to it was a white wooden chair, the type commonly seen on porches in Maine, with a stack of encyclopedias. The *right* one! *Encyclopedia Americana!*

My pulse quickened, and almost in astonishment, I opened the "A" volume. The year of publication was 1960. Turning to the section on astronomy, I excitedly looked for the quote. It wasn't there. Disappointed, but not daunted, I continued under "history of astronomy," and—there it was! What a miracle! And a testimony of its importance to the article.

When you read "A New Star," pay close attention to the quote from the encyclopedia and what immediately follows. It's terrific!

Sherrie Kline Smith

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Foundation News

Rejoice with us! FRAA has found a building for its headquarters. Located at 210 White Oak, Independence, this building will provide about 2800 square feet for offices, the library, and video production lab. Read more about this exciting news on page 15.

Living Water

Living Water, by Thelona Stevens, is now available for purchase at \$6 a copy. Sister Stevens completed the work for this book shortly before her death. It is an anthology of her regular column of "Study Along With Thelona Stevens" which appeared in *The Witness* over the last several years. The book provides a more in-depth study than was possible in *The Witness* because of space constraints.

Order a copy from School of the Saints, 520 West Maple, Independence, MO 64050. Include \$1.75 for postage and handling.

Regional Conferences

All-day seminars on the Book of Mormon sponsored by the Foundation were conducted in Arlington, Texas (July 14), Miami, Oklahoma (second annual, August 18), and Port Huron, Michigan (September 22). Approximately 100 attended each the Texas and Oklahoma conferences, and about 300 in Michigan. Along with the different presentations and slide lectures, drama and testimonies enhanced the day's activities.

"I'm glad I came," said one attendee. "It was most worthwhile, and the presentations made me think of things I'd never thought of before."

Informative and faith strengthening, the day also provided a chance to share with fellow Book of Mormon believers—truly a joyous occasion. If your area or district would



like to host a regional conference, please contact Michael Gatrost, (816) 525-6391. Tentative plans are in the works for Ohio and Illinois.

Volunteers Help FRAA Forge Ahead

In preparation for the move to the new building, FRAA reorganized some of its administrative responsibilities.

Under the capable direction of FRAA's computer consultant, Pat Beebe, improvements are being made on the computer databases of *The Witness* mailing list and records of Helaman's Two Thousand, FRAA's group of special supporters. Bea Luther and Julie Nixon continue to update the mailing list, and Jill Beebe now maintains Helaman's Two Thousand records and performs clerical work involved with this program. Many thanks go to Penny Dunning, who for the past two years kept the records on her own personal computer.

Another new volunteer, Ruth Carver, is assisting in the library by creating a database of the library's holdings. Her own computer and software were compatible with FRAA's, and she volunteered her services, as well as her computer, for this much needed task. She also has helped out with the tremendous backlog

of filing for Helaman's Two Thousand.

Other volunteers who provide strong support are: Don Beebe (photography for lectures and publications); Jerry Brown (video duplication); Lynda Friend (library acquisitions, typing); Marilyn Kline (library acquisitions, typing); Rae Simmons (Helaman's Two Thousand renewals and validation research for articles in *The Witness*); Suzanne Smith (preparation of mailings for regional and annual Book of Mormon days, typing, and filing); Donna Weddle (continues to be a backbone to FRAA's treasurer, Carol Martin, and receives and routes all FRAA mail); and *many others!*

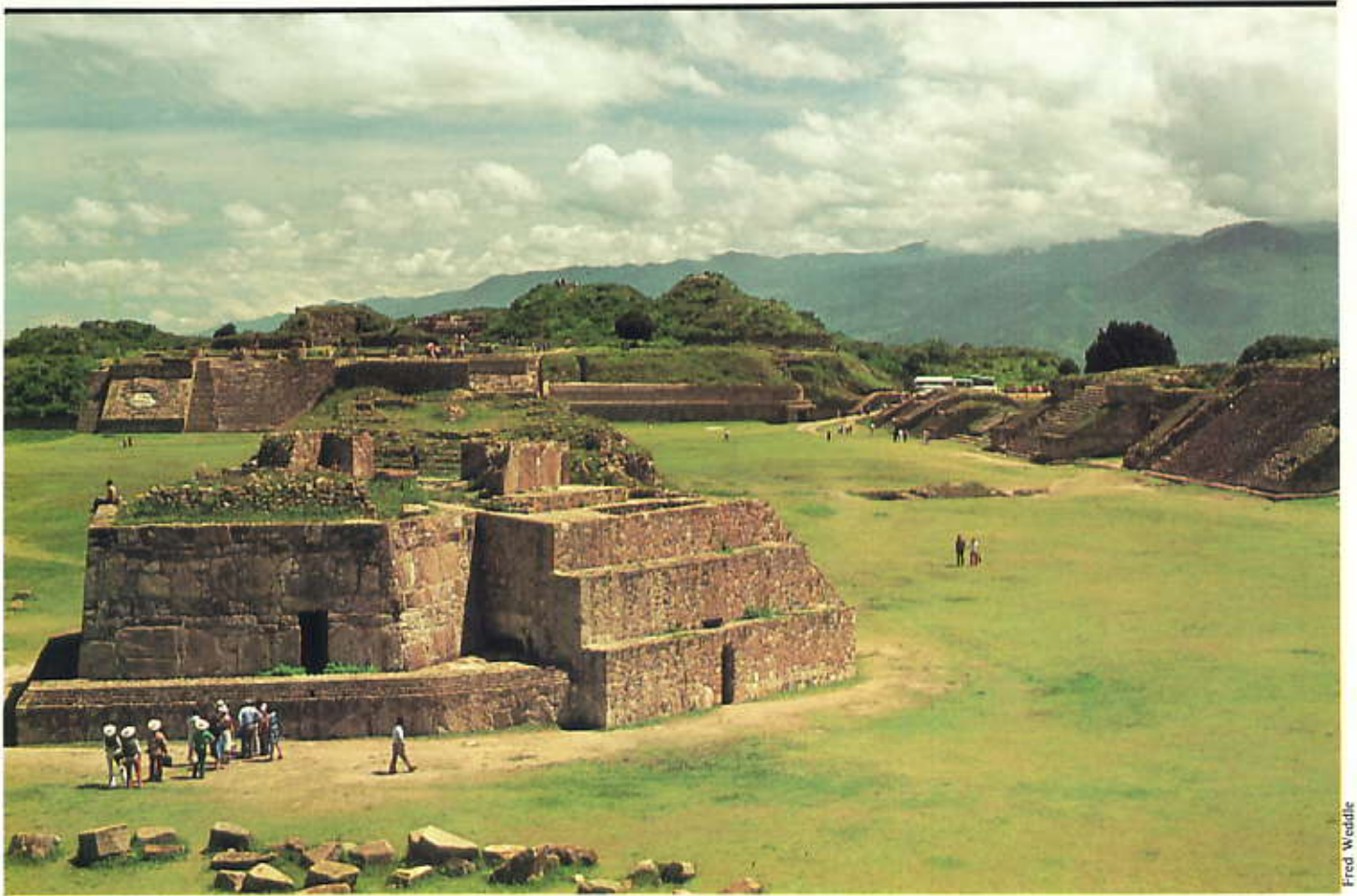
This list doesn't begin to take in the *many* who helped label *The Witness* and continue to label special mailings, prepare art work for publications and the annual Book of Mormon day, present drama, produce videos, and work behind-the-scenes to contribute toward the Foundation's extensive promotion of the Book of Mormon. All give their time and talents to enable the Foundation to witness that Jesus is the Christ and that the Book of Mormon is true. Thank you to all our volunteers!



