

THE WITNESS

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AND THERE WERE MANY HIGHWAYS CAST UP
AND MANY ROADS MADE WHICH LED FROM CITY TO CITY
AND FROM LAND TO LAND AND FROM PLACE TO PLACE

THE
WITNESS

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Cover Photo by Joanie Glandon
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From the Board

We live in such an exciting time that has created many opportunities to exercise good financial stewardship. Some of these opportunities have created new ways to contribute to not-for-profit organizations, such as The Book of Mormon Foundation. We invite you to read the following explanation concerning one of these opportunities and give it your prayerful consideration. Thank you for your continued prayers and support.

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Thank you again for your generosity in assisting us with our various programs.



The jaguar got up and slowly walked straight towards me from the far reaches of its compound in the Belize zoo. To get a better photo, I had knelt down parallel to the cat and pressed my little camera against the fence so its wires would not show. I decided I would not move and handed the camera to my husband. Then, with my face just a camera's width away, I was eye to eye with that magnificent creature, so close it was out of focus.

by Faye Shaw

My husband Gaylord (Gay to his friends) and I first went to Central America on one of FRAA's (Foundation for Research on Ancient America) tours over Christmas break in 1992-93. The following summer the two of us spent a month exploring in English-speaking Belize, and later returned to the Yucatan peninsula several more times. I had often wondered what the Book of Mormon people encountered in their local surroundings and their wanderings.

This article is based on our experiences and a report I read of a scientific expedition in the Maya Mountains. As Sharon Matola, an environmentalist and the founder of the Belize zoo, shared their eight days of exploration, the dozen naturalists and military explorers faded in my mind and were replaced by Book of Mormon counterparts.

WILDLIFE

Sharon Matola was reflecting on their 35-mile trek in southern Belize, over the main divide of the Maya Mountains that extend northeastward from the Guatemalan border for about 70 miles. The highest is the 3,670 foot Victoria Peak. The eastern side of the mountains sharply drop off to a plain

along the eastern seacoast. "We're noticing some great things along the way. Tracks of jaguar, ocelot, tapir..We've watched fishing bats nab their prey along the river's surface."¹ The Book of Mormon mentions wild animals only twice, but they must have experienced them often. We have seen friendly coatis, many iguanas sunning themselves among the ruins, little lizards running upright across the road, bats hanging deeper inside some of the ruins, crocodiles resting along the shore of the New River, noisy howler monkeys in the trees, a fox, and a tapir—all wandering free. On a dirt road in the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest, we saw millions of little butterflies fluttering like autumn leaves in the wind.

Belize has eight dangerous serpents, including pit vipers and coral snakes. To this day, one reason the Maya carry machetes is to protect themselves from them. As our guide to a ruin within a small town approached us with a machete in hand, he explained he had just killed a Tommy Goff (fer-de-lance) on his way over. There are 5500 snakebites reported in Central America every year, and besides anti-venom, a natural remedy has yet to be discovered.² So we have no idea what the Book of Mormon people may have used.

VENOMOUS SNAKES KEPT THE BOOK OF MORMON JAREDITES AT BAY FOR EIGHT KING GENERATIONS.



And there came forth poisonous serpents also upon the face of the land and did poison many people. And it came to pass that their flocks began to flee before the poisonous serpents toward the Land Southward, which was called by the Nephites Zarahemla. And it came to pass that there were many of them which did perish by the way; Nevertheless, there were some which fled into the Land Southward. And it came to pass that the Lord did cause the serpents that they should pursue them no more, But that they should hedge up the way that the people could not pass, That whoso should attempt to pass might fall by the poisonous serpents. (Ether 4:35-38)

The snakes existed throughout Nephite times too, but not to the same extent. Moroni includes a beautiful testimony of the faith of his predecessors.

And He knoweth their faith...even the fiery furnace could not harm them—neither wild beasts, nor poison serpents—because of the power of His word. (Mormon 4:30-31)

At Tulum, I was startled to spot a small coral snake lying in the grass just behind Gay's shoe.

