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HUGH NIBLEY ARCHIVE

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Churches in the Wilderness

P.O. BOX 7113
UNIVERSITY STATION
PROVO, UTAH 84602

Churches in the Wilderness

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Long before the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, Robert Eisler called attention to the existence of societies of ancient sectaries, including the early Christians, who fled to the desert and formed pious communities there, after the manner of the order of Rekhabites (Jeremiah 35.) More recently, E. Kaesemann and U. W. Mauser have taken up the theme and now the Pope himself refers to his followers as "the Wayfaring Church," of all things. No aspect of the gospel is more fundamental than that which calls the Saints out of the world; it has recently been recognized as fundamental to the universal apocalyptic pattern, and is now recognized as a basic teaching of the prophets of Israel, including the Lord himself. It is the central theme of the Book of Mormon, and Lehi's people faithfully follow the correct routine of flights to the desert as their stories now merge with new manuscript finds from the Dead Sea and elsewhere. And while many Christian communities have consciously sought to imitate the dramatic flight into the Wilderness, from monastic orders to Pilgrim Fathers, only the followers of Joseph Smith can claim the distinction of a wholesale, involuntary and total expulsion into a most authentic wilderness.

Now, the Book of Mormon is not only a typical product of a religious people driven to the wilds – surprisingly we have learned since 1950 that such people had a veritable passion for writing books and keeping records –

but it actually contains passages that match some of the Dead Sea Scrolls almost word for word. Isn't that going a bit too far? How, one may ask, would Alma be able to quote from a book written on the other side of the world among people with whom his own had lost all contact for five hundred years? Joseph Smith must have possessed supernatural cunning to have foreseen such an impasse, yet his Book of Mormon explains it easily: Alma informs us that the passages in question are not his, but he is quoting them directly from an ancient source, the work of an early prophet of Israel named Zenos. Alma and the author of the Thanksgiving Scroll are drawing from the same ancient source. No wonder they sound alike.

If all the Dead Sea Scrolls which are now known to scholars but have not yet been published were to go through the press at the same rate that the others have, we might well be talking about new Dead Sea Scrolls for at least two centuries to come. This is about some scrolls and some readings hitherto quite unknown to the public.

The first is the Enoch Scroll, which became accessible not long ago. I want to call attention to just one item which caught my attention. In the Joseph Smith book of Enoch is an episode that stands out conspicuously for the strangely intimate twist it gives to the story. That is when out of the blue comes "a man . . . whose name was Mahijah," who asks Enoch point-blank, "Tell us plainly who thou art, and from whence thou comest?" (Moses 6:40.) This triggers Enoch's great sermon in response, in which he reads to the people from the book of Adam and puts them to shame for their sins. As far as I know, the episode is not found in the Ethiopian, Old Slavonic, Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek Enoch text, so I was brought up with a start when, upon reaching the final fragments of the newly published Aramaic Enoch from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the name *MHWY* started popping up repeatedly. Before telling the story of *MHWY* from Qumran, a word about the name is in order.

It is of course the *MHWY* of Genesis 4:18, where the other Enoch's grandfather is given the name, appearing in our King James Bible as Methuselah. This is not our hero, whose name lacks the -el ending; on the contrary, he belongs to the Cainite branch of the family which would make the Sethite missionary Enoch an alien to

his people. In the Joseph Smith Enoch both forms of the name appear, Mahijah and Mahujah, which should not be surprising, for in Semitic languages the consonants abide, as everyone knows, while the vowels undergo all manner of vicissitudes; and of all the vowels the *w* and the *y* are the most active. (One need mention only such obvious examples as the Hebrew *yeled* and Arabic *walad*, "boy," or the way the *w* and *y* constantly supplant each other in Egyptian participles, depending on time and place of writing.) The name *MHWY* is written exactly the same in the Qumran texts as in the Hebrew Bible. In the Greek Septuagint it is Mai-el (the Greeks, having letters for neither *h* nor *w* could end up with Ma[hu]y[ah] as Mai); the trace of the *waf* is preserved in the Latin Vulgate: *Mavia-el*; but in both cases the semi-vowel *waf* is weakened and the *y* sound dominates. Mahujah and Mahijah obviously have the same root. The Ma- prefix may denote the place of an action or in derived forms of the verb the person acting, reminding us that it was "upon the place Mahujah" that Enoch inquired of the Lord and received his missionary assignment in a glorious theophany (Moses 7:2), while the man who boldly put the questions to Enoch himself was Mahijah, the asker. And, since we are playing games, what the Ma- most strongly suggests is certainly the all-but-universal ancient interrogative, *Ma*, who? or what? so that the names Mahujah and Mahijah both sound to the student of Semitics like questions. In the newly discovered texts from Ebla (Tel-Mardikh) the same names are written with Ma- (Amorite) and Mi (Phoenician-Hebrew.)

But the important thing about *MHWY* in the Aramaic Enoch — by far the oldest Enoch texts so far known — is what the man does. Let me read you some parallel passages, following the translation of Professors Milik and Black so that you won't think I have been loading the dice to come out this way.

The presence of Enoch was a disturbing one, "a strange thing in the land," in the Joseph Smith version, "a wild man hath come among us." And so this is what we get (*italics added*):

Moses 6:39. . . . when they heard him . . . *fear came* on all them that heard him

4QEnGiants^b L20 [Thereupon] all the giants [and the nephilim] took fright

6:40. And there came a man unto him, whose name was *Mahijah*, and said unto him: *Tell us plainly* who thou art, and from whence thou comest?

and they summoned *MHWY* [Mahujah] and he came to them. And the giants asked him and sent him to Enoch . . . saying, to him: "Go thou . . .

and under pain of death you must . . . and listen to his voice; and tell him that *he is to explain* to you and to interpret the dreams. . . .

So here comes Mahujah-Mahijah to Enoch, representing a disturbed constituency, to ask the holy man just what the situation is. That *MHWY* was sent "under pain of death" shows that not only the dreams but the presence of Enoch was a cause of dread. In reply the messenger learns that Enoch comes from a special and holy place:

6:41. And he said unto them: I came out from . . . the land of my fathers, a *land of righteousness* unto this day

4QEnGiants^c [Ohyah, following *MHWY*'s report]: . . . my accusers . . . they dwell in [heaven]s, for they live in *holy abodes* . . . they are more powerful than I . . .

Enoch tells the man about a revelation and call he received as he traveled in the mountains on a missionary journey. The journey here seems to be transferred to *MHWY* himself, who crosses the deserts on high to behold Enoch and receive an oracle from him, while in the Joseph Smith version Enoch himself makes such a journey to receive instructions from God:

6:42. And . . . as I journeyed . . . by the sea east, I beheld a vision: and lo, the heavens I saw. . . .
7:2-3. . . . As I was journeying . . . I went up on the mount . . . I beheld the heavens open. . . .

