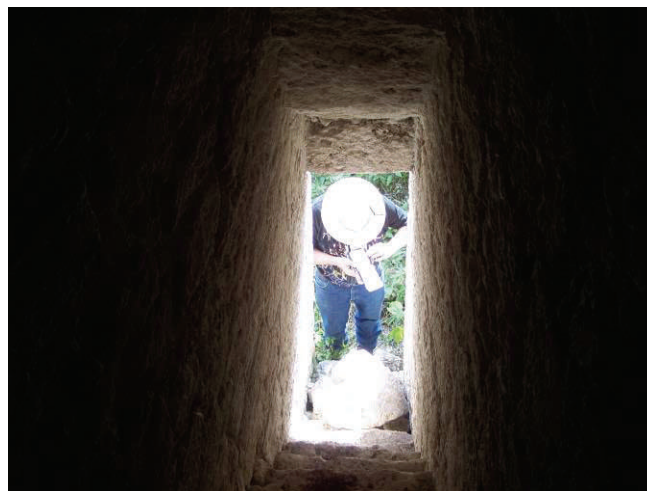


The Road to Rio Bec By Chris Scott

Oftentimes our journey in life takes us to some unexpected places, especially when we brush up against adventurous friends such as the Hill Cumorah Expedition Team. While traveling with this group in January, I found myself visiting a site in the southern portion of the Mexican state of Campeche. Rio Bec, located in the heart of the jungle of the central Maya lowlands, is of a unique architectural style of pyramids that differ from other Maya pyramids. One of the temples located at site A in Rio Bec has two interior stairways hidden within the twin towers. These stairways are narrow, only wide enough for one person to enter. One of these stairways starts at the

ground level and leads up through a tower to an exit on the roof of the building. The opening to the stairway is in the back of the tower and the opening at the top overlooks the front of the temple. Passing through the stairway

was the only accessible entrance to the top of the building. Several of our group braved climbing the stairs past the bats up onto the flat top roof of the building. There are similar structures found at Xpujil and Becan. This



Neil Steede Prepares to ascend the narrow stairway that measures about 27 inches wide—about the width of your shoulders.

2008 Spring Expedition By David B. Brown

On March 28th of this year our Hill Cumorah Expedition Team began its 2008 Spring Expedition by flying four members to Mexico City for meetings with area archaeologists and then followed on March 29th with four additional members traveling by highway to meet with their counterparts in Puebla, Mexico on Sunday evening March 30th. The group of eight finished their journey to Tuxtepec by traversing over mountains and into the lowlands that lead to Cerro Rabon.

On Tuesday the group met Alvaro Rubio,

our friend and former mayor of Jalapa de Diaz. Donated clothing was delivered and other acquaintances were renewed with Moises and his family, and Catalina's family.

On Thursday April 3rd the group split again and four members were back on the highway to LaVenta, Villahermosa, Palenque and Yaxchilan. Because of questions that had arisen as a result of information gathered at Yaxchilan during the January Research Expedition, it was necessary to return to gather more information and refine the theories concerning King

Benjamin's Temple and Tower. Neil Steede was not only able to finalize some of that information, but he was also able to determine that the thrones built on the front of Temple 41 were apparently placed there by the Bountiful Historical Society. This was determined by the difference in stone color and texture, and by

Inside this issue:

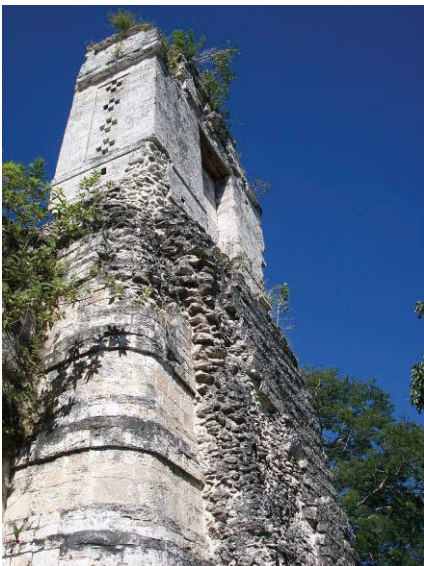
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The Road to Rio Bec continued

This narrow stairway splits for two approaches to the pinnacle of the "Holy Stand" in the Temple at Rio Bec Site A.



unique design is very close to the Book of Mormon description of "The Stand" found in Alma 16:89. "And they did worship after a manner which Alma and his brethren had never beheld; for they had a place built up in the center of the synagogue, a place for standing, which was high above the head; and the top thereof would only admit one person." And Alma 16:97, "Now the place was called by them Rameumpton, which being interpreted, is the Holy Stand."