Calendar

December 22-
January 1, 1991

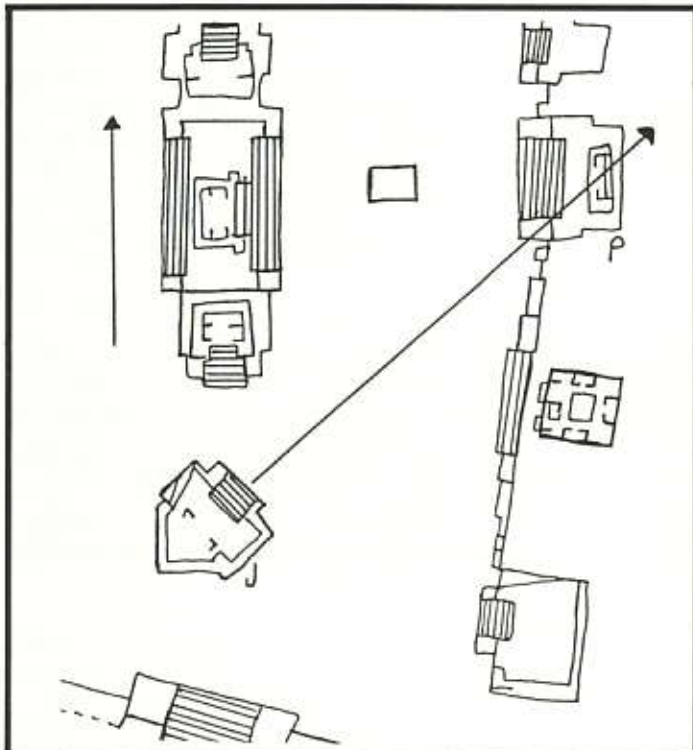
Mexico Gulf Coast Tour



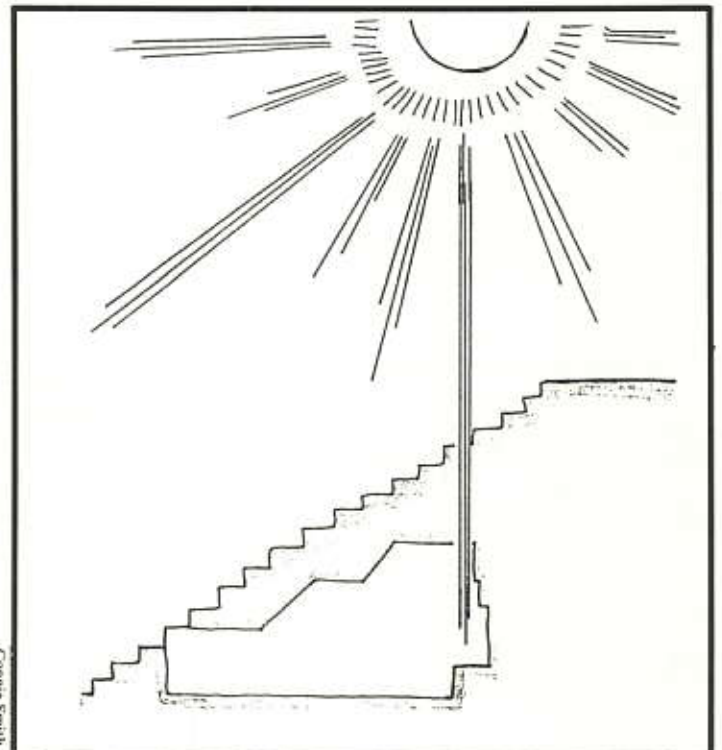
Fred Weddle

In Monte Alban, most of the buildings on the main plaza align rather squarely except Building J, the observatory. Built about 200 B.C., Building J faces northeast. Ancient astronomers stood at its doorway and looked across the eastern portion of the plaza to Building P to watch for the bright star Capella to rise within a half degree of the building. This signaled the day (May 9) when the Sun reached its zenith and the beginning of the rainy season.

Building P has a small square hole right in the middle of the staircase. The thin shaft points directly at the zenith and leads vertically down six feet into an observation chamber beneath the stairs. At noon, when the Sun shone directly down this zenith tube to a small ledge 2½ feet above the floor, the chamber filled with a burst of light. By counting the days between zenith passages, the people of Monte Alban knew the length of the year quite precisely (Littman 1980:5).



Conroy Smith



A New Star Did Appear

Roy Weldon

Sunday, December 22, the Christmas story in the Book of Mormon was being read from the pulpit.

And angels did appear unto men, wise men, and did declare unto them glad tidings of great joy.

—Helaman 5:126

And it came to pass also, that a new star did appear.

—3 Nephi 1:24

Like a flash, it suddenly dawned upon me that if a new star, or for that matter a hundred new stars, appeared tonight, I would never know the difference. My lifelong enthusiasm and love for Book of Mormon research was aroused.

The following Sunday, I asked an adult assembly if anyone there would know if a new star should appear that night. They all admitted they would not. Later I asked the same question of a college degree man. He said he was a student of the stars and knew the constellations. I suggested that Stanford University estimates roughly 6,000 stars in the heavens are visible to the unaided eye. He then admitted he would not be able to tell if a new star should appear.

What basis was there for the Book of Mormon assertion in 1830 that people in ancient Central America had sufficient astronomical know-how to be aware when a new star appeared?

The buried cities of the Mayas were, to say nothing of their astronomical proficiencies, simply unknown in 1830. John Lloyd Stephens, termed the "Father and Discoverer of the Maya Civilization," first found the ruins in 1839.

Victor Wolfgang Von Hagen in his biography of Stephens says of the Maya-Aztec-Inca cultures:

These civilizations were not only dead, for dead implied having once lived, but even to

the world immersed in searching out the antique, absolutely unknown.

—Von Hagen 1947:75

We have only two choices. The Book of Mormon is either what it claims to be or it is one of the greatest frauds of all time. If the existence of the Maya civilization was *absolutely unknown* to the learned men in 1830, then by what means could an unlearned youth of backwoods New York know of this civilization and that the claim of "a new star did appear" would be fully justified by archaeological exploration a full century later?

Archaeologist Herbert J. Spinden wrote of Maya astronomical observatories:

The most remarkable of these observatories is located at the Mayan city of Copan. . . . They could tell the exact number of days between the recurrences of any phenomena.

—Velt 1949:62

A more recent text provides this insight.

The astronomer Anthony Aveni and the architect Horst Hartung have determined that the ancient Maya used buildings and doorways and windows within them for astronomical sightings, especially of Venus.

—Coe 1987:178

Present-day astronomers at the Hansen Planetarium developed a special planetarium program about the ancient America astronomers called "Skywatchers of Ancient Mexico." A companion booklet of the same name indicates these ancient civilizations calculated knowledge of the heavens correctly and consistently.

Starlike in appearance, Venus far outshines the real nighttime stars. . . . One of the great triumphs of Maya astronomy was its recognition that the

"Morning Star" and the "Evening Star" were one and the same. But the Maya went far beyond that discovery. By careful observation they found that it takes Venus 583.92 days to go from Morning Star to Evening Star and back to Morning Star again. . . . They calculated this cycle of Venus so accurately that they would be off only one day in 6,000 years.

—Littman 1982:20

The Book of Mormon affirmation that a new star did appear does not seem, in light of modern day discoveries, as incredulous as it did in 1830.

Let us now take some soundings of this Book of Mormon deep. The *Encyclopedia Americana*, subject history of astronomy, says:

No other scientists have been more dependent upon the work of their predecessors than the astronomers. Isaac Newton, greatest of astronomers, graciously acknowledged this fact when he said, "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."