The only other snake we saw in all our visits was a very large roadkill near the Blue Hole. Even so, we were not afraid to spend a leisurely afternoon in the cool turquoise water there. We became friends with a native who had been bitten by a Tommy Goff 19 months earlier. His pantleg was still wet from a huge open sore the poison had created that encompassed half his lower leg. He said when bitten, he immediately felt his body reacting to the poison and was blessed to get immediate help that saved his life. A day after our meeting, we went to a pharmacy for supplies and Gay taught his wife how to nurse his leg.

The wilderness was a foreboding place. When the Lamanites fled before Alma's army,

Yea, they were met on every hand and slain and driven until they were scattered on the west and on the north, until they had reached the wilderness which was called Hermounts; And it came to pass that many died in the wilderness of their wounds and were devoured by those beasts, and also the vultures of the air; And their bones have been found and have been heaped upon the earth. (Alma 1:95, 97)

THE TERRAIN

Sharon Matola explained how easy it was to get lost in the mountainous area, a place the Book of Mormon people had to traverse between the Lamanite domain and the lowlands of the Nephite region.

...it is a maze of confusion up there in the high altitude bush. The ridges are twisting and turning, they go south, then turn west, then south...it's hard to stay oriented. We were told to walk west. We did. For hours. The theory was that we'd connect with hunting trails which would lead us right into...camp.... We walked and walked. By late afternoon, questions arose. 'Are you sure we shouldn't turn south?' It began to seem like we were heading too long in a westward direction.³

The 43 men of Limhi's search party must have had the same thoughts as they finally found their way back to the city of Lehi-Nephi without realizing their goal.

And they were lost in the wilderness for the space of many days, yet they were diligent and found not the Land of Zarahemla, But returned to this land, having traveled in a land among many waters, Having discovered a land which was covered with bones of men and of beasts and was also covered with ruins of buildings of every kind, Having discovered a land which had been peopled with a people which were as numerous as the hosts of Israel. (Mosiah 5:61-63)



We thought we would do a little exploring, so Gay stopped our car beside Big Hill in Belize. At 100 yards tall, it is the biggest hill in the vicinity. He stepped through the foliage along the road to check the feasibility of climbing it. Although the underbrush did not continue beneath the trees, about 15 feet in he was lost and could not find his way back. He had to call out to me. Later we did climb the hill and tied yellow plastic strips around the trees. Near the top we came across what could

best be described as a **cavity of a rock** (Ether 6:14) and we thought of Ether hiding in a place like that to view the end of his civilization.

Northern Yucatan is limestone, which does not hold water. Therefore, it seeps underground making the foliage more sparse. We were walking there through a silent woods to a much older pyramid at Chichen Itza and began to hear a noisy large crowd when we were only 30 to 40 feet from the clearing. We were astonished that we had not heard them sooner! We realized that the Book of Mormon people could have been so close to their destination goal, yet unknowingly still slipped past it or others who could have assisted them.

CARRYING SUPPLIES

Although the Book of Mormon does not mention the daunting task of toting supplies for exoduses and excursions from land to land, the Belizean explorers recounted the difficulty. They had to carry their room and board with them for five days and were thankful each day as the load lightened. "Even without a heavy load this would be a difficult trek. Up ridges, down steep valleys, up another ridge...Down another valley."⁴

Matola mentioned the communications officer who carried a thirty-pound radio to keep in touch with air support. After only six days, "He was, as he said in his own words, 'a mere shadow of my former self.' His rapid weight loss... was due to hiking all day with his radio pack... Expedition Slim-fast".

On the way to Caracol in southwestern Belize, a US military jungle training site is located just after the road crosses a river and turns up a hill. Once we watched as tired, sweaty soldiers in full gear trudged past us back down to their camp. On our return trip we found them cooling off in the river. Even without the hot uniforms and boots, carrying a heavy load in such high temperatures would be exhausting.

Of necessity, more than once the ancients had to transport all they had.