One of the two towers at Rio Bec Site B. A place of facades and visual deceptions.

Please refer to Alma chapter 16:88-138.

There are four aspects of worship or culture in this portion of scripture that I would like to expand upon in this article, but first I want to discuss the roots of our own forms of worship. We begin with Pagan worship, which was an external kind of worship. It modeled itself after the type of worship given to human sovereigns. Service, offerings of food, washing and anointing, tributes, sacrifices etc. were part of that worship. It involved temples where priests served and took care of the temple, which housed the God being honored.

Israelite worship shared many of the external forms, but went a step further and it became necessary to follow and obey God's law; moral and ethical as well as ritual laws. God was interested in justice and to honor him was to live justly and morally. The Old Testament describes many different types of sacrifices made including cleansing rituals, thanksgiving offerings, and "sin offerings," which were designed to purify the temple. Also, guilt offerings were brought when one had desecrated some holy thing or perjured oneself. Its purpose was the reparation of damages. Israelite worship also included that of prayer and song, priestly benedictions are recorded in the Old Testament as well as prayers accompanying the first fruits and tithes. Private prayer and fasting are also referred to in the Old Testament in addition to a levitical temple choir.

Later in the history of Israelite worship there began to be synagogues. The history is vague as to why they developed, possibly in the absence of a temple; a result of being exiled after being conquered. Synagogues were places of worship including prayer, reading of Scripture, preaching and

teaching. The word synagogue is a Greek word meaning "an assembly of people."

We now come to New Testament worship and the differences from the Old Testament. The early Christians no longer practiced blood sacrifices, since the death of Christ constituted the perfect sacrifice. Only three rituals were practiced, baptism, laying-on-of-hands, and communion. Worship was still a matter of reverence or bowing down, service, and piety, but was internalized. The Holy Spirit inhabited the church and all believers. Worship in the early church was joyous and filled with thanksgiving and celebrated by the



Several team members atop the tower at the Temple at Rio Bec Site A. The stairway takes them all the way up.

breaking of bread. The first day of the week was a favorite day for the Christian assembly and teaching, exhortation, singing, praying and prophesying were all part of the service.

When we consider the roots of the Mayan or Rio Bec culture and their worship, most archaeologists would probably agree that the pyramids were used for worship and were temples where the people gathered to worship, thus probably having similar roots of worship as our culture. If we refer back to our story about the Zoramites, there are four points about their culture and worship that I would like to point out. The first involves the external type of worship that they were practicing. Rameuptom was the name giving by the

The Road to Rio Bec continued

Zoramites to the elevated place in their synagogues where they offered up their vainglorious and hypocritical prayers. “Ramoht,” meaning high (as in Ramoth Gilead), elevated, or a place where one can see and be seen; or, in a figurative sense, sublime or exalted. “Mptom” had its roots in the Hebrew word translated as threshold. Words with this root are quite common in the Bible. Thus we see how Rameumptom means a high place to stand upon, a holy stand (a commentary on the Book of Mormon: Herald). This reminds me of the Tower of Babel story in the Bible, where the people wanted to be close to God and were building a tower in order to accomplish that end. Genesis 11:3-5.