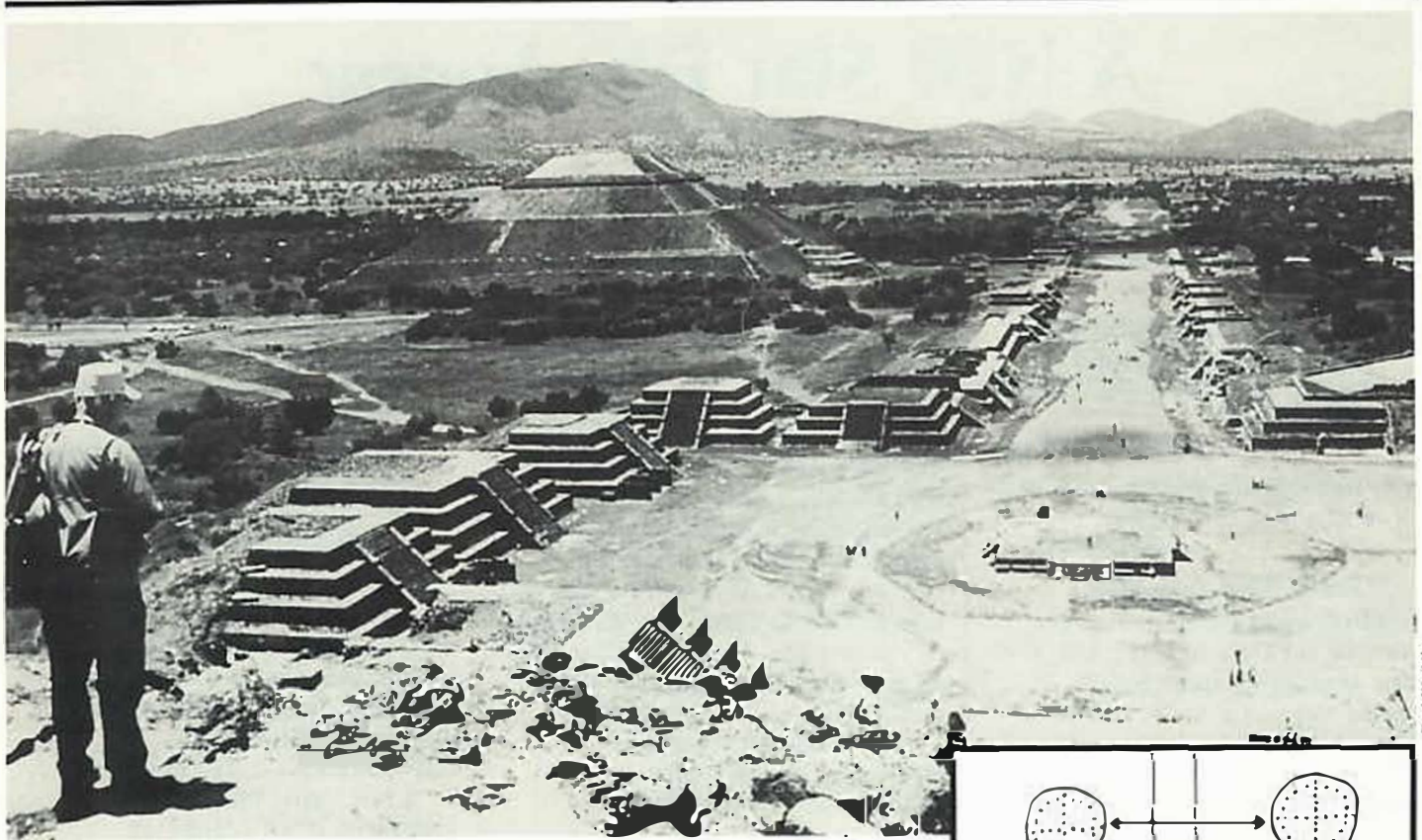
—1960:462

Upon what predecessor's shoulders did Joseph stand in order to see that ancient Americans were so advanced in astronomy as to know when a new star appeared? The answer appears clearcut and dramatic. Joseph Smith stood on the shoulders of the ALMIGHTY—as did Jeremiah when he wrote:

As the host of heaven [stars] cannot be numbered. . . . so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me (emphasis added).

—Jeremiah 33:22

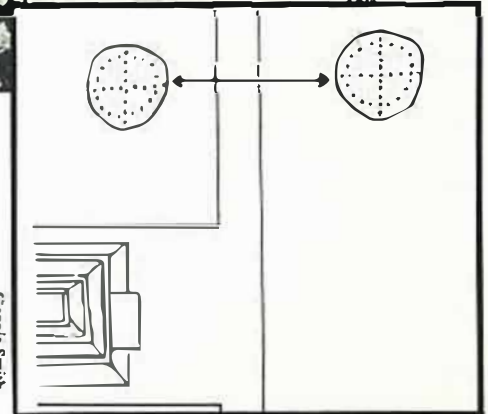
Aristarchus, the Greek astronomer (150 B.C.), numbered the stars at 1,022. Claudius



Fred Weddle

The Pyramids of the Sun and Moon and numerous other buildings flank the well laid out Avenue of the Dead in Teotihuacan. The main avenue aligns 15 1/2 degrees east of north. A design called a pecked cross (see diagram) is hammered into the limestone floor of a building next to the Pyramid of the Sun. An almost identical pecked cross lies two miles away toward the west-northwest at the base of a range of hills called the Cerro Colorado. The two pecked crosses lie almost exactly at right angles to the Avenue of the Dead. When standing at the pecked cross in Teotihuacan and looking toward the Cerro Colorado, the bright star Capella and the beautiful faint cluster of stars we call the Pleiades can be observed. When the Pleiades set or vanished from view, almost exactly along the line of sight formed by the two pecked crosses, this heralded the day when the Sun climbed to its zenith (Littman 1980:7-8).

Genelle Smith



Ptolemy, Greek astronomer living in Egypt, cataloged more than 1,000 stars in the second century A.D. Now, however, 2,500 years after Jeremiah, his inspiration is overwhelmingly authenticated.

In the 1930s, Harvard University attempted a star census by photographing sections of the sky. One plate, 14 by 17 inches, revealed 2,000 outside galaxies. From all the results, the estimate of the number of galaxies composing the known universe is 500 million million. As for the number of stars in one galaxy, one observer at Harvard counted two million selected patches of the Milky Way.

Space age and computer technologies not only have confirmed the numberless

concourses of stars, but aid today's astronomers in their study of the heavens. British astronomers recently discovered a new satellite of the Milky Way. The computerized plate-measuring machine counted roughly 250,000 stars on the 14-inch photographic plate (*Sky & Telescope* 1990:237).

This brief article does not take into account other Book of Mormon astronomy claims such as "For sure it is the earth that moveth, and not the sun" (Helaman 4:62), or "the course of the Lord is one eternal round" (1 Nephi 3:32). A sample substantiation of "one eternal round" is found in Lincoln Barnett's book on Dr. Einstein which says: "In the Einstein universe there are no straight

lines, there are only great circles" (Barnett 1948:93).

The Book of Mormon measures up to the Bible in that its prophets had insights and foresights which developments of subsequent decades and centuries have authenticated.

"A new star did appear" claimed the Book of Mormon in 1830. A century later, the astronomical ability of the ancient Americans came to light.

See also *Book of Mormon Claims and Evidences*, Vol. 1, 1979, pages 80-81.

