

GLYPH

Notes

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Metal Plates and Stone Boxes: Have Joseph Smith's Claims Been Vindicated?

By Glenn A. Scott, Jr.

When Joseph Smith Jr. in 1830 announced to the world that The Book of Mormon, a record of early inhabitants of the New World, was translated from ancient metal plates bound with metal rings, which he had found in a stone box near Manchester, New York, he unleashed a firestorm of criticism which has not ceased to this day. All of the "authorities" of his day laughed and said that there was no evidence of ancient peoples ever having left inscribed metal records in stone boxes. In 1857 critic John Hyde wrote, "The Jews did not use plates of brass at that time [600 BC]. All the writings of the Jews long anterior and subsequent to Zedekiah were in rolls."

Well the authorities didn't know their Bible very well because it contains references to engraving on gold plates (Exodus 28:36 and 39:30).

A reference to even earlier hidden records was made by the Greek historian Eusebius who wrote that Ksisouthros [Noah] was commanded by God before the Flood to bury his records in the city of Sippar [Mesopotamia before 4000 BC]. And we know the Brother of Jared recorded his experience with the pre-mortal Christ (about 3115 BC) and was commanded to "seal them up" until after He would come in the flesh (Ether 1:86-89).

So the authorities were wrong, because ever since the early 1900s a virtual multitude of examples of inscribed documents, many in stone boxes, have been found.

One of the earliest physical evidences were inscribed copper plates deposited in a limestone box in the foundation of the temple of Dagon at Tell Brak, Iraq, and dated by modern authorities at 3000-2900 BC. Another early example was of copper plates inscribed in a still unknown script and found in a stone box in the Indus River valley of ancient India (now Pakistan) dated c. 2800 BC.

The most famous deposit of inscribed metal plates ever found buried in stone boxes was by King Darius I of Persia. He had a set of one gold and one silver tablets listing his royal accomplishments caused to be installed in each cornerstone of his palaces at Persepolis, Susa, and Ecbatan. Each tablet carried the same message inscribed in Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian (518-515 BC). This pattern was followed by several of his successors, Kings Ariaramnes, Assamese, Artaxerxes, and Darius II all who deposited their inscribed tablets at their palaces at Hamadan, Iraq, in the years following.

Of particular interest to scholars of The Book of Mormon are two different discoveries of gold plates in the Etruscan language. The first of these were three gold tablets discovered in 1964 at the port city of Pyrgi, Italy, 30 miles north of Rome. Two were inscribed in Etruscan (now a dead language) and one in Phoenician (Punic) commemorating a dedication event around 500 BC.

More recently an anonymous donor presented the Natural History Museum in Sofia, Bulgaria, with an ancient six-page book made up of gold plates inscribed in Etruscan and held together by metal rings. It was found in the Struma River valley of Bulgaria and estimated to date to c. 600 BC. *Cont. on Page 2*



Etruscan gold book with rings.

Since the early 1900s a virtual multitude of examples of inscribed documents, many in stone boxes, have been found.



Lead plate codex.

Time Period	Location Discovered	Material	Notes	Depositor, if known
3000-2900 BC	Tell Brak, Iraq	copper plates	alabaster or white limestone box in the foundation of the temple of Dagon	
c. 2800 BC	Indus River valley of ancient India (now Pakistan)	copper plates	in an unknown language; stone box	
c. 2450 BC	Iraq	gold plates	inscribed in Akkadian; fired-brick foundation box	King Djohha Umma
1843-1823 BC	Larsa, Iraq	copper and steatite (soapstone) tablets	inscribed in Amorite; fired-brick foundation box	King Warrad Sin
1822-1763 BC	Ur, Iraq	steatite tablet and a copper figurine	discovered by Sir Leonard Wooley	
1813-1781 BC	Larsa, Iraq	various metals	fired-brick foundation box	King Shamshi Adad
1792-1760 BC	Larsa, Iraq	copper and limestone tablets	fired-brick foundation box	Queen Simat Inanna, wife of King Warrad Sin
1345-1324 BC	Ur, Iraq	two copper and eight steatite tablets	inscribed in Kassite	King Kiri Galzu
1274-1245 BC	Assur, Iraq	gold, silver, copper, iron, and tin plates	fired-brick foundation box	King Shalmeneser
1244-1208 BC	Larsa, Iraq	seven lead, thirteen gold/silver, one copper, and seven alabaster		King Tikulte-Ninurte
883-859 BC	Kutha, Apqu, and Imgur Bel, Iraq	gold, silver, and marble tablets	inscribed in cuneiform; stone boxes in the foundations of three palaces	King Assurnasirpal
854-824 BC	Assur and Ecbatan, Iraq	one of gold with a ring, and others of silver, copper, iron, and tin tablets	inscribed in Assyrian cuneiform; stone boxes	King Shalmeneser III
721-705 BC	Khorsabad, Iraq	gold, silver, bronze, lead, and alabaster tablets	inscribed in Assyrian cuneiform; marble box	King Sargon I
699-680 BC	Samarra, Iraq	bronze tablet	inscribed in Elamite	King Esarhaddon
600 BC	Struma River valley of Bulgaria	six pages of gold plates held together by metal rings	inscribed in Etruscan	
600 BC	antiquities market	bronze tablet	inscribed in the Sabaean language (that of the Queen of Sheba) in the alphabet of South Arabia	
518-515 BC	Persepolis, Susa, and Ecbatan, Iraq	sets of one gold and one silver tablets	each set carried the same message inscribed in Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian in the cornerstones of his three palaces	King Darius I of Persia
500 BC	Pyrgi, Italy	three gold plates	two inscribed in Etruscan and one in Phoenician (Punic) commemorating a dedication event around 500 BC	
246-222 BC	three temples at Alexandria, Egypt	three plates of gold, one silver, one bronze, and five glass	all inscribed in Egyptian hieroglyphs and Greek	King Ptolemy III
200 BC	Dead Sea at Qumran, Israel	copper scrolls	clay jars in caves bordering the Dead Sea	Essenes circa AD 70
first century AD	cave in eastern Jordan	70 codices (ancient books) made of lead plates held together by wire rings		possibly early Christians