They could find no way to deliver themselves out of bondage, Except it were to take their women and children and their flocks and their herds and their tents and depart into the wilderness, (Mosiah 10:3)



The word tent or tents is mentioned 64 times in the Book of Mormon. Another instance in the Book of Mormon is where the people had been staying in their temporary dwellings.

When Ammon had heard this, he returned to the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, and also Alma with him, into the wilderness where they had pitched their tents and made known unto them all these things; (Alma 15:27)

Tents also were carried around as they fought their enemies.

He [chief captain Moroni] took his army and marched out with his tents into the wilderness to cut off the course of Amalickiah in the wilderness. (Alma 21:66)

I tried to imagine how many tents would be necessary for a large army, and how heavy they would have been since they would not have been made out of lightweight fabrics like we have today. The Book of Mormon does not include specific details, but drastic results were experienced by Zeniff's group as they returned up to the mountainous land of their forefathers.

I, being overzealous to inherit the land of our fathers, collected as many as were desirous to go up to possess the land and started again on our journey into the wilderness to go up to the land; But we were smitten with famine and sore afflictions... (Mosiah 6:6)

THE SEASON TO TRAVEL

The Belize expedition wisely departed a month before the rainy season which runs from June to October, but they still had mud tugging at their boots. Two months after the rainy season at the Altun Ha ruins, I was gingerly walking back to one of the ancient reservoirs, carefully picking clumps of grass to step on, when my shoe was pulled off by the spongy, swampy surroundings. If Book of Mormon people journeyed off any paved thoroughfare (sacbe), they would have reasonably limited their travels and wars to the dry season.

Although **many waters** are used 11 times in the Book of Mormon, only two refer to Promised Land territory.

And they were lost in the wilderness for the space of many days, yet they were diligent and found not the Land of Zarahemla, But returned to this land, having traveled in a land among many waters, (Mosiah 5:61)

And we did pitch our tents round about the Hill Cumorah; And it was in a land of many waters, rivers and fountains; (Mormon 3:5)

What was meant by **many waters**? Was it plenty of surrounding rivers, waterfalls, lakes, inlets? A gigantic body of water, as they described oceans? Except in the Northern Yucatan where most water is underground, there is an abundance of surface water most of the year. No wonder they built many raised roads to avoid flooding. They are still quite evident today.

There were many cities built anew and there were many old cities repaired, And there were many highways cast up and many roads made which led from city to city and from land to land and from place to place; (3 Nephi 3:8)

When we arrived that summer, our first stop from the airport was at Colha on the Old Northern Highway. We began to walk to the ruins, but rapidly turned back. I wonder how often the ancient ones contended with engulfing clouds of mosquitoes like we had there and a little further north at the ruins of Cerros on the Chetumal Bay.

TIMES OF TRAVEL

From the very beginning, when Lehi and his family left the Jerusalem area and traveled in the wilderness to the sea, there were times they did not travel a direct course, and were afflicted with hunger and thirst (Alma 17:77). Many others who came after them discovered that journeys throughout the new land continued to be a challenge. The following are some of those who encountered discovery, escaped to freedom, experienced adversity, and lost their way.

Wilderness Journeys in the Promised Land

Upon arriving, Lehi's family journeyed and explored	1 Nephi 5:216
For many days Nephi and his people fled from his brothers	2 Nephi 4:10
Zeniff and his people had "famine and sore afflictions"	Mosiah 6:6
King Noah's people flee before Lamanites	Mosiah 9:82
King Noah took the Lamanite daughters in wilderness	Mosiah 9:111-112
Limhi's men became lost	Mosiah 9:166
King Limhi and his people's escape took many days	Mosiah 10:14-16
Alma and his people fled from King Noah eight days	Mosiah 11:1-3
Lamanite army became lost for many days	Mosiah 11:34
Alma and his people fled again for twelve days	Mosiah 11:75-76
The sons of Mosiah went to preach to the Lamanites	Alma 12:8-14
Ammon and Anti-Nephi-Lehi people fled for safety	Alma 15:14
Those who fled with Amalickiah	Alma 21:78
The servants of the king Lehonti fled an army	Alma 21:11

WATERWAYS

It would have often been impossible for the ancients to simply come across a river and follow it to a familiar place. I studied maps while planning our visit to Belize, but became confused when attempting to trace the rivers. I checked multiple maps which always showed blank spaces in the lines of the rivers. After visiting St. Herman's Blue Hole National Park in Belize we discovered why.