The second point is the fact that the people were being excluded from their worship. There was a peasant class in the culture of Rio Bec that we may be able to assume was not part of the elite group that worshiped in the synagogues. “The lead French archaeologist at Rio Bec B says that there are no towns in the Rio Bec area. The sites (upwards of seventy of them) are small, consisting of at most a few buildings. She believes the Maya-era equivalent of haciendas, occupied by an elite family or extended family supervising a



David Brown stands on a tiny landing in a narrow stairway on the face of the Temple at Rio Bec Site A. Is this the “Holy Stand” of the Zoramites?

group of peasants in the immediate surrounding area (copyright 2006 by John Hagenbuch). In Alma 16:123 we read *“Therefore they were not permitted to enter into their synagogues, to worship God, being esteemed as filthiness; therefore they were poor; yea, they were esteemed by their brethren as dross: therefore they were poor as to things of the world; and also they were poor in heart.”*

The third point to consider about

“Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community.”

the Rio Bec culture is that they were lifted up in pride. A feature of the Rio Bec site is the false facades that are built into the temple, making the appearance of much larger pyramids than they actually were. Also, the honeycombs on top of the pyramids in this era were becoming much larger and ornate than other Maya sites. Michael Coe writes “Here showiness rather than function is what was apparently sought for characteristic of this style of the late Classic is the decoration of perfectly ordinary small ‘palaces’ with high towers imitating the fronts of temple-pyramids” (Michael D. Coe, “The Maya”, p. 112-3). Alma 16:101 reads, *“Yea, and he also saw that their hearts were lifted up unto great boasting, in their pride.”*

The fourth and final point to consider about the Zoramites is this scripture where it is stated as fact that they had rejected Christ. Alma 16:92 reads, *“And also thou hast made it known unto us that there shall be no Christ; but thou are the same, yesterday, today, and for ever; and thou hast elected us, that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell; for the which holiness, O God, we thank thee;”*

As we consider the form of worship practiced on “The Stand,” we look to what Alma had to say. Alma and his brethren began to preach to the people, and began to have success among the poor because of their great poverty. They asked Alma what they should do because they had been cast out of their synagogues and could not worship their God. Alma said *“Do you suppose that ye cannot worship God, save it be in your synagogues only? And moreover I would ask, Do ye suppose that ye must not worship God only once in a week?”* Then Alma goes on to talk about humility and says, *“he that truly humbleth himself and repenteth of his sins, and endureth to the end, the same shall be blessed;” “blessed is he that believeth on the word of God and is baptized.....”*

Our present day worship still constitutes a God that is interested in justice. The external or symbolic rituals that we practice hopefully lead us into an attitude of worship. We still offer sacrifices of time, treasure, and talent. Praise, thanksgiving, preaching, teaching, and sacraments are still part of our worship and still are accompanied by the Holy Spirit. In our most recent “Counsel to the Church” we read, *“Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community.”* The invitation is to all.

As we journey through life with all the bumps, bruises, cuts and scratches, such as the trip through the rough jungle road to Rio Bec, it is my prayer that we learn to be in an attitude of worship that cushions us from the hurts that we encounter. Our encounter with the Divine changes us, individually and as a community. The fruits of these encounters will be born out with a fuller sense of who we are and God’s purpose within us.

In Psalms 19:14 we read, *“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.”*

2008 Spring Expedition Continued

the finer texture found in the mortar used; all of this indicating that it was added during a period of improved engineering such as the heart of the Classical Maya period.

Of particular interest is the understanding of the final placement of King Benjamin's Temple down on the riverfront very close to the footings for the suspension bridge that one time traversed the Usumacinta River (River Sidon) and connected the Mexican side with the Guatemalan Side. The group also photographed several monuments at LaVenta Park that appear to have distinct Ogam markings on them. These photographs are now under consideration by the Mexican Epigraphic Society here in Independence, Missouri where the markings will be scrutinized and transliterated.

While half the group was traveling the other half was walking up the hilltop at Cumorahcita and surveying the area for additional evidences of ancient occupation. The top of the hill had been cleared and planted with corn, this allowed the group to see the west slope more clearly and take measurements along the top of the hill following north for several hundred feet. Both groups met up on Friday evening and shared the news they had gathered.