4QEnGiants^b [*MHWY* . . . rose up into the air] like the whirlwind, and he flew . . . and crossed Solitude, the great desert . . . And he caught sight of Enoch, and he called to him and said to him: 'An oracle. . . .'

It is in reply to Mahijah-*MHWY* that Enoch refers the people to an ancient book which he bears with him, having according to some sources (Jubilees, XII Patriarchs) copied it with his own hand from heavenly tablets.

6:45. Enoch: We . . . cannot deny . . . for a book of remembrance we have *written* among us,

4QEnGiants^a 7 . . . to you, *MH* [wy . . .] the two tablets . . . and the second has not been read up till now. 8. the boo [k of . . .

According to the pattern given *by the finger of God* . . . in our own language.

The copy of the second tablet of the Epistle . . . *written*] by Enoch, the distinguished scribe's own hand . . . and the *Holy One*, to Shemihazah and all [his] Com[panions].

The teachings of the book (from Adam's time in the Joseph Smith version) strike home, and the hearers are overcome:

6:47. And as Enoch spake forth the words of God, the people *trembled*, and *could not stand* in his presence.

6Q8 a . . . Ohyah and he said to *MHWY*: ". . . and [I?] do not tremble. Who showed you all [that] tell [us?]. . . ." And *MHWY* said: ". . . Baraq'el, my father, was with me."

4[En Giants^a Frg.4 . . . Ohyah said to Ha]hyah, his brother. . . . they *prostrated themselves* and began to weep before [Enoch (?) . . .].

The name Baraq'el is interesting in this context, since Joseph Smith is designated in the Doctrine and Covenants both as Enoch and as Baurakale (D&C 78:9; 102:21f, etc.) Next comes a resounding declaration of general depravity, which in two verses of the Joseph Smith text powerfully sums up the same message in the longest of the Aramaic Enoch fragments:

6:48. And he said unto them . . . We are made partakers of misery and woe . . .

4EnGiants^a Frg.8. The longest fragment: The depravity and misery of the people described. Their petition is rejected: *God has cast them out*. All is "for the worst",

6:49. . . . carnal, sensual, and devilish, and are *shut out from the presence of God*.

But then interestingly enough, both the Qumran and the Joseph Smith sermons end on a note of hope — which is *not* found in the other versions of the Book of Enoch:

6:52. If thou wilt *turn unto me*; . . . and repent . . . *asking* all

[Closing line] And yet, *loosen your bonds* [of sin?] which tie

things in his name . . . it shall [you] up . . . and begin to pray.
be given you.

Now comes what I consider an important theological note. Enoch tells how the Lord told Adam of the natural inclination to sin that came with the Fall. This is converted in the Aramaic version to a denunciation of the wicked people of Enoch's day, who did indeed conceive their children in sin, since they were illegitimate offspring of a totally amoral society:

<p>6:55. Inasmuch as thy <i>children</i> are <i>conceived in sin</i>. even so . . . sin conceiveth in their hearts . . .</p> <p>6:57. Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent.</p>	<p>4QEnGiants 8. Let it be known to you that . . . and your works and those of your wives . . . themselves [and their] <i>children</i> and the wives of [their children . . .] <i>by your prostitution</i> on earth. And it befell you. . . .</p>
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Next the wicked move against Enoch and his people in force, but are themselves forced to acknowledge the superior power supporting the patriarch:

<p>7:13. And . . . he [Enoch] led the people of God, and their enemies <i>came to battle against them</i>; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled. . . .</p>	<p>4QEnGiant^c [Ohyah the enemy of Enoch]: ". . . by the strength of my power, [I had attacked] all flesh and I have <i>made war with them</i> . . . they live in holy abodes, and . . . they are more powerful than I."</p>
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And then that striking passage, so surprisingly vindicated in other Enoch texts, of the roaring lions amidst scenes of general terror:

<p>and the <i>roar of the lions</i> was heard out of the wilderness;</p> <p>and all nations <i>feared</i> greatly. . . .</p>	<p>[Thereupon . . .] the <i>roaring of the wild beasts</i> came and the multitude of wild animals began to cry out And Ohyah spoke . . . "My dream has <i>overwhelmed</i> me [. . . and the s]leep of my eyes [has fled]. . . .</p>
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Finally the prediction of utter destruction and the confining in prison that is to follow:

7:37 . . . these shall suffer. 38. . . . these . . . *shall perish* in the floods; and behold, I will *shut* them up; a *prison* have I prepared for them.

4QEnGiants^a Frg. 7. Then Ohyah [said] to Hahyah, his brother. . . . Then he [sc. God] punished . . . the [sons] of the Watchers, the giants, and all [their] beloved ones *will not be spared* . . . he has *imprisoned* us and you he has subdued [lit. *tqaf*: seized, confined].

Among new Dead Sea Scrolls we may number those found in 1966 not at Qumran but in the all but inaccessible caves that line the precipitous walls of the Nahal Khever or, as we would say, "Heber Valley." Instead of a valley it is a deep gorge, like Rock Canyon; it is the next canyon just south of En Gedi where the people bathe in the Dead Sea today. In those caves Jews fleeing from the Romans in the time of Bar Kokhba holed up with their families and their most precious portable possessions. A cave in the side of a cliff that can only be approached by one man at a time is easy to defend, and the Romans did not bother to attack them there, but simply set up camps on the flat mesas on either side of the canyon, from which they could look right down into the caves and make sure that no one escaped. Thus trapped, the poor Jews perished miserably in their hideouts, refusing to surrender, and left behind not only all manner of artifacts, kitchen-ware, clothing, baskets in excellent condition, shoes, etc., but a priceless harvest of their personal papers and books. These throw a great deal of light on practices described in the Book of Mormon.

For what these people were doing in fleeing from the farms and cities of Judea, as digging in these very caves has shown, was exactly what had been done at other times when the land was overrun by foreign armies. The evidence goes clear back to mysterious bronze vessels hidden there about 3000 B.C., supposedly by people fleeing from the armies of the first king of Egypt! I will be quoting from the review of Professor Yigael Yadin's book *Bar-Kokhba* (New York: Random House, 1971) on the subject.

