Elder Eyring Will Address Annual F.A.R.M.S. Banquet

Elder Henry B. Eyring, a member of the First Quorum of Seventy and Commissioner of Church Education for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, will be the featured speaker at the 1994 F.A.R.M.S. banquet, to be held the evening of Thursday, October 13. His topic has not yet been announced.

This annual event gives the many people associated with the Foundation (subscribers, volunteers, researchers, members of the board of directors, and many other friends of F.A.R.M.S.) a chance to renew old friendships and make new ones with others who support the mission of the Foundation.

The banquet will begin at 7:00 P.M. in room 394 of the Wilkinson Center at Brigham Young University. Please note that the room is not the same one in which the banquet has been held the last few years. We have had to move to a new location within the Wilkinson Center to accommodate the larger number of people who wish to attend.

Reservations are required and may be made using the order form or by calling the F.A.R.M.S. office. Free parking is available in the parking lot directly east of the

New Book Describes Efforts to Trace Lehi’s Trail

No one has done as much to advance our understanding of Lehi’s journey as have F.A.R.M.S. workers Warren and Michaela Aston. For more than a decade they have expended time, money, and great effort in searching the remote valleys and deserts of the Arabian peninsula for candidates for locations mentioned and described in the Book of Mormon. Now a very personal and moving account of their efforts has been published by Deseret Book, In the Footsteps of Lehi: New Evidence for Lehi’s Journey across Arabia to Bountiful.

In this slim volume (see the order form), the Astons detail their research methods and their findings, supplemented with maps and photographs. Though they are not professional scholars, their work has both impressed and aided the scholarly community and will provide the basis for future scholarly efforts to explore the sites they have identified. They have gone about

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3
Was There Leprosy among the Nephites?

SPEAKING TO THE NEPHITES assembled at the temple in Bountiful, the risen Jesus Christ said, “Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous . . . ? Bring them hither and I will heal them” (3 Nephi 17:7). Yet medical researchers do not believe that “leprosy” existed in ancient America. How can we resolve this apparent conflict between what the Book of Mormon describes and what modern researchers have concluded?

Answering such a question always demands that we first look carefully at the text. It seems safe to suppose that behind Joseph Smith’s translation of “leprosous” in 3 Nephi would have been the Hebrew word that is consistently translated “leprosy” in the Old Testament. That Hebrew term is šārā‘āt. The Jewish scholars in Alexandria who put the Old Testament into Greek (the Septuagint) used Greek lepra as the equivalent of šārā‘āt. Lepra is regularly referred to in the Gospels where it is translated “leprosy.”

A sizable body of scholarly writing has tried to identify what medical condition fits the Bible’s statements regarding the nature, incidence and cure of šārā‘āt and lepra.1 The somewhat surprising conclusion is that šārā‘āt “is not leprosy and does not include it.”2 The Old Testament statements about the lesions and symptoms simply do not fit leprosy. In fact the history of disease and medicine suggests that “it is doubtful if leprosy existed at all in the Ancient Near East at the time of the Old Testament,”3 although it is possible that true leprosy had reached Judea by the time of Jesus and could have been included by New Testament writers with the diseases previously encompassed under the term šārā‘āt.4 Finally, the result of this research concludes simply that šārā‘āt denoted “several types of skin lesions which exhibit exfoliation or scaling of the skin”5 but were not leprosy per se. Thus it appears that the English translations of the Old Testament use “leprosy” to refer to skin conditions that were not epidemiologically leprosy.

Thus it is highly unlikely that Lehi’s or Mulek’s parties could have brought real leprosy with them to the New World. To what disease, then, might the Savior have referred in calling for the Nephite “leprous” to be brought to him to be healed? Two candidates are uta (leishmaniasis) and Chagas’ disease. Both attack the mucous membranes of the face and cause an appearance like leprosy.6 Another skin disease that was present in ancient America is called pintá; it discolors the skin with light blotches that sound like one of the symptoms of šārā‘āt.

