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YEA, YEA NAY, NAY

TRAINING BEGINS AT HOME

AURA BUSH'S FINE REFLECTION, "From Bunkerville to Babylon: Juanita Brooks and Phyllis Barber Tell the Story of Twentieth-Century Mormon Women's Sexual Training," (SUNSTONE, December 2004) is very thought-provoking—and disturbing. To wit, from page 29, Brooks's father's statement: "I'd hate to have the fellows discuss my daughter like they did one girl this afternoon. If she knew the things the boys say about her, she'd be less free with her favors."

From Brooks's account, we learn that her father listened to the stories about the girl. And we learn that he, who's trying to teach his daughter appropriate behavior, didn't chastise the boys for their misbehavior. What would have been the effect on Juanita had he been able to report that he'd snapped right back: "Now don't you boys ever talk that way about that girl or any other girl, whether you think it's true or not. Don't you have any decency? And don't you boys ever do anything to any girls that could get them talked about that way, either. You have a responsibility to be decent to women and to your own selves as men." And what might have been the effect on the boys, who, of course, may have been lying the whole time?

And what if we could know that Doctor McGregor (discussed on page 31) was worried not only about the "good names" of the Dixie Junior College boys he'd treated for venereal disease? What if we could know he had also worried about the good name and health of the victimized girl enough to treat her? She hadn't developed the disease on her

Even though Brook's accounts are of events that happened some eighty years ago, I'm not convinced today's fathers and doctors do much better. I hope Bush's article and Holly Welker's excellent response, which demonstrates harsh realities about today's sexual attitudes, will be widely read and serve as a catalyst for healthy discussions.

GALE PETERSON Albuquerque, New Mexico

CATCHING FIRE

T HANKS FOR PUBLISHING THE ESSAYS from the "Mormonism as Praxis" panel (SUNSTONE, December 2004). I had attended the session at the 2004 Salt Lake Symposium and was very sorry when I learned that the recording had failed.

I'm especially inspired by John Dewey Remy's essay about his practice of prayer, even though he's a skeptic. I very much liked learning about his devotions during the administration of the sacrament. He says: "I sit in silence, seeking the divine light within me and feeling it not only there, but also becoming aware that there are hundreds of little flames burning brightly in the hearts of all of who are sitting around me."

I usually read scriptures during this time but am now focusing on igniting my small spiritual flame that could merge with the glow of my community of believers seeking the enveloping light of Christ.

> LYNN MUMFORD Salt Lake City, Utah

RECONNECTING

Faith and Reading Kafka" (SUNSTONE, EAL CHANDLER'S PIECE, "KEEPING December 2004), is a wonderful gift, both for its prose and insight. Before her passing three years ago, my grandmother was one of those "church-running ladies" that Chandler speaks so fondly of and for whom the Church in Germany was a vital part of her life. I will treasure this essay for how it has reconnected me with her as well as with the German people, whom I have barely taken the time to try to know, though I am descended from them in heritage. Thank you, Brother Chandler, for sharing your thoughts and opening this window for me. Like you, I'm going to take Elder Moyle's advice and go buy a few books to help me better understand "their hearts and minds."

TED COOMBS Portland, Oregon

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to the unprecedented number of letters received in response to Blake Ostler's essay, "Assessing the Logical Structure of DNA Arguments against the Book of Mormon," (SUNSTONE, December 2004) and Ostler's desire to respond in some depth to each of them here, we have decided to delay the publication of Part II of his essay until the next issue.

CORRECT "PRINCIPAL"

I READ WITH PLEASURE BLAKE OSTLER'S "Assessing the Logical Structure of DNA Arguments against the Book of Mormon." I believe that translating arguments into a logi-

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cal form is a valuable contribution to the discourse. However, I would like to encourage Ostler to more accurately represent my arguments and reconsider his analysis under the premises represented below.

In his discussion of the deductive argument, he contends that I have proposed:

- P1. The Book of Mormon claims that all aboriginal inhabitants of ancient America are of Hebrew descent.
- P2. DNA studies show that all inhabitants of ancient America are of Asiatic, not Hebrew, descent.
- P3. DNA studies are accurate.
- P4. P1 cannot be true, given P2 and P3.
- C1. Therefore, the Book of Mormon claim stated in premise P1 is false.