First of all, there is something almost alarmingly literal about these "voices from the dust." For these documents were deliberately buried in the deep dust of the cave floors and came forth in choking clouds of dust — the finders had to wear masks: "For those who shall be destroyed shall speak unto them out of the ground, and their speech shall be low out of the dust, and their voice shall be

as one that hath a familiar spirit; for the Lord God will give unto him power, that he may whisper concerning them, even as it were out of the ground; and their speech shall whisper out of the dust." (2 Nephi 26:16.) They have not survived accidentally, as most other ancient writings have, but were hidden away on purpose; nor were they simply left behind or misplaced or forgotten by people who moved on and lived out their lives elsewhere — the people who left these records died soon after they buried them and died on the spot, the victims of a savage religious war. "For those who shall be destroyed shall speak unto them out of the ground. . . ." (2 Nephi 26:16.) What do these records contain? Accounts of contemporary affairs in private letters, legal documents, military and civil correspondence, or, in the words of the Book of Mormon, "For thus saith the Lord God: They shall write the things which shall be done among them. . . . Wherefore, as those who have been destroyed have been destroyed speedily. . . ." (2 Nephi 26:17-18.) Not only all their letters and legal papers, but their household effects and their bones were left behind in the caves, for the simple reason that they did not have time to escape. As to their destroyers, "Nothing remains here today of the Romans save a heap of stones on the face of the desert," writes Yadin, "but here the descendants of the besieged were returning to salvage their ancestors' precious belongings." (p. 235.) Again the Book of Mormon: ". . . and the multitude of their terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away. . . ." (2 Nephi 26:18.)

With the Dead Sea Scrolls we have something new under the sun; even if they simply repeated what we already know, their principal contribution would be the same — a new dimension of reality to our religion. It has been a long time since scholars asked, "Are there really such things as this? Did this really happen?" They have learned to be content with the easy assumption that it really makes no difference in dealing with spiritual, allegorical, moral emblems whether or not there is a physical reality to our stories. The most shocking thing that Joseph Smith brought before the world was the announcement that things men had been talking about for centuries were literally true, and would have to be viewed as such. The restoration of the gospel brought a new reality, but found few believers — it was more comfortable the old way, when you could take things just as you wanted them.

But with the scrolls from the caves, the reality of things hits us in the face with a shock. How often does it happen that documents thousands of years old have been dug up by the very descendants of

the people who wrote those documents, who could actually read them on the spot, not referring them to pedantic decipherment in distant studies and laboratories, but reading them right off as messages from their own grandparents? "We found that our emotions were a mixture of tension and awe," writes Professor Yadin, "yet astonishment and pride at being part of the reborn State of Israel after a Diaspora of 1,800 years." (p. 253.) Compare this with Nephi's moving lines: "And it shall be as if the fruit of thy loins had cried unto them from the dust. . . . even after many generations have gone by them. . . ." (2 Nephi 3:19-20.)

Nothing illustrates this better than Ezekiel's dry bones. The question in Ezekiel 37:3 is, "Can these bones live?" and the answer is, Yes, when "the stick of Ephraim, for Joseph, and for all the house of Israel" is joined "with the stick of Judah" "one to another into one stick; and they shall be one in thine hand." (See Ezekiel 37:16-19.) I once wrote a series of articles on the ancient tally-sticks. The true tally-stick was a staff (originally an arrow-shaft) on which the contract and names of the contracting parties were written; the staff was then split down the middle and one half, called "the stock" was kept by one of the parties, while the other "the bill" was held by the other. When the time came to settle the contract, the two parties would present their halves of the stick to the king. If they matched perfectly it was plain that neither party had attempted to tinker with the document, and all conditions having been met, the two halves, joined together again to make one, would be bound with string in the king's hand and laid away in the archives. The oldest known tallies are written in Latin and, surprisingly, in Hebrew. Are such the "sticks" to which Ezekiel refers? They are. The Bar Kochba cave has now produced no less than twenty-three examples of this technique in those letters of "the type commonly known as 'double deeds' or 'tied deeds,' " the use of which "is a very old and known practice in the ancient world." The idea was to write the same contract twice, once very small, roll it into a tight cylinder, sew it closed, and sign it over with the participants' signatures, not to be opened until the final settlement — plainly the technique of the tally-stick.

So here the Dead Sea Scrolls confirm our own interpretation of what the sticks of Ephraim and Judah were: matching documents to be brought together and placed side by side to make one book at that particular moment when God would set his hand to resurrecting the dry bones of dead Israel. The word of the Lord assures us now that it is indeed "Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of

Mormon, containing the fulness of my everlasting gospel, to whom I have committed the keys of the records of the stick of Ephraim." (D&C 27:5.) It is specifically with the bringing forth of these documents that the work of the last days is to start moving. Moroni, who brought the book again, sealed it up anciently with the prophecy that when its word shall be "like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust" (Moroni 10:27), then shall the invitation go forth to the Jews: "Awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem . . . enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded. . . ." (10:31). Which is exactly what they are doing today: the only way they can keep from being "confounded" is to have defensible borders.

In 1948 the world turned a corner. Overnight modern Israel became a reality, and so did ancient Israel. The Battle Scroll appeared just at the moment that Israel was called to arms, and according to Yadin had not only a moral but even a practical value in that great crisis. Suddenly scriptures became "relevant." In the same year the oldest Jewish library and the oldest Christian library were discovered: both were threatened with destruction; both were challenged as hoaxes; both became the object of political and religious rivalries and deadlocks; both were viewed as the work of irresponsible and fanatic sectaries. Yet through the years there has been a growing respect for both the Nag Hammadi and the Qumran writings, both because of their impressive spiritual content and the number of other pseudepigrapha that are being discovered or re-discovered to confirm their proximity to the authentic Judaism and Christianity that flourished in the days before the Jewish and Christian doctors of Alexandria changed everything.

To me this seems to be an obvious sequel to what happened in 1830, when another book appeared from the dust, and another Israel was established. There are three main parts to the Restoration, as was made clear in a revelation given a year later: "But before the great day of the Lord shall come, Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness, and the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose. Zion shall flourish upon the hills and rejoice upon the mountains, and shall be assembled together unto the place which I have appointed." (D&C 49:24-25.) And the three shall combine their records, for "it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews. And it shall come to pass that my people, which are of the house of

Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one. And I will show unto them that fight against my word and against my people, who are of the house of Israel, that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever." (2 Nephi 29:13-14.) The Dead Sea Scrolls bind the Old Testament and the New Testament together as nothing else, and almost all the Scrolls so far published show remarkable affinity to the Book of Mormon, as well as the restored Church. Why should this be? Or am I just imagining things? The proper cure for "parallelomania" is not to avoid parallels but to explain them: every parallel has a proper explanation, even if it is only mere coincidence or illusion. There are marks on rocks that sometimes look like writing or like fossilized plants; these are not to be ignored even though they often turn out to be misleading, because once in a while they really are true writing and true fossils. Resemblances between the Bible and the Book of Mormon are not hard to explain; far from being evidence of fraud, they are rather confirmation of authenticity. If the Book of Mormon is what it pretends to be, we should expect to find a strong biblical influence in it. Its prophets sound like those of the Old Testament because they studied and consciously quoted the words of those prophets, and all prophets moreover are programmed to sound alike, being called for the same purpose under much the same conditions.

