

## BOOK OF MORMON EVIDENCE

Jeremiah 38:6

By Raymond White

The important question is, of course, is the Book of Mormon true? But I think the better question is: is it *authentic*? That is, was it really written circa 400 A.D.? We cannot prove or disprove that Joseph Smith received gold plates from an angel any more than we can prove or disprove that God made the universe. But we might be able to give evidence that the book really is nearly 2000 years old.

That's important, because if the book is authentically ancient, then the story of the angel and other divine encounters seem inescapable — it's hard to imagine how Joseph Smith could have come by such a book other than as he has explained. Edgar Allen Poe wrote (in *Murders in the Rue Morgue*): "When everything that is impossible has been eliminated, whatever is left, however unlikely, must be true." That's the situation here.

There are several genres of evidence that knowledgeable Mormons are familiar with. I won't even begin to cover them all. I will, however, give you a quick tour of three that impress me.

### [1] TRANSLITERATIONS

The book contains untranslated words like Liahona, Nahom, Zarahemla, Deseret, and others which the book insists are directly from ancient languages. If their provided definitions agree with modern scholasticism (and they do), that would be compelling.

My favorite transliteration is the word Deseret which is given as a 4000 year old word meaning bees or beekeeping. The remarkable connection is that scholars have identified an ancient Egyptian word that is pronounced "dsrt" (no vowels) and does indeed reference bees. The likelihood of Joseph Smith guessing that correctly is infinitesimally small.

The best work on Book of Mormon transliterations is still Hugh Nibley's *Since Cumorah*. But a google search will do as well.

### [2] CHIASMUS

A chiasmus is a poetic form where words or ideas are repeated but in reverse. For instance, John Kennedy's line, "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country." This two level chiasmus form exists in all languages, and also in the Bible. A simple chiasmus in the Bible is **Genesis 9:6** *Whoso sheds the blood of a man, by man shall his blood be shed.*

More interesting are multi-level chiasmus that exist only in ancient Semitic languages, principally Hebrew. Scholars understand such chiasmus to be evidence of a document's ancient Hebrew origin.

It was in the late 1960s that multi-level chiasmus were discovered in the Book of Mormon by John Welch, Jr. (Side note: His father, John Welch, Sr. was a friend of mine.) Here is just one example of the dozens, maybe hundreds, that I could pick from.

**Mosiah 3:18-19**

*except they humble themselves  
and become as little children,  
and believe that salvation was and is...in...Christ...  
for the natural man  
is an enemy to God  
and had been from the fall of Adam  
and will be, forever and ever,  
unless he yields to the enticing of the Holy Spirit,  
and putteth off the natural man  
and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ  
and becometh as a child,  
submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love.*

The study of chiasmus is fascinating, particularly in the Book of Mormon for the simple reason that they shouldn't be there, not if the book is a hoax. But they are there, all over the book, and it is impossible for Joseph Smith to have known about such a thing.

**[3] MULEK, THE MISSING PRINCE**

This is my personal favorite, at least for now.

The Book of Mormon claims to be a history of four peoples and gives us precise histories of three of them yet almost entirely neglects the fourth. They are: [1] The very ancient Jaredites who came on barges circa 3000 B.C., [2] The not-nearly-so-ancient Nephites who came on a sailing ship along with their brothers circa 600 B.C., [3] The Lamanites who came with the Nephites, but after arriving, split away from them, and [4] The Mulikites who were discovered by the Nephites circa 100 B.C.

That fourth group is the baffling mystery. The book gives us no information at all about their journeyings and how they managed to get to the American continent. Solving that riddle gives us an amazing evidence for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

Here is all that the book says about these people —

**Helaman 6:10** *Now the land south was called Lehi and the land north was called Mulek, which was after the son of Zedekiah; for the Lord did bring Mulek into the land north, and Lehi into the land south. 8:21* *And now will you dispute that Jerusalem was destroyed? Will ye say that the sons of Zedekiah were not slain, all except it were Mulek? Yea, and do ye not behold that the seed of Zedekiah are with us, and they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem?*

That's all there is. But those few words say a lot.

Now, to the Bible. We know from the Book of Jeremiah that king Zedekiah's sons were killed, and the king, Zedekiah, was blinded so that the last thing he saw was his dying children.

But the Book of Mormon gives us an alternate ending: not *all* the sons of Zedekiah died, there was one survivor, Mulek, who escaped. And somehow he (and his entourage?) came to the new world. How? The Book of Mormon doesn't say.

So, how is this useful as evidence? It is for two reasons —

*First:* Bible scholars have discovered that there actually was a Mulek. Where's he been hiding? He's been hiding in an obscure verse in Jeremiah.

**Jeremiah 38:6** *Then took they Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Mal-chiah the son of Hamme-lech...*

So, what's the point? Here's the point:

The King James says: Mal-chiah the son of Hamme-lech

The Hebrew says: Malki Yahu ben-hamMalek

The proper English then is: King is Jehoveh, son of the king.

So here we have a man, apparently already in prison when Jeremiah arrived, whose name is "King is Jehovah" (a good Jewish name) and whose title is "son of the king"; that is, a son of Zedekiah.

Now, the proper noun Malki Yahu would be shortened to just Malki, and in the Phoenician language, that would be Mulek.

That's a big point for Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. But we're not done yet.