Saturday April 5th found the group back up on Cumorahcita to do some cave exploration. When Neil exited the vehicle to speak with a local about a guide he was approached by an elderly Mexican lady who, having never met Neil, began exclaiming "Finally you have come. You come in the name of God, you come in the name of Christ. Now things will change; things will be

different now." When Neil asked why the lady then repeated the same words and with the tenderness of a Catholic Priest she reached up and in the form of a cross she touched his forehead and cheeks with her thumb all the while pronouncing a blessing on Neil. Those who watched were in awe. It was a moment taken straight from the scriptures for just two nights before the four who had spent the night camping on Cumorahcita had earnestly prayed for some direction or indication of what God wanted the group to accomplish for Him. This was a direct answer to that prayer.



Paula in the midst of our team.

The group soon discovered that her name is Paula; eighty-five years old and looking forward to reaching a hundred if God will allow it. This family opened their home to the group offering to kill a chicken or a goat for a feast. The group graciously declined, but before the group left the area to travel back to the USA they left three Spanish Book of Mormons with the family members, and one special one for Paula.

The group renewed their special bond with Moises and his family. His household had asked for prayers of blessing before we left, so on Tuesday afternoon April 8th we gathered at the home of Moises for a meal and then to provide prayers over each family member. The wind had been subtle and calm all afternoon as we sat upon the concrete floor of the porch to keep cool with a small breeze occasionally coming through. As we all gathered in the living room for prayers and the first prayer was being offered up the wind began to blow strong and steadily for



Mike Brown on the floor next to Aunt Martha

several minutes and one member of the group sitting by the door had his pomegranate scented consecrated oil open while in his pocket and the wind circulated the scent of pomegranate throughout the small home as the prayers for each member of the family continued. As the prayers of administration continued for the each family member in turn there was a noticeable presence of the Holy Spirit. It became most evident with the final prayer that we gave to Aunt Martha—a young lady who was stricken with polio at age five. Sitting on the floor because her legs are folded underneath her from the disease, we all knelt beside her and placed our hands upon her as the prayer for God's blessing was given. So strong was the Spirit that very few words were spoken for the next half-hour. It was as if everyone wanted to "be still and know" that He is God. After many hugs and bitter-sweet goodbyes, we parted and left these wonderful friends who live in the shadow of Cumorah.

The group traveled back to Teotihuacán and gathered yet more information concerning the Nephite influence in the culture. The group parted ways with four members flying back to Kansas City and the other four traveling by highway—both parties reaching the Independence, Missouri area by Friday April 11th.

So much information was gathered that helped to continue to identify the various locations in Mesoamerica as specific Book of Mormon sites. And, the group is of the opinion that God continues to open doors and plant seeds for a future harvest. It is toward that end that we continue to work with even greater enthusiasm than before.



Paula washing cave grime from Neil's hands.

