

# "ANACHRONISMS AND HISTORICAL INACCURACIES IN THE MORMON SCRIPTURES"

by  
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Appendix 3  
from  
*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*  
(Chicago: Moody Press, 1974)

In Nephi 2:5-8, it is stated that the river Laman emptied into the Red Sea. Yet neither in historic nor prehistoric times has there ever been any river *in Arabia* at all that emptied into the Red Sea. Apart from an ancient canal which once connected the Nile with the coast of the Gulf of Suez, and certain wadis which showed occasional rainfall in ancient times, there were no streams of any kind emptying into the Red Sea on the western shore above the southern border of Egypt.

Second Nephi states that only the family of Lehi, Ishmael, and Zoram were left in Jerusalem in 600 B.C. to migrate to the New World. These totaled fifteen persons, plus three or four girls, or no more than twenty in all. Yet in less than thirty years, according to 2 Nephi 5:28, they had multiplied so startlingly that they divided up into two nations (2 Nephi 5:5-6, 21). Indeed, after arriving in America in 589 B.C., they are stated to have built a temple like Solomon's. Now Solomon's temple required 153,000 workers and 30,000 overseers (1 Ki 5:13, 15; 6:1, 38; 9:20-21; 2 Ch 2:2, 17-18) in seven and a half years. It is difficult to see how a few dozen unskilled workers (most of whom must have been children) could have duplicated this feat even in the nineteen years they allegedly did the work. Nor is it clear how all kinds of iron, copper, brass, silver, and gold could have been found in great abundance (2 Nephi 5:15) for the erection of this structure back in the sixth-century B.C. America.

According to Alma 7:10, Jesus was to be born at Jerusalem (rather than in Bethlehem, as recorded in Lk 2:4 and predicted in Mic 5:2).

Helamen 14:20, 29 states that darkness covered the whole earth for three *days* at the time of Christ's death (rather than three hours, as recorded in Mt 27:45 and Mk 15:33), or beyond Easter morning, which would have made it impossible for the woman at the tomb to tell whether the stone had been rolled away from its mouth.

Alma 46:15 indicates that believers were called "Christians" back in 73 B.C. rather than at Antioch, as Acts 11:26 informs us. It is difficult to imagine how anyone could have been labeled Christian so many decades before Christ was even born.

Helamen 12:25-26, allegedly written in 6 B.C., quotes John 5:29 as a prior written source, introducing it by the words "We read." It is difficult to see how a quotation could be cited from a written source not composed until eight or nine decades after 6 B.C.

Quite numerous are the instances in which the Mormon scriptures, said to have been in the possession of the Nephites back in 600 B.C., quote from or allude to passages or episodes found

only in exilic or postexilic books of the Old Testament. Several examples follow.

1. First Nephi 22:15 states: "For behold, saith the prophet, the time cometh speedily that Satan shall have no more power over the hearts of the children of men; for the day soon cometh that all the proud and they who do wickedly shall be as stubble; and the day cometh that they must be burned." Compare this with Malachi 5:1 (ca. 435 B.C.): "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

2. Second Nephi 26:9: "But the Son of righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall heal them, and they shall have peace with him, until three generations shall have passed away." Compare this with Malachi 4:2: "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall." Note the confusion between *Son* and *Sun*, which could only have originated from their similar sound in the English language.

3. Third Nephi 28:21-22: "And thrice they were cast into a furnace and received no harm. And twice they were cast into a den of wild beasts; and behold they did play with the beasts as a child with a suckling lamb, and received no harm." Compare this with Daniel 3 and 6 where such adventures befell Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, along with Daniel himself. It is difficult to understand how these Mormon believers could have had experiences just like those related in the book of Daniel, which was not even composed until several decades after their alleged departure for the New World in 589 B.C. (Daniel could have found written form only after the fall of Babylon to the Persians in 539 B.C., since it contains at least fifteen Persian loanwords.)

4. Alma 10:2 states that Aminadi "interpreted the writing which was upon the wall of the temple, which was written by the finger of God." Surely this is a reminiscence of Daniel's feat in reading the divine handwriting upon the wall of Belshazzar's banquet hall in 539 B.C.