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Don Beebe

Positive Evidences of Prophetic Leadership

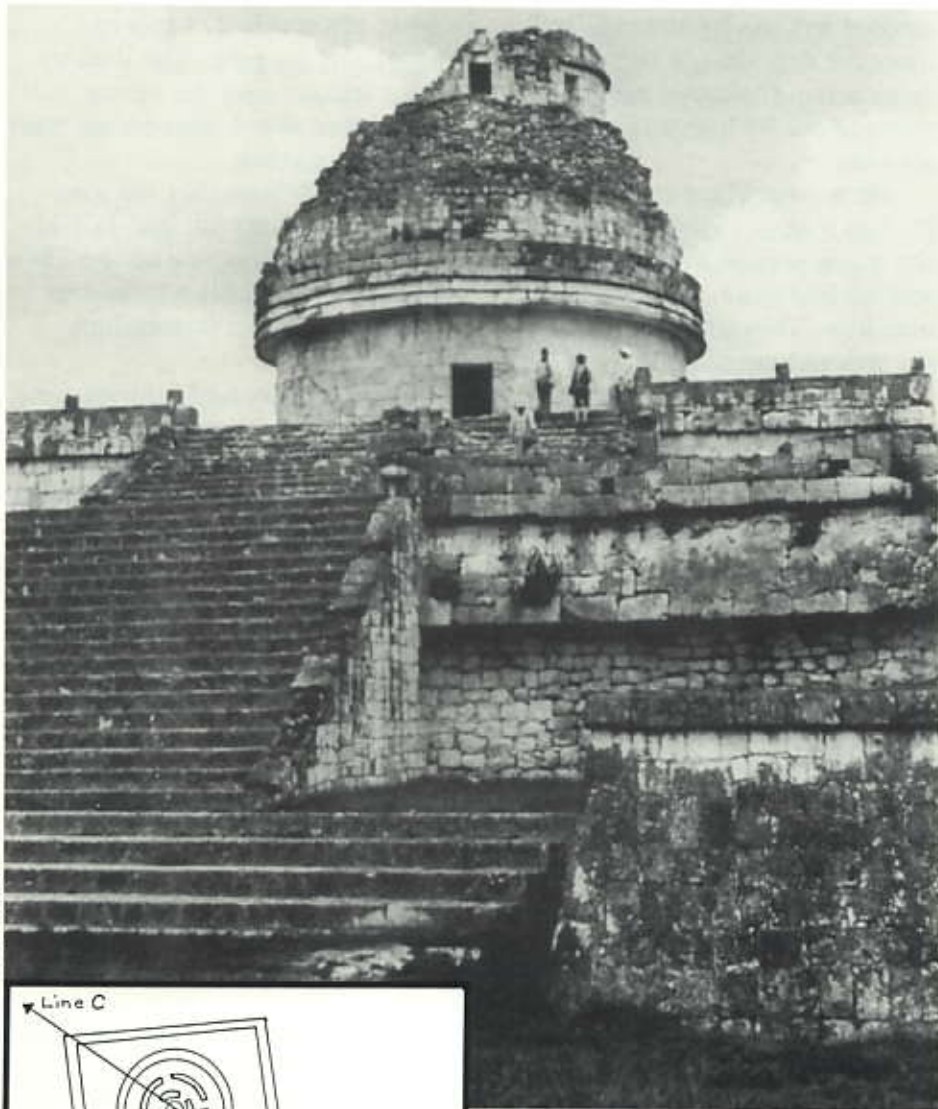
Roy Weldon

I want to make clear here and now that I base my philosophy of life on the positives and not the negatives. I base my dedication to the gospel on a formidable stockpile of positive affirmative evidences.

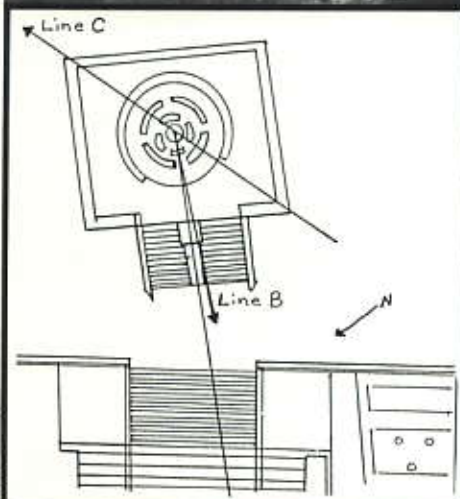
The fact that Joseph Smith was human and made some errors has no bearing upon the positive evidences of his prophetic leadership. I regret very much and do not follow the mistakes of David, yet I accept the inspiration and thrill to the twenty-third, nineteenth, and first Psalms. I regret that Peter cursed and denied his Lord on that dark night, yet I glory in the positive affirmations of Peter's ministry. I regret Paul could not get along with Barnabas, but this has no bearing upon the positive evidences that he was indeed blessed of heaven as few others have been blessed. I regret that my pastor, my stake president, my brothers and sisters, and myself make mistakes and do fool things, but I refuse to allow these human frailties to be a factor in determining my course of action. Should I reject Jesus because he had a Judas Iscariot in his inner circle?

My experiences with the Restoration's affirmatives goes back to the year 1915. I was reclining under a pear tree in my father's orchard in California one Sunday afternoon reading the Doctrine and Covenants when there came over me a powerful influence which gave me to know that the words I was reading were divinely inspired and that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of God.

Again and again, through the years the Lord has touched me by the finger of his Spirit by which I have come to know that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and that Jesus Christ is my Savior, and the Savior of the world.



Fred Weddle



Corinne Smith

At Chichen Itza, the building now called the Caracol, and sometimes derisively "the wedding cake," sits askew its base. Its asymmetrical positioning was clearly on purpose. Although the damaged condition of the Caracol and its reconstruction in the 1930s make certainty unsure, archaeoastronomers believe the Mayas used the windows to sight and monitor the rise and fall of Venus, equinoxes, and the Sun's zenith (Littman 1980:19).



Ministry of a Nephite

Frank Scottie Wilcox initiated and promoted the FRAA regional Spend a Day with the Book of Mormon Conference in the Boston area. Brother Wilcox stands between Mary George and Lyle Smith at the conference held in May 1989.



Frank Scottie Wilcox

It was a nice sunny afternoon, late in September of 1981. I had gone downtown to get some paint. On the way home, a car driven by a drunk driver smashed into my car broadside, pushing it through the intersection to cut off a power pole which fell across my car. I suffered excessive physical injuries and have no recollection of the accident. What I know was told to me by the nurse who witnessed it and then cared for me until I was transferred to the hospital. She later came to visit me and related what she had seen.

This nurse had been in the car ahead of me. As she stopped at the four-way stop and pulled into the intersection, she saw a car bearing down at quite a high speed. She quickly accelerated to avoid being hit. In her rearview mirror, she watched as I came to the intersection, made my stop, and proceeded into the intersection, unaware of the oncoming car.

After the crash, the nurse promptly came to render what help she could while the First Aid car was called to rescue me. I needed the Jaws-of-Life tool to cut me loose from the crushed car.

While the nurse monitored my vital signs, she noticed a man—somewhat large in stature and well-dressed in a business suit—come down the street. He approached the car on the opposite side from her, put his hands on me, and said something she couldn't understand. She

asked him his name, but he ignored her. As he stepped back from the car, she got out and came around to again ask his name and if he had witnessed the accident.

He was nowhere to be found. He had simply vanished. Puzzled, she asked several bystanders which way he had gone. Nobody had seen him. They didn't know what she was talking about.

On the way to the hospital, my heart stopped. When I arrived at the emergency room, however, the staff managed to activate my heart, but couldn't maintain my blood pressure. This alerted them to internal injuries, and they performed immediate surgery. My liver and kidneys were damaged, and I sustained extensive internal cuts. My pelvis bone was broken and left hip considerably crushed. They feared they would not be able to repair the hip socket and I would lose the use of my left leg.

Unique circumstances surrounded my care at the hospital. One of the top surgeons, who normally left at noon, had remained, merely carrying on conversation with different people, not knowing why he didn't go home. One of the top bone specialists, who also normally left at noon, was also still at the hospital. Both were on hand to immediately provide me with the best medical care available.

In the Book of Mormon, one of the blessings given to the Three Nephites who tarried on earth was that they would not have pain

while in the flesh (3 Nephi 13:20). After my accident, I too had absolutely no pain. The doctors were amazed and the nurses astonished that I didn't want pain pills or sedatives.

I fully believe that the man who came to my car and laid his hands on me was one of the Three Nephites. From his administration, I received a tremendous blessing.

The doctors had informed me that in approximately a year and a half arthritis would attack the bones which had been broken and I probably would need crutches the rest of my life. Some nine years later, I still have no arthritis. I must be careful, but otherwise, have almost a hundred percent use of both legs. My recovery was truly miraculous.

Three or four months after my release from the hospital, I visited the nurse and tried to tell her about my belief in the Book of Mormon and the Three Nephites. She refused to listen. She said she didn't believe such nonsense. It was all right if I wanted to, but she didn't want to hear anything about it.

I have not contacted her further, but I feel certain she thinks of this experience once in awhile. It's probably on her mind even though she doesn't believe it—yet.

I praise God for the rich blessings he has given me, especially this one from the ministry of a Nephite.





The Junior Witness

The Foundation For Research On Ancient America

WINTER 1990

NUMBER 16

They Came from the East

by Larry L. Jordan

Who were the wise men who came to visit the Christ child? The New Testament tells us only that wise men came from the east (Matthew 3:1-2).

Tradition has taught us that these wise men were three kings and were from the Orient. These traditions are based not on Scriptures, but on legends.

The Book of Mormon also tells us about

wise men. "Angels did appear unto men, wise men, and did declare unto them glad tidings of great joy" (Helaman 5:125-126).

The Book of Mormon gives possible clues about who the wise men were. The following story is a might-have-been story based on the scriptures from: Matthew (I.V.) 3:1-11, Helaman 5:6-8, 54-63, 125-126, and 3 Nephi 1:12-25.

SUMMARY PART I

Standing upon their city walls, Samuel the Lamanite prophesied to the wicked Nephites. In five years Jesus Christ, the Messiah, would be born. Some people repented and sought bap-

tism. Others threw stones until Samuel fled. Now, five years later, the signs and wonders had begun. Samuel knew the time of Christ's birth would be soon.

PART II

The smell of burning flesh drew Samuel from his reverie. He sighed and began to eat his supper.

