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Abstract Review of *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem* (2004), edited by John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely.

Jerusalem in Lehi's Day

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Generally, teachers and students begin their study of the Book of Mormon with the phrase "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents," perhaps without giving much thought to the historical context into which Nephi and his father, Lehi, were born. This is unfortunate because students can profit greatly from studying the history, archaeology, literature, and culture of Judea in the period immediately preceding Lehi and his family's departure into the wilderness. *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem* is an important book that succeeds admirably in helping us understand and visualize the world in which Lehi and Nephi lived. Focus on Jerusalem is important because once Lehi and his family board the ship to the new promised land, it becomes much more difficult to establish where events described in the Book of Mormon took place and even more difficult to grasp their cultural setting. Although significant work has been done on proposing possible ancient American settings for the Book or Mormon (particularly by

Review of John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely, eds. *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem.* Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004. xvi + 669 pp., with suggestions for further reading and subject index. $29.95.

John L. Sorenson),[1] we are still in the realm of speculation. For this reason, an examination of Jerusalem and the Old World in testing the claims of the Book of Mormon can be particularly useful because we believe we know where events took place.[2]

Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem begins by serving up a culturegram about Jerusalem. John Welch and Robert Hunt offer basic information in a readable style, in the tradition of the culturegrams provided by the Kennedy Center at Brigham Young University or of one of the many visitor guidebooks so familiar to travelers. This is followed by an annotated list of biblical figures and political figures from Judah, Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt active during the period under consideration. David Seely and Robert Hunt introduce these individuals to the reader who may not have been familiar with them previously. For those who are more conversant with these historical figures, the list serves as a quick reference with a handy chronological chart that has been reprinted on the back endpapers.

Jo Ann Seely's photo essay provides beautiful color photographs that illustrate many points in the text and help the reader visualize life in ancient Israel. The photo essay is followed by a most interesting study by Jeffrey Chadwick in which he uses textual, historical, and archaeological evidence, as well as common sense, to establish in which district of Jerusalem Lehi and his family may have lived and where Lehi's "land of inheritance" was located. I found Chadwick's arguments compelling and agree with most of his conclusions. This is an example of the best type of research that can be done on the Book of Mormon.

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1. John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985, 1996); see John Clark, "Searching for Book of Mormon Lands in Middle America," and Matthew Roper, "Limited Geography and the Book of Mormon: Historical Antecedents and Early Interpretations," both in this number of the *FARMS Review,* pages 225–75.

2. See, for example, Warren P. Aston and Michaela Knoth Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi: New Evidence for Lehi's Journey across Arabia to Bountiful* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994); Warren P. Aston, "Newly Found Altars from Nahom," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10/2 (2001): 56–61; and S. Kent Brown, "New Light from Arabia on Lehi's Trail," in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon,* ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 55–125.

In "A Woman's World in Lehi's Jerusalem," Ariel Bybee paints a picture of the various roles women would have played in Israelite and Nephite societies. Working with limited textual evidence, she explains the economic, social, and educational responsibilities that Sariah and other Nephite women would have carried out.

Terry Ball and Wilford Hess bring their expertise as botanists to bear on the question of agriculture among the Nephites. Nephi reports that the group brought various seeds of grain and fruit with them from the Old World to the New (1 Nephi 8:1). In this technical chapter, Ball and Hess examine the various types of plants that would have been available to Lehi and his family in Jerusalem for the trip. They suggest that the Nephites would also have encountered and made use of new crops in their adopted homeland. This chapter also clarifies the agricultural terms presented in the Book of Mormon.

Dana Pike contributes a solid survey of the inscriptional evidence from Judah, including photographs of some of the more significant inscriptions. He includes two appendixes that provide sources for further research. The most surprising aspect of these inscriptions is the lack of evidence for worship of other gods. As Pike explains, this may indicate that the prophetic proscription against polytheistic worship may have been directed toward specific segments of the population rather than toward the inhabitants of Judah in general.

