

# **The Witness**

The Foundation For Research On Ancient America



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**The Hope of Israel**

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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...**

Jerusalem symbolizes the hope of a united Israel when all the tribes will be gathered together.

Photo by Jim Dunning.

## Guatemala Tour

Come stay in the Jungle Lodge at Tikal! Join the yearly archaeology tour sponsored by FRAA. This year the tour will visit Guatemala. Meet the lovely people, explore the exotic jungles, and climb the magnificent ruins!

**DATES**

November 22-December 1, 1991

**TOUR LEADERS**

Lyle Smith, chairman of the archaeology committee for FRAA.  
Sherrie Smith, editor and librarian for FRAA.

**COST**

Approximately \$1600



To sign up, call Lyle Smith (816) 229-5192 NOW! Or, write FRAA 1991 Tour, 210 White Oak, Independence, MO 64050 for a brochure. Tickets are reserved in March.

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# Foundation News

## New Building

By the time this issue gets in the mail, the new headquarters building for the Foundation should be about ready for occupancy. Work began in the middle of October, painting the exterior walls, tearing out interior walls, ceilings, wiring, breaking up the concrete drive and repouring new, and putting in new windows.

In January and February, the inside finishing should be done. Target date for official opening of the office and sales area is the end of March. Look for more update in our next issue.

## New Brochure

A new informational brochure that tells about the Foundation and what it does has been printed. It includes a short testimony and a form to join Helaman's Two Thousand. It can be used to share with friends to let them know why you are so enthusiastic about the work of the Foundation. If you would like a copy or several, write: FRAA Brochure, 210 White Oak, Independence, MO 64050.

Foundation For Research  
On Ancient America



قوله الله انك قد اذنت  
في سائر الامم التي في العالم  
كالمؤمنين



Don Beebe

## Archaeology Tour

On December 22, 1990, the Mexico Gulf Coast Tour left Kansas City with 28 eager and adventurous travelers. The itinerary covered many Olmec and Maya sites including Cacaxtla, Comalcalco, La Venta, Palenque, Tres Zapotes, Tonina, Yaxchilan, and La Venta Park. A sidetrip was to Hill Rabon which may be Hill Cumorah. The tour was led by FRAA's archaeology committee chairman, Lyle Smith. Glenn Scott, another member of the archaeology committee, was also part of the group.

Plan now for next year's tour. It will be November 22 to December 1, 1991.

## Helaman's Two Thousand

Helaman's Two Thousand marches onward! Nearly one thousand have joined this special group of contributors! These

faithful and dedicated members support the work of FRAA in many ways.

FRAA reaches into the lives of more than 18,000 homes to bear an affirmative testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ and the truth of the Book of Mormon. Without the support from Helaman's Two Thousand, FRAA could not do this. Exciting things are happening in regard to the Book of Mormon, and as many as possible should know about this good news. YOUR contributions and prayers make it happen!

Why don't you, too, become a member of Helaman's Two Thousand? Fill in the form inserted in this issue and send to FRAA, 210 White Oak, Independence, MO 64050.

## Regional Book of Mormon Days

Plans are underway for the first "Spend a Day with the Book of Mormon" conference in Provo, Utah at the RLDS Church. Mark April 13, 1991 on your calendar. Those in the area plan to attend.

Also, August 3, 1991 will be the date of the second annual Michigan region conference at Port Huron. These all-day seminars give people a chance to hear some of the new and exciting things happening in regard to new light and information coming forth validating the truth of the Book of Mormon. It's also a great opportunity to visit and share your testimony about the Book of Mormon with others.

If you would like to host a conference in your area, please contact Michael Gatrost, (816) 525-6391.



## Calendar

End of March

April 13, 1991

August 3, 1991

November 22-  
December 1, 1991

Target Date For Opening of New Building

Utah Spend A Day With The Book of Mormon Conference—Provo RLDS Church

Michigan Spend A Day With The Book of Mormon Conference—Port Huron

Archaeology Tour—Guatemala

LA FLORIDA

MARE

NUEVA ESPAÑA

Laueraçus.  
Roca.

MAREL SVR

Beuda.

EL

# The Hope of Israel

Thoric Nils Cederstrom

## Introduction

It was late afternoon and the sun was setting on a pleasant day in mid-May 1985. My wife and I had spent the entire day touring the medieval city of Bruges, Belgium, enjoying the well-preserved buildings, cobblestoned streets, and ancient canals.

The day's activities had exhausted us, and consequently we were more than ready to head back to our camping site to rest for the evening. On the way back to our car, however, we chanced upon a small bookstore tucked away on a narrow sidestreet. Both of us being avid book readers, we decided to stop for a few minutes to explore.

A strong smell of old paper and leather greeted us as we entered. This was no ordinary bookstore. All the volumes on these shelves were ancient. They dated from the invention of the printing press up to the 1800s and were printed in all the European languages ranging from old English to Latin to Flemish.

As we feasted upon these literary treasures, I happened upon a tattered work entitled *The Hope of Israel* by Manasseh ben Israel published in Amsterdam in

*The wave of exploration of new lands in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries called for charts and maps to guide the navigators. The map shown here comes from a large Portuguese portolano atlas of the mid-sixteenth century. Unlabeled and of unknown authorship, this map is considered one of the most accurate and beautiful charts of early America. Only the left half of the map which depicts the southern portion of North America, Central America, and parts of South America including Colombia is reproduced here. By turning the map on its side, "Cartagena" appears to the left of the first point of the coat of arms.*

*The FRAA Research Library has a bibliography published in 1974 listing Central America early maps up to 1860, with some reproductions of selected maps.*

the year 1651. This fascinating work, written during the height of the Catholic Inquisition, dealt with the scattering and gathering of the House of Israel. The text was hard to understand with its unfamiliar English spellings, strange syntax, and Gothic type-setting. Unable to afford the book, I made the few notes that were possible under the circumstances.

Recently, while organizing items in storage, I came across those scribblings. After deciphering my own hieroglyphics, I expanded my notes of six years ago, based upon my shorthand annotations and fragmented memory, into the form presented here.

The writings of Manasseh ben Israel are based on descriptions by Aaron Levi who traveled exten-

sively throughout the Caribbean region in the mid-1600s. While his supposed findings are exciting to Book of Mormon believers, caution and a rational approach should be exercised.

The desire by the Jews of Europe to find the "Lost Tribes" and restore Israel burned passionately throughout the dark times of the medieval period. Nonetheless, if we give ben Israel the benefit of the doubt, Aaron Levi's experiences match closely with Book of Mormon history and prophecy. A more complete analysis of *The Hope of Israel* and similar writings, which most surely exist, will provide a better understanding of possible connections between the Zionic beliefs of the Restoration movement and Zionist ideology of modern Israel.



*Orthodox Jews come to the Western Wall in Jerusalem to pray for the Messiah to come, for the building of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the restoration of the whole House of Israel. The incident in the fall of 1990 with the rioting of dozens of Palestinians during the Feast of Tabernacles "began with what has become an annual attempt by certain Orthodox Jews to place a cornerstone at the site where Herod's Temple once stood" (David A. Ingraham, "Restoring Temple Worship in Jerusalem," *The Gospel Truth* Vol. 31, No. 11 (November 1990):1.). The hope of Israel for the Temple and the gathering of the Children of the Covenant continues to burn in the bosom of the Jews.*

## The Document

(Italics indicate direct quotes from the book.)

1. Aaron Levi relates his experiences of travel in the New World (circum-Caribbean, especially northern South America) to Manasseh ben Israel and other elders of the Portugal nation in Amsterdam in 1644.<sup>1</sup>

2. Levi, while in Port Honda (in Dutch Guinea) contracts some porters (Indians) with mules to carry cargo. Their leader is an Indian named Franciscus Castellanus, called *Cazicus* by the other Indians.<sup>2</sup>

3. During the trip across the mountains, the caravan is caught in a storm. The Indian porters, fearing death is near, confess their sins. They feel their punishment was sent by God. Franciscus comforts them by promising that they will receive rest if they should die. The Indians respond that they are unworthy because of the magnitude of their sins. They say that the extreme mistreatment that they suffer at the hands of the Spaniards was *sent of God*.