But the Book of Mormon goes far beyond such generalities when it takes us into worlds hitherto undreamed of, namely those societies of desert sectaries, Jewish and Christian, which since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi documents have come to life in our histories and commentaries. The Book of Mormon deals with both types of religious community for 3 Nephi gives us the Christian version, as other books do the Jewish. The presence of Jewish colonies that look strangely Christian and early Christian colonies that look strangely Jewish has been disturbing to both conventional "normative" Judaism and conventional Christianity, and has already called for drastic revisions of doctrine and liturgy.

In the Dead Sea Scrolls we learn of the peculiar way of life of the sectaries of the desert, whose Rekhabite tradition goes back to Lehi's day and long before, and survives long after, as is very apparent from the 2nd Sura of the Koran. The people of Lehi were rooted in this tradition. When John Welch was studying at Duke a few years ago, he was struck by the close resemblance between the story of Lehi and the writing of Zosimus, a Greek of the third

century A.D. What would a Greek know about Lehi almost a thousand years after? Zosimus was looking for the model society of the saints, and affected to find it in the desert among the Rekhabites — that is the common tradition; I pointed out long ago that Lehi was in the proper sense a Rekhabite and certainly acquainted with the pious sectaries of Jeremiah 30. The writing of Zosimus shows that we are dealing with a pervasive and persistent pattern. Since the rise of "patternism" in the 1930s scholars have come to recognize all manner of common religious forms and stereotypes throughout the world. But it is important to remember that Joseph Smith in his day was running in an open field, a boundless plain where there was nothing to check or restrain him. Mrs. Brodie saw in the Book of Mormon only the product of a completely untrained, unbridled, undisciplined imagination that ran over like a spring freshet, as she put it. A hundred and forty years ago he might have gotten away with it, but now surely comes the day of reckoning! And it is not he but his critics who are confounded.

The Book of Mormon is, as it often reminds us, a selective history. It deals with small groups of pious believers, intensely conservative by nature and tradition; consciously identifying themselves with their ancestors, Israel in the wilderness of long ago. (See 1 Nephi 19:23.) It was this characteristic tendency of the sectaries to identify themselves with earlier trials and tribulations of Israel that at first made the Dead Sea Scrolls so hard to date: the same situations seem to obtain again and again through history, so that the Kittim of the Scrolls might be the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, or Romans. Though carrying on in the New World, the Book of Mormon people preserve their ancient culture for centuries: which should not surprise us — do not the present inhabitants of America speak the English, Spanish and Portuguese and preserve the customs of the Old World after four hundred years? With this strong cultural carry-over, the Nephites are aware of being special and apart — as the sectaries always are — "a lonesome and a solemn people," is the moving expression of Nephi's brother. And strangely enough, they are peculiarly bound to the written word, as are the people of Qumran. One of the most important discoveries of the Book of Mormon was the process and techniques of recording, transmitting, concealing, editing, translating, and duplicating ancient writings. Here is something the world refused to see in the Bible, the most sealed of books, but it has been thoroughly vindicated in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Of many striking parallels, I would like to speak of one here

that goes to the root of things. It is an episode that opens in the Book of Mormon in the middle of the second century B.C. with "a man whose name was Abinadi," in deep trouble with the establishment: In the Old World we find about the same time a certain "Teacher of Righteousness" in much the same fix: his story is told in the Manual of Discipline, the Damascus or Zadokite Fragment, the commentary on Habaku and the Thanksgiving Hymns from Qumran. He is being given a bad time by certain corrupt priests who are in the saddle. In the Book of Mormon we find them cross-examining the righteous man as they sit at a special tribunal with comfortable seats,

The common formula is "lying speakers and vain seers" (*mlitse kazav w-khoze rmiyah*, 4:10)

Mosiah 11:11. . . .that they might rest their bodies . . . while they should speak lying and vain words to his people.

IQH 4:6 . . .But they lead thy people astray by speaking smooth things to them, practitioners of vain rhetoric . . . (*mlitse remiiah*, preachers of deceit.)

IQH 4:20. they are men of deceit [mirmah] and seers who lead astray [*khozeh ta'ut*].

IQH 4:16. in their insolence they would sit in judgement on thee [investigate, persecute: *yidreshu-ka*] from the mouths of lying prophets led astray by error.

11:19. they did delight in . . . shedding . . . the blood of their brethren, and this because of the wickedness of their king and priests.

CD 1:20. and they took the offensive [*ya'udu*] against the life of the Righteous one and all who walked uprightly [perfectly] they hated in their hearts, and pursued them with the sword and rejoiced in controversy.

CD 19:15. The princes of Judah

have transgressed in a bond of conspiracy [*tshuvah*] . . . 18. in vengeance and wrath, every man against his brother, and everyone hating his neighbor, greedy for gain

11:26. . . .they were wroth with him, and sought to take away his life; but the Lord delivered him out of their hands.

IQH 2:21. The ruthless ones sought my life . . . a gang of no-goods [*sodh shawehi*], a conspiracy of Belial. But they knew not that my security [*ma amadhi*] rested on Thee, 23. and that through thy mercy is my soul delivered . . . 32: They sought to take away my life and shed my blood, but Thou God hast helped the weak and suffering out of the hand of the one who was stronger than he.

11:28. Abinadi . . . has said these things that he might stir up my people to anger one with another, and to raise contentions among my people; therefore I will slay him.

IQH 2:14. I became a man of controversy [*ish riv*, a troublemaker] to the preachers of error . . .

(Cf. Joseph Smith 2:20. I was destined to prove a disturber and annoyer of his [Satan's] kingdom . . .)

12.1 . . .after the space of two years . . . Abinadi came among them in disguise, that they knew him not, and began to prophesy.

IQH 4:8. For they drove me out of my land, 9. like a bird from its nest, and all my friends and relatives they turned against me.

(Cf. Od. Sal. 42)

Next Abinadi uses an interesting figure, combining two elements of fire and weaving, as the Damascus text also does, but in a quite different combination:

12.3. the life of king Noah shall be valued even as a garment in a hot furnace.

CD 2:5. for those who stubbornly oppose [God] there shall be violence and

overpowering of great terror by the flame of fire.

CD 5:13. they are playing with fire and throwing sparks around [or setting fires].