Cement steps lead down into an immense area



where the roof of a cave collapsed and the space is now full of lush jungle vegetation. It also exposed the river which had been underground. The water emerges at the deep turquoise area of this pool, flows about 50 yards, then disappears under the road at the other edge of the huge sinkhole.

So, as rivers often flow beneath the surface, where do they reconnect? Even today's experts are perplexed, as some join this body of water with

either the Sibun or Caves Branch rivers.

There were other rivers and streams where we could walk through caverns following the water, like the Rio Frio and St. Herman's caves. In this picture of St. Herman's, you can see worn ancient steps leading down into the cool cave. With their subterranean passages, Book of Mormon travelers could not follow the course of many rivers.

Even the Lamanites, who should have been familiar with the terrain since they tended to live in the rugged areas of the land (Alma 13:70), had problems. In one instance they were pursuing King Limhi and his people along with all their flocks and herds for two days before they could no longer follow their tracks and became lost. (Mosiah 10:19) How could they miss such a pronounced trail? They could not find their way back. When they finally came across Alma and his people they bargained for help.

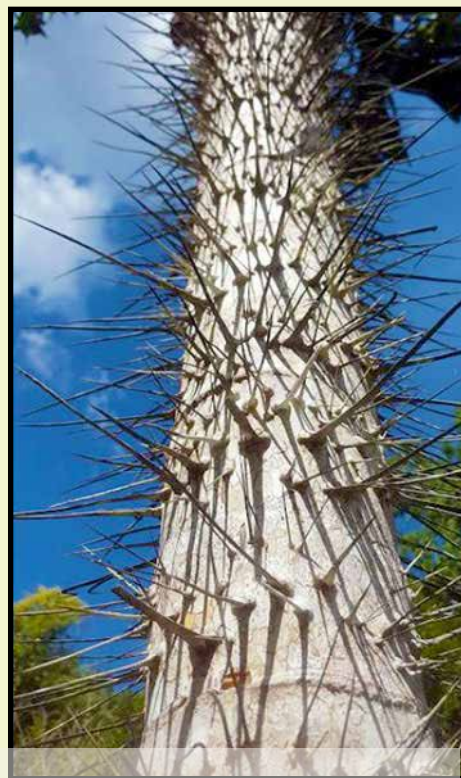
And it came to pass that the Lamanites promised unto Alma and his brethren that if they would show them the way which led to the Land of Nephi, that they would grant unto them their lives and their liberty. (Mosiah 11:34, 40)

FOLIAGE

Several plants would have been quite useful in remote areas. Hacking off a portion of a wild grape vine the height of their bodies would have provided each of them with a day's worth of pure water.

The give-and-take-tree could have saved their lives after serious injuries. Its trunk is covered with long spikes that give wounds, but the cotton-like substance beneath the bark heals them.

At the Medicine Trail we were told about their expanding the trail on horseback. One worker raised his



machete to cut a vine just as the horse reared from thorn pricks from the overgrowth. As the man brought his knife down, it sliced diagonally across his other arm. Immediately they stripped the tree bark and applied some of that gauzy substance, folded his arm over it, and rushed to the distant hospital. Upon arrival, the doctor called them all over to view the arm. The wound already looked like the accident had occurred several days earlier.

Twice the Book of Mormon tells about binding up wounds after a battle. The first was when the people of Limhi fiercely defended themselves from the Lamanites.

And it came to pass that they found the king of the Lamanites among the number of their dead, Yet he was not dead, having been wounded and left upon the ground, so speedy was the flight of his people; And they took him and bound up his wounds and brought him before Limhi.

(Mosiah 9:120-121)

The second time occurred with Helaman and his 2060 young warriors.