Levi chastises Franciscus for his and the other Indians' criticism of the Spaniards. Franciscus responds that he has not counted *one halfe of the miseries and calamities inflicted by a cruell, and inhumane people; but they should not goe unrevenged, looking for helpe from an unknown people* (emphasis added).<sup>3</sup>

4. After the storm passes, Levi arrives at Cartagena with his caravan. Upon his arrival, he is arrested and placed in prison.<sup>4</sup> After intense questioning, he is released some time later. Levi searches for Franciscus in the city to inquire more about what he had said on the journey. He finds him and together they leave the city. Levi confesses to Franciscus that he is *an Hebrew, tribe of Levi*. Franciscus then asks him who is his father? Levi responds: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Franciscus, not satisfied completely, asks again. Levi, thinking that he wants to know his own father's



Mule caravanning in Colombia in the 1960s was much the same as the 1650s when Levi and Franciscus traveled the Colombian interior.

names, gives his father's proper name. Franciscus finally asks whether Levi is a *Son of Israel*.

Franciscus then offers to take him on a journey into the interior with the following conditions: he will eat only parched *mayz*, wear clothes of white linen, and must do everything he is told.

5. They travel seven days, resting on Shabbat. They come to a large river where they stop and make signals. (It is unclear exactly how they do this, with smoke perhaps.) Three men and a woman appear from the other side of the river. They speak with the Indian Franciscus in a language unknown to Levi. Franciscus prostrates himself on the ground before the three men. They bid him stand up and then they embrace him. They turn and embrace Levi also. Two of the men speak to Levi in Hebrew *the 4th ver. of Deut. 6. Semah Israel, adonai Elchenu adonai ehad; that is, Heare O Israel, the Lord our God is one God*. Through Franciscus and the woman, who function as interpreters, the three men speak the following words (direct quotes from the book):

a. *Our Fathers are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Israel, and they signified these foure by the three fingers lifted up; then they joined Reuben, adding another finger to the former three.*

b. *We will bestow severall places on them who have a minde to live with us.*

c. *Joseph dwels in the midst of the Sea, they making a signe by two fingers put together,*

*and then parted them.*

d. *They said (speaking fast) shortly some of us will goe forth to see, and to tread underfoot; at which word they winked, and stamped their feet (emphasis added).*

e. *One day we shall all of us talke together, they saying, Ba, ba, ba, ba; and we shall come forth as issuing out of our Mother the Earth.*

f. *A certaine Messenger shall goe forth.*

g. *Franciscus shall tell you somewhat more of these things, they making a signe with their finger, that much must not be spoken.*

h. *Suffer us that we may prepare ourselves; and they turning their hands and faces every way, thus prayed to God, DO NOT STAY LONG.*

i. *Send twelve men, they making a signe, that they would have men that had beards, and who are skillful in writing.*

6. The meeting lasts all day long. The same men return two more days and repeat the same things said earlier. Levi becomes frustrated when his questions are not answered and attempts to cross the river. He is not allowed to do so. The men warn him not to try again.

Levi briefly describes the dress and manners of the people. Finally, Levi prepares to leave to go back to Cartagena. For his return journey, he is given provisions by his brethren.

7. On the trip back, Franciscus reveals more information handed down to him by his fathers. He

tells Levi, "Thy Brethren are the Sons of Israel, and brought thither by the providence of God." Franciscus also admits that his people (the Indians) used to treat the people beyond the river (the Sons of Israel) worse than the Spaniards now treat his own people. At one time, his people were at battle with the brethren beyond the river. They had followed the advice and counseling of the *Magicians* who incited them to destroy the *Sons of Israel* completely. They were not only unsuccessful, but severely beaten. The Indians decided to destroy the magicians because of the bad counsel they had given. After their defeat, the Indians sent leaders (cazici) to learn from the people beyond the river.

8. Upon returning from the trip, Franciscus brings three other cazici, bearers of the same knowledge as his, to meet with Levi in Port Honda. After conversing, they leave Levi to finish a business with *the wicked Spaniards*. Franciscus says that he is going to visit Levi's brethren (the people beyond the river) with the other three Hebrew cazici. Franciscus promises to return and bring Levi out of bondage. He commands Levi not to doubt, *but he who cannot lye will help us; according to his Word; endeavor you in the meanwhile that those men may come.*

### Discussion and Conclusion

The Jews in Medieval Europe were under incredible pressures to forgo the religion of their ancestors and assimilate into mainstream Catholic culture. Consequently, they longed with a passion to find their long lost brethren scattered since the time of the First Temple.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the account of Levi reflects more a burning desire to gather the Children of the Covenant rather than an accurate, historical accounting of actual events.

Nonetheless, his perceptions of

native Americans, even though obviously influenced by his ideology, are intriguing. Book of Mormon scholars will readily recognize the parallels between this account of Levi's experiences and the predictions and prophecies recorded in the ancient records of the Nephites.

Of particular interest, however, are the perceptions by the Indians of the Spaniards and the statements by the people beyond the river (i.e. *to tread underfoot*). There almost seems to be an underlying implication of a conclusive reckoning with the European conquering forces by an alliance between the Indians and the Sons of Israel.

In the final analysis, documents such as this book *The Hope of Israel* prove to be extremely interesting—even though their absolute validity is difficult to prove—because they indicate an unending faith in the ultimate gathering process yet to occur. The Jews of the Diaspora never relinquished their dream of gathering back to Zion, and many maintained the hope that their lost brethren carried off centuries before them would one day return.

For the descendants of Judah and of the tribe of Levi, the return to the land of Israel movement began as a trickle during the last century. It turned into a deluge after the Holocaust of World War II and gave rise to the modern state of Israel. The belief in a common homeland for all the children of Israel played a key role in the making of this miracle in the face of overwhelming odds.

Many Restorationists share similar beliefs about the eventual regathering of the House of Israel and see themselves as active partners in the process. The Zionistic process basically represents the ingathering of scattered remnants of Israel among the Gentiles.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, the importance of

documents like the one described here are not diminished by their questionable historical "validity," but rather they poignantly symbolize the fervent belief shared by many Jews and Restorationists that the scattered remnants of the House of Israel will be united once again under the same spiritual roof.

### Footnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> The majority of Jewish residents in Portugal had fled to the Low Countries by the mid-1600s or to the New World to avoid persecution by the Inquisition or forced conversion to Catholicism.
- <sup>2</sup> The term *cazicus* has been corrupted to *cacique* in Spanish which means *chief, leader, or ruler*.
- <sup>3</sup> The mistreatment of the Indians by the Spaniards is legendary. For an indepth look at the circumstances of Spanish rule in the Americas, consult *The Spanish Struggle of Justice in the Conquest of America* by Lewis Hanke, *The Spanish Empire in America* by C. H. Haring, and *Apologetica historia de las Indias* by Bartolome de las Casas or *The Life and Writings of Bartolome de las Casas* by Henry R. Wagner.
- <sup>4</sup> The account does not specify why Aaron Levi was arrested, but the most probable reason was that he was suspected of being a practicing Jew by the Papal authorities since he seems to have traveled from Dutch Guinea (a Protestant region) to Cartagena (under Catholic jurisdiction) which is now in present-day Colombia. For more information regarding Catholic persecution of Jews in the New World, consult "Crypto-Jews in Mexico During the Sixteenth Century" by Arnold Wiznitzer in *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* Vol. 41 (1962); *The Mexican Inquisition of the Sixteenth Century* by Richard E. Greenleaf; and *Los judios en la Nueva Espana* by Alfonso Toro.
- <sup>5</sup> For other interesting accounts of visits to scattered remnants see *Post Biblical Hebrew Literature* by B. Halpler; *Jewish Travellers* edited by Elkan Nathan Adler; "Travels in Abyssinia" by Joseph HaLevy in *Miscellany of Hebrew Literature* Part II, Society of Hebrew Literature, London 1877 (His writings record the first attempt to visit the Falasha Jews of Ethiopia); and "The Caucasian Mountain Jews" by Fannina W. Halle in *Commentary* October 1946.
- <sup>6</sup> Much excellent literature deals with the topic of the gathering and restoration of the House of Israel. I recommend one particular work entitled *Problems of Industrial Zion* by J. A. Koehler.