"Samuel, Samuel," a voice from heaven called.

Samuel dropped his fish in the middle of a bite.

"Samuel, you have served me long and well and have brought many people back to me."

"Thank you, Lord. I have often prayed my offering would be acceptable unto you."

"I have one more task for you, Samuel."

"Name it, Lord, and I shall do it!"

"I want you to return to the land of your father Lehi," the Lord said.

"To the land of Jerusalem?" Samuel asked.

"Jerusalem!" the Lord said. "You must prepare a vessel to carry you and the sons of Helaman across the waters. I shall place a new star in the heavens to guide you to my Son."

"Your Son?" asked Samuel. "The Lord Jesus?"

Samuel fell to the sand, unable to comprehend the blessing that was to be truly his. Ever since he had prophesied the birth of Jesus, he had longed to touch him, to fall down and worship him, to bring him a gift, to see with his own eyes this long heralded Messiah.

And now . . . God was asking him to go! His heart exploded with joy! With superhuman energy Samuel built the boat. God instructed him on building the ship, as he had Nephi of old, the

Brother of Jared before him, and Noah before him.

It was finished. All it needed was a crew.

"Is this the home of the Lamanite prophet?" a voice asked from the darkness behind him.

Samuel jumped and turned to see the smiling faces of Nephi and Lehi, the two sons of Helaman. Tall and noble with the assurance that comes from following the Lord and leading people, the two Nephites stepped into the firelight.

As old friends, they embraced Samuel.

"Come sit by the fire and rest. You must be tired. The Lord told me you would be coming," Samuel said.

After the sons of Helaman had unpacked their animals and

bedded them down, the three men talked into the night, sharing news of recent signs and wonders, and news that angels had brought glad tidings of great joy (Helaman 5:6-8, 125-126).

The next few days, the three men carefully packed—dried fruit, fish, meat, water, and grain.

The three men could feel the electricity in the air. The very elements were charged with expectation.

As the second day wore on, the sun made its relentless trek across the sky. Lehi studied the sunset as the men stopped to rest.

"Look at the sky. It is as bright as noonday, and the sun is nearly gone!" Lehi said.

"This will be the night of his birth!" shouted Samuel. "Tomorrow we leave for Jerusalem!"

The next night, according to the prophecy five years before, the new star appeared.

As the sun rose again, the three wise men began their journey. For almost two long years, they followed the heavenly light across ocean, desert, and wilderness, until it led them to the land of Jerusalem.

Nephi, Lehi, and Samuel could hardly contain their excitement as they approached that legendary city. In the wonder and bustle on the highway to Jerusalem, they had, for a time, forgotten the star.

"Surely someone can tell us the location of the child. Indeed, all Israel must know!" Nephi exclaimed.

Asking the whereabouts of the child as they went, they entered the city. No one seemed to know.

"This must be the best kept secret in all Israel!" Samuel muttered to his companions.

"Let us go to the king. He must know. It would be wise to pay our respects, anyway," Nephi answered.

As they passed through crowded streets, they saw the sick and the lame. They heard the beggars and hawkers shouting at

the crowd.

"Evidently these people do not know the power of the prayer of faith," Lehi confided.

One old blind man came close. Over and over he called out to them, "Will someone help the poor blind man?"

The men stopped. Nephi turned to the old man and spoke to him.

"Do you believe that the God who led Moses out of Egypt by his mighty hand will send his Son the Messiah, to redeem mankind and free the captive?" Samuel asked.

"Yes, masters, yes!" the old man answered in awe.

"Do you believe that this Messiah has the power to free you from the bondage of blindness?" Lehi asked.

By now a crowd had gathered, giving hushed attention to every word of this strange dialogue.

"Yes, I believe! I . . . I believe!"

Samuel and Lehi took the old man's trembling hands while Nephi raised his eyes heavenward and called upon the Lord in mighty prayer.

As he prayed, there came a look of awe over the faces of the people gathered around.

"Angels!" one whispered.

"Fire from heaven!" another exclaimed, as all four men were bathed in a heavenly glow.

As Nephi concluded his prayer, he looked into the eyes of the old man and said, "In the name of the Messiah, be thou healed!"

There was silence for a moment. As the old man slowly lifted his head, a broad, toothless smile spread slowly across his tear-stained face.

"I . . . can . . . see! I can see! In the name of the Messiah, I can see! Praise the Lord, I can see!" the old man shouted, hobbling off speedily.

"Remember, old man," Nephi called after him, "the power of the prayer of faith!"

Leaving the chattering crowd behind, the three turned up the



cobbled lane toward Herod's palace where the king had already heard of the wise men seeking the Messiah.

They came before Herod saying, **Where is the child that is born, the Messiah of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him.**

When Herod the king had heard of the child, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests, and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them, saying, **Where is the place that is written of by the prophets, in which Christ should be born? For he greatly feared, yet he believed not the prophets.**

And they said unto him, **It is written by the prophets, that he should be born in Bethlehem of Judea. . . .**

Then Herod, when he had called the wise men privily,



Illustration by Rick Farley

inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found the child, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also (Matthew 3:2-8).

After they left Herod, the three made their way out of Jerusalem and headed toward Bethlehem as the scribes had directed.

"Strange," Samuel said, "that this news we brought seems to come as a surprise to everyone. Perhaps . . ."

"Look!" Lehi exclaimed, "the star!"

"Thank the Lord!" Nephi breathed, feeling frustrated over the delays of the past hours.

"It is not leading us toward Bethlehem," Samuel said, with some surprise.

"Let us follow it wherever it goes. It has led us true so far," Nephi answered.

And lo, the star which they

saw in the east, went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was (Matthew 3:9).

As Samuel and the others rode, weary, into the sleepy village of Nazareth, they saw the star stop over a house a little way ahead of them. The old excitement welled up within them as they realized they were so close to their long awaited Messiah. Reverently they all dismounted and walked toward the house. They could hear voices as they approached.

"Joseph, we have visitors." a tender voice said.

A childish voice piped, "Momma, a star . . . Pretty!"

Finally a door opened. Light spilled from the open door, adding to the gentle wash of starlight that bathed the house and street.

Three tall strangers dressed in foreign clothing stood expectantly in the doorway, peering inside. A balding middle-aged man and a young woman with raven hair and radiant face stared back at them. From a small tousled head, big brown eyes peeked around the woman's skirt. One pudgy hand clutched her apron.

Nephi broke the silence, saying, "Please, may we come in? We have come such a long way to see the young Messiah."

Joseph nodded his assent and backed away from the door to make room for them.

"God must have sent you," Mary said. "Nobody but a few shepherds outside Bethlehem and my cousin Elizabeth know about who my son is."

"Who are you? Where do you come from?" Joseph asked.

"We come from a land far to the east across a great ocean. We have been traveling since the time of Jesus' birth two years ago. We saw the same star that you see overhead. God sent it to lead us here . . . to see . . . to see . . ."

"The Messiah," Lehi added, his eyes glued to the Christ child.

"Jesus, the Son of God!" Samuel breathed.

"Angels appeared to us bearing 'good tidings of great joy' they called it. They told us the Messiah was to be born," Samuel said.

The three wise men stared in loving wonder at the little one clutching his mother's skirt.

Mary turned to Joseph as Jesus climbed into her lap.

"That's what the shepherds said . . . those very words!" Mary said.

Joseph nodded in agreement as the three strangers knelt before the child and his mother and worshiped him silently. Their tear-stained faces shone.

After a time, Nephi stood and said, "We have brought gifts for the young Messiah. He and the others hurried outside to collect their treasures.

"We have looked for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ for many many years. We thought it only fitting that we should present him with these small tokens of our devotion . . . In this way, may we, who have waited so long for him, share in his life, if with only these meager gifts . . . We would be honored if . . . you would accept . . . for him . . . with our thanks . . ." they said, giving him gold from the Promised Land, frankincense and myrrh from Arabia.

And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way (Matthew 3:12).

As their boat crunched into the sandy beach they had left over four years before, Samuel said to his brothers, "No matter what may befall us or where our paths lead from now on, we shall ever be able to say, 'I know that my Redeemer lives!'"

"And perhaps," Nephi replied, "the Lord Jesus will remember his people here in the Promised Land and we shall see him again."