Adventures In Scriptures

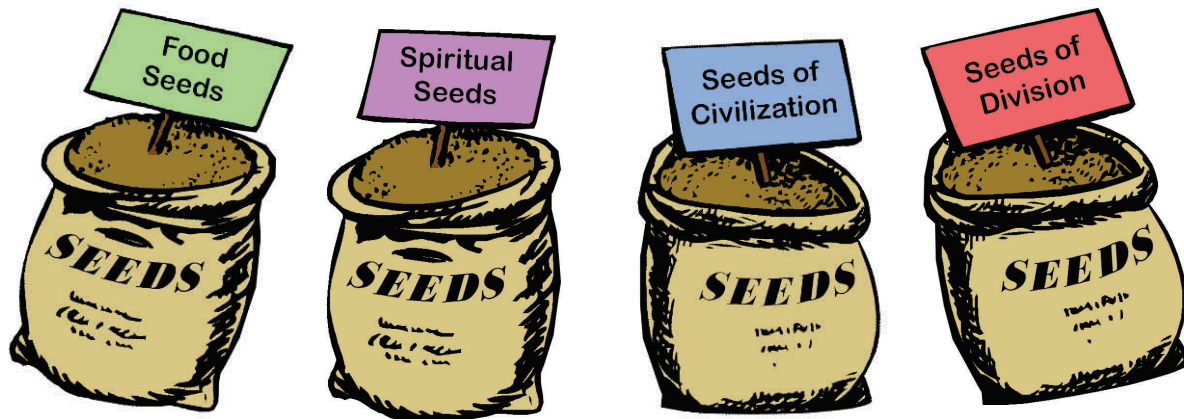
Issue 3

2008

JOURNEY TO THE PROMISED LAND

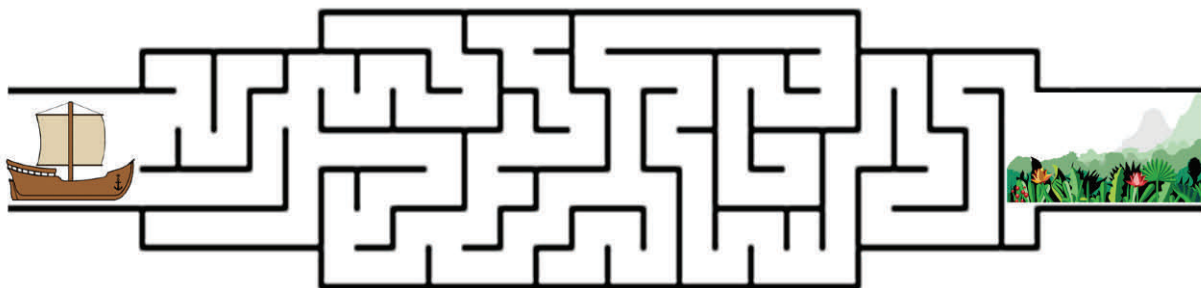
As Nephi and his family camped by the sea, at a place they called Bountiful. They collected many supplies for their journey to cross the ocean. Meat, honey and seeds of many kinds were gathered and stored on the ship. Then the family boarded the ship and sailed for many days across the water. And after awhile, some of the people began to forget the Lord and behave with much rudeness. Nephi tried to speak to those who were forgetting the commandments of the Lord. His brothers, Laman and Lemuel were angry with him and tied him up with ropes. They treated him badly and there arose a big storm and the Liahona no longer worked to steer the ship. The storm was fierce and lasted for four days. Laman and Lemuel feared for their lives and once again humbled themselves before the Lord. They softened their hearts toward Nephi and let him loose to steer the ship. The storm ceased and there was great calm on the waters and they once again traveled safely toward the Promised Land. When they arrived, they planted the seeds that they had brought with them. The seeds grew exceedingly well in this Promised Land and the people of Nephi were blessed abundantly.

Book of Mormon I Nephi 5:175-215



The People of Lehi carried many different types of seeds on their journey, including seeds of civilization, seeds of division and rebellion, spiritual seeds and seeds for food.

Journey Across the Ocean



Scripture Fun

Read what Jesus and the Prophets wrote about planting seeds.

BIBLE

Genesis 1:15-16
 Matthew 13:17-36
 Galations 3:16-20

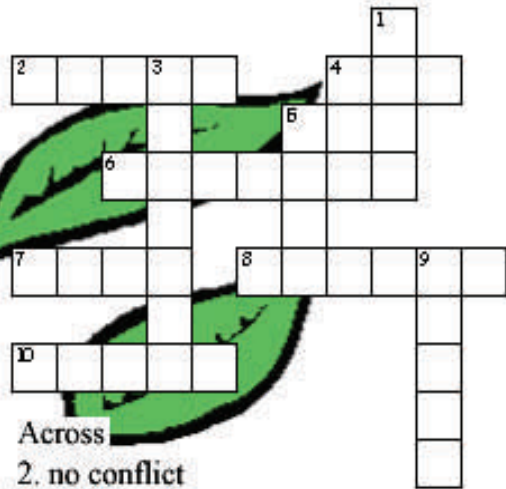
BOOK of MORMON

Alma 16:152-200

DOCTRINE and COVENANTS

Section 4:1-2

Gather Good Fruits



Across

- 2. no conflict
- 4. happiness
- 6. illuminate
- 7. wishing what is wanted will happen
- 8. feeling good
- 10. of value or importance

Down

- 1. a feeling of affection
- 3. warm fuzzy feeling
- 5. not dead
- 9. correctness or reality