# Chronicles of the Nephites

Jim Dunning

**M**y wife Penny and I journeyed as part of a Christian tour group to Israel in March 1990. While there in the land of the Israelites, we distributed ten *Chronicles of the Nephites* (The Book of Mormon). It was a meaningful experience walking some of the same places Christ walked, made all the more meaningful as we gave the gift of His book to Jewish peoples.

One night, as Penny and I were walking around the area of Tiberias, we searched for someone to present a book to. We passed several Jewish people, but never felt led by the Spirit to give them one. Previously, we had prayed that the Lord would lead us to the persons He wanted to receive the Holy Book. We wanted to be instruments in his hand to carry out his work in these latter days.

In our walk, we saw an Orthodox Jew praying outside his apartment, standing and facing his wall. Penny turned to me and said, "Let's give him a book."

I replied, "Do you know he is probably a Hassidic Orthodox Jew? They are very strict in their belief of Old Testament law!"

Then, the Spirit spoke to my mind and confirmed what my wife had said. I quickly petitioned the Lord as to how we might do this, as the man was praying. "Just wait," came that small still voice.

After a few seconds, I was directed to begin walking toward him. As soon as I took one step, he stopped praying and turned to rebuke a dog who had come up next to him. We approached him and said, "Shalom. This is a gift." He took the book and said, "Shalom." We left.

I realized that as we worked to honor the Lord and do his work,

he would bring to pass those experiences that would be beneficial to us and the Jews we were to touch. The next book went to a young man at the Western Wall

Our tour guide was Jewish, raised by a Jewish mother and a Christian father. She was well versed in all of the Bible. She often stayed for the worship ser-



*Jim and Penny Dunning with Jerusalem in the background. For two years, Penny managed FRAA's computer program for Helaman's Two Thousand.*

who was passing out material on the teachings of the Torah. I accepted his literature, and when I presented him with a book, he initially withdrew his hand. Then he said, "We should exchange literature. You took mine. I will take yours."

My wife and I gave away the books in our spare time, in the evenings, and on our free day. Two Jewish shopkeepers radiated the love of God in their countenances, and we could tell they loved the Lord God. They both graciously accepted the books, and one promised he would read it cover to cover.

vices held by our group. We pray for her, and ask your prayers that the book we gave her might produce fruit in her life and lead her to the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we were led by the Spirit, we were blessed by the Lord and Savior in each of the ten books distributed. "I will never leave you alone as you seek to honor me and do my work" came to my mind often.

We pray we have planted seeds which will be harvested by others as the good fruit of the gospel is produced.







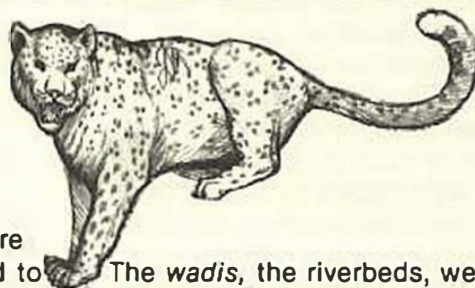
# The Junior Witness

The Foundation For Research On Ancient America

SPRING 1991

NUMBER 17

## Unexpected Danger



by Viola Velt Presler

Illustrated by Aaron Presler

(A might-have-been story based on Jeremiah 38:17-20, Judges 14:5-6, 1 Nephi 1:18-26, Jeremiah 9:2.)

**SYNOPSIS:** *It has been nearly a year since Nephi came of age and went up to the city of Jerusalem to stay with Uncle Ishmael and learn metal work. But the Lord has given Nephi another dream—so Father has apprenticed him in the school of Jonathan the Scribe. There he has rejoiced in memorizing the word of God. Until today.*

The words of Ben Shaphan rang in Nephi's ears. "In the name of Laban, Governor of Jerusalem, I arrest you, Jonathan, the scribe. I proclaim your house condemned. I claim it for the use of Zedekiah, King of Israel. He has need of a prison for men such as you!" (Jeremiah 38:17-20)

"Class dismissed," Nephi's beloved teacher Jonathan commanded sternly. The students fled out the side entrance, scattering like fall leaves blown by the wind.

Nephi hesitated. He wanted to stand by Rabbi Jonathan, but the rabbi's stern command was not to be questioned. What should he do?

Flee, but where? And where was Father who had promised to meet him at the school today? He knew that prophets had been stoned. He knew that Captain Laban had begun to arrest them and throw them into prison. Nephi was quite sure that Laban was looking for Father.

Should he return to Uncle Ishmael's house? Yet if Father were there, Nephi might lead his enemies to him. Anyway, he might endanger the lives of Uncle Ishmael's family. Then where should he go?

One answer and one alone seemed to speak to his heart, "Home! Go home, Nephi! Flee this wicked city ripe for destruction!" an inner voice said.

But home is a day's journey, and it is already midmorning now, Nephi thought. How could he ever get home before dark? In the darkness thieves came out and animals searched for food. I must make full speed, Nephi thought. The Lord God will help me. He has delivered me out of the hand of Captain Laban and his men this day, and He will give me strength to hasten."

Was anybody following? Nephi saw no one. Safely past the throng at the Western Gate, he began to run. Ah, it was good to stretch out his long legs and move!

Already fall rains had begun.

The *wadis*, the riverbeds, were not dry now. There might well be an afternoon rain shower, and that meant flash floods. He had better not follow the river through the valley, but run higher up alongside.

Through fields of barley and groves of sycamore figs, Nephi darted, jumping terraced limestone walls as if they were hurdles in a race, for truly he raced the sun. Through brushwood and pines, scrubby fir and spreading oaks, Nephi ran down the western slopes of Jerusalem, always alongside the *Nahal* (River) Rephaim toward Ramoth-Lehi, his home.

At last, Nephi sank down on a rock wall to ease his heaving sides. He must rest, just for a moment. Gasping for air, he noticed that the sun which had been directly above his head when he passed Beth-haccherem was toward the west. He must not lose his race with the sun!

Nephi caught his breath and ran on. For the first time he realized that although he knew these hills well, he had never come alone before. Alone? Was not the Almighty God with him? What was he thinking? He must pray!

"Lord, help me make it safely home," he cried aloud. "Thank you for saving my life so far

today. Take care of Uncle Ishmael and his family," he said through a sob that would not be choked down. "And do preserve Rabbi Jonathan."

The memory of Rabbi Jonathan's courage to speak God's truth, even when caught in the net of danger, inspired Nephi. With renewed effort, he ran on.

A sudden breeze swept over his sweating face. The sky was overcast, making it more difficult for him to trace its position.

At last, tripped by an oak root, Nephi tumbled downhill, sprawling headlong into a small stream which flowed into the river below. Burying his steaming face in the water, he gulped the cold, clear liquid.

He lay there in the coolness of the leaves, faint and shaken. How hungry he was! He had not eaten all day!

Lifting his dripping head, he noticed a patch of fresh water-cress beneath the cool stream. Cress! It made him think of Sam and his love for herbs and wild foods. Perhaps I could chew on the leaves and gain a little strength, Nephi thought. Munching on the crisp leaves, he followed the stream along, going deeper and deeper into the forest shade.

There was a big patch! He dropped to one knee to pick it.

A cry, raw and primitive, shot through the air. Nephi's hair stood on end. His heart pounded. His legs turned to water. There, scarcely ten arm lengths away, stretched out on a limb in front of him, crouched—a leopard!