14. Their weaving is a flimsy thing, the weaving of spiders.

Here both prophets are borrowing from Isaiah 50:9, 11: "... who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. . . ." The idea is that those who have foolishly started such fires will themselves perish by them. In the Zadokite Fragment the precarious position of the persecutors is compared with the playing with fire and a flimsy weaving of spiders. Abinadi combines the images with characteristic wit: Noah himself is the flimsy garment in the hot fire, to suffer the very death he is inflicting on Abinadi. In the next verse he employs a figure from the Scrolls:

12:10. he [Abinadi] saith that thy life shall be as a garment in a furnace of fire.

12:12. And again, he saith thou shalt be as the blossoms of a thistle, which . . . the wind bloweth . . .

IQH 7:2 . . .Thou . . . scatterest the remnant of the men who fight against me like chaff before the wind [naturally suggesting Psalm 1].

12:19. [The priests] began to question him, that they might cross him, . . . to accuse him; but . . . to their astonishment . . . he did withstand them in all their questions, and did confound them in all their words.

IQH 2:29. They spread a net to catch me, but it caught their own foot . . . 3. Thou deliverest me from the spite of the manipulators [rhetoricians] of lies, 32. from the council of those who seek smooth things; thou has rescued the soul of the Poor one whom they desired to destroy because of his service to thee.

IQH 14:14. I was zealous against the deceitful men. For all who are near to Thee resist not thy mouth nor change thy words.

12:25. [You] pretend to teach this people, 12:26. If ye understand these things ye have not taught them; therefore, ye have perverted the ways of the Lord

12:27. Ye have not applied your hearts to understanding
12:28. And they said: We teach [the law of Moses].
12:29. If ye teach the law of Moses why do ye not keep it? Why do ye set your hearts upon riches? Why do ye commit whoredoms and spend your strength with harlots?

12:33. I know if ye keep the commandments of God ye shall be saved; yea, if ye keep the commandments which the Lord delivered unto Moses in the mount of Sinai . . .
12:37. Have ye done all this? . . . And have ye taught this people that they should do all these things? I say unto you, Nay, ye have not.

Then comes a long sermon to the wicked priests in which he chides them with their indifference to the scriptures and lays it on with a caustic tongue, showing himself well versed in the ancient writings: "And now I read unto you the remainder of the commandments of God, for I perceive that they are not written in your hearts; I perceive that ye have studied and taught iniquity the most part of your lives." (Mosiah 13:11.) Like the Teacher of Righteousness, Abinadi sees in

IQH 2:15. I became an accusing spirit [of *qinah*] against all who taught smooth things; and all the men of false teaching [*remiyah*, deception, illusion] stormed against me.

16. They professed to be in the covenant of repentance.
CD 19:17. . . .but they have not departed from the way of the apostates, but have wallowed in the ways of whoredoms, and godlessness . . . Everyone has deserted his family for immoral practices, zealous in the acquisition of wealth and property, every man doing what is right in his own eyes, confirming the people in their sins

(Cf. Alma 30:17.)

IQH 4:10. The preachers of lies and seers of illusions contrive devil's tricks against me to make me exchange the Law which thou has engraved in my heart for the smooth things they teach to the people.
11. They who shut up the drink of knowledge from the thirsting ones to give them vinegar, to turn them to false teachings that they fall into your nets!

the law a preparation for the Messiah to come. Professor Frank Cross called the Qumran community "the church of anticipation."

13:27. I say unto you that it is expedient that ye should keep the law of Moses *as yet*; but I say unto you, that the time shall come when it shall no more be expedient to keep the law of Moses. (Italics added.)

13:30. Therefore there was a law given . . . a law of performances and of ordinances . . . which they were to observe strictly from day to day. . . .

31. But behold . . . all these things were types of things to come.

32. And now . . . they did not all understand the law; and this because of the hardness of their hearts.

13:33. Did not Moses prophesy . . . concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people? Yea, and even all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began — have they not spoken more or less concerning these things?

IQS 9:9. And from no precept of the Law [Torah] shall they depart . . .

11. UNTIL there shall come the Prophet and the Messiah of Aaron and Israel.

CD 12:21. And according to this rule shall they walk even the seed of Israel . . . and this is the way [*serekh*] of living for the camp, by which they walk in the time of the wicked, UNTIL the Anointed One [Messiah] of Aaron arises.

IQS 1:2. . . .as was commanded by the hand of Moses and by the hand of his servants the prophets.

IQS 9:4. to atone for the sins . . . to please God in the land MORE than the flesh of burnt offerings and the fat of sacrifices: the heave-offering of the lips for a mishpat, like the sacrificial odor [*k-nikhoakh*] the offering acceptable to him.

Being perfect in the way means keeping the covenants one has made: the expression is found at the opening of the Book of Luke, where we find the parents of John the Baptist following precepts like these.

Mosiah 15:10. And who shall be his seed?

11. . . whosoever has heard the words of the prophets . . . and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day . . . these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.

15:26. Behold, and fear, and tremble . . . ye . . . that have known the commandments of God, and would not keep them

16:1. . . when all shall see the salvation of the Lord. 16:2. And then shall the wicked be cast out. . . 3. . . and the devil has power over them. . .

During the trial of Abinadi, Alma, one of the priests of Noah who had been converted by the teaching of the holy man, pleaded on his behalf, and being in danger of his own life (Mosiah 17:3), withdrew from circulation while he could put everything down in writing. The name of Alma, incidentally, has turned up in one of the newly discovered scrolls. In 1966, Professor Yadin found deeply buried in the floor of the Cave of Manuscripts the deed to a farm. Today the visitor entering the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem will find the very first display on his left hand to be this deed, a strip of papyrus mounted on glass with a light shining through; and there written in a neat and legible hand is the name "Alma, son of Judah" — one of the owners of the farm. This deserves mention because the critics have always made great fun of the name of Alma (both Latin and feminine), comically out of place among the ancient Jews.

17:3. . . the king . . . caused

IQS 3:2-3. . . may he lift up his face upon all thy assembly and place upon thy head the crown.

4. in eternal glory and sanctify thy seed with eternal glory . . . and give thee peace and the kingdom [*malkuth*, kingship] . . .

5:21. A covenant of the Church to establish forever the kingship of his people.

IQS 2:26-3:1. For his soul has turned away and departed from the knowledge [counsel] of the ordinances [*mishpate*] of truth; he did not remain firm in his dedication [changing of his life].

CD 20:26. When the glory of God is openly revealed to Israel, then shall all the evil-doers of Judah be cast out from the midst of the camp and the people.

IQH 5:5. I praise THEE Lord for

that Alma should be cast out . . . and sent his servants after him that they might slay him. 4. But he fled from before them and hid himself that they found him not. And he being concealed for many days did write all the words which Abinadi had spoken.

thou didst not desert me when I was among the people . . . and didst not leave me in my secret affairs, but saved my life out of the pit and gave . . . in the midst of lions . . . 8. Thou didst take me to a place removed among the fisherfolk and hunters.