Among the Aztecs, Father Sahagun reported that one of the diseases attributed to the god Tláloc, the rain gods, were those with “certain incurable skin diseases,” including what Sahagun had called “leprosy.”7 It is reasonable, therefore, to suppose that several kinds of skin diseases existed in the American land of the Nephites which would have recalled to Book of Mormon writers the šārā‘āt or “leprosy” of the Old Testament. When Jesus called for those suffering from those ills to come forward, the Book of Mormon term “leprous” would serve to denote their condition just as accurately as in the case of the Bible and its peoples.

We can see “leprosy” in the Book of Mormon text as one in a substantial series of terms which prudent readers will understand to demand careful explication before their actual meanings are clear.

NOTES
2. Ibid., 278.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 281.
5. Ibid., 279.
7. See Codex Florentino 1:287.
8. See J. E. Thompson, Mexico before Cortez (New York: Scribner’s, 1933), 50.

Based on research by John L. Sorenson
Elder Holland Bears Powerful Testimony of the Keystone of Our Religion

At the annual CES symposium at BYU, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, newly called member of the Quorum of the Twelve of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, highlighted several themes in the Book of Mormon and bore testimony of its truthfulness. He also spoke of his calling and of his experiences with President Hunter. Since many of our readers are seminary and institute teachers who were not able to attend the symposium, a transcript of this powerful address is available by using the order form in this issue of the F.A.R.M.S. newsletter.

Elder Holland discussed the ways in which Nephi, Jacob, and Isaiah are witnesses positioned at the beginning of the Book of Mormon to testify of the divinity of Jesus Christ. He suggests that part of the “wise purpose” for which Nephi made the small plates, in addition to the need that Joseph Smith would have to use them to replace the lost portion of the record, was to place these three witnesses of Christ at the beginning of the book that we would receive. Elder Holland points out that Nephi stresses this role of the three prophets in 2 Nephi 11:2–3, telling us that all three had seen their Redeemer and that the words of Isaiah and Jacob would prove that his own words about the Savior were true.

Elder Holland also pointed out that more than four-fifths of the Book of Mormon comes out of a period before Christ’s appearance to the Nephites, so that most of the testimonies of Christ given in the book came from people who “had not a Christ who had come in the flesh but only the trust and consummate hope of such a Christ who would come. . . . What godly, believing, stalwart people. I am moved to tears at their trust. And I feel ashamed for our post-advent generations who have so many witnesses and so much evidence, but still do not believe.”

Three other themes from the Book of Mormon that Elder Holland discussed eloquently and forcefully are the prevalence and central participation of angels in the gospel story, especially in bearing testimony of Christ, a role “which may not yet have been developed enough in our teaching of young people”; the beautiful image of the praying Christ in 3 Nephi; and the need for purity through the blood of the Lamb.

On a more personal note, Elder Holland shared “what is shareable” about the experience he had in being called to serve in the Quorum of the Twelve, as a way of bearing testimony about President Hunter. He spoke of the “sweet counsel and continued reassurance” President Hunter gave him, followed by the meeting in the temple in which President Hunter gave him his apostolic charge along with personal counsel and then set him apart. Following that 90-minute sequence, President Hunter proceeded to conduct the business of the remaining two hours, doing things personally that he might have delegated.

“My point,” said Elder Holland, “is that at the end of a day in which I was absolutely drained, just as emotionally and tearfully exhausted as one could possibly be, President Hunter was apparently getting stronger by the hour—and so it has seemed from that day to this.”
The Symbolism of Eating and Drinking in the Book of Mormon Is Explored

In a recent article published in the latest issue of *BYU Studies*, Richard D. Rust of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill discusses images of eating and drinking (and the lack thereof) from the Book of Mormon and the ways in which these images are used to "define the essential nature of people, emphasize problems of survival, illustrate degradation, characterize social relationships, reinforce covenants, poetically define a hope for eternal life, and suggest a response to the book as a whole."