Even more remarkable is the abundance of parallels or word-for-word quotations from the *New Testament* which are found in the *Book of Mormon*, which was allegedly in the possession of the Nephites back in 600 B.C. Jerald and Sandra Tanner (*The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 2, Salt Lake City, 1967, pp. 87-102) have listed no less than 400 clear examples out of a much larger number that could be adduced; and these serve to establish beyond all question that the author of the *Book of Mormon* was actually well acquainted with the *New Testament*, and specifically in the KJV of 1611. A few examples follow:

1. First Nephi 4:13: "That one man should perish than that a nation should . . . perish in unbelief." Compare this with John 11:50: "That one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."

2. 1 Nephi 10:8: "Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." Compare this with John 1:27: "Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

3. 1 Nephi 10:9: "In Bethabara beyond Jordan . . . he should baptize." Compare this with John 1:28: "In Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing."

4. 1 Nephi 11:22: "The love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men." Compare this with Romans 5:5: "The love is God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost."

5. 1 Nephi 11:27: "The Holy Ghost come down out of heaven and abide upon him in the form of a dove." Compare this with Luke 3:22: "The Holy Ghost descended in bodily shape like a dove upon him."

6. 1 Nephi 14:11: "The whore of all the earth, and she sat upon many waters; and she had dominion over all the earth, among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people." Compare this with Revelation 17:1, 15: "The great whore sitteth upon many waters . . . The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are people, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."

Most interesting is the recently exposed fraud of the so-called Book of Abraham, part of the Mormon scripture known as *The Pearl of Great Price*. This was assertedly translated from an ancient Egyptian papyrus found in the mummy wrappings of certain mummies which had been acquired by a certain Michael H. Chandler. In 1835 Joseph Smith became very much interested in these papyrus leaves, which he first saw in Kirtland, Ohio, on July 3, and arranged for the purchase of both mummies and manuscripts. Believing he had divinely received the gift of interpreting ancient Egyptian, he was delighted to find that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham himself, whose signature he had personally inscribed in the Egyptian language. In 1842, Smith published his translation under the title, "The Book of Abraham" in *Times and Seasons*. He even included three drawings of the pictures or vignettes appearing in the manuscript, and interpreted the meaning of these illustrations: Abraham sitting upon the throne of Pharaoh, the serpent with walking legs who tempted Eve in Eden. For many years this collection of papyri was lost, but somehow they (or else a duplicate set of them from ancient times) were presented to the Mormon Church by the Metropolitan Art Museum of New York City on November 27, 1967. This made the translation skill of Joseph Smith susceptible of objective verification. The unhappy result was that earlier negative verdicts of scholars like Theodule Devaria of the Louvre, and Samuel A. B. Mercer of Western Theological Seminary, and James H. Breasted of the University of Chicago, and W. M. Flinders Petrie of London University (who had all been shown Smith's facsimiles) were clearly upheld by a multitude of present-day Egyptologists.

Their finding was that not a single word of Joseph Smith's alleged translation bore any resemblance to the contents of this document. It turned out to be a late, even Ptolemaic, copy in hieratic script of the Sensen Papyrus, which belongs to the same genre as the Egyptian Book of the Dead. As John A. Wilson, professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago, described it in a published letter written on March 16, 1966, it contains vignettes familiar from the Book of the Dead. The first illustration shows the god of embalming named Anubis preparing the body of the deceased for burial, with the soul hovering over his head in the form of a bird, and the canopic jars containing the dead man's inwards set beneath his bier. The third picture shows the deceased led into the presence of Osiris, the infernal deity who judged the souls of the dead. (This is what Smith had identified as Abraham sitting on Pharaoh's throne!). Figure 2 was a round disc made of cloth and jesso and customarily placed as a pillow under the head of a corpse in the Late Egyptian period. The accompanying text, as can be ascertained from other copies of this not uncommon document, deals with magical spells intended to open the mouth of the deceased and to prepare him for his audience before Osiris in the judgment hall of the dead (as set forth in detail in chap. 125 of the Book of the Dead, the Egyptian title of which is *P-r m h-r-w*, or, "The Going Forth by

Day"). Needless to say, the completely mistaken concept of Joseph Smith as to his competence in ancient Egyptian is now clearly demonstrated to be beyond debate.