And it came to pass that after the Lamanites had fled, I immediately gave orders that my men which had been wounded should be taken from among the dead and caused that their wounds should be dressed.

(Alma 26:99)

Although they had all been wounded, not one of them died.

And now, their preservation was astonishing to our whole army... And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their exceeding faith...

(Alma 26:102-103)

Did this effective give-and-take healing tree assist in this awesome event? The Book of Mormon people understood the value of some of their tropical vegetation. Alma mentions useful plants, saying,

And there were some who died with fevers, which at some seasons of the year was very frequent in the land—But not so much with fevers, because of the excellent qualities of the many plants and roots which God had prepared. (Alma 21:75-76)

Our modern mountaineer described a jungle walk through “unforgettable and punishing tiger-claw fern...As the sharp edges of this fern clamored over our bodies, we felt as if we were being preyed



upon by plants.”⁵

On the way to the cenote at Chichen Itza, one of our group stopped to rest on a large rock under the shade of a tree. A native hurried over and gestured for him to not sit there. A few days later, Dr. Rosita Arvigo, head of the Medicine Trail in Belize, cautioned our group of the perils of coming in contact with the poisonwood tree. Even a drop of sap from the leaves would lead to a rash similar to poison ivy and later turn into itching burning blisters which could last for weeks. The poisonwood (white) tree always grows near a gumbo limbo (red) tree which contains the antidote to the poison. Had the lost people of Zeniff coped with similar obstacles or received such relief as they worked their way back to the city of Lehi-Nephi?



GIVING THANKS

The Matola expedition reflected apprehension as they were concerned that they had crossed the border into Guatemala with its continuing military activity and infringements to claim Belizean property. Since the time of her writing in 1992, things have gotten worse. Tourists have been harassed, and there have been a few deaths near the border. A church family was injured when their van was shot up while driving in Guatemala, so we were somewhat concerned on our final trip. We would be visiting Caracol's remote ruins, which are quite close to the border, and we had not decided yet whether to venture over into Guatemala to visit Tikal.

In that context, we were at Caracol with another couple, and I alone was exploring on an exposed plaza at the far reaches of the site when I heard an approaching helicopter. Was it a dangerous Guatemalan? With my heart racing, I ran for cover and peeked from around a tree to see it land quite close among the ruins. I watched a soldier in a camouflage uniform get out of the helicopter. This experience gave me a vague impression of what it must have been like for the ancients to be concerned for their lives because of their situation or their enemies. Yet they trusted in their God.

While they traveled or camped in the unfamiliar wilderness, those of long ago would thank Him and praise Him for His many blessings, even when experiencing uncomfortable circumstances. In the very beginning of the Book of Mormon, after Nephi's brothers mistreated him and tied him up

at sea, his heart still turned to his Creator.

Nevertheless, I did look unto my God and I did praise Him all the day long, And I did not murmur against the Lord because of mine afflictions. (1 Nephi 5:199)

After Alma and all his grateful people had finally escaped from bondage into the wilderness,

They poured out their thanks to God because He had been merciful unto them and eased their burdens and had delivered them out of bondage, And they gave thanks to God, Yea, all their men and all their women and all their children that could speak lifted their voices in the praises of their God. (Mosiah 11:70, 72)

Even though the Jaredite barges were at times buried in the depths of the sea, they did sing praises unto the Lord,

Yea, the brother of Jared did sing praises unto the Lord, And he did thank and praise the Lord all the day long, And when the night came, they did not cease to praise the Lord. (Ether 3:10-11)

No matter what they faced, the righteous people in the Book of Mormon trusted the Lord to be there with them, to see them through their troubles, and to continue to bless them. This study has helped me more clearly sense a little of what their lives must have been like.

1. Matola, Sharon, "The Maya Divide Expedition". Belize Review, News, Views, and Ecotourism. July 1992. p 18.
2. Giovannini, Peter, Melanie-Jayne R. Howes, Medicinal plants used to treat snakebite in Central America: Review and assessment of scientific evidence. Mar 6, 2017. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28179114/>.
3. Matola, p 8.
4. Ibid, p 9.
5. Ibid, p 19.