In "Nephi's Written Language and the Standard Biblical Hebrew of 600 B.C.," William Adams addresses the question of what language the Book of Mormon prophets used to write on the plates that Joseph Smith received. The two most likely options are that (1) the authors wrote in Hebrew using a reformed Egyptian script, or (2) both the script and the language were reformed Egyptian. Adams prefers the first possibility and presents several linguistic features that support this conclusion. I also believe that the Book of Mormon authors wrote in Hebrew, but I think that the language they used may have been influenced by contact with groups that spoke other languages. For example, the people of Zarahemla became the numerically dominant portion of the Nephites. They had originally spoken Hebrew, but it had become corrupted to the point that the Nephites were not able to

understand them (Omni 1:17). Although they adopted the language of Mosiah, the language they spoke certainly had some influence on the spoken language of the Nephites. The Lamanites and even the written language of the Jaredites may have had similar effects. Unfortunately, it may be impossible to determine to what degree these various groups influenced spoken Nephite.

In two separate chapters, John Thompson and John Gee elucidate the function Egyptian culture, history, and language played in Jerusalem in Lehi's day and subsequently among the Nephites. As a Semitist, I have often focused on the Hebrew and Mesopotamian influences and underestimated the importance Egypt played in the lives of Lehi and his family. These chapters illustrate the importance of Egypt when considering the source of Nephite culture.

Chapters by Aaron Schade and John Gee outline the political and military history of Israel and the surrounding nations around the time of Lehi. These are important chapters that give the reader the needed understanding of the world situation at the beginning of the Book of Mormon.

The volume editors contribute two chapters that examine Lehi's life. The first, by the Seelys, is a reprint of an article originally published in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* entitled "Lehi and Jeremiah: Prophets, Priests, and Patriarchs."[3] They compare and contrast the careers and messages of Lehi and his contemporary, Jeremiah. In the second, Welch examines word by word the account of the prophetic calling of Lehi and shows how this account is consistent with prophetic traditions in Jerusalem at that time.

In "Sacred History, Covenants, and the Messiah: The Religious Background of the World of Lehi," David Seely places Lehi and his family in the religious context of the Old Testament. He explains the importance of various religious beliefs and practices, particularly the significance of covenants in the life of Lehi as an Israelite.

John Welch examines the trial of Jeremiah described in Jeremiah 26 and shows how it may have had an effect on the judicial traditions

3. *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 24–35.

among the Nephites in the New World. He argues that Lehi may have witnessed the proceeding, but even if he hadn't, he certainly would have been aware of it and carried many of the legal traditions as part of the cultural baggage from the Old World to the new promised land.

The book includes the text of a forum address Margaret Barker delivered on 6 May 2003 at Brigham Young University. Her address was part of a week-long seminar in which she presented her ideas regarding the Old Testament to several faculty members. Some Latter-day Saints have enthusiastically championed Barker's reconstruction of preexilic Israelite worship because they see similarities to some aspects of Latter-day Saint ritual and doctrine.[4] In the chapter "The Temple, the Monarchy, and Wisdom: Lehi's World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker," Kevin Christensen offers a summary of Barker's ideas and compares them with similar concepts found in the Book of Mormon. I will address a key element of Barker's reading of the Old Testament that is the theme of her contribution to this book: her position on Josiah's reforms.

Barker claims that Josiah's reforms (and those of Hezekiah before him) destroyed a previous form of worship that had existed in Israel since the time of Abraham. Elements of this older form of worship include an emphasis on a "tree of life," which she identifies as a particular form of the menorah, worship of a female counterpart to God, and an emphasis on wisdom. Barker argues that while Josiah and those who supported him tried to stamp out this older form of worship, it survived underground and now can be found in

4. For example, see Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8–23," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson,* ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 191–243; Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/2 (2000): 16–25; Peterson, "'Ye Are Gods': Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witnesses to the Divine Nature of Humankind," in *The Disciple As Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson,* ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 471–594; and Kevin Christensen, "Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker's Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies," *FARMS Occasional Papers* 2 (2001). Other Latter-day Saint authors who have cited Barker include M. Catherine Thomas, Kevin Barney, John A. Tvedtnes, Ross David Baron, Mark Thomas, Eugene Seaich, William J. Hamblin, Kerry Shirts, and Terryl L. Givens.

numerous apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings from which she often quotes to support her view.