Avoid Rebellious Seeds

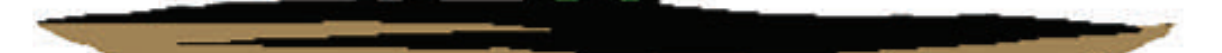
Y	W	T	S	R	R	Q	Y	M	X
E	T	T	L	U	M	E	R	I	Y
L	A	I	Z	I	B	H	E	S	V
I	S	O	P	O	U	N	S	T	I
T	U	E	S	F	F	G	E	R	O
S	D	I	M	E	L	R	N	U	L
O	D	I	A	A	X	E	T	S	E
H	H	R	W	Y	N	R	S	T	N
I	N	S	E	C	U	R	E	K	C
O	S	U	O	L	A	E	J	E	E

DISOBEY FEAR GUILT HOSTILE
 RESENT JEALOUS MISTRUST NAMES
 INSECURE SELFPIITY VIOLENCE

Plant Good Seeds

Z	Y	W	E	E	S	E	K	N	Y
P	E	N	A	U	V	I	Y	R	T
R	B	C	L	R	N	O	E	H	I
A	O	C	U	D	M	V	L	R	R
Y	E	C	N	E	I	T	A	P	A
E	T	E	K	G	X	N	H	U	H
R	S	F	R	I	E	N	D	S	C
S	S	O	G	N	I	V	I	G	C
Y	F	H	T	I	A	F	G	Q	Q
O	O	T	H	A	N	K	S	G	H

CHARITY FAITH FORGIVE FRIENDS
 GIVING KINDNESS LOVE OBEY PATIENCE
 PRAYER THANKS WARMTH



A Testimony of the Prayer Partner Project By Randall Lawrence

It was my honor to coordinate the Prayer Warriors/Partners for the Hill Cumorah Expedition Team 2008 Spring Expedition. I want to share my testimony with you concerning this endeavor.

I really wanted to go on this trip, but for various reasons I was unable though my heart was with them. In the weeks prior to the Spring Expedition, I began to ask God how I could be a support back in Independence. The inspiration that I received came through the Book of Mormon and the stories of the “sons of Helaman” who credited the prayers and teachings of their mothers for keeping them safe in battle. This is recorded in Alma 26:53-57 *“And now I say unto you my beloved brother, Moroni, that never had I seen so great courage, nay, not amongst all the Nephites. For as I had ever called them my sons, (for they were all of them very young,) even so they said unto me, Father, behold, our God is with us, and he will not suffer that we shall fall; then let us go forth; We would not slay our brethren, if they would let us alone; therefore let us go, lest they should overpower the army of Antipus. Now they never had fought, yet they did not fear death: and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers, than they did upon their lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, that God would deliver them. And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying, We do not doubt our mothers knew.”* Then from Alma 26:94-104 *“But behold, my little band of two thousand and sixty, fought most desperately; yea, they were firm before the Lamanites, and did administer death unto all those who opposed them; And as the remainder of our army were about to give way before the Lamanites, behold, those two thousand and sixty were firm and undaunted; yea, and they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness; Yea, and even according to their faith, it was done unto them; and I did remember the words which they said unto me that their mothers had taught them. And*

now behold, it was these, my sons, and those men who had been selected to convey the prisoners, to whom we owe this great victory; for it was they who did beat the Lamanites; therefore they were driven back to the city of Manti.” *“And it came to pass that there were two hundred, out of my two thousand and sixty, who had fainted because of the loss of blood; Nevertheless, according to the goodness of God, and to our great astonishment, and also the joy of our whole army, there was not one soul of them who did perish; yea, and neither was there one soul among them who had not received many wounds. And now, their preservation was astonishing to our whole army; yea, that they should be spared, while there was a thousand of our brethren who were slain. And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their exceeding faith in that which they had been taught to believe, that there was a just God; and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power.”*

“Nevertheless, according to the goodness of God, and to our great astonishment, and also the joy of our whole army, there was not one soul of them who did perish;.”