My deductive argument is more accurately represented as follows:

- P1. The Book of Mormon claims that the principal ancestors of American Indians are of Hebrew descent.
- P2. DNA studies show that *the* principal ancestors of American Indians are of Asiatic, not Hebrew, descent.
- P3. DNA studies are accurate.
- P4. P1 cannot be true, given P2 and P3.
- C1. Therefore, the Book of Mormon claim stated in premise P1 is false.

In his discussion of the inductive argument, he contends that I have proposed:

- M1. "There is no genetic evidence to support the view that the ancient inhabitants of the Americas were of Semitic descent."
- M2. If there had been peoples of Semitic descent in the ancient Americas, then it is highly probable that genetic evidence showing suchSemitic descent would appear among the DNA samplings that have been collected so far.
- M3. Therefore, it is highly improbable that there were any people of Semitic descent in ancient America.

My inductive argument is more accurately represented as follows:

M1. "There is no genetic evidence to support the view that the ancient inhabitants of the

- Americas were of Semitic descent."
- M2. If the principal ancestors of American Indians had been peoples of Semitic descent in the ancient Americas, then it is highly probable that genetic evidence showing such Semitic descent would appear among the DNA samplings that have been collected so far.
- M3. Therefore, it is highly improbable that *the principal ancestors of American Indians* were of Semitic descent.

I would like to encourage Ostler to reconsider his analysis with the corrected arguments noted above. To continue his critique otherwise is merely to argue against a straw man.

THOMAS W. MURPHY Edmonds, Washington

BLAKE OSTLER responds: I appreciate Tom Murphy's timely response to my article. I especially appreciate his acknowledgment that recognizing the logical structure of arguments is important. Further, by disavowing premise P1 in the deductive argument, Murphy acknowledges implicitly that the Book of Mormon does not

teach that "all aboriginal inhabitants of ancient America are of Hebrew descent." That recognition is crucial in the discussion of DNA issues and is a real step forward in the discussion. The denial of P1 also implies that the Book of Mormon teaches that there were others already present when Lehi arrived who are also ancestors of Native Americans, which I argue for in Part II of my essay in the next issue of SUNSTONE.

Of course I desire to state Murphy's arguments accurately. Did I misstate the first deductive argument? No. I took the premises of the argument from his statements in the Living Hope video that I quoted. Murphy never uses the phrase "principal ancestors of the American Indians" in that video. So Premise P1 seems to me to accurately represent what he stated there. Moreover, Murphy's suggested emendation (I will call it P1*) is still false. The Book of Mormon nowhere states that "the principal ancestors of American Indians are of Hebrew descent." Murphy cannot quote any chapter and verse in the Book of Mormon where this assertion is made because it isn't there. I acknowledge that others have made that claim about the Book of Mormon (e.g., the Introduction added to the Book of Mormon in 1981), but it isn't a claim that the Book of Mormon makes for itself, as P1* asserts. In Part II of my article, I deal with the fallacy of attributing to the Book of Mormon what others say about it to assess whether what it says is



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TOOMATE STEEN



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true. It is a fallacy that Murphy commits in his letter.

Moreover, Murphy's suggested emendation, MP1, is vague. Just what does it mean to claim that "the principal ancestors of American Indians are of Hebrew descent"? Does it mean "the vast majority of ancestors," or "the most important ancestors," or "the ancestors responsible for the Book of Mormon," or "the most noble ancestors," or "the only ancestors"? Without clarification, I don't know what it is that Murphy believes he is asserting. In any event, his argument remains unsound because premise P1* is false and, as I have shown, hopelessly vague.

Murphy also suggests that I have misstated premise M2 in the inductive argument. I am willing to adopt Murphy's suggested changes to premise M2. He is always free to try to strengthen his argument. But does Murphy's suggested change to premise M2 (I will call it M2*) really make any difference to the argument? No, it doesn't. In fact, it makes matters worse. The problem remains that we don't know whether M2* is true and are not in an epistemic position to know what could make it true—and Murphy's suggested change makes matters worse because, as discussed above, the inclusion of the phrase about "principal ancestors" makes us uncertain what the premise means. Thus, the argument is not inductively valid. Moreover, Murphy's recognition that the Book of Mormon does not claim that all Native Americans are of Hebrew descent reduces the initial probability that we should expect to find clear evidence of Hebrew DNA markers among present DNA samples—though without more information, we have no way of assessing whether the probability is high or low.