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Moroni the Faithful

One of the choicest gifts anyone can bequeath to the world is himself at his best. Each of us gives this contribution according to his opportunities, and to his ideas of values and ideals. Moroni thought more of his testimony of the Savior and of preserving the sacred plates of the Book of Mormon than he did of his own life. That was one way he gave himself in a super-gift. Everything else was secondary to these spiritual duties. No precaution or effort was too great for him to take in protecting the holy records. He was faithful in his care of them in life, in death, and in resurrection.

Moroni was born and grew to manhood in the terrible civil war time previous to the final struggle between the Nephites and Lamanites. He was an officer under his father Mormon, and commander of a corps of ten thousand men in the last battle. In this war of annihilation all the Nephites were killed save twenty-four strong men, and a small number who escaped southward, and a few dissenters who joined the Lamanites. Moroni and his father were among the twenty-four survivors.

Living in that wicked age and passing through the blood and destruction of the final battles it was singular for Moroni to place emphasis on spiritual things above all else. In spite of every opposition he was determined to obey the teachings of his faithful father, and always be true to his calling and testimony. He had the insight and vision of the value the records would be to a future generation and forgot himself in his resolute efforts to preserve them.

Moroni's last days were anything but pleasant. The rigor of the northern winters, and the necessity of supplying himself with clothing, food, and shelter, added greatly to his difficulties. Then his very existence was in jeopardy. In fact, for the most part, his life was filled with great personal danger, and constant anxiety for the safety of the records. At first he had his father and companions

for company, but sixteen years after the last battle he was the only faithful Nephite living.

In 400 A. D. he wrote:

After the great and tremendous battle at Cumorah, behold, the Nephites who had escaped into the country southward were hunted down by the Lamanites until they were all destroyed, and my father also was killed by them and I even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people. (Mormon 8:2-3 LDS) [Mormon 4:2 RLDS]

During the next twenty years he lived alone, finishing up the Nephite history and abridging the Book of Ether. After he had finished this he wrote:

Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed not to have written more, but I have not as yet perished, and I make not myself known to the Lamanites, lest they should destroy me. For behold, their wars are exceeding fierce among themselves; and because of their hatred, they put to death every Nephite that will not deny Christ. And I, Moroni, will not deny Christ; wherefore I wander withersoever I can, for the safety of my own life. (Moroni 1:1-3 LDS/RLDS)

Rather than sacrifice this testimony he lived as an outcast, his life in constant peril for those last twenty years. During this time alone he must have longed for human companionship. But he refused to sell his soul for this association. He chose the harder but wiser course of remaining faithful and protecting the records at all hazards.

His loneliness must have been trying at times and yet it was not as depressing as it could have been, as he realized he was sacrificing for

a great cause. He knew what he was doing was tremendously worthwhile. Then he was sustained spiritually from heaven. On one occasion he and his father had a visit from the three Nephites. Then most of the time he was occupied in literary work connected with the plates. I wonder if he could have stood his solitude without an occupation, and without great spiritual fortitude and vision.

In 420 AD Moroni sealed up the records and hid them away in a stone box in the Hill Cumorah. His earthly work was then done. In speaking of his passing he once wrote:

And whether they will slay me I know not. Therefore I will write and hide up the records in the earth, and whither I go it mattereth not. (Mormon 8:4 LDS) [Mormon 4:4 RLDS]

How he met the final end we do not know, but we are sure he was always faithful to his trust as custodian of the holy things in his care; and although



he died the last representative of a fallen race, his tenacity in giving his best to safeguard the sacred records in his charge makes one marvel at his great strength of character and spiritual endurance.

In the dramatic restoration of the Gospel in this dispensation, Moroni, as a glorious angel and resurrected being, was just as careful with the plates and the other articles with them. He wouldn't even allow Joseph Smith to touch them at first. Before he permitted the Prophet to remove them he required him to wait four years, during which time he yearly instructed him concerning their sacredness. He warned the boy many times that the plates could not be used for financial gain, that their value was greater than money, because they contained the fullness of the Gospel, and that he should make every endeavor to preserve them or he should be cut off.