I also like the stories of the sons of Mosiah who became missionaries to their enemies. I believe this is another story of how the prayers of King Mosiah and others holding them up for blessings contributed to the success of their efforts and their safety. Mosiah 12:10-12 *“And King Mosiah went and inquired of the Lord, if he should let his sons go up among the Lamanites to preach the word. And the Lord said unto Mosiah, Let them go up, for many shall believe on their words, and they shall have eternal life; and I will deliver thy sons out of the hands of the Lamanites. And it came to pass that Mosiah granted that they might go, and do according to their request;”* Alma 12:160-161 *“Now one of them, whose*

brother had been slain with the sword of Ammon, being exceeding angry with Ammon, drew his sword and went forth that he might let it fall upon Ammon, to slay him; and as he lifted the sword to smite him, behold he fell dead. Now we see that Ammon could not be slain, for the Lord had said unto Mosiah, his father, I will spare him, and it shall be unto him according to thy faith; therefore Mosiah trusted him unto the Lord.”

I asked to do devotions about three weeks before the trip and shared the scriptures of the “sons of Helaman” and my idea to coordinate and organize prayer support for the team. With the help of David Brown and Carol Brown, we began with a base of 80 photos cards (10 cards per team member) with the photo and name of the team member on the face and the dates of the trip and website information on the back. I decided to begin with the congregations that were most supportive and from which the team members originated. I also developed back-up cards for each congregation. All 80 photo cards were distributed by the start of the trip and all backup cards were distributed before the end of the trip. Thanks go to congregational coordinators Elrey Goheen, Johnnie Brown, Joe Fera, Ruth Ferrand-Cox, and others who helped distribute cards to 170 plus persons who took of the role of prayer partners. Other supportive congregations and groups included New Philadelphia, Ohio; HART Ministries; Celebration Ministries; Contemporary Christian Ministries, and many others.

Comments from those who traveled on the Expedition this year involved crediting the prayer support for their safety, for a smooth driving trip including no problem during the border crossing, and for God-incidences related to experiences with Paula and the persons of the Santa Domingo River Valley. The Hill Cumorah Expedition Team would like to thank the many persons who contributed to this prayer support during the 2008 Spring Expedition. The progress made will be manifested in years to come.

**We're on the web at
www.hceti.org**

The Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc is a Missouri not-for-profit corporation dedicated to the study, research and dissemination of information as it pertains to the Book of Mormon. Our primary focus is to research and assemble archaeological and other related information to help establish the historical feasibility of the Book of Mormon.

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Moving Into the Future By David B. Brown

With each expedition, with each chapter written, with each testimony shared we feel a sense that faith is growing into knowledge and that something larger than ourselves is bringing us into a future that God has prepared. That movement into the future is compelling us to do all we can to prepare the people of this generation to receive the full measure of God's knowledge when he is ready to have it "sweep the earth as with a flood."

For us that preparation is the gathering of as much research information as we can comprehend into a body of evidence that provides a comprehensive historical view of the people who are chronicled in the Book of Mormon. The spirit of our ancient brothers and sisters have moved upon us and we feel an affinity with them that is beyond the ability of words to express. But, just as Alma instituted the church to prepare the people of this continent to receive a



The eight members of the HCET 2008 Spring Expedition. From left back; Tim Brown, Mike Brown, Neil Steede, Joe Fera. Middle; Carol Brown, Jerry Stoner, David Brown. Kneeling; Kevin Brown.

risen Christ, so is the calling to the Restoration faiths to prepare the people of our day to receive the blessings that God has in store for His Zion community.

If you are interested and feel so led to support our efforts through membership then you can send the membership fee in

check or money order made out to: **Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc.**

The fee for membership is \$100 annually, and \$50 annually for seniors and students. This helps us to maintain our ongoing efforts to research and distribute the information. Please send your payment to:

Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc.
c/o David B. Brown
311 N Lee Street
Buckner, MO 64016

If you prefer to purchase your membership with a credit card, then you can access our website and send your funds through PayPal. Donations are always welcome.

The success of our effort is greatly enhanced when there is sufficient funding. All of this can only happen with God's blessing, but we feel that we must prepare ourselves to be ready when God says, "It's time!"

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