Many people have longed to see Jesus Christ. The story tells us that Samuel longed to see Jesus with his own eyes and he did!

Have you seen Jesus? Some children have. If you have seen him would you share your experience with us in *The Junior Witness*?





















Send to Editor, *The Junior Witness*,
410 North Pleasant, Independence, Missouri 64050.

PICTURES OF CHRISTMAS—TRUE OR FALSE?

by B. Mildred Smith

(In the box check TRUE or FALSE.) (Cross out the FALSE picture.)

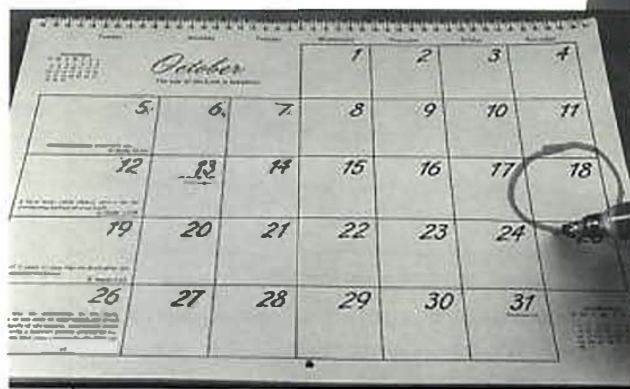
Check your answers with the key on pages 2 and 3.

1. The wise men visited the Christ child in the stable (Matthew 3:11, I.V.).	<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE	A 	B 
2. The Bible teaches that there were three wise men who visited the Christ child (Matthew 3:1).	<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE		
3. According to the Bible, the wise men were kings from the Orient (Matthew 3:1).	<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE		
4. People in the Promised Land knew when Christ was to be born (Helaman 5:55).	<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE		
5. The prophets of the Bible said a star would appear to announce the birth of Christ.	<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE		
6. Prophets in the Promised Land said a new star would appear at the time of Christ's birth (Helaman 5:54-59).	<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE		
7. People in the Promised Land saw the new star and knew that it signaled Jesus' birth (3 Nephi 1:22-24).	<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE		
8. The wise men never lost sight of the star, but followed it from the time they first saw it until they found the Christ child (Matthew 3:7-10).	<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE		
9. Angels appeared to wise men in the Promised Land before the birth of Christ (Helaman 5:125-126).	<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE		
10. King Herod wanted to find the Christ child in order to worship him (Matthew 3:8, 13, 16).	<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE		

Time and the Calendar in the Book of Mormon:

Part One

Gordon Heady



Calendars make excellent Christmas presents. They range from practical one-year-on-a-page sheets to beautiful, full color collectors' editions such as FRAA's Book of Mormon calendars.* Everybody needs one.

What would we do without a calendar to remind us when school starts, when to plant gardens and celebrate holidays? How would we know when to pay our bills, go to church, or wish Mom Happy Birthday?

All life revolves around accurately tracking time. Since Creation, people have developed calendar systems to measure time and to govern their daily affairs. Most of us take the calendar for granted. Few realize how much past, present, and future time affects our lives.

For some people, discussing a calendar system is humdrum. It's importance, however, becomes immediately meaningful when considering the following four points: 1. Calendars control all aspects of life—corporate, secular, and spiritual. 2. Accurate calendars require certain ingredients. 3. Understanding the calendars of two different societies will, with a correlation point, positively link the histories of both groups. 4. Knowing the calendar system used by Book of Mormon peoples and linking it with the Gregorian calendar would provide a powerful solid proof of the book's divinity.

Only the first two points and

their relation to the Book of Mormon will be examined in this article.

Calendars Control Lives

It doesn't matter how much money people have—kings or peasants—they must eat. Without a calendar to tell them when to plant crops, they might starve. Book of Mormon peoples had to produce food, thus they had to have a calendar. Survival—food production—was an impelling reason for the development of calendars.

Measuring time was also necessary for spiritual purposes: worship, feast dates, and prophetic fulfillment. As civilizations became more sophisticated, they used the calendar in business and commerce as well as in their personal lives.

Different Systems

Devising accurate calendars requires diligent observation of the Sun, Moon, stars, and planets. A solar calendar is based on the Sun; a lunar one, the Moon. All calendars must be intercalated because the Earth's orbit around the Sun is not an even 365 days. Intercalation means periodically adjusting the system to keep it synchronized with the Sun. We intercalate our calendar every four years by adding an extra day to February. The Jewish system, basically a lunar calendar, intermittently adds a whole month.

Calendar Ingredients

The two primary ingredients in an accurate solar calendar system are a knowledge of how to measure the movement of the Earth and Sun relative to each other (it isn't necessary to know which one revolves around the other) and the ability to compute fractions (decimals). This information alone can provide an accurate year length. For daily convenience, months and weeks divide the year into manageable time portions.

Nephite Knowledge

Did the Nephite/Lamanite nations have the necessary skills to develop an accurate calendar? What system did they use?

The Nephite record clearly shows they had knowledge of fractions, one of the primary ingredients. Mosiah 5:35 mentions one half, and Mosiah 7:6, one fifth. Several Book of Mormon authors use one hundredth. In addition, the Nephites had a complete understanding of the universe, which, with the planetary orbits as we now know them, required the use of fractions (decimals).

They knew about the revolution of the Earth (Alma 16:54); the planets moving in regular form (Alma 16:55); constellations (2 Nephi 10:10); the Moon's light (2 Nephi 10:10); the Sun, Moon, and stars (3 Nephi

4:20); and the second ingredient, that the Earth moved and not the Sun (Helaman 4:62).

Since the two primary ingredients for a calendar are evident, one can assume an accurate system existed. The record lacks, though, precise details about the system.

Book of Mormon Calendar Components

The smallest division of time in the Book of Mormon is an hour. The words minute and second are not found. Our understanding of the events in the Book of Mormon and the book's spiritual message would not necessarily have been enhanced if the Jaredites and Nephites had recorded the exact day or hour of an event. This would, however, have been priceless information for calendar students and their studies of chronology.

The word day frequently appears. The Nephites recognized daylight and darkness, and the rising and setting of the Sun (3 Nephi 1:17). No mention, however, is made of when they began the day. Several descriptions of battles relate the Nephites pursued the Lamanites all night and "on the morrow . . ." (Alma 26:152; 3 Nephi 2:73). If "morrow" indicates daylight, when troops could see well enough to find an enemy or to fight, then their day presumably began before or at daybreak. On the other hand, if "morrow" only means daylight, and not the next day, then "on the morrow" is not particularly meaningful. In addition, some authors point out that the Nephites, having a Jewish heritage, probably began their day at sunset.

The word week occurs only three times in the Book of Mormon and always in a spiritual context. The record doesn't specifically state that a week consists of seven days, but by

connecting several verses it seems clear that it did.

One day of each week was observed as a day of worship, the Sabbath (Mosiah 9:58). Mosiah 7:117 calls the Sabbath the seventh day, and Mosiah 7:118 tells of six days of creation plus the Sabbath day. A week, though, is never related as part of a month or as a unit of time passage. Still, the Nephites surely had a seven-day count because each seventh day was a day of worship.

References to months are numerous throughout the book. The highest numbered month is the eleventh (Alma 21:149). It is not known for sure, but because of their Jewish heritage the Nephites probably had at least twelve months in their year.

Curiously, not one month name appears in the Book of Mormon. The Mayas, Aztecs, Romans, and Jews named their months. In fact, most ancient civilizations that used months in their calendars also named them.

Not knowing the number of months the Nephites had in a year nor their names are a couple reasons it is so difficult to extract the Nephite calendar system from the Book of Mormon. If they had named their months, correlation with either the Jewish or Mayan calendar could occur because the names of the months in both these calendars are known.

Book of Mormon System

In the Book of Mormon, the fundamental ingredients for an accurate calendar are present—the required mathematical skills; knowledge of planets and heavenly bodies; and time elements—hours, days, months, and years. Unfortunately, little is known about how they used and measured the ingredients.

The Nephites referred to days as part of a month and months as part of a year. They give no indication, however, of how many

hours were in a day, how many days comprised a month, or how many months made a year. The most important missing information is the exact number of days in a year and how they intercalated. The writers do not tell how they synchronized their calendar with the Sun, or even if their calendar was based on the Sun (solar) or the Moon (lunar).

