

From the Editor

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A nephew recently asked me, “Why do we care about the Old Testament? Is it even relevant today?” After catching my breath, I got wondering, how many others might share this feeling as the Church Sunday School curriculum returns in 2018 to the study of the Old Testament? And for those who feel that way, might some of the intriguing articles published in *BYU Studies* over the years on Old Testament topics pique their interest? I would definitely hope so.

Fortunately, this latest issue of the journal leads off with a superb article by Kent P. Jackson, who has spent the better part of a lifetime working on Old Testament materials, especially the book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation. This article tracks in fascinating detail the timing and scribal evidences of the Prophet’s meticulous work on the book of Genesis in 1831 and its eventual preparation for publication. Obviously, the young Prophet of the Restoration saw enormous value in the words left by Moses, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, and Abraham, while at the same time rendering that ancient testament relevant to all believers in Jesus Christ.

And as we look back to previous volumes of *BYU Studies*, we find many articles that point out marvelous and worthwhile things to know about ancient times. For example, the 2006 article by E. Douglas Clark reveals stunning similarities between the opening chapter in Joseph Smith’s translation of Genesis and passages in the more recently discovered early Jewish text called the *Book of Jubilees*. A 2002 article by Syriac specialist Kristian S. Heal details an impressive set of parallels that were recognized by early Christians who saw the life of Joseph in Egypt as typologically foreshadowing the life of Jesus in Galilee and Judea. Then there is the recent article by Dana M. Pike on what is meant by “the

breath of life” (Genesis 2:7), and his earlier work on the anatomy of the expression “the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”

I believe that anyone interested in the calling of prophets, whether in ancient or modern times, would find relevant several studies by Stephen D. Ricks on what scholars have called the “narrative call pattern,” which is found not only in the Hebrew Bible, but also the book of Moses in the commission of Enoch (Moses 6)—see Ricks’s seminal 1986 article in *BYU Studies* 26, no. 4—as well as the Book of Mormon, such as in the installation of King Mosiah by his father, Benjamin (Mosiah 1–6), and other examples.

The list of outstanding articles goes on and on, covering such topics as the ancient Israelite backgrounds of the Moses and Exodus typologies in the Book of Mormon, Elisha and the bears, Jewish mysteries on an Ezekiel mural at Dura Europos, a possible reference to prayer circles in Psalm 24, new evidence for an allusion to crucifixion in Psalm 22:16, a powerful study of the whole of Psalm 22 as a foundational New Testament text, and the significance of the plural pronouns in Malachi’s promise of blessings to tithe payers.

These and many other Old Testament items can easily be found by searching the BYU Studies website or by using the “Study Resources” and “Old Testament Lessons” drop-down menus on the home page.

But there’s more in this issue than ancient scripture study. An article by R. Devan Jensen and Kenneth L. Alford is the first dedicated to the wartime imprisonment of William Stowell, the principal Mormon prisoner held during the Utah War. It includes the stories of his plural wives, Cynthia and Sophronia, who endured extreme difficulty with young children during the Move South.

Dog lovers everywhere will relate to new information about the reciprocal devotion between Joseph Smith and his faithful dog, Old Major, a large English mastiff, as narrated by Alexander L. Baugh.

Many other elements in this issue offer something new for every reader, whether interested in thoughtful poetry or self-baring prose, or divine interventions, animals in the Book of Mormon, century-old photographs, or recently published books dealing with topics that range from Mormon art and higher education to missionary work and the widespread human desire to save others.

All this we at BYU Studies hope will start your New Year off on a joyously fulfilling path, as you bring from your reading treasury, like the wise scribe who is “instructed unto the kingdom of heaven,” things that are both “new and old” (Matthew 13:52). We gladly extend our sincere thanks to you personally and to all of our readers everywhere.