By the way, what does "dungeon of" mean? Maybe this prince was in prison (his dad was mad at him) and maybe that's how he survived — he was in the one place the Babylonians would never have thought to look for him: in jail.

Now, *second:* How did Mulek get to America?

I'll tell this story as accurately as I can remember it.

In 1964 I was on my mission in Ireland. My mission president was Stephen Covey. I recall being in a library one day reading a newspaper and running across an article about a "Phoenician Stone," I think that's what the article called it. It was a large rock discovered in New York state, and etched across the stone were Phoenician characters. The stone was dated by scholars to 700 B.C. So Phoenicians were in New York 700 years before Christ.

As a Mormon missionary, a 700 B.C. Phoenician stone in New York was not what I wanted to hear. The Book of Mormon puts Jews in America around 600 B.C., and anything earlier would muck up my timeline, so I ignored the article and did my best to forget it.

But I couldn't forget it. It kept nagging at me until last year (50 years later) it dawned on me: *That's how Mulek got here!*

Mulek was a crown prince in Israel and he had connections. He had friends who were interested in getting him safely out of town and quickly. But which way to go? East? Towards Babylon? No way. North to Syria? That was already Babylonian territory. South to Egypt? Egypt was next on Babylon's hit list. That left West to Tyre, and the Phoenicians, and the open sea.

Once in Tyre, the Phoenicians didn't want him hanging around long because there was a price on his head — (the Babylonians no doubt wanted this last Jewish prince dead or alive) — and the last thing Tyre needed was Babylonian attention right then. The people of Tyre were evacuating their mainland city and moving to a safe island just off the coast, which did in fact save them from Babylonian wrath (**Ezekiel 29:18**). (It did not, however, save them from Greek wrath when Alexander swept through 300 years later.)

So, now where to? How determined were the Babylonians to get him? Probably very determined. So, the further the better. And further meant west across the Mediterranean Sea, across the Atlantic Ocean to a far away land that only the Phoenicians knew about — a trip that a crown prince ex-patriot could afford to pay for. And we know the Phoenicians could do it because they had already been in New York a century earlier, as proven by the Phoenician Stone.

Who came with Mulek? Family no doubt, but also a bunch of friends and servants, all afraid of the Babylonians. Why a bunch? Because when the Nephites met them 400 years later, there were more Mulekites, by a bunch, than there were Nephites.

The Mulekites likely arrived in America a decade before Lehi. Lehi spent a decade traipsing around Arabia while Mulek had royal influence, money, and Phoenicians for a quick get-away.

But Lehi, on the other hand, had God, and historical records, and other religious artifacts to stay connected with their Jewish religion. Mulek had no such stuff other than verbal traditions and a family lineage, which explains why the Mulekites were so accepting of Mosiah and his entourage when they arrived. The Mulekites were *so* accepting that they made Mosiah their king. Why? Because he had the records that gave them the cultural underpinnings for the Jewish identity that the Mulekites had been longing for for 400 years. They had no prophets, no records, nothing until Mosiah showed up.

Now this question: How did Joseph Smith know all that? Answer: He didn't! Which is the point. He *couldn't* have known. But it's all there. How could that have happened? Answer: Maybe the Book of Mormon story of angels and gold plates really is true after all.

Just so you know, all my Googling has not turned up the Phoenician Stone. If any of you locate this thing, I'd appreciate hearing about it from you. It's gotta be in some museum somewhere.

#### [5] A PROBLEM RESOLVED

This Phoenician connection solves another problem — well, what I think is a problem. And that problem is this verse:

*Moroni 8:45 And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

Why is this verse a problem? Because it is lifted directly out of the King James Bible: *I Corinthians 13:4-7*. It is so glaringly conspicuous that it is impossible not to imagine that Joseph Smith was just so enamored by this grand text that he just had to include it in his book, word for word.

Hugh Nibley gives an explanation in his *Since Cumorah*. He points out that this theme — faith, hope, and charity — was a common theme of the time. I don't doubt that. But still, it is *so* word-for-word from the King James that it seems, well, spurious.

I have a better suggestion. With the Phoenician connection and Mulek's seafaring, it seems much more likely that the ancient western civilizations were not nearly so isolated after

all. The Polynesian tribes, for instance, prove that there were regular criss-crossings of the Pacific, and the Pacific is larger than the Atlantic.

Columbus arrived in 1492. The Vikings preceded him by centuries, and the Phoenicians preceded *them* by two millennia.

Just prior to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.), Christians fled Jerusalem. Christians also fled from Roman persecutions from Nero to Diocletian. Now, 400 years is a long time, from Christ to Mormon. Is it not at least reasonable that in all that time, that *some* Christians of that period made it to America along with their scriptures? I mean, since the Phoenicians had already arrived in America a thousand years earlier, and there were, no doubt, Phoenician Christians (***Mark 7:26***).

After all, the New Testament was canonized by Iranaeus in the second century, and the epistles of Paul were “canonized” by Marcion just a few years before that. So it is not ludicrous to imagine a copy of ***1 Corinthians*** (or parts of it anyway) finding its way to America and to Moroni (Mormon’s son) who inserted the Charity text verbatim into his own book.

I think Moroni’s text so copies the King James, not because Moroni and Paul were similarly minded (that’s absurd), but because *it’s a copy!* Well, not of the King James of course, but of Paul’s original Greek which could accurately translate to the King James text, which is exactly what Joseph Smith did. And that’s my opinion.