DATING CHALLENGE

In his article in the december 2004 Sunstone, Blake Ostler addresses recent writings by Murphy and others on DNA studies as they relate to issues of Book of Mormon historicity. Ostler claims that the scientific facts are only that "Amerindian DNA is consistent with an Asiatic ancestry." The DNA evidence is actually stronger than this. The principal mitochondrial markers, which are passed mother-to-daughter, and the Y chromosome markers, which are passed father-to-son, exhibit genetic variation indicating that the Amerindians have been separated from both Asiatic and European stock for at least 12,000 years.

Needless to say, a 12,000-year separation time does not help defend the traditional view of Book of Mormon history, which depicts the Jaredite migration as occuring, at most, some 5,000 years ago, and Lehi's de-

parture from the Middle East about 2,600 years ago. Given this, the best we can say is that conceivably the original Book of Mormon groups may have quickly assimilated into much larger native populations so that today we cannot discern any genetic trace

These are difficult challenges, and I don't pretend to know the answers. But we need to be realistic about the scientific evidence. Philosophical, lawyer-like jockeying around the issues will not save the day.

DAVID H. BAILEY Alamo, California

BLAKE OSTLER responds: I appreciate David Bailey's comments because they provide an opportunity to further clarify the issues related to DNA and the Book of Mormon. Let's look at his two main assertions (and given that we're talking about clues derived from chomosomes, let's have some fun and label them x and y):

(x) Genetic dating demonstrates that (all?) Amerindians are of Asiatic descent, descending from ancestors who departed from Asia or Europe at least 12,000 years ago.

And, given that Bailey accepts that "conceivably the original Book of Mormon groups may have quickly assimilated into much larger native populations so that today we cannot discern any genetic trace," I believe he would endorse:

(y) It is consistent with the genetic data of Amerindian origins that more recently than 12,000 years ago, non-Asiatics may have arrived in the Americas from whom modern Native Americans are also descended.

Now it seems to me that if we consider that Bailey really meant (x) to mean "all" Amerindians are of Asiatic descent (and, if he didn't, then there's really no extra challenge in his adding the findings about separation dates to the discussion), his allowing that (y) may also be true is inconsistent. One cannot fairly state something categorical in nature (x) while also admitting possible exceptions (y).

An exercise in clarifying claims like those in Bailey's letter and in the implied arguments of those pushing DNA findings beyond their proper bounds isn't just "lawyer-like" jockeying. Its purpose is to demonstrate how those who attack the Book of Mormon tend to focus on totalizing statements like (x), while those who defend the Book of Mormon point out that statements of the tenor of (y) are true. And given that (y) is true, so possibly are Book of Mormon historicity claims.

Moreover, what does the Book of Mormon itself lead us to expect? I point out in Part II of my essay (in the next SUNSTONE) that one scenario consistent with the Book of Mormon is that a

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group of people, probably largely Asiatic, arrived in the Americas some 4,400-5,000 years ago. The Jaredite population included Asiatics (if Hugh Nibley is correct that the Jaredites journeyed across the steppes of Asia). There was also a later group of non-Asiatics (Semites) who arrived about 2,600 years ago. These non-Asiatics, consisting of about sixty people at most, were quickly assimilated into the existing population of Asiatics. However, large numbers of those descending from the non-Asiatic groups did not survive because of their mass destruction. Thus, the Book of Mormon is consistent with the genetic data. If my reading is correct, the Book of Mormon leads us to believe that we will find largely Asiatic DNA among Native Americans. Given that the number of those who assimilated into the existing population, and thus who left behind descendants, is at most about sixty souls, it is not surprising to me that distinctive Semtitic mitochondrial DNA or other genetic indications seem to have disappeared.