The Book of Mormon is a severely abridged religious history with comments on civil and political affairs. Helaman 2:13 even lists some of the subjects omitted from the record. Mormon and the other writers either considered many of the details we would find interesting to be of little import to the main spiritual record or they were instructed not to write them. They included little of the technological data we would have found helpful in a study of their life and civil systems.

The paucity of information on a calendar system in the Book of Mormon may be by design. The Lord is a lord of plans, precision, prophecy, and timing. Although, "time only is measured unto man" (Alma 19:38), the Lord has always been conscious of the passage of time in its relation to men. It is entirely possible the Lord instructed Mormon to leave out some of the information about the calendar. This will be addressed in a future article.

Calendar information greatly adds to our understanding of ancient peoples and helps tie our civilization to theirs, but it is of little eternal value. It won't save our souls. The message of the Book of Mormon, besides being a record of God's dealings with his people in the promised land, is that Jesus is Lord, he created us, loves us, forgives us, and died for us. Calendars are interesting and intriguing. Jesus is eternal.

To be continued in the next issue.



Who Were the Wise Men?

B. Mildred Smith

The Inspired and King James Versions of the Bible record “wise men from the east” came to Jerusalem to find the child born to be the Messiah of the Jews. When they found him, they worshiped him, opened their treasures, and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Tradition, probably arising because of three gifts, proclaims there were three wise men. The Scriptures do not reveal how many came.

This event and the legends surrounding the mysterious strangers from afar have been the basis for some beautiful art, literature, and music. Henry van Dyke popularized their legendary names—Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar—in his moving story *The Other Wise Man* and reaffirmed the ancient legend that made them oriental kings, one of whom was dark skinned. The song, “We Three Kings of Orient Are,” found in many hymnbooks today, perpetuates this tradition.

Another tradition calls them “Magi.” O. Henry’s delightful story “Gift of the Magi” endeared this myth to many who may not know “Magi” pertains to a class of Zoroastrian priests of ancient Media and Persia reputed to possess supernatural powers; magicians and sorcerers.

Modern versions of the Scriptures add confusion concerning who these men really were. The *New International Version* calls them *Magi*. The *Reach Out Version* says they were *astrologers*, persons who profess to interpret the influence of zodiac. The *Good News Bible* tells they

were just *some men who studied the stars*.

Tradition has long held that the wise men, whoever they were, learned from their studies that a new star would herald the birth of the Messiah, the deliverer and king of the Jews. What did they study to get such an idea? None

Modern versions of the Scriptures add confusion concerning who these men really were.

of the Old Testament Scriptures of today have any prophecy of a star connected with the birth of a Jewish king.

What would the appearance of a new star mean to a Zoroastrian priest or to an oriental king about a Jewish Messiah? And if they understood that a new king of the tiny kingdom of Judea had been born, of what significance would that be to the mighty kings of the Orient or to the powerful religion of the Zoroastrians? Their gift giving might be explainable, but why would these kings or priests want to *worship* this newborn king? Every version of the Scriptures commonly used today relates the wise men declared they had come to *worship* him.

According to tradition, the new star arrived over the stable in which Christ was born on the night of his birth, and the wise men or Magi or Zoroastrian



Don Beebe

priests or astrologers or whoever they were followed that star from their homes. Some problems arise with these ideas.

If the star appeared on the night of the baby’s birth, this allows no time for the men in question to follow it from their homes to Bethlehem. And if they followed the star all of the way, and it stopped right over the stable, why was it necessary for them to inquire where to go? If they obtained their information from ancient prophecies of the Jews, why did they not go directly to Bethlehem instead of going first to Jerusalem to inquire of the king for the place of birth? The prophet Micah designated Bethlehem as the birthplace many centuries before the time (Micah 5:2). And why were they so delighted when they saw the star after their private audience with Herod?

Actually, all they said about the star was that they *had seen it in the east*. It was only *after* their visit to King Herod that they followed the star until it led them to the house (not stable) where they saw the young child and his mother Mary.

The Biblical account substantiates that the wise men did not arrive on the night of the Christ child’s birth. The record states that immediately after the wise men came, an angel warned Joseph to take Mary and the young child to Egypt to escape Herod’s wrath. They left in haste

by night (Matt. 3:13-14).

Prior to this journey to Egypt, at least three significant events transpired. Jesus was circumcised and named on the eighth day after his birth (Luke 2:21). He was presented at the temple with sacrifice as the law required after Mary's forty days of purification (Luke 2:22-24 and Lev. 12:2-8), and Joseph, Mary, and the babe returned to Nazareth, their own city (Luke 2:39). The flight into Egypt immediately after the wise men presented their gifts could not have occurred for many days after the child's birth.

Of further significance, Herod ordered the slaying of all children in Bethlehem, and "the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men" (Matt. 3:16). Although all of two years may not have passed since the star heralded the birth, the wise men seemingly did not report it as a current event.

The Book of Mormon offers possible clues to some of the questions the Bible leaves unanswered concerning these strangers and may help identify them.

From the time of their exodus

"Angels did appear unto men, wise men . . . and did declare unto them tidings of great joy." —Helaman 5:126

from the land of Jerusalem, the Nephite people knew the approximate time and place of the expected Messiah's birth. Nephi records his father Lehi prophesied the Messiah would be born in the land of Jerusalem 600 years from the time of their leaving (1 Nephi 3:4). Alma reaffirmed the place of



None of the Old Testament Scriptures of today have any prophecy of a star connected with the birth of a Jewish king.

his birth—"at Jerusalem, which is the land of our forefathers" (Alma 5:19).

As the end of the 600 years approached, Samuel the Lamanite prophet entered the land of the Nephites to preach to a people who had largely dwindled in disbelief. He told them the coming of the Messiah was only five years away. To mark that day, he prophesied a sign would be given.

Behold, there shall be great lights in heaven, insomuch that in the night before he cometh, there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day;

Therefore there shall be one day and a night, and a day, as if it were one day, and there were no night; and this shall be unto you for a sign; for ye shall know of the rising of the

sun, and also of its setting. . . .

And behold there shall be a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld; and this also shall be a sign unto you.

—Helaman 5:56-59

Although many scoffed at the words of Samuel, some faithfully anticipated the fulfillment of his prophesies. Three years after Samuel's ministry, "angels did appear unto men, wise men" among the believers, "and did declare unto them tidings of great joy" (Helaman 5:126).

Nephi, head of the church at this time, was the one believers turned to for baptism. In the year following the visit of the angels, Nephi gave his son Nephi charge of all the sacred things and records that had been kept since the exodus from Jerusalem. Then, he departed out of the land. The account does not report where Nephi went; and he was not seen again in the land for at least nine years (3 Nephi 1:2, 3, and 46).

(Continued on p. 14.)

*The legend of the three oriental kings has inspired great works of art, music, and literature. As Gian Carlo Menotti wandered the halls of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City in November—conscious of his commission to compose an opera for television by Christmas—he found himself standing in front of this painting by Hieronymus Bosch, *Adoration of the Kings*. It recalled his childhood in Italy where gifts are brought by the three wise men, not Santa Claus. He heard again the strange song of the three kings and *Amahl and the Night Visitors* was born.*

Many have enjoyed the unusual harmonies of the opera and thrilled to the miracle of healing for the crippled boy Amahl. The main message, though, is couched in the aria sung by Melchior, one of the three kings.

The Child we seek doesn't need our gold.

*On love, on love alone
He will build His kingdom.
His pierced hand will hold
no scepter.*

His haloed head will wear no crown.

His might will not be built on your toil.

*Swifter than lightning
He will soon walk among us.
He will bring us new life
and receive our death,
and the keys to His city
belong to the poor.*



Likewise, the Nephites never heard more of Samuel after his prophesying. The record says he returned to his "own country, and began to preach and to prophesy among his own people." No mention is made of subsequent ministry among either the Lamanites or Nephites (Helaman 5:119-120).

According then to the Book of Mormon, the faithful who lived in Joseph's land knew the approximate day the Messiah—for whom all Israel had waited for centuries—would be born. About two years before the appointed date, angels appeared to "wise men" bringing them "tidings of great joy" which they shared with the believers. During the year following that joyous occurrence, Nephi, leader of the church, turned over the sacred things and responsibilities to his son and departed from the land for some purpose not revealed in the Scriptures. Whether Samuel the Lamanite was one of those with whom the tidings were shared is not recorded, but he does not appear in the Scriptures again.