Nephi just barely noticed the rosy tail swishing, the ears flattened back against the great head, the fangs bared, because the menacing glare of the yellow eyes held him spellbound. The big cat tensed.

In the seconds that followed, Nephi's mind raced. What to do? Jump aside? Run? The least movement could trigger the spring of the big cat.

"Be not afraid. Fear is your enemy," an inner voice said.

"Ha! Too late," Nephi answered. Fear had already pumped its juices through his body.

"Think then. Think now. Breathe; breathe without moving. Do not let the cat smell your fear. Do not back up. Do not shout. Break the gaze of the cat!"

"God help me," Nephi prayed urgently. "Surely you have not preserved me, only to bring me here to this forest to die!"

Oh, must I wrestle this cat, then, as Samson did the lion? Nephi prayed. Samson had killed a lion when the Spirit of God "came mightily upon him" (Judges 14:5-6). Yet Nephi felt no sudden surge of power.

Oh, if only he had his bow and arrow, he would not have been caught like this without defense in the forest. No defense? Had not he himself told others that God was the God of the whole earth, his shield and defender?

He had prayed not to fight his enemies. Was there a better way? Should he pray to love this cat as he had prayed to love Laman?

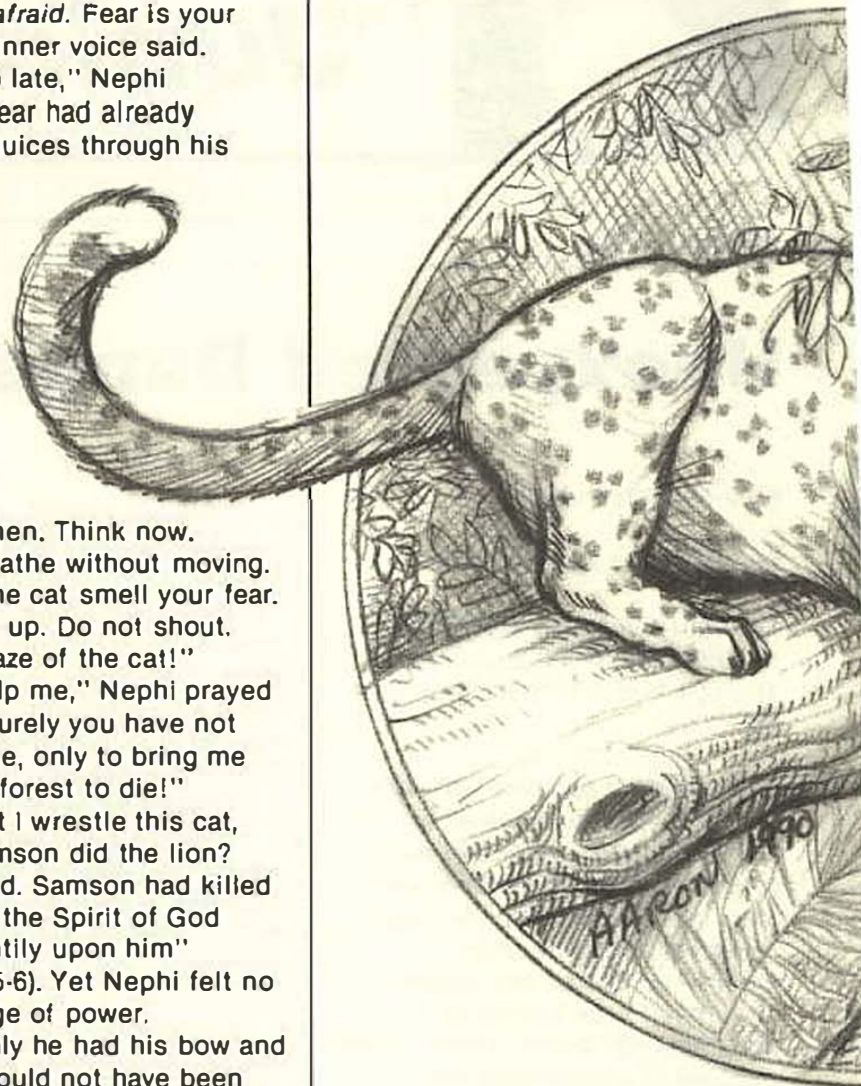
"Lord God," he prayed, "I choose love. Send me your Spirit. Show me your way."

Steadily he held the gaze of the big animal, knowing death soon would spring.

A strange mewling came at his left.

Kittens! So this was a mother leopard. He had intruded on the mother's family.

With that, his heart melted. Sorry, girl, he thought, I meant no harm to your children. Nephi breathed more deeply.



"I am in your hands, Lord," he prayed. "Be it according to your will."

Again the kittens cried plaintively in the brush at his left.

The big cat stirred; a deep rumbling rose from her throat, but she held her gaze.

Then Nephi remembered the words of Uncle Ishmael this last summer in Jerusalem. "Remember, Nephi, when things get too bad around you, *look up. Look up to the Lord.*"

But I have already prayed, Nephi thought. To look up would break the gaze of the cat. She might spring. Yet it would be an act of faith in God. A risk.

Nephi looked up.

All at one time light flashed, thunder cracked, and the earth shook. What happened? Lightning had struck the tree before him.



The leopard had vanished into the forest as quickly as she had appeared.

So rapidly did all this happen that Nephi wondered if the cat had been a nightmare. The tracks in the mud, however, were no nightmare.

He wept in relief. Fourteen

years old, but he couldn't help it. As he wept, the rain came down, lightly, then pelted him with great drops, as if God wept with him.

"Oh, Lord," Nephi prayed, "this day you have delivered me from the hand of Laban and the paw of the leopard. Thank you Lord." To Nephi, nothing was by chance but by the will of God.

A great peace swept over him. Weak, but comforted, he backed away from the shadows and returned to the lighter parts of the hills, following the river more closely as darkness descended.

As the last glimmer of light faded, Nephi stumbled through his own front door, dripping wet and cold, breathless and spent.

"Father! Mother! Sam! Laman! Lemuel! Anybody?"

Only an eerie silence greeted him. Then he noticed a tiny light. Flying down the slippery path, Nephi followed the light to the stables, nearly knocking Lehi over in the doorway.

"Father! It is you! Oh, you are safe!"

"Nephi! Son!" Lehi exclaimed, nearly dropping the oil lamp in his hand. Laughing and crying, he grabbed Nephi, dripping clothing and all, and held him to his chest. "Where have you been, my son? How did you know to come home?"

"I don't know, Father. A voice inside just said, 'Go home.'" Then Nephi told his father all about Ben Shaphan, Laban's men and the arrest of Rabbi Jonathan. He

explained he could not even go back to say goodbye to Uncle Ishmael, and about his encounter with the leopard. "But why are you down here at the stables at night? And why did you not come to the city today?" he asked.

"It is the Lord's doing, my son," Lehi answered. "Last night the Lord spoke unto me in a dream, and said, 'Blessed art thou Lehi, because of the things which thou hast done; and because thou hast been faithful and declared unto this people the things which I have commanded thee, behold they seek to take away thy life (1 Nephi 1:24-25). Take your family and flee into the wilderness.'" "

Nephi's mouth fell open. It was not uncommon for refugees to flee into the wilderness. From class he remembered the words of Jeremiah: "Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place (Jeremiah 9:2).

"When do we leave, Father?" Nephi asked softly, his thoughts reeling again. Troubles, it seemed, never came singly, but in packs, like wolves.

"Now," Lehi answered. "The Lord said to 'flee.' There can be no delay."

Somehow, the God who had preserved him this day would give him strength for the flight ahead, Nephi thought.

"And how long shall we be gone, my father?" Nephi asked.

"Forever," answered his father.

Nephi began to help pack.



In the "Kids' Mailbox" of *The Junior Witness*, Winter 1990, the question was asked, "Have you seen Jesus?" Chad Cruickshank, a second grader from Independence, Missouri sent his own well-written letter to the "Kids' Mailbox."