However, I believe that (x) is not quite accurate either, for GM haplotypes evidence suggests at least four migrations of Asians, the first between 17,000 and 25,000 years ago (Moses S. Schanfield, "Immunoglobulin Allotypes [GM and KM] Indicate Multiple Founding Populations of Native Americans: Evidence of at Least Four Migrations to the New World," Human Biology 64, no. 3 [1992]: 381–97). However, it also

seems clear that such evidence shows only when the first ancestors of Amerindians arrived; it doesn't show what happened thereafter. That is, other groups have undoubtedly arrived in the Americas since that time. So the fact that the evidence shows when the first ancestors arrived does not address the issues raised by the claims of the Book of Mormon. When the Jaredites migrated to the Americas is uncertain, but it was almost certainly long after BC 20,000. If Nibley is correct, then the Jaredites migrated from southwest Asia, and their presence would not introduce any new types of DNA—that is, DNA types different from those already brought to the Americas by the first migration of Asiatics. If I am correct, the number of Israelites who were assimilated into the preexisting culture was so small that bottlenecks and genetic drift are very likely.

THE INEXORABLE CRAWL

B LAKE OSTLER HAS NOT BEEN SHY about confronting Book of Mormon criticism. The first effort of his to reach my radar screen was his article, "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion of an Ancient Source" (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1987, 66–123), in which he attempts to develop a model of revelation that would honor both ancient and nineteenth-century elements in the Book of

Mormon. His latest venture, "Assessing the Logical Structure of DNA Arguments against the Book of Mormon," is an argument attempting to mitigate the impact of Thomas Murphy's Amerindian DNA studies as they relate to Book of Mormon claims. I can agree with Ostler in regards to Murphy's ill-advised interview with a religiously fundamentalist organization; yet while I think that Ostler's article is carefully and logically written, it employs straw-man logic. Murphy's findings on the so-called Lamanitish DNA is, in my opinion, devastating to claims about the historicity of the Book of Mormon, and the more so because the science behind DNA sequencing and analysis is precise and overwhelming. Remember, DNA science forced the obfuscating confession of Bill Clinton.

However, the DNA discussion is only peripheral to the central question that has amplified since the publication of the Book of Mormon. Two quotes from Ostler will help illuminate this larger matter: (1) "I believe it will be evident that DNA studies have little or no bearing on the question of Book of Mormon historicity," and (2) "Those who rely on DNA evidence to discredit the Book of Mormon are claiming more than they can know."

Two observations emerge from such statements. First, that for Ostler and other apolo-

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gists, there never will be sufficient evidence to discredit central Book of Mormon claims. However, by engaging the debate at all, Ostler has entered into a devil's pact by insisting that Book of Mormon claims *can* be tested by logic and reason. Thus, unwittingly, Ostler has undermined the very nature of his own faith claims. Make no mistake about it, Ostler's apologetic is a faith claim.

Second, in his article, Ostler challenges as non-parsimonious Murphy's jump to assign nineteenth-century origins to the Book of Mormon, yet Ostler gives no countervailing logic that has led him to condlude on an ancient setting for the Book of Mormon. In his footnote 6, Ostler lists a large number of apologetic Book of Mormon studies, including those related to so-called internal Hebraisms, the limited-geography model, and Ostler's own Dialogue article, but to my knowledge, every article listed appears in non-peer-reviewed journals, and each is in some way a concession to science and a retreat from mainstream, traditional views of the Book of Mormon. We must believe that, given Ostler's unforgiving expectations of Book of Mormon critics, he surely has his own vigorous evidentiary claims for Book of Mormon historicity. Perhaps at some later date he will share these for peer reviewhopefully in some non-LDS scholarly journal. Else why would he be such a strong defender?

Science-generated criticism of a religious canon can be onerous and difficult to bear for the inquisitive, but for "true believers," textual veracity is ultimately subsumed to a faith which is untestable, unfalsifiable, and outside the purview of the scientific method. Fortunately, intellectual integrity concedes to the inexorable crawl of science. As all religions bend, shape, or retreat, there will be a smaller community of hardcore believers.

In 1997, Michael Drosnin wrote the best seller, *The Bible Code*, describing how he decoded "prophecies" of historical events past (he couldn't manage events yet to come). Many skeptics claimed the book was a fraud. Drosnin told *Newsweek* in June 1997, "When my critics find a message about the assassination of a prime minister encrypted in *Moby Dick*, I'll believe them." When mathematician Brendan McKay took up the challenge by finding messages in Melville's classic about Indira Gandhi, the exile of Leon Trotsky, Martin Luther King, Jr., and others, how did Drosnin respond? He wrote *Bible Code II*.

STEVE OAKEY Rexburg, Idaho

BLAKE OSTLER responds: Let me begin with a

point on which Steve Oakey and I both agree: I am not shy. Unfortunately, that's about all we agree on.