11. Thou didst hide me, O God, from the children of men, and hid thy law in me, until the time,

12. that thy help should be revealed to me.

13. Thou did preserve the life of the Poor One in the place of lions.

This is something of a standard situation — preparation for a holy mission by a retreat into the wilderness: we see the same thing in the cases of Ether, Moroni, Lehi and his sons, of Moses, John the Baptist and the Lord himself. The wilderness motif (Cf. Mauser's book, *Christ in the Wilderness*) is preparation for the more ambitious Rekhabite motif, about which Robert Eisler wrote so learnedly many years ago. Alma came out of hiding to do his work among the people; and in the Hodayot we see the leader building up just such a following in the towns:

18:1 . . . Alma . . . went about privately among the people . . . to teach the words of Abinadi — 3. And he taught them privately. . . .

IQH 4:23. Thou hast not kept hiding for shame

24. all of those who permitted me to visit [or instruct] them, who came together in a church [*yahad*] of thy covenant to listen to me, and to follow the ways of thy heart. They rallied to my defense as a group of Saints.

And now come the New World Qumran:

18:4. And . . . as many as did believe him did go forth to a place which was called

CD 6:4. The volunteers from the people are those who bear the staff [cf. of wandering

Mormon . . . being in the borders of the land . . . infested, by times or at seasons, by wild beasts.

(N.b. This is not the howling wilderness, but the *midhbar*, the places where desert and cultivation or grazing infringe upon each other; the next verse shows that it was a desert terrain.)

18:5. Now, there was in Mormon a fountain of pure water . . . there being near the water a thicket of small trees [like Ain Feshka?], where he did hide himself in the daytime from the searches of the king.

18:6. . . .as many as believed him went thither to hear his words.

7. And . . . after many days there were a goodly number gathered together at the place of Mormon, to hear the words of Alma. . . . And he did teach them, and did preach unto them. . . .

8. And . . . he said unto them: . . .as ye are . . . willing to bear one another's burdens. . . .

Moses] and the Fountain [of spring] is the Law . . . and they are the inhabitants of Israel who depart from the land of Judah and dwell in the land of Damascus as strangers. 7. The staff is the one who teaches them the Law, as Isaiah says.

(1 Nephi 19:23. I [Nephi in the desert] did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning.)

IQS 8:13. At the fulfillment of these signs they shall separate themselves from dwelling in the midst of a perverse people, and go forth into the desert to prepare a way for Him . . . 15. . . .even by the study of the Law as it was given to Moses according to what has been revealed from time to time as it was shown to the prophet through the Holy Ghost.

IQS 9:18. To lead and instruct (*lehinkhotam*) in knowledge and so give them understanding in the hidden wonders and truth [s] in the midst of
19. the men of the Church; to walk each one blamelessly [perfect] with his neighbor in all that has been revealed to them in this time of preparing the way in the wilderness, and to instruct them in all that must be done at this time.

Such communities were not without precedent in Israel. There were fraudulent prophets and quacks who time and again led such groups into the wilderness (see Eisler's work). The Dead Sea Scrolls have a good deal to say about such ambitious would-be Moseses. There is one instance in the early Christian literature which is interesting because it tells of one impostor who led his people to a place of filthy water — reminding us of Ignatius's charge that the apostate leaders of his day are giving the thirsting people poison to drink. What makes this case arresting is that the false prophet's name was Mormon. (Text in J. P. Migne, *Dict. des Apocryphes I.*) So too we read in CD 1:14. "The man of deception [*latson* — the phony] arose who preached lying waters to Israel and led them astray in the pathless desert, away from the paths of righteousness." In IQH 2:16 the righteous teacher tells how "all the men of falsehood [*remiyah*] stormed against me like a mass of mighty waters," 2:12. "The assembly of the wicked rushed upon me like a stormy sea, whose waves cast up all manner of mud," and 13. "filth." This is the "filthy water" of Nephi's vision, an image found also in the desert Arab poets. What could be worse to one dying of thirst in the desert than to be led to waters that could not be drunk!

18:8. [Alma says] Here are the waters of Mormon. . . .
10. . . .what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness . . . that ye have entered into a covenant that ye will serve him and keep his commandments. . . .

13. . . .as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him. . . .

18:8. . . .willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light, . . .
9. and . . . willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort. . . .

IQS 3:8. [In baptism] he submits his soul in all humility to every commandment of God,
3:9f. after which he applies himself to walking carefully [perfectly] in all the ways of God as he commanded for the specified time and conditions in turning aside to the right or to the left . . .
11. then he will truly be a covenant member of God's eternal church.

IQS 2:2-4. For all shall be united in one true church [oneness of truth], and in becoming humility, and love of mercy and fair dealing [dealings of righteousness] each man with his neighbor.

18:8. . . .as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people. . . .

18:9. . . .and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things and in all places. . . . even until death,

18:9. that ye may be redeemed, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection — that ye may have eternal life.

2 Nephi 9:41. . . .the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel: and he employeth no servant there; . . .

42. And whoso knocketh, to him will he open. . . . 43. [to them]. . . that happiness which is prepared for the saints.

The IQH 6:26 here uses the language of the Pastor of Hermas: "O God thou layest a foundation upon a Rock . . . according to the true rule and plummet [made] of thy chosen stones . . . and none stumbles who walketh hence. For no stranger will enter into its

5:24. to be perfect each in supporting his fellow in truth and humility and love of mercy towards all.

CD 4:2. The sons of Zadok are following the patterns: The priests are penitent Israel 3. who have left the Land of Judah [and they are the LEVITES]. . . they are the elect of Israel who will be called up by name in the Last Days.

IQS 18:9. And not to turn away from him out of any fear or terror or any burning that may threaten in the government of Belial.

IQH 6:7-8. I was comforted amidst all the raging of the people gathering together. For I know that 8. after a time thou wilt raise up the Living One in the midst of thy people, and a remnant in thine inheritance, and purify them with the purification of forgiveness, for all their deed. 9. They trust on thee.

13. And there is no go-between (*melits benayim* — servant representative) for thy Saints. . . . 14. for they answer in the presence of thy glory and become thy princes in an eternal inheritance.

gates, protective gates . . . whose strong bolts cannot be forced." These verses (cf. 2 Nephi 9:42-43) plainly refer to the mysteries of godliness both in the Book of Mormon and the Qumran texts. When I first visited Qumran, in 1966, (Dr. Joseph Saad, Vontella Kimball, Moses Kader and myself were the only persons on the site, for it was during a time of troubles) Christian and Jewish scholars vigorously denied that the tanks, basins and water-conduits connecting them had anything to do with baptism or ritual ablutions; but last year our group visiting the place noted with interest that the Israeli authorities had put up signs designating such places as meant for ritual ablutions. The baptism of Alma is the old Jewish baptism, strictly an ordinance of purification and initiation with no mention of death and resurrection.