#### When I Saw Jesus by Chad Cruickshank

When I was three years old, I was praying in my neighbor's backyard. I bumped into their swing. I got a big bump on my head. When I went to bed, my mom came in to pray

with me. Then Jesus came in. Jesus put his hands on my head and prayed. In the morning my head was all better.

# O Beautiful, Our Country

DIANE ANDERSON

DIANE ANDERSON

1. O beau-ti-ful, our coun-try, choice a-bove all oth-er lands;  
 2. chil-dren lis-ten to the prom-ise gi-ven to this land of lib-er-ty;  
 3. Jo-seph, full-ness of the gos-pel, with His plan and promises true,  
 4. cov-enants made unto their fa-thers, and led by the Iron Rod,

Land of Prom-ise to Jo-seph's seed who were led here by God's hand. 2. O ye  
 If you serve the God of the land, free from bon-dage you'll al-ways be. 3. Stick of  
 From the Gen-tiles shall it go-forth that His rem-nant may re-new 4. The  
 With the Gen-tiles

as their bro-thers will build the ci-ty of God. With the Gen-tiles

*rall.* as their bro-thers will build the ci-ty of God.

"O Beautiful, Our Country" was written and composed by Diane Anderson especially for FRAA's sixth annual Book of Mormon conference October 6, 1990. The children learned the song during the morning activities, then later sang it for the conference.

# La Mojarra Mini-Conference Stimulates New Thoughts About the Writing on the Plates

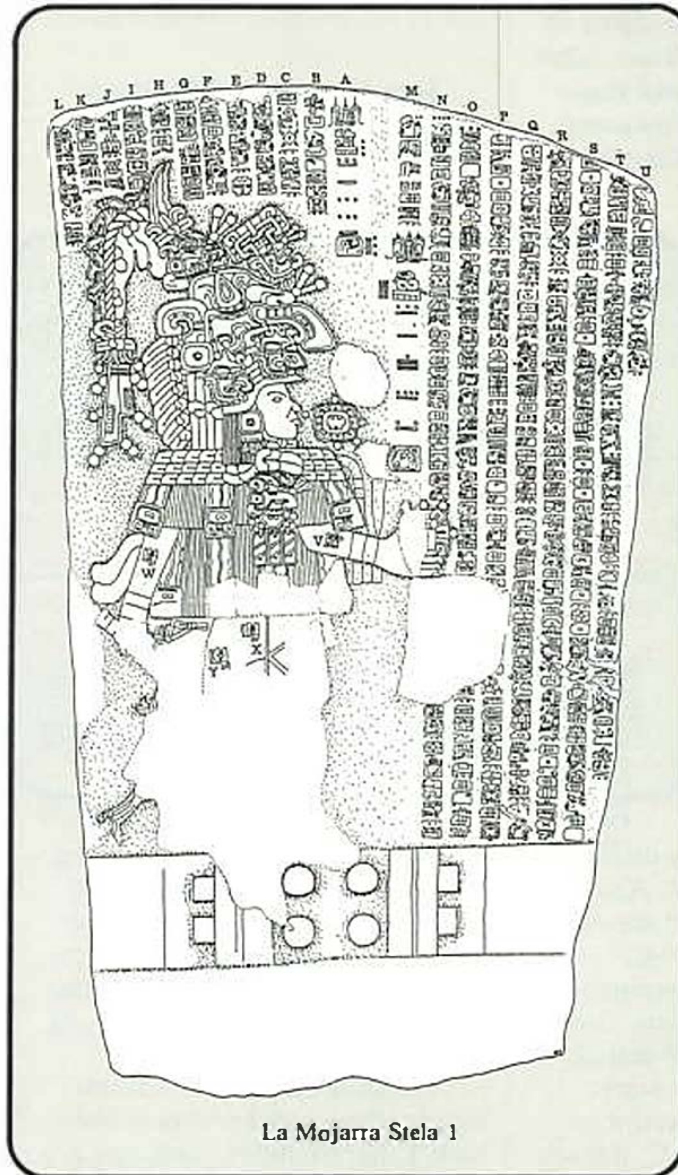
Lyle and Sherric Smith

On October 27, 1990, we were privileged to attend a special conference on the La Mojarra Stela 1.\* Sponsored jointly by the Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute (P.A.R.I.) and The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the conference was hosted at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, Golden Gate Park.

Since its discovery in 1986, the La Mojarra Stela 1 has prompted much speculation and a great deal of study. George Stuart, director of the Center for Maya Research and staff archaeologist for National Geographic, called the stela "one of the most important monuments in Mesoamerica." Stuart, in conjunction with Fernando Winfield Capitaine of Veracruz, Mexico, published the first report on this stela in June 1988.

This small seminar of about 50 participants brought together scholars from Canada to Mexico. Merle Greene Robertson of P.A.R.I. moderated the day's program. Papers were presented by Fernando Winfield Capitaine, Sylvia Meluzin, Kent Reilly, Brian Stross, Martha Macri, Laura Stark, and Amador Arguelles. Twice during the day, panel discussions were held to allow an opportunity for ideas to flow and perhaps stimulate new lines of thought in relation to the stela and its hieroglyphic script.

At present, many feel the hieroglyphs embody elements from both Olmec and Maya writing systems, and some believe it could be termed a proto-Maya script. Martha Macri, a Mayan linguist, suggests the writing of the La Mojarra stela indicates a mixed system: logographic and phonetic.



La Mojarra Stela 1

Arguelles, however, feels it is strictly pictographic. Several of those in attendance are compiling a catalog of the different hieroglyphic signs, which will aid the decipherment of this intriguing stela.

During the discussion, Macri pointed out an arresting thought: one language can use different writing systems. If the writing system of the La Mojarra stela is identified as a proto-Maya script,

it doesn't necessarily follow that it represents a form of Mayan language. One people or culture can use different writing systems for their language.

This idea prompts us to sidetrack a moment to reconsider the way the Book of Mormon was written. Is it possible that the authors of the Book of Mormon wrote using Egyptian characters for the Hebrew language on the plates rather than writing the Egyptian language?

Let's re-examine that most often quoted, yet puzzling, opening verse in the Book of Mormon.

**I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians**

(emphasis added).

—1 Nephi 1:1

Although Nephi writes "language of the Egyptians," he also says the "language of my father." What is the language of Nephi's father? Hebrew most likely. There is no doubt, however, that Lehi knew Egyptian because he could read the brass plates

\*See "La Mojarra: A Voice From the Past," *The Witness* No. 64 (Feb. 1989): 4-6.

which were written in Egyptian (Mosiah 1:3-6).

Mormon writing nearly a thousand years later resolves this question.

**We have written this record according to our knowledge in the *characters*, which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large, we should have written in the Hebrew...** (emphasis added).

—Mormon  
4:98-99

Is it possible that the record was written using Egyptian *characters* to write the Hebrew language?

It was not uncommon practice in the Old World to use different scripts for one language. Although a language and its script are closely linked (Naveh 1982:114), evidences abound of languages employing different scripts. Seal impressions on bullae of Jewish origin included Hebrew words written in the Aramaic script of the late sixth century B.C. (Naveh 1982:117). Close neighbors of the Israelites, the Moabites, used the Hebrew script for their language (Naveh 1982:101). A most important example, though, is the Egyptian demotic script employed for an Aramaic religious text in Egypt (Naveh 1982:114). These are only a few examples; many more exist.

Further, the use of Egyptian characters for the Hebrew language easily results from the fact that both languages employed symbols for consonants only. According to I. J. Gelb,

**the twenty-four simple signs of the Egyptian writing are identical in inner structure with the twenty-two to thirty signs of the various Semitic writings [of which Hebrew is one].**

—1952:147

Thus there is no difficulty in using Egyptian characters for the Hebrew language.