Joseph heeded the warnings and used many successful strategies in keeping the plates safe during their translation. After this was accomplished the angel appeared to the Prophet and received back the plates in his care.

Moroni's watchful care over the plates fully tested him. It required more than his time in mortality. On this earth he gave his life to the cause, and now in a resurrected state still functions as custodian.

But glorious has been his reward, for to him came the well earned honor of being the angel to fly from heaven bearing the everlasting Gospel to the earth in the last days.

Like Moroni, we are all faced with problems and ideals that test us, and to which we have to be faithful even though we stand alone.

We all have sacred things entrusted to our keeping. Our lives, and the way we live them are holy charges. We also have our dear ones, our friends, our testimonies of the Gospel, and our ideals to protect from evil at all times.

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Why Was Hyrum Faithful to His Witness of the Book of Mormon?

The same morning, after Hyrum had made ready to go—shall it be said to the slaughter? yes, for so it was—he read ... near the close of the twelfth chapter of Ether, in the Book of Mormon, and turned down the leaf upon it. (D&C 135:4 LDS) [D&C 113:4c RLDS]



Of all Joseph Smith's family and friends, perhaps none were closer to him or more loyal than his older brother Hyrum Smith. Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, and many others remembered that when they first met Joseph, Hyrum was there too. In the eyes of many observers, the two seemed inseparable.¹ It is therefore no surprise that Hyrum was among those chosen to be witnesses of the Book of Mormon.

All who remembered hearing Hyrum testify of the Book of Mormon found his testimony to be powerful and compelling. William E. McLellin joined the Church after having a lengthy conversation with Hyrum Smith where he "inquired into the particulars of the coming forth of the record ... and upon the testimonies given to him."² A few weeks later, McLellin recorded hearing Hyrum share "his evidence of the truth of the book" to a congregation of about 500 people.³

In 1837, Mary Fielding, wife of Hyrum Smith, assured her brother Joseph Fielding that "her husband has seen and handled the plates."⁴ In the wake of the Kirtland apostasy,⁵ Sally Parker heard Hyrum testify. "He said he had but two hands and two eyes, He said he had seen the plates with his eyes and handled them with his hands." The testimony was reassuring to Sally because she had heard dissidents "dispute the book so much."⁶

A few months later, Hyrum, Joseph, and others were imprisoned in Missouri from November 1838 to April 1839. These were some of the most trying months for Joseph and his companions, including Hyrum. They wallowed in the cold,

dark dungeon of Liberty Jail, often vomiting up their food because it was poisoned and then going hungry for days. Meanwhile, their families and friends were being driven from their homes, and there was little that could be done to stop it.⁷

Shortly after that trying experience, Hyrum wrote a letter "to the Saints scattered abroad" that was published in the *Times and Seasons*.⁸ "Having given my testimony to the world of the truth of the book of Mormon," Hyrum wrote, "and having been brought into great affliction and distresses for the same, I thought that it might be strengthening to my beloved brethren, to give them a short account of my sufferings, for the truth's sake."⁹ Hyrum went on to describe his resolve to be faithful to his experience as one of the Eight Witnesses despite serious hardship:

I had been abused and thrust into a dungeon, and confined for months on account of my faith, and the "testimony of Jesus Christ." However I thank God that I felt a determination to die, rather than deny the things which my eyes had seen, which my hands had handled, and which I had borne testimony to, wherever my lot had been cast; and I can assure my beloved brethren that I was enabled to bear as strong a testimony, when nothing but death presented itself, as ever I did in my life.¹⁰

Hyrum was loyal to his witness literally to his death as a martyr in Carthage Jail together with Joseph on June 27, 1844. That, however, was not the first time Hyrum endured suffering and imprisonment for his loyalty to his brother

and faithfulness to his testimony. Because Hyrum remained steadfast in his testimony during years of severe hardship and persecution, he had been proven and found worthy through his willingness to sacrifice all—even his life.