Mosiah 18:10. . . .baptized . . . as a witness . . . that ye have entered into a covenant . . . that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you.

18:11. [When Alma put the proposition before all the people gathered]. . . when the people heard these words, they clapped their hands for joy, and exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts.

Reference to baptism has naturally caused a good deal of discussion among Christians and Jews alike. It is plain from the Scrolls that there was both an initiatory baptism and frequent ritual washings.

18:10. Being baptized . . . that he may pour out his Spirit. . . .
12. O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant. . . .

13. . . .may the Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon you . . . eternal life, through the redemption of Christ, . . . prepared from the foundation of the world.

IQH 14:71. Thine abundant goodness have I recognized by an oath, not to sin against thee or to do anything that is evil in thine eyes. And so I have joined in the fellowship of all who share my faith [*sodh*]

IQS 1:20. And all those desiring to enter into the covenant shall say after them [the Levite who preaches repentance and the Priest who proposes the new covenant] Amen! Amen!

IQS 3:4. (Introductory admonition) The backsliders from the covenant "shall not be purified and cleansed by the waters of niddah [removal of ritual impurity] nor sanctified by the water of the running streams, nor [cleansed by the waters of washing, bathing; *raphkatz*]

Now we come to the organization of Alma's church — Jewish in some respects, early Christian in others. The writers of the Scrolls call their organization a *yahad*, the word meaning simply "oneness." Some would translate it as "unity," others as "community," others as "oneness." Georg Molin, the eminent Roman Catholic student of the Scrolls, insists that the usage and context of the word requires it to be translated simply as "church," while the name the people gave to themselves, according to him, was "Latter-day Saints." The emphasis on oneness is a reminder that these churches in the wilderness thought of themselves as little scale models of Enoch, City of Zion, so-called "because they were of one heart and one mind." (Moses 7:18.)

18:21. He [Alma] commanded . . . that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with *one* eye, having *one* faith and *one* baptism, having their hearts knit together in *unity* and in love one towards another. (Italics added.)

As to organization,

18:17. And they were called the church of God, or the church of Christ [Messiah]. . . . And . . . whosoever was baptized by the power and authority of God was added to his church.

IQS 5:25. No one shall speak to his brother in anger or peevishness, or haughtily [with stiff neck] or with any unkind feeling [*qimah*] but everyone shall admonish his fellow in truth, humility and loving-kindness.
1:3 and to love all the Chosen . . . 9. and to love all the Sons of Light in the quorum [council, brotherhood] of God [*'etsath*].

IQSa 2:11f. This is the assembly of the men of the name, the meeting of the council of the church [*yahad*] whenever God causes the Messiah [Anointed One, Christ] to be born among them. 17. And whenever they come together for the table of the church [*yahad*, unity] or to drink the new wine, and the table of the *yahad* is set, 18. and the new wine is mixed for drinking, no one shall put forth his hand toward the bread and

wine at first before the Priest, for he must bless the first-fruits of the bread and wine; and he takes the bread before them, and after that the Messiah of Israel puts forth his hand on the bread, and after that all the assembly of the church shall bless [or be blessed, served], each in the order of his office [dignity],
21. and this is how they shall do it on every formal occasion, [*ma'rakhah*] when as many as ten come together.

If this sounds disturbingly Christian, it is no more so than IQS 8:1 "In the council of the church there shall be twelve men, and three priests, perfectly instructed in all that has been revealed.

2. in the entire Torah, to act in truth and justice and judgment and love of mercy, walking in humility with their brethren.

23:14. . . . trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments.

23:16. Alma was their high priest . . . [and] founder of their church.

23:17. . . . none received authority to preach or to teach except it were by him from God. . . . he consecrated all their priests and all their teachers. . . .

IQS 6:3f. Ten men shall not meet without a priest to preside.
6:7ff. There must never be a priest failing to teach the word of God.
6:6 And there shall not be missing in any place where there are as many as 10 men a *doresh* [reader, expounder in the Torah, whether by day or night].

IQS 2:20. The priests shall enter or move on first of all, the Levites come next, and all the people in third place, for thousands and hundreds and fifties, and then tens, so that every man may know his place in the church of God for the doctrine of the eternities
6:8 the priests sit in the first place, the elders in the second and then all the other people
9. each according to his dignity. And they shall be consulted concerning the law and all decisions whatsoever that come before the congregation, so that every member
10. may place his knowledge at the disposal of all

IQSa 1:24. all things are directed by the Sons of Zadok the priests.

CD 13:2. In a place of 10 people there must a priest learned in the Book of Hagi, and all must follow his instructions. If he does not know enough, a Levite

18:19. [The priest] should teach nothing save it were . . . [what Alma] had taught, and which had been spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets.

IQS 9:7. Only the Sons of Aaron shall decide matters of law and property and administer the affairs of the society.

2:1. The priests shall bless all the active members [men who share the lot] who are in good standing [lit. who are walking perfectly].

18:23. . . . they should observe the sabbath day, . . . and *also* every day they should give thanks. . . . (Italics added.)

CD 10:14-12:4. Anyone who desecrates the Sabbath or the special day [*mo'a doth*] is put on probation for 7 years, before 6.

18:25. And there was one day in every week that was set apart that they should gather themselves together to teach the people, and to worship the Lord their God, and also, as often as it was in their power, to assemble themselves together.

18:24. . . . the priests . . . should labor with their own hands for their support.

26. And the priests were not to depend upon the people for their support . . . for their labor they were to receive the grace of God, that they might . . . teach with power. . . .

18:27. . . . the people of the church should impart of their substance, every one according to that which he had. . . .

28. . . . they should impart of their substance of their own free will . . . to those priests that stood in need, . . . and to every needy, naked soul.

18:29. . . . and they did walk uprightly before God, imparting to one another both temporally and spiritually

he is permitted again to attend all the meetings.

IQS 6:7. the entire congregation shall watch together for a third of every night, to read in the Book, discuss the Law, 8. and sing hymns together.

IQS 6:2. And the small shall heed the superior regarding work and property [Mammon, business] and they shall eat together.

CD 13:11. And everyone who joins the community shall be examined for his past activities, his knowledge and skills, his physical capacity, his energy, and his possession. (All contribute these.)

IQS 6:19. Anyone accepted into the community shall turn over his property agreeable to the priests and the congregation, and receive a receipt from the official in charge.

7:6-7. Anyone careless with the common property must replace it.