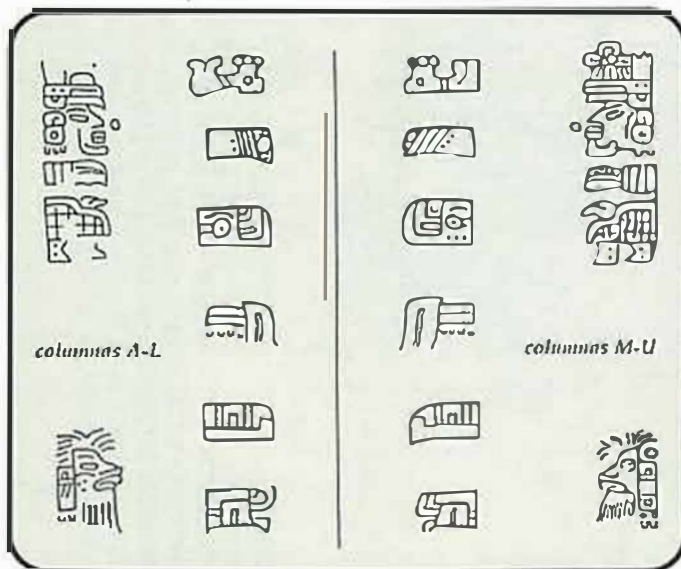


Figure 1

Courtesy Smith

To illustrate, English speaking countries use the alphabet—a, b, c, d—to write their language. So do the Spanish, German, French, and others. These all use the same *script* to form different words and sounds in different *languages*.

The intermingling of nations and languages and scripts at the time Lehi left Judah, indicates it is not at all out of the ordinary for Lehi and Nephi to use the Egyptian script for writing the Hebrew language. This may explain the high frequency of Hebraic language patterns such as chiasmus and others found in the Book of Mormon. It seems a better explanation for the strong Hebrew presence that appears in the English translation than the implication from 1 Nephi 1:1 of employing the “learning of the Jews” incorporated into the Egyptian language.

This very idea of one language using different scripts caused Macri’s cautionary comment at the conference about the La Mojarra stela. In terms of decipherment, one should remember a language could be written using different systems. Although the La Mojarra stela script resembles closely the writing found on the Tuxtla statuette (In fact, Meluzin stated at the conference she believes they both were written by the same scribe.), its identity has not been established, nor is the language it represents known.

Close examination of the script reveals resemblances to both Olmec and Maya writing systems, but also some intriguing patterns. The first portion of the text is a mirror image of parts of the second portion. The glyphs face each other and certain series of glyphs appear in both sections (see figure 1).

The stela was discovered in the Acula River near the narrow neck (Isthmus of Tehuantepec) of land, a crucial location for both the Jaredites and Nephites. All things being equal, the dates engraved on the stela, according to the generally accepted GMT correlation, are 143 and 156 A.D.

Could this particular stela be a significant find for Book of Mormon believers? As scholars try to unravel the mystery of this stela and more excavations are done at the La Mojarra site, we anxiously await their reports.

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# Time and the Calendar in the Book of Mormon: Part Two— Beginnings and Endings

Gordon Heady

This series of articles studies the Jaredite and Nephite time keeping/calendar systems. In part one, we discovered the fundamental ingredients for an accurate calendar are present in the Book of Mormon: required mathematical skills; knowledge of planets and heavenly bodies; and time elements. Unfortunately, little is known about how the people used and measured the ingredients. Thus, we cannot identify the calendar system employed by the Nephites or Jaredites.

This article will examine some of the time elements and other reference points in the Book of Mormon and their use in relating Book of Mormon peoples with each other and to world time.

Knowing how a culture records time provides valuable cross-links with other civilizations and helps correlate chronologies of contemporaneous peoples. Chronologists lay out civilizations side by side, or end to end, in world history order. Simply, they take a strip of paper with the beginning and ending dates of a civilization on it, slide it up and down against the adjacent strip with another civilization's history, and try to match the same date in both strips. Matching up the same date in two strips provides a cross-link and pegs the two groups together.

The better the calendar systems are known, the better chronologists can place them side by side or end to end in a world timeline. To be accurate, though, both civilizations must have had their record keeping converted to solar time.

What happens if a civilization's calendar system is not



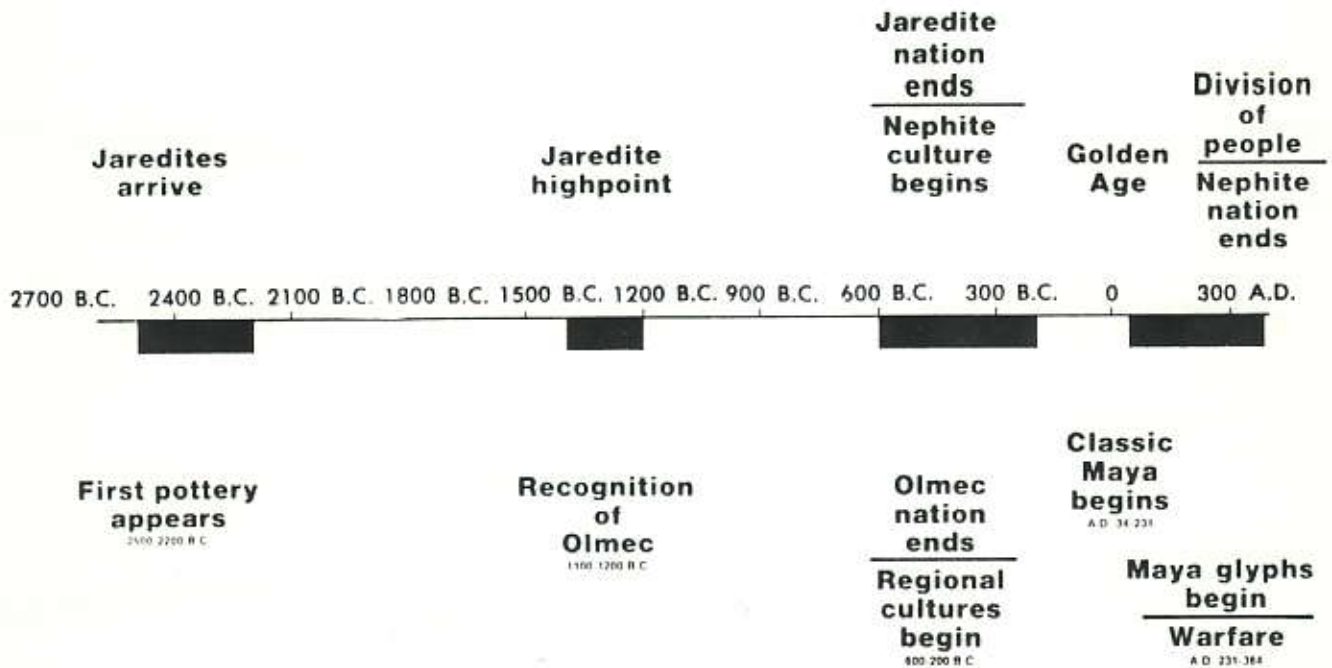
*This advertisement for a chronological chart of world history appears regularly in Biblical Archaeological Review. It has sparked hot debate within the "Queries & Comments" column as readers protest or defend its publication. Objections arise because it includes Book of Mormon civilizations. This chart may be ordered from International Timeline, Inc. at 1-800-543-9316. Used by permission.*

sufficiently well known to convert it to solar time, or not known at all? With contemporaneous civilizations, chronologists can use "since" statements, another technique utilized to help them correlate one culture to another. For example, two cultures living in close proximity may have recorded "it's been 150 years since a certain volcano erupted," or "it's been 45 years since Limhi (one people) found Coriantumr (from another people) and he lived with them nine months."

Civilizations not in existence at the same time, can still be linked by a third civilization that overlaps both. If a date or event in the beginning of the third culture overlaps the end of the first civilization and another date or event overlaps the beginning of the second civilization, this links all three and pegs them together.

Let's consider peg, link, since, and before in correlating Book of Mormon peoples to each other and to world civilizations. Results differ vastly for the Jaredite and Nephite civilizations.