I'll admit that after reading Oakey's letter several times, I'm still not clear about what he intends to say. He first asserts what appear to me to be two contradictory claims:

- (1) for people "like me" there never will be enough evidence to discredit the Book of Mormon; and
- (2) by engaging evidence and logic, I have already undermined the very nature of my own faith claims.

I take his real beef to be something like: "The evidence really shows the Book of Mormon is false and Ostler just dosn't get it because of his prior faith commitments." However, I can see no reason to give any credence to this assertion. I came back from being a skeptic about the Book of Mormon to adopting the expansion theory I argued for in my 1987 Dialogue article because I was looking for a way to explain all of the evidence and not just what one polemical position or another claimed. Moreover, if my "apologetic is a faith claim," then Oakey's faith in science and his own view of the evidence is no less a faith claim. It appears to me that he is blind to his own "faith" commitments or presuppositions since he appears to believe that I come to the text with some prior commitments and he does not. That isn't true.

Oakey is clear that he sees DNA evidence as "devastating to claims about the historicity of the Book of Mormon." From his seeming disdain for religion that is slow in bending or shaping itself to the demands of "the inexorable crawl of science," my guess is that he disbelieved the Book of Mormon before he saw any DNA evidence. However, I insist that before an argument from evidence can be "devastating," it must first be valid and sound. In Part I of my essay, I show that the arguments from DNA are neither—and Oakey completely ignores my arguments. So I invite Oakey to give us a valid and sound argument from DNA that demonstrates his claim rather than an unsupported assertion—regardless of whether DNA showed Bill Clinton to be a liar.

That brings me to Oakey's second beef. I cite numerous articles demonstrating that the Book of Mormon evidences awareness of ancient Israelite prophetic call forms, Israelite judicial procedures, and substantive law and covenant renewal festivals. Oakey asserts that this evidence is not trustworthy because it appears in journals that are not peer-reviewed. Is that the best he can do in response? All the articles I cited appeared in peer-reviewed journals and books. BYU Studies, Dialogue, and the books I cited are all peer-reviewed publications. I suppose that Oakey's real beef is that he wants the "jury of peers" to consist of people who are not LDS or

who know nothing about the Book of Mormon—in other words, people who are more likely agree with him that science has supposedly shown that all religion is false. From my perspective, Oakey's criticism is without merit. What he needs to deal with is the evidence and not whether the panel of peers shares his biases.

However, let me observe that my own approach to science and issues of faith is much different than Oakey's. I am torn in two directions. I am quite certain that "science" will change drastically over the years and that what we take as established by the evidence and explained by adequate theories will be rejected and viewed as vastly inadequate in the not-too-distant-future. However, I also believe that it is worthwhile to assess our view of the scriptures in light of the best evidence available to us—what else can we do? I didn't come to the view that the Book of Mormon teaches about a small group who lived in relatively limited areas of the Americas and surrounding islands and who were surrounded by indigenous others by looking at DNA evidence, but it seems to me that one could come to that view based on the scientific evidence.

Believers approach the issue of evidence and scripture much differently than Oakey does. It seems to me that the critics of the Book of Mormon see any change or shift in understanding of the Book of Mormon as evidence that Latter-day Saints are just plain wrong. Oakey and Murphy see DNA evidence as "devastating" to the Book or Mormon. However, it seems to me that the believer is within his or her epistemic rights to reason something like this:

I believe in the Book of Mormon. The "scientific" evidence shows that the only way that the Book of Mormon can be true is if there were indigenous "others" who were of Asiatic origin already present when Lehi arrived. Therefore, if it is possible, in good faith, to read the Book of Mormon as being consistent with the presence of preexisting Asiatic populations, then it is most responsible and in line with the evidence to read it in that way.

It seems to me that it is a virtue to read scripture in light of our best evidence. When LDS read scripture in light of new evidence that may disagree with opinions held by earlier Church leaders, I would have thought that Oakey would see that as a good thing. Instead, he appears to see it as capitulation and bad faith. Rather than using DNA as proof that the Book of Mormon is false, it seems to me that the believer will refer to DNA evidence to update and correct assumptions held about the Book of Mormon. As I show in Part II of my essay, I believe that the Book of Mormon actually leads us to read it in a way that is consistent with the DNA evidence.