CD 13:7. The overseer of the Camp shall direct the generality in the works of God, and teach them about the

according to their needs and their wants.

wonderful things he has done, and have compassion like a father with his children, saving them from their erring ways as a Shepherd his sheep . . . that there be no oppressor or smiter in his group [*adatho*]

14:12. The gain [*shkar*] from at least 2 days a month shall be placed in the hands of the Overseer and the judges, for the support of the widows, the ailing and the poor and aged.

(In the Pastor of Hernias the rule is one day's income a month.)

As he sums up the achievements of this holy band, struggling to be real saints, and to a degree succeeding, the author of our account breaks out into an ecstatic little hymn of joy. The author of which account? Of both! The author of Mosiah 18:30 precedes the hymn with a satisfying summary to his story: ". . . and they did walk uprightly before God, imparting to one another both temporally and spiritually . . ." The writer of the Thanksgiving Hymns prefaces this particular one with an account of the wicked world in which he lived, but then he sees the community in the desert as a light shining all the more brightly by contrast:

IQH 6:11. the people of thy counsel in the midst of those of the world [the *bne adam*], telling for endless generations thy marvellous things and meditating upon thy greatness without ceasing . . . for thou sendest thy glory to all the men of thy counsel, sharing a common lot with the angels of thy presence."

IQH 6:5. from the world of *shaw* [vanity] and *khamas* [violence]. . . 8. God will establish a new life for his people, the remnant who will be his heirs.

13. Everyone who accepts his counsel receiving a common share with the angels of the presence [the Zion of Enoch motif].

There is no "go between" between the Holy One and the Saints (cf. 2 Nephi 9:41). 14. they are like a congregation of princes sharing in the eternal glory of the presence. . . .

15. . . blossoming fruit forever, putting forth shoots to bear foliage in endless planting [renewal], to cast their shade over all the earth. . . .

16. until . . . their roots reach to the foundations of the earth [*tchom*] they strike the cosmic waters, and all the streams of Eden water them . . .

17. . . and has become the place of springs of light for an unending fountain that knows no ceasing

18. Then the account goes back to the wicked

After this brief happy vision of the community as a well-watered garden, an oasis in the desert, the poet plunges back into the dreary and wicked world. But the most remarkable parallel to Alma's hymn is No. VIII of the Thanksgiving Hymns from Qumran: The Book of Mormon hymn is divided into two stanzas, the first about the waters of Mormon, the second about the trees of Mormon. IQH VIII emphasizes the same dependence of the water and the trees on each other:

Mosiah 18:30. And . . . all this was done in *Mormon*, yea, by the waters of *Mormon*, in the forest that was near the waters of *Mormon*; yea, the place of *Mormon*, the waters of *Mormon*,

the forest of *Mormon*, how

IQH 8:4. I praise the Lord, for Thou didst bring me to a place of water in a dry land, to a fountain of water in a parched land, and to a water of a garden . . . a growth [planting] of

beautiful are *they* to the eyes of them who there came to the knowledge of their Redeemer; Yea, and how blessed are they,

for they shall sing his praise forever. (*Italics added.*)

junipers, poplars and cedars, along with thy glory, trees of life are hidden amidst secret springs in the midst of all the trees, by the water, and they shall bring forth shoots for an eternal planting to salvation.

Even without the last line and the formal word of conclusion — “forever” — it would be plain that the Book of Mormon verses are a hymn with a melody hovering about the word *Mormon*. In both songs the imagery is that of the wanderer in the desert saved by the water of life and the tree of life, saved from spiritual death to find redemption and salvation. As might be expected, the trees and the water give knowledge — life-giving knowledge as sustenance. So

1 Nephi 2:9. [*Lehi's song, qasida, in the desert*] O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness! (Cf. Ether 8:26.)

IQS 10:9. I will sing and play . . . to 10:12. . . the Most High, the fountain of my good, the source of my well-being, a fountain of knowledge, a flowing spring of holiness . . . I will praise him at my going out and coming in . . .

Even the end of the colony is much the same in the two stories. Neither Qumran nor the waters of Mormon were unknown to the king's men (Noah's in one case, Herod's in the other); after all the places were not too far out in the wilderness, numbers of people streamed out to them, and only one spy could find out or suspect all that was necessary. What happened in the Book of Mormon suggests quite sensibly what could have happened at Qumran, with a jealous monarch keeping the place under surveillance until he decided it would have to go.

Mosiah 18:32. . . the king . . . sent his servants to watch them. . . 33. And . . . said that Alma was stirring up the people to rebellion against him; therefore he sent his army to destroy them.

So they had to move on — but they were used to that, for that is the Rekhabite tradition: Israel is ever “das wandernde Gottesvolk” God's Wandering People — indeed the present Pope of Rome is partial to the title “Wayfaring Church” to describe his own flock.

Mosiah 18:34. And . . . Alma and the people of the Lord . . . took their tents and their families and departed into the wilderness.

35. And they were in number about four hundred and fifty souls.

Then they repeat Operation Flight into the Wilderness.

23.1 Now Alma . . . made it known to his people, therefore they gathered together their flocks, and took of their grain, and departed into the wilderness. . . .

23:3. And they fled eight days' journey into the wilderness.

4. And they came to . . . a very beautiful and pleasant land, a land of pure water.

5. And they pitched their tents, and began to till the ground, and began to build buildings; yea, they were industrious, and did labor exceedingly.

It would be easy to supply many times more such parallels between the Book of Mormon and the other ancient records. If the latter are authentic (and both the Qumran and the Enoch writings were once challenged as late forgeries), it is hard to see how we can brush aside the Joseph Smith productions as nonsense. Even if every parallel were the purest coincidence, we would still have to explain how the Prophet contrived to pack such a dense succession of happy accidents into the scriptures he gave us. Where the world

CD 6:5. They went into the desert [Nu. 21:8] to dig a well, that is, to study the Law, namely the noble ones with the staff, that of Israel who had repented [been converted, *shuv*]; and they departed from the land of Judah and sojourned in the Land of Damascus, a land that was strange. 6. God has called them princes because they sought after him, 7. and the Staff [their leader] is he who studies the Law [as Isaiah 54:16 says], an implement in the hands of God to bring about his purposes.

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has a perfect right to expect a great potpourri of the most outrageous nonsense, and in anticipation has indeed rushed to judgment with all manner of premature accusations, we discover whenever ancient texts turn up to offer the necessary checks and controls, that the man was astonishingly on target in his depiction of general situations, in the almost casual mention of peculiar oddities, in the strange proper names, and countless other unaccountable details. What have Joseph Smith's critics really known about the true nature of those ancient societies into which his apocalyptic writings propose to take us? As the evidence accumulates, it is not the Prophet but his critics who find themselves with a lot of explaining to do.

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Classic Essays of Hugh W. Nibley, pp. 155-186