Pegging the beginning of the Jaredite system is especially difficult because information on their calendar system is nonexistent and the events mentioned in the record only provide a general—not specific—time frame in Biblical, secular, and Nephite history. Except for brief references in Mosiah, Alma, and Omni, all knowledge of Jaredite civilization comes from the book of Ether. Moroni abridged the record of Ether which was discovered by the people of Limhi and later translated by Mosiah II. Moroni states, "and the hundredth part I have not written" (Ether 6:108); perhaps a metaphor, but a certain



Raymond Treat of the Zarahemla Research Foundation developed this timeline linking Jaredite and Nephite cultures with Mesoamerican civilizations (*The Zarahemla Record*, Summer 1979). Used by permission.

indication he used only a small part of the information available to him. Ether covers approximately 2000 years in 46 pages. The Nephite record of approximately 1000 years is contained in about 731 pages.

The only exact day count in Ether is the 344 days spent crossing the ocean. Other times indicated are only a few references to people's ages and some references to the duration of specific years of reigns.

The record mainly characterizes years as "many" and gives no year references since the time they left the Tower or forward to the time of Christ's birth. It's not that they didn't know. They started and ended their civilization with great prophets, great men of God. The Brother of Jared and Ether had remarkable and enviable experiences with the Lord. Truly remarkable.

Lack of calendar and time-keeping information for the Jaredite civilization is due to the Lord's own purposes. The sealed portion, when at last translated, may give some of this missing

information.

Although we lack knowledge of a calendar system for the Jaredites (and the Nephites), we can still link them with other civilizations by using names (Nimrod, Zedekiah, Mosiah 1, and Coriantumr), places (valley of Nimrod, tower, Jerusalem), and events (confusion of languages, finding Coriantumr) as links from one civilization to another.

Using the event of the story of the great tower links Jaredite history with world history.

Although the tower episode cannot be accurately dated, we know the Jaredites left their homeland and migrated to the Promised Land at the time of the confusion of languages, thus providing a link with the Biblical story of the same event.

Another chance to place the Jaredite nation in a time frame is Coriantumr's contact with the people of Zarahemla (Omni 1:37). Coriantumr's life with the people of Zarahemla is contained in one sentence. It tells only that the people of Zarahemla discovered Coriantumr and that he lived with

them for nine moons. It says nothing about the cross-cultural exchange of information that surely took place, nor does it tell precisely when this event happened.

What if, however, Amaleki had written, "Forty-six years ago, on this date in our calendar, Coriantumr was found by the people of Zarahemla and he lived with them nine months." This would have provided a more definite date for the ending of the Jaredite civilization.

Another event linking the Jaredite and Nephite nations occurs with the discovery of Ether's record (the 24 gold plates) of the Jaredite people by Limhi's search party. The plates were later translated by Mosiah II.

One of the most thought-provoking pieces of information about a cultural link between the two nations happens when King Mosiah II translates the plates (Mosiah 12:16, 18). It says the translation which Mosiah caused to be written gave King Mosiah's people "much knowledge, in the which they did rejoice." (Mosiah

*(Continued on page 14)*





Don Beebe

Stelae, or "stone trees" as the Maya called them, were erected to reinforce kingship or commemorate battles won. This stela from Seibal, Guatemala dates to around 800 A.D.



All cultures of Mesoamerica considered jade more precious than gold.

The Olmec and Maya many times included a calendar date in their inscriptions. This Maya stela is in the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Guatemala City. The first six glyphs under the large opening glyph on top provide the calendar information.

When Mosiah II translated Ether's record of the Jaredites, the people of King Mosiah gained "much knowledge." Did it include such things as the calendar, weights and measures (which Mosiah regulated or established during his reign), and art forms? Did the stone Mosiah I translated telling about Coriantumr provide the impetus for the Mayas to erect stelae commemorating reigns of kings? Did more cultural interaction happen between the Jaredites and the Lamanites and Mulekites than with the Nephites?

The archaeological record for Mesoamerica seems to credit the Olmec (probably Jaredites) as stimulators of later Maya (probably Nephites/Lamanites/Mulekites) practices or customs. According to Mary Ellen Miller in *The Art of Mesoamerica From Olmec to Aztec* (1986) "many important elements of Mesoamerican art and architecture can be seen to have had a probable Olmec origin..." (17), including the calendar system which appears to have been adopted by the Maya from the Olmec (38-42).



12:25). What was that "much knowledge"?

Using these different events helps place the Jaredites in the Biblical, secular, and Nephite timelines.

One tool Book of Mormon believers have that, to my knowledge, no other historians have, is the "before" statement. What group of people have written they did something before a certain event was to take place? For instance, did the Babylonians record they intended to found their civilization 2000 years before the Greeks? "Before" means future tense and only the Lord knows the future.

The Book of Mormon has one "before" statement: Lehi left Jerusalem 600 years before the birth of Christ (1 Nephi 3:4). That one "before" statement in the Nephite record is most valuable. It allows Biblical, Jewish, and secular history to peg Lehi's leaving Jerusalem to world events.

Volumes have been written about the Jews, Jerusalem, Jewish beliefs, and even several books on the Jewish calendar. The Jews had more than one calendar in operation at the same time, and over a period of centuries, changed their calendar. Joseph Good\* states the Jews used four calendars. Two of these, the religious and civil calendars, were identical in structure but started the year with different months. The religious calendar started in the spring with Aviv or Nisan and the civil calendar began in the fall with Tishri or Ethanim.

What if Nephi had not only given us the "before" time but also the year, month, and day they left Jerusalem in the Jewish calendar? We could not only peg the Nephites to the Jewish civilization, but to their calendar system. Fortunately, we can convert the Jewish calendar to our Gregorian system with reasonable accuracy and can profitably use Nephi's 600

year count.

The Nephites were compulsive time-keepers and kept three sets of elapsed time before the birth of Christ. The first recorded the number of years since leaving Jerusalem, "Mosiah died . . . five hundred and nine years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem" (Mosiah 13:67). The second counted the elapsed time from the beginning of the rule by judges (Alma 1:1). "The ninety and first year [of the reign of judges] had passed away; and it was six hundred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem . . ." (3 Nephi 1:1). The third was a decreasing count until Jesus' birth.

Because they knew Christ was to be born 600 years after their exodus from Jerusalem, the Nephites had a decreasing forward time count of when his birth would be. The declining count is not often mentioned, but this does not diminish its importance. Samuel knew about it and used it in his prophecies (Helaman 5:55). The closer the time came for Christ to be born the more unbelievers used that same 600 year count to threaten the believers with death.

These three time counts have nothing to do with calendric changes. They are only "since" and "before" counts and do not affect the calendar system at all. Our system is based on a count of elapsed years "since" the birth of Christ, 1990 years. We could add on a count of the years since the birth of our nation in 1776 and give dates as November 17, 1990 or 214 years since independence. This does not change our 365.25 day calendar. It just adds another reference point.

At the birth of Christ, the Nephites dropped their three counts and used one count, the number of years since the birth of Christ. For the duration of the Nephite civilization we have been fortunate to have had their time

periods quoted in years. Nephi gave us 600 years before Christ's birth; Moroni gave us 420 years after his birth for the end of the written record. We know precisely the changeover for counting years was at the birth of Christ. The marvelous point to remember is the Nephite dates are in B.C. and A.D. years, the exact same system we use today. For 1,000 years, the Nephites used this method of quoting time, before and after the birth of Christ. This is an important point which will prove invaluable as more hieroglyphs are deciphered and a greater understanding of the Maya calendar system comes to light.

A thousand years elapsed from the time Moroni hid the plates until the time the Spanish arrived in the 1500s. History records the Spanish conquerors and priests burned all the native records they could find. The quantity surely must be measured by the ton. This greatly lessened the opportunity to link the peoples in the Book of Mormon with the people discovered by the Spaniards.