What better choice could be made for the "wise men" than believers in the Nephite/Lamanite nations who eagerly anticipated the birth of the Messiah?

If the "wise men" to whom the angels appeared made preparations, as a result of those tidings, to journey from Joseph's land to the land of Jerusalem, it would easily take them upwards to two years to arrive. This would account for the time which the wise men told Herod had passed since the birth when he "diligently inquired" of them when the star had appeared.

Luke's record does not mention a star with the events surrounding the birth of Christ. Herod and his court seemed unaware such a phenomenon had occurred. It was the wise men who announced they had seen a star in

These were not pagan kings who merely brought gifts to honor a king. These were men in touch with the God of Israel.



Don Becker

the east and had come to worship the one whose birth the star heralded, the Messiah of the Jews. Their purpose was not just to bring gifts to a king, but to worship the Messiah. Believers among the Nephite/Lamanites would have this purpose.

Wise men from Joseph's land would naturally have gone first to Jerusalem to search for the child. Their Scriptures said he would be born in the "land of Jerusalem" (1 Nephi 3:4), "the land of our forefathers" (Alma 5:19). The Book of Mormon gives no indication the people had the prophecies of Micah to which Herod's priests and scribes referred when they informed Herod the birth would be in Bethlehem (Matt. 3:4-5; Micah 5:2).

When the wise men left Herod, they again saw the star which they

had seen in the east, and they rejoiced for now it did lead them until it stood over the house where the young child resided (Matt. 3:9-11). The Scriptures do not reveal that the house was in Bethlehem.

The first act of the wise men was to worship the Christ child. Then they presented him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Warned of God not to return to Herod with news of the whereabouts of the child, "they departed into their own country another way."

These were not pagan kings who merely brought gifts to honor a king. Nor were they Zoroastrian priests enlightened by their study of the stars. These were men in touch with the God of Israel whose Messiah they worshiped and served.

Prayerful consideration of the Book of Mormon account provides a possible and much more meaningful insight into the identity of the "wise men from the east."



Transoceanic Contact New Publication

John Sorenson, professor emeritus of anthropology at Brigham Young University and a speaker at the fifth annual Spend a Day with the Book of Mormon conference, and Martin H. Raish collaborated together to produce *Pre-Columbian Contacts with the Americas across the Oceans: An Annotated Bibliography*. This work of 1375 pages covers 5613 items concerning evidences for and against transoceanic contacts. Abstracts are provided for most entries. The two volume work may be purchased for \$69 if orders are received by December 1, and \$89 after December 1.

FRAA's New Headquarters



J. Robert Farley's drawing of what FRAA plans to have the new building look like after renovations are completed.

Have you ever been part of an effort that affects the lives of thousands? Such an opportunity is now!

We at FRAA bear testimony that our success as an organization comes because our purpose is to witness of Christ through the Book of Mormon and because of the willing and eager dedication of our volunteers.

The new FRAA building at 210 White Oak, Independence, will expand this witness in several ways. We want people to know we are about a good cause, the cause of the kingdom. These offices will help us be visible to the community and bear testimony to one and all of what we do and why.

This facility will enable us to

open and enlarge our Restoration/Book of Mormon/archaeology library.

"Many treasures exist in the library," says Sherrie Smith, librarian. "Not only do we have rare resources, but current journals and newsletters with the most recent archaeological data. Until now, this information was unavailable on a regular basis. The new building permits us to take a giant step forward."

Starting with several thousand volumes, the library will be a vehicle for disseminating much information and promoting continual research about the Book of Mormon and Jesus Christ. "Seek learning even by study, and also by faith" (D&C 85:36a).

In addition, for the first time

the work volunteers do in more than six homes will be consolidated into one place. This will greatly minimize problems of logistics and coordination and promote better efficiency.

Yes, we need your help! Join with us to reach thousands in the next few years. The building costs \$50,000 and has projected renovation expenses of about \$40,000. Your special contribution to the building fund will be deeply appreciated.

When we look back in a few months, we will be able to say, "And this is the blessing which hath been bestowed upon us, that we have been made instruments in the hands of God, to bring about this great work" (Alma 14:82).

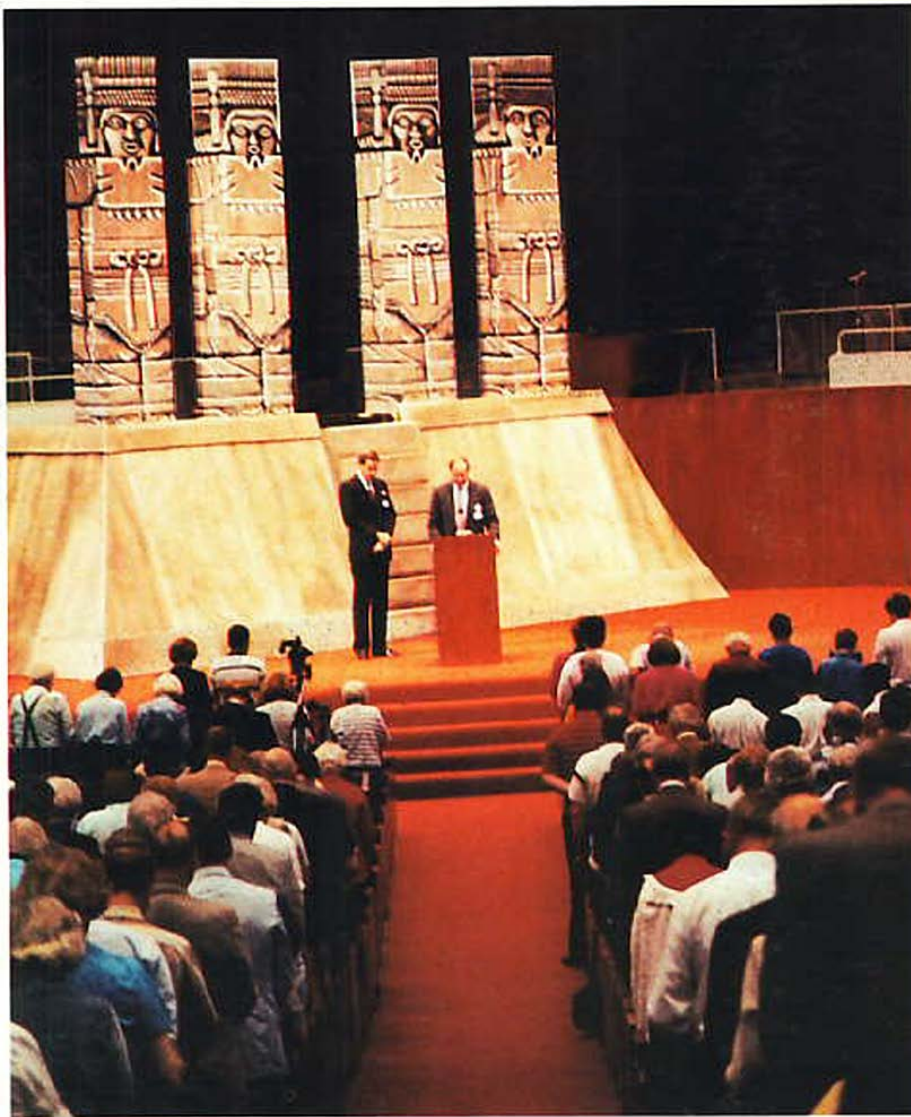


"That was the best Book of Mormon day I've attended," exclaimed Mickey Pritchard to a FRAA board member. "I learned so many new things!"

This time the Tula temple provided the dramatic backdrop for FRAA's sixth annual Spend a Day with the Book of Mormon conference. Speakers included Don Parry and John Tvetdnes from the LDS church and Richard A. De Long and Clair Weldon of the RLDS church.

After the drama presentation which opened the conference, over 200 children, under the direction of Julie Gatrost, went to the lower auditorium for a morning of classes, crafts, stories, and singing. Just before the conference broke for lunch, the children returned to sing a song they had learned that morning.

Conference attendees came from far and near. Janet Rasmussen and two others from Council Bluffs, Iowa attended for the first time. "We enjoyed it so much," said Jan. "We'll be coming back next year."



Don Beebe

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