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CONCEDING THE WAR

I 'D LIKE TO OFFER A BRIEF REBUTTAL to Blake Ostler's logical analysis of the DNA arguments against the historicity of the Book of Mormon. As I understand him, Ostler's arguments can be condensed to two principal points:

- (1) The only basis for the statement that all Native Americans are descended from Hebrews comes from Book of Mormon statements by early prophets and elaboration from more recent prophets, who were mistaken; and
- (2) We cannot conclude that DNA evidence of Hebrew ancestry in American Indians is absent because we haven't tested all currently living Native Americans.

I'll address Ostler's points in reverse order. Ostler is absolutely correct that not all Native Americans have been DNA-tested (2), and that absolute conclusions cannot yet be drawn. But many Native Americans have been tested, and no Hebrew DNA has been found. True, we're not talking about onehundred percent certainty here, but the levels reached so far are pretty discouraging for many. Does Ostler really want to suggest we reject all evidence that doesn't reach the hundred-percent certainty level? Reasonable people will discount such an argument, simply because we all realize there are extraordinarily few hundred-percent certainties in life and we don't demand that for our important decisions.

Ostler's other premise (1) is that our justification for believing that all Native Americans are at least in large part descended from Hebrews comes from Book of Mormon prophets and latter-day prophets, and that these prophets were mistaken. That premise supports his argument for the Book of Mormon's historicity. But does Ostler really want to argue that the Book of Mormon is a historical document by asserting that statements in the Book of Mormon and from early and modern LDS prophets about this scripture have been false? False statements on such an important point by so many prophets? I don't see the logic of attempting to win the battle by conceding the war.

If Ostler really wants to pose a logically imperative, unassailable argument that DNA testing of Native Americans is irrelevant to the historicity of the Book of Mormon, without conceding that latter-day and Book of Mormon prophets teach false doctrine, he might consider this one: Even if the Nephites and Lamanites represented a large population

group in ancient America, it is quite possible that the surviving Lamanites discouraged intermarriage with other tribes (I understand this was not uncommon), and that the Lamanites were eventually decimated by disease, famine, or war (also not uncommon in the ancient Americas). This is entirely possible, and could easily account for the lack of any discernible Hebrew DNA in current Native American populations. Just a thought.

MICHAEL J. BARRETT (another damn lawyer) Sterling, Virginia

BLAKE OSTLER responds: I appreciate Michael Barrett's taking the time to read my article and respond. Unfortunately, the points he responds to are not points that I make. He attributes to me both (1) and (2), but neither represents my arguments, even remotely. I don't believe that all Native Americans are of Hebrew descent (and I don't think that the Book of Mormon teaches it, either), and so (1) is something I have not and would not assert (and indeed, I believe it is false). Further, I don't argue that we must test all of the DNA evidence before we can draw any conclusions—where Barrett thinks I argue that, I'm not sure

Moreover, I have neither asserted nor do I believe that (2) is true. In fact, Barrett's letter provides a good example of common assumptions about two points, both of which I actually argue against. First, he takes the DNA evidence showing that Native Americans have Asiatic ancestors as evidence that they don't also have Hebrew ancestors. It is a logical fallacy to argue that because DNA evidence demonstrates that modern Native Americans have Asiatic ancestry that it follows that they didn't have Israelite ancestors as well. Equally important, the Book of Mormon doesn't teach that all Native Americans are of Hebrew descent. Nor does it teach that they don't have ancestors who are not Hebrew.

While I agree that the basis for believing that

some Native Americans may have Hebrew ancestors is primarily drawn from the Book of Mormon, I don't believe the Book of Mormon prophets were wrong about that assertion. However, it appears that Barrett is actually saying: "Look, you assert that the Book of Mormon prophets would have been wrong if they had claimed that all Native Americans are of Hebrew descent, so you undermine the basis of your claim because they are also the only basis for believing that Native Americans have Hebrew ancestors." This is not my position. I am merely pointing out that prophets are fallible and that if the Book of Mormon writers made a claim that all Native Americans are of Hebrew descent (which I don't believe they did), then they did not have the epistemic basis for doing so. I believe this assertion is defensible and in line with LDS teachings about revelation and the possibility that prophets may make mistakes. And I don't believe my saying this constitutes an example of winning a "battle by conceding the war." I suggest that the Book of Mormon should be read to see what it says rather than relying on others to characterize what it says.