Some Spanish priests, however, tried to provide a bridge across cultures by linking the Maya and Aztec calendars to the Julian (later Gregorian) calendar. They linked them as best they could using limited and sometimes faulty understanding of the native languages and calendar systems. Some archaeologists still debate that link.

To fill in the thousand year blank, however, we need to understand the Maya calendar system and then it must also be accurately correlated with the Gregorian. At present, the Maya calendar is fairly well understood, but one crucial point needs further proof, intercalation. The concluding article in this series will discuss the Maya calendar.



\*Rosh HaShanah and the Messianic Kingdom to Come. Port Arthur, Texas: Hatikva Ministries, 1989, p. 51.

# Date With Destiny

Roy Weldon

*Part of an address delivered to the sixth annual Spend A Day With The Book of Mormon conference held in Independence, Missouri, October 27, 1990.*

The Book of Mormon has a date with destiny. It has potentials no other book has or even remotely approaches as it moves into the future.

The first potential has to do with the statement in Helaman that the Nephites wrote many books (2:12). One of the potentials is that an archaeologist may just stumble onto one of these books which could, overnight, bring the Book of Mormon into, what shall we say, stunning the world.

Another one is that the Lord is waiting for us, his people, to prepare ourselves so he can bring out the great treasure of the Cumorah records.

For the past few years, there has been a marked increase by the media mentioning the Book of Mormon, both by the printed page and television. I personally have listened to two noted television evangelists go out of their way to condemn the Book of Mormon. By their own claims, millions of people hear their programs.

I became curious one time and read the Koran. How many of these millions will be moved by curiosity or whatever to read the Book of Mormon? Would it be five thousand? Ten thousand? Would it be fifty thousand?

Those who do read it will soon discover that the Book of Mormon speaks for itself and in no uncertain terms.

The Book of Mormon, at this time, has amassed such a great



amount of evidence. It is added to day by day even as we have listened to this morning. The Book of Mormon is now rolling on, rolling on into the future with a momentum that no hand can deter; that no power can slow, as it rolls on into a grand opening, a grand burst into the full limelight of world recognition.

Time is running out. A new day is dawning—a day in which we need to make great preparations. I believe the time is NOW to make preparations of all kinds.

The time will come when the world will be looking toward Zion. In view of what the prophets have said, the day will come when they come to learn of her ways. We need to have an assemblage of all kinds of material, and a need of, what shall I say—I think I'll quote about the land shadowing with wings, Isaiah 18, the third verse.

**All ye inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth, SEE YE, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, HEAR YE (emphasis added).**

Evidence shows the Lord is NOW preparing men of such caliber and of such expertise that they can step to the microphone and under divine endowment from on high speak to the nations, speak to the millions.

One time when I was in California, I was climbing up Mount Diablo, a mountain about 6,500 feet high. I was taking a group of teenagers up this mountain. We stopped to rest near the top by a huge boulder. This boulder, probably fifteen or twenty tons, turned out to be very lightly balanced. We got that thing going. It rolled on. The first thing it hit was a huge dead tree and scattered it into parts all around. The results were awesome and frightening.

There is another mountain; there is another stone. The second chapter of Daniel tells of the stone that rolls out of the mountain, down into a great image, representative and symbolic of all the philosophies, isms and ologies that we have in the world.

What will be left of that image? The results will be awesome. Not anything more but what the wind can blow away will be left.

Then the stone rolls on. On and on and it fills the whole earth, and stands forever.

The grand finale of the Restoration Movement is now beckoning us on. **WHAT A DAY TO BE ALIVE!**

*(As Brother Weldon moved to return to his place, he was given a standing ovation. He added the following words.)*

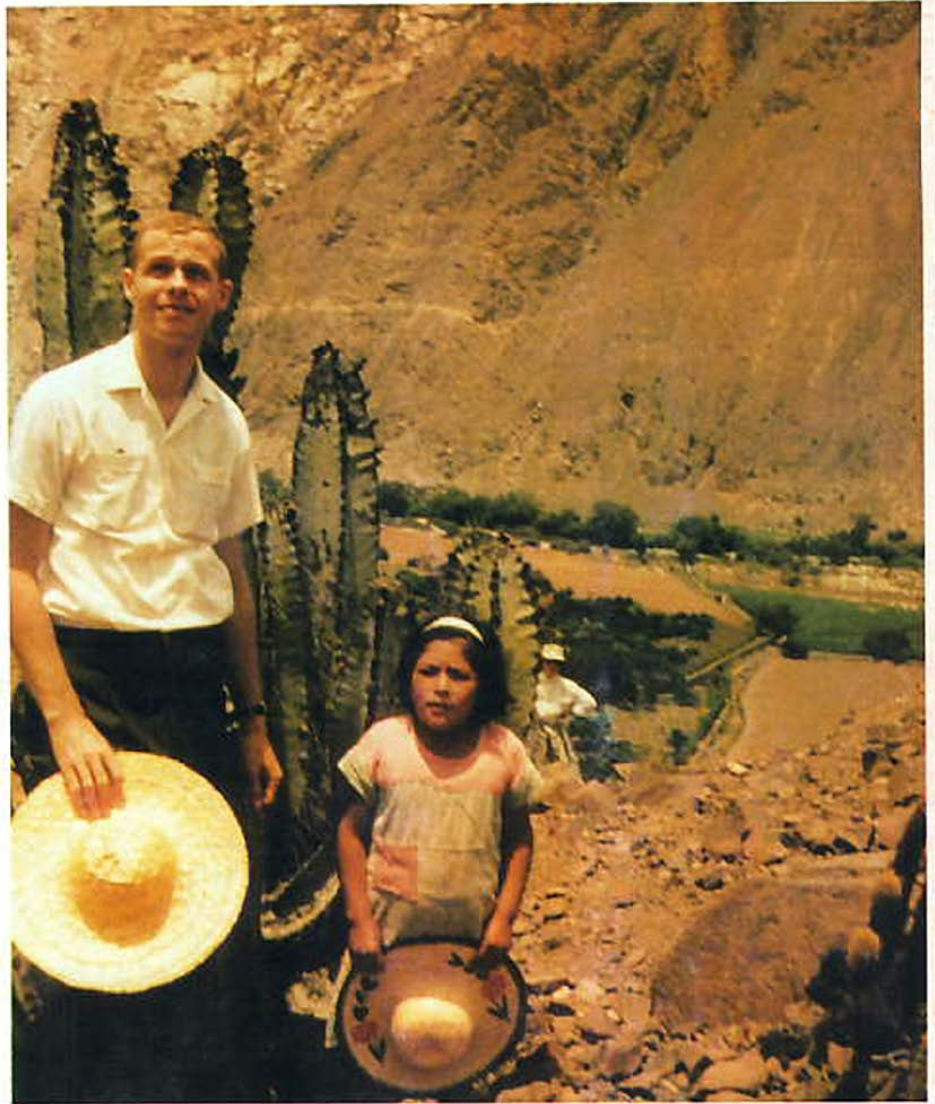
I appreciate your response. Before I went to church this morning I asked the Lord to give me a special blessing; that I would give him all the honor and credit. This goes for this morning and for all my life of seventy years of working in the Lord's vineyard. There are simply three words to say and that is: "WITHOUT HIM I can do NOTHING!"



*This photo, taken in January 1963, shows Lyle Smith, chairman of the archaeology committee for FRAA, and his small Incan guide examining picture writing found outside Lima, Peru.*

*Samples of writing systems should be evident in any remains found for Book of Mormon peoples. Abundant examples of writing proliferate throughout Mesoamerica, which includes Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, and Honduras, but, Peru lacks evidence of true writing systems.*

*Mesoamerica has numerous Mayan inscriptions and a few from the Olmec civilization. In 1986, however, in the state of Veracruz, Mexico, a large stone slab (stela) engraved with many hieroglyphs in a writing system different from most known inscriptions in Mesoamerica was found. Called La Mojarra Stela 1, its monumental inscription of glyphs challenges epigraphers. See page 8 inside for a report on this stela.*



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