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THE EDITOR’S NOTEBOOK

Some people see great potential for research to turn up new ways of seeing and thinking about the world. Others tend to feel that everything important must already have been discovered. For the latter, “research” means finding authorities who offer a confident answer to each question that occurs to us to ask. For the former, the best part of any question is the quest part.

Brigham Young once observed, “A spirit and power of research is planted within [humans], yet they remain undeveloped.” He also said, “If I do not learn what is in the world, from first to last, somebody will be wiser than I am. I intend to know the whole of it, both good and bad.”

Book of Mormon studies is one special manifestation of that general curiosity that Brother Brigham recommended. Simply treading the same mental and spiritual ground year after year as we examine the scripture may not advance our understanding as much as it puts us to sleep. For us to read scripture doggedly time after time may yield little new insight or appreciation of what the text contains that might inspire. We might well gain more by pausing to ask, “Why did the Lord make this statement at this historical moment?” or, more specifically, “Why did Book of Mormon writers use the name Jehovah only twice in the entire text—and one of those in the last verse of the book?” Just as challenging is seeking new depth in a word we have read so many times that we no longer think about its meaning—for example, what does it mean to “harrow up” a person’s soul (2 Nephi 9:47; Mormon 5:8)?

All the authors whose work we publish offer us new views of expressions that may have become commonplace in our reading. That is what research is about—to crack open previously closed windows of our minds. This issue of the Journal offers a new tool to help us do so. Dr. Cynthia Hallen, a linguist at BYU, starts a new department entitled “What’s in a Word?” As she pursues her own quest for new understanding, she will share items of interest that will extend and enrich our grasp of scripture.
What Meanteth the Words That Are Written? Abinadi Interprets Isaiah


2. The brass plates version of Isaiah prefaces its title with the phrase “In 74.” For more on this see David R. Seely, 4. Hugh W. Nibley, in 1. For an in-depth study of Hebrew law

3. Written?” Abinadi Interprets Isaiah

5. It is also possible that other metallurgists were involved.

7. We know little about the process of recording the text on the plates, but it is likely that the text was recorded in a sequence that made sense both to the recorder and to the reader. The text was probably written in rows, with each row containing a single line of text. The text was then transcribed onto the plates, which were then sealed with the sacred seal.

8. Abinadi was a prophet who lived in ancient Israel. He was a member of the Israelite tribe of Judah and was known for his role in the events leading up to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

9. Abinadi is known for his role in the events leading up to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. He was a member of the Israelite tribe of Judah and was known for his role in the events leading up to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

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