F.A.R.M.S. Videos Go Down Under

Dennis Curyer of Lilydale, Melbourne, has volunteered to transfer F.A.R.M.S. videotapes to the format used in Australia to give F.A.R.M.S. subscribers there the chance to enjoy these materials. We appreciate his generosity. Brother Curyer can be contacted by phone at 03-735-4748 or through the mail at 58-60 Old Gippsland Road, P.O. Box 770, Lilydale, Melbourne, VIC 3140.

Upcoming Events

- **September 17, 7:00 P.M.** Truman G. Madsen of BYU will present a F.A.R.M.S.-sponsored fireside on "The Temple and the Atonement" at the Saratoga California Stake Center.
- **October 13, 7:00 P.M.** F.A.R.M.S. annual banquet, 394 Wilkinson Center, BYU. Featured speaker will be Elder Henry B. Eyring.
- **November 27.** The F.A.R.M.S.-sponsored educational tour, conducted by Educational Opportunities, Inc., leaving for Jerusalem on November 27, is now full.

Fourth Semester Videos of Nibley’s Book of Mormon Class Now Available

The fourth semester's videos of Hugh Nibley's Honors Book of Mormon class are now available for purchase on the order form in this issue of *INSIGHTS*. We appreciate the volunteer efforts of some of our friends at NuSkin International, Kurt Jurgens and Joel Clark, and Jack Lundquist of Da Vinci Films, who have worked to prepare the videos of these insightful and inspiring class sessions for distribution.
The very popular Book of Mormon lecture series, originally produced on video, is now available on audiocassette—the same outstanding lectures on the Book of Mormon by some of BYU's finest faculty members and other respected teachers.

Thanks to generous donations, this series is available very inexpensively. A further discount is available to CES seminaries and institutes.

Take advantage of this opportunity to learn at the feet of some of the finest Book of Mormon scholars, and watch for more lectures (both on videotape and audiotape) to be featured in future issues of INSIGHTS.

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- **Susan E. Black, “Christ in the Book of Mormon.”** Insights into the mission of Christ that can be gained by examining the 101 names the Book of Mormon used to describe Him. BLA-T1
- **Larry E. Dahl, “Faith, Hope, and Charity.”** Explores Book of Mormon teachings concerning faith, hope, and charity: their meanings, how they are acquired, and what their fruits are. DAH-T1
- **Victor L. Ludlow, “The Covenant Teachings of the Book of Mormon.”** Shows how the book fulfills its purpose to teach the House of Israel about the covenants of the Lord. LUD-T1
- **Robert L. Millet, “The Doctrine of the New Birth.”** Discusses what the book teaches about a life-long process of renewal that we experience when we choose to follow Christ. MIL-T3
- **Robert L. Millet, “The Fall as Taught in the Book of Mormon.”** Discusses what the Book of Mormon teaches about the fall, which is essential to understanding salvation. MIL-T2
- **Robert L. Millet, “The Nature of God in the Book of Mormon.”** What the Book of Mormon reveals about each member of the godhead and the relationships among them. MIL-T1

- **Monte S. Nyman, “Is the Book of Mormon History?”** Discusses the book as spiritual history. NYM-T1
- **Dallin H. Oaks, “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.”** Focuses on the message and promise implied in the book's subtitle. OAK-T1
- **Donald W. Parry, “Isaiah in the Book of Mormon.”** Gives keys to understanding the writings of Isaiah and reasons why we should study them. PAR-T1
- **Ed Pinegar, “Missionary Work and the Book of Mormon.”** Shows how the book is vital for missionaries, as well as for investigators. PIN-T1
- **Noel B. Reynolds, “The Gospel as Taught by the Nephites.”** Examines a series of six items that are presented repeatedly in the Book of Mormon as the gospel of Christ. REY-T1
- **Stephen D. Ricks, “The Translation and Publication of the Book of Mormon.”** Looks at what Joseph Smith and his associates said about the process of translating the Book of Mormon. RIC-T1
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- **John W. Welch, “Ten Testimonies of Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon.”** Looks at the distinctive and personal natures of the testimonies of ten prophets. WEL-T2
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**F.A.R.M.S. Book of Mormon Lecture Series, audiotapes and videotapes (from other side)**

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