There is no doubt that the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah brought changes in the beliefs and rituals of Judah. We must, however, ask whether or not these changes were approved of God. Barker addresses this issue by citing the refugees from Jerusalem (Jeremiah 44:16–19), who blamed the destruction of Jerusalem on the fact that they had stopped burning incense and worshipping the queen of heaven. Barker asserts that the reason these people had ceased these practices is because Josiah's reforms had prohibited them. The prophet Jeremiah responded to the refugees by explaining that in fact Jerusalem had been destroyed because

> the Lord could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day. Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day. (Jeremiah 44:22–23)

It seems to me that Jeremiah supported the changes Josiah had made. Should we follow the prophet Jeremiah's view on this matter or that of the exiles?

To further evaluate Barker's claims, we must first understand the relationship between Josiah's reforms and the book of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history. It is generally accepted that Deuteronomy or a portion thereof was the book that was found during the refurbishing of the temple during Josiah's reign and that it was crucial to the reforms he instituted.[5] There are a number of reasons for this: (1) Deuteronomy identifies itself as the book of law (28:58, 61;

5. See for example Moshe Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy, Book of," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary,* ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:168–83. Barker agrees with this point of view (p. 521).

29:21; 30:10); (2) it has been suggested that the cursings in the book of the law found in Josiah's day (2 Kings 22:16) are those found in Deuteronomy 28; and (3) the reforms enacted by Josiah reflect the laws stated in Deuteronomy. Many scholars have further seen a close connection between the book of Deuteronomy and the books known as the "Former Prophets" (Joshua–2 Kings) and have designated this the "Deuteronomistic History."[6]

Furthermore, some have seen a relationship between the prophet Jeremiah and the book of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history. Richard Friedman, for example, has recently suggested that Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, should be identified as the Deuteronomist because of the similarity of the language and religious ideas in Jeremiah and Deuteronomy and in the Deuteronomistic history.[7]

Now with a basic understanding of the relationship between Josiah and his reforms, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history, and the prophet Jeremiah, we should examine Josiah's reforms from the perspective of the Book of Mormon. Although Josiah is not mentioned in the Book of Mormon, I believe we can obtain an idea of how its authors may have felt about those reforms. We should first start by pointing out that Nephi quoted approvingly from the book of Deuteronomy:

> And the Lord will surely prepare a way for his people, unto the fulfilling of the words of Moses, which he spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that all those who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people. (1 Nephi 22:20)

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6. See Steven L. McKenzie, "Deuteronomistic History," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary,* 160–68. An example of the positive evaluation that the Deuteronomistic historian gives Josiah can be seen in 2 Kings 23:25: "And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him."

7. Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 2nd ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 146–47.

This same passage (Deuteronomy 18:15) is also quoted at a later time in the Book of Mormon, this time by the resurrected Christ who identified himself as the prophet of whom Moses was speaking (3 Nephi 20:23). Certainly Nephi and the other authors of the Book of Mormon regarded Deuteronomy as authoritative scripture.

As mentioned above, an important theme in Deuteronomy is alternate blessings or curses determined by the righteousness of the people. This theme not only ties Deuteronomy to the book of the law found during the refurbishing of the temple in Josiah's day but may also link it with the Book of Mormon. Lehi was born in Jerusalem and had dwelt there "all his days" (1 Nephi 1:4). He was likely a husband and father of young children during Josiah's reforms. If we are to believe 2 Kings 23:2, he was present at the reading of the book of the law that formed the basis of those reforms. I believe that Lehi would have taken these reforms to heart and done his best to teach them to his children. This may explain why one of the central themes of the Book of Mormon is this idea of alternate blessings or curses, depending on the righteousness of the people. Nephi reports that the Lord told him:

> And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands. And inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee, they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord. (1 Nephi 2:20–21)

Forms of this passage appear no less than fifteen times in the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 4:14; 17:13; 2 Nephi 1:9, 20; 4:4; Jarom 1:9; Omni 1:6; Alma 9:13–14; 36:1, 30; 37:13; 38:1; 48:15, 25; 50:20). Certainly this Deuteronomistic idea was prominent in the Book of Mormon.[8]

I believe that the reforms of Josiah may also be partially responsible for Nephi's love and respect for Moses. It is clear that Moses was

8. This is in contrast to Kevin Christensen, who thinks that Lehi and his descendents rejected Josiah's reforms (p. 451).

an important figure in Nephi's life. For example, as he and his brothers hid in the cavity of a rock, he encouraged his brothers with the following exhortation: "Therefore let us go up; let us be strong like unto Moses" (1 Nephi 4:2).[9] Since Deuteronomy, the center of Josiah's reform, was presented as being "the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness" (Deuteronomy 1:1) and Lehi embraced the reforms, Moses became an important figure in his life and in his teachings to his family. Nephi would have developed a strong love and respect for Moses from the teachings of his father.