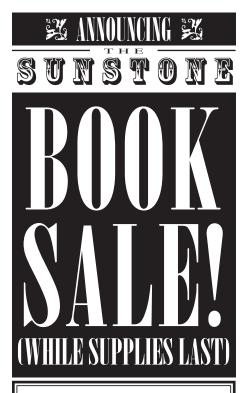
SYLLOGISMS GONE WILD

- P1. The Book of Mormon portrays lawyers as being pretentious and contentious (3 Nephi 6:10–11).
- P2. Blake T. Ostler's rebuttal to Tom Murphy's work specifically, and others of his ilk generally, is pretentious and contentious.
- C1. Therefore, the Book of Mormon is true.

I COULD EASILY SUBSCRIBE TO THE proposition that Murphy's hyperbole (i.e., Native Americans have an Asian rather than Semitic genetic legacy; therefore, the Book of



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Mormon is a nineteenth-century creation schemed up by Joseph Smith with the intent to deceive) is neither good logic nor good science. Other than that, about all that the twoand-a-half pages of Ostler's pontifications confirmed for me is the reason why scribes and lawyers (no matter the merit of their intentions nor the quality of their character) get a bad rap in holy writ.

> DOUG WARD Longmont, Colorado

BLAKE OSTLER responds: I trust that Ward's syllogism and letter was primarily intended as fun. So, in reply, how's this?

- P1. No one is perfect.
- P2. I'm no one.
- C1. Therefore, I am perfect. How's that for pontificating!

More seriously, it appears that clarifying fuzzy reasoning and applying sound logic to matters that are negatively and needlessly affecting people's faith in scripture isn't Ward's thing. Does he suggest we just let inprecise language and bad thinking go without a challenge? If I've parsed the issues and critics' arguments wrong, I want to know about it. If the intent of his letter is to say that principles of sound reasoning have no place in this discussion, then he would probably

find supporters among some of the folks pressing use of the DNA findings far beyond their proper hounds

MALAY AND DNA

LAKE OSTLER'S ESSAY CONTINUES D the debate over DNA and its potential application to the question of the historicity of Book of Mormon. The Malay Hypothesis I have proposed provides a reasonable way to resolve this continuing DNA controversy.

The Pacific "Quarter" was the uninhabited quarter to which the Jaredites were to go (Ether 2:5). They and the Lehites and Mulekites managed to go as far as the Pacific rim, landing on the Malay Peninsula. The peninsula (Alma 22:32) provides a setting which is compatible, to the best of my knowledge, with all Book of Mormon ac-

But owing to dissention and directives from the Lord (1 Nephi 10:13; 17:38; 2 Nephi 23:14), small groups "hived off" the peninsula and migrated to islands of the Pacific and to a few sites along the western shores of the Americas. Hence many common cultural traits are found in Southeast Asia, Polynesia, and the Americas.

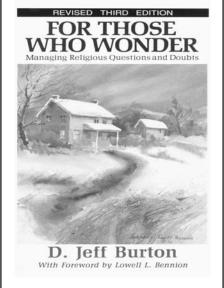
DNA evidence shows that few, if any, original Americans came from the Middle East. According to the Malay Hypothesis, Middle Eastern DNA is more likely to be found in descendents of these groups that hived off the Malay Peninsula.

A very small portion of my argument was published in SUNSTONE, March 2004, pages 30-34. Unpublished copies of my full study, "The Malay Peninsula as the Setting for the Book of Mormon," are available in several libraries, including the University of Utah, Utah State University, and Montana State University. It is also available for downloading through the Sunstone website at: <www.sunstoneonline.com/magazine/issues/</p> 131/olsen.html>.

> RALPH A. OLSEN Bozeman, Montana

BLAKE OSTLER comments: I applaud Olsen's willingness to consider new approaches to the Book of Mormon. Moreover, as I suggest in Part II of my essay, it seems to me that Jacob expressly states that the Nephites are on "an isle of the sea" and "wherefore as [Isaiah's record] says isles, there must needs be more than this, and they are inhabited also by our brethren" (2 Nephi 10:20-21). So what Olsen says bears further consideration, though I have not studied enough about his Malay hypothesis to be prepared to endorse his particular views.

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