Hyrum remained faithful to his testimony of the Book of Mormon because he turned to the book often. He read it, he loved it, and he gladly opened it unto others. While imprisoned shortly before his death, Hyrum turned to the words of promise found in the writings of Moroni and found solace in the Book of Mormon itself—the very record he has testified of—as he read Moroni’s farewell in the book of Ether: “Thou hast been faithful; wherefore ... thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father” (Ether 12:37 LDS) [Ether 5:38 RLDS].¹¹ Hyrum’s faith in the promises of his Savior Jesus Christ stood firmly grounded in the Book of Mormon, which he held onto, truly and faithfully, until the end.



Binding the original printing of the Book of Mormon

And ultimately, Hyrum’s faithfulness was coupled with his devotion to Joseph. Hyrum’s willingness to endure suffering, persecution, and ultimately death as he followed his younger brother, offers compelling support to the testimony of the Book of Mormon that he bore and, by extension, also speaks to the integrity of Joseph Smith himself.

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland so powerfully and eloquently testified, “In this their greatest—and

last—hour of need, I ask you: would these men blaspheme before God by continuing to fix their lives, their honor, and their own search for eternal salvation on a book (and by implication a church and a ministry) they had fictitiously created out of whole cloth? ... They would not do that! They were willing to die rather than deny the divine origin and the eternal truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.”¹²

“In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated” (D&C 135:3 LDS) [D&C 113:3g RLDS], and in the mouth of these two who stood together as witnesses, God firmly established the truthfulness of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and of the restoration of His kingdom in the latter days. By standing strong together with Joseph, Hyrum solidified and eternally memorialized his primary role as one of the foundational witnesses of the Book of Mormon.

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Further Reading

Mark E. Mendenhall et al., eds., *Joseph and Hyrum: Leading as One* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2010).

Jeffrey S. O’Driscoll, *Hyrum Smith: A Life of Integrity* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2003).

Notes

1. See Mark E. Mendenhall et al., eds., *Joseph and Hyrum: Leading as One* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2010), v.
2. William E. McLellin, *Journal*, August 19, 1831, in *The Journals of William E. McLellin, 1831–1836*, ed. Jan Shipps and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: BYU Studies; Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994)

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3. McLellin, Journal, September 10, 1831, in Journals of William E. McLellin, 39. For more of McLellin, see Book of Mormon Central, [Why Did William E. McLellin Call the Book of Mormon the 'Apple of My Eye'?](#) (Doctrine and Covenants 66:1), KnoWhy 611 (July 1, 2021).
4. Joseph Fielding to Parley P. Pratt, June 20, 1841, in Millennial Star 2, no. 4 (August 1841): 52, in Larry E. Morris, ed., A Documentary History of the Book of Mormon (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 443.
5. For background on one of the key events contributing to the Kirtland apostasy, see Book of Mormon Central, [Why Did the Kirtland Safety Society Fail?](#) (Doctrine and Covenants 64:21), KnoWhy 604 (May 18, 2021).
6. Sally Parker to John Kempton, August 26, 1838, in Janiece L. Johnson, 'The Scriptures Is a Fulfilling': Sally Parker's Weave, BYU Studies Quarterly 44, no. 2 (2005): 115.
7. For a discussion of Hyrum's experiences and hardships during his time in Liberty Jail, see Jeffrey S. O'Driscoll, Hyrum Smith: A Life of Integrity (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2003), 187-204.
8. See Hyrum Smith, To the Saints Scattered Abroad, December 1839, Times and Seasons 1, no. 2 (December 1839), excerpted in Morris, Documentary History, 426-427.
9. Smith, To the Saints, in Morris, Documentary History, 427.
10. Smith, To the Saints, in Morris, Documentary History, 427.
11. See Book of Mormon Central, [What Does It Mean to Be a Martyr?](#) (Ether 12:37, 39), KnoWhy 1 (January 1, 2016).
12. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, Safety for the Soul, October 2009 general conference, online at churchofjesuschrist.org.

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