Finally, the Book of Mormon views Jeremiah—who, as we have seen, was sympathetic to the reforms of Josiah—in a positive light. We are told that the plates of brass contained "many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah" (1 Nephi 5:13) and that Jerusalem had been destroyed because the people had "rejected the prophets, and Jeremiah have they cast into prison" (1 Nephi 7:14).

But how can we explain, as Barker has pointed out, that some rituals and objects approved among the patriarchs were later prohibited in Josiah's reforms? We can answer this question by examining a specific object and see what happened to it through the process of time. The object we shall examine is the serpent of brass that Moses prepared during the exodus to heal those Israelites who had been bitten by "fiery serpents" (Numbers 21:6). Certainly this was initially an object approved of God and his prophets. Nephi even saw it as a type of Christ: "And as many as should look upon that serpent should live, even so as many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live, even unto that life which is eternal" (Helaman 8:15).

However, it seems that with the passage of time, the Israelites began to worship this object. Thus, as part of Hezekiah's reforms: "He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made:

9. See Terrence L. Szink, "Nephi and the Exodus," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon,* ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 38-51, where I argue that Nephi used Moses's account of the exodus as a model for writing his own wilderness experience.

for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan" (2 Kings 18:4). This change in the way the Israelites viewed the brass serpent and other objects and rituals most likely came about because of their contact with the religious practices of surrounding peoples, as warned of in Deuteronomy (see, for example, Deuteronomy 12:29–32). This inclination of the later Israelites to extend worship to objects or beings other than God may also explain the tendency noted by Barker of the Deuteronomist to downplay the role of angelic messengers. The Deuteronomist may have been worried that angels could have become the objects of adoration by the Israelites. In short, I believe the evidence that Barker cites to support her position on Josiah's reforms can be explained using a different model in which those reforms can be seen in a positive light, and I think that the Book of Mormon supports this model.

Bruce Satterfield uses the writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel to demonstrate why the Lord was justified in destroying Jerusalem. He shows that according to the prophets cited, the inhabitants of Jerusalem had lost the spirit, rejected the prophets, and refused to repent and that any reformation was only a surface change without the necessary inward change; thus their destruction was warranted.

In a chapter entitled "How Could Jerusalem 'That Great City,' Be Destroyed?" David Seely and Fred Woods explain not only why Jerusalem merited destruction but also how the inhabitants could fool themselves into believing that God would preserve them. Nephi's description of Laman and Lemuel's self-deception fits in well with what Seely and Woods demonstrate was a prevalent mind-set in Jerusalem at the time.

Jeffrey Thompson and John Welch draw comparisons between the mysterious and faithful Rechabites of whom the prophet Jeremiah spoke in Jeremiah 35 and Lehi's family, who lived in tents. The Rechabites abstained from alcohol and were seminomadic, living in tents. Thompson and Welch point out that the oft-recurring phrase *my father dwelt in a tent* in 1 Nephi may convey a social significance.

In "Jerusalem Connections to Arabia in 600 B.C.," Kent Brown examines the Israelite presence in Arabia at the time of Lehi and his

family's wilderness journey. He concludes that although there were native groups there who had contact with the Assyrian military prior to Lehi and that there is evidence for a much later Israelite population, Lehi and his family were essentially pioneers who certainly encountered others while on the journey but for the most part probably avoided such contact.

In conclusion, I feel that this book makes a solid contribution to the study of the Book of Mormon in an area that, although not completely ignored in the past, certainly deserves our attention. Although there is not complete agreement on every detail, I believe the contributors have brought to light a fairly complete picture of the Jerusalem of Lehi's day that above all is consistent with what the Book of Mormon says about it.