Metal Plates and Stone Boxes (Cont. from page 1)

This was at the height of the Etruscan culture which, as a seafaring people, had trade relations with the Greeks and the Phoenicians. Thus their trade goods were likely to be found in any of the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. The significance of this find is its close similarity to Joseph Smith's description of The Book of Mormon plates and that they are from the very same timeframe as Lehi.

Also recently an ancient inscribed bronze tablet appeared in the antiquities market. It is in the Sabaean language (that of the Queen of Sheba) but inscribed in the alphabet of South Arabia. Thus it not only documents that South Arabia traded with "the towns of Judah" toward the end of the seventh century BC, but it is another excellent proof that ancient peoples did inscribe records on metal plates.

One of the most recent archaeological discoveries is a trove of 70 codices (ancient books) made up of lead plates held together by wire rings. Some are even sealed with wire rings around all four sides. The plates, about the size of a modern credit card, appear from metallurgical tests to date to the first century AD. They are causing quite a stir among Bible scholars, especially Christians,

because from what little has been translated, they may contain clues to the last days of Christ on Earth and may predate the writings of Apostle Paul. Some scholars have suggested that they may be the earliest Christian writing in existence and the most significant find since the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947. See "Clips" for more on page 6.

It seems these codices were found in a remote cave in eastern Jordan, in an area where early Christians were known to have fled after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in AD 70 by the Romans. A Jordanian Bedouin found the codices but they are currently in the possession of an Israeli Bedouin. They are being intensely studied by various British Biblical scholars. The government of Jordan is exerting "all effort at every level" to regain possession of these ancient records.

Now more than 185 years have passed since Joseph Smith, Jr., claimed to have translated The Book of Mormon from an ancient codex made up of inscribed plates having the appearance of gold and held together by metal rings, buried in a stone box. The overwhelming multitude of physical examples listed here

should be more than enough to prove to any open-minded person the reasonableness of Joseph's claim, even though it undoubtedly seemed revolutionary in 1830.

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Working Together

By Patricia J. Beebe

According to Webster's Dictionary, a symbiotic relationship is one between two entities which is mutually beneficial for the participants. Nature provides an excellent example of such a relationship between the bumble bee and the flower. While the bumble bee extracts pollen for protein and nectar for energy, the flower in turn receives assistance from the bee to spread its pollen to complete its reproductive cycle. Both need each other for survival. In like manner, Pre-Columbian Studies Institute (PSI) and its supporters/contributors share such a relationship. We need each other for life and continuity.


The contributor, like the bumble bee,

receives vital Book of Mormon research and testimony from the pages of glyph notes which are filled with enlightenment and faith-building information. PSI, like the flower, receives necessary assistance from the contributor to spread the vibrant message of The Book of Mormon; a message brought out of the earth through the power of our Heavenly Father and commissioned to go to all those on the earth. You, the contributor, provide the energy and life which enables PSI to share that beautiful message.

On behalf of PSI, I wish to express our gratitude and to extend a sincere thank you to those who continue to support PSI through their gifts and tithes. Contributions for the year



2010 held steady for most of the year. However, the last two months of 2010 was unusually low, and the beginning of 2011 continues to be below normal. Our contributors have always come through for PSI even in tough economic times, and I trust that the trend is temporary and quickly will rebound with enthusiasm.

I invite all who receive glyph notes bi-monthly to join in a mutually beneficial partnership with PSI. Many have yet to hear the good news of the gospel or share in new knowledge concerning the land of The Book of Mormon which are coming forth at an accelerated pace. Won't you please use the self-addressed envelope enclosed with this issue to update your subscription and, if possible, add a little extra for those who cannot give at this time. 

The Liahona: The Miraculous Directors inside the Ball

By David Johnson

Because of my deep interest in The Book of Mormon and what it offers, I guess that I have always been attracted to any subject that seemed to relate to it in anyway. And because in my early years I flew with the U.S. Navy and acquired an interest in and knowledge of navigational equipment and techniques, I suppose it was inevitable that I would someday see a connection between them.

In 1999 I was attending a class at The Book of Mormon Foundation taught by Ray Treat. About the same time my wife Shirley gave me a copy of Glenn Scott's book *Voices from the Dust*. We spent many hours reading from and about The Book of Mormon, discussing topics of interest in the travels of Lehi and his followers. By this means I became aware of Nephi's mechanical knowledge (1 Nephi 5:84) and how he had the abilities to teach his people through the creativity of his craft (2 Nephi 4:21).

I was impressed by the words of Ray Treat which he repeated many times. "There is something to study for everyone in The Book of Mormon, and we can come together in these last days for an understanding of what is written there. But we must ponder the point and be led by the Holy Spirit even as the assurance given to Oliver Cowdery concerning the spirit of revelation." See Doctrine and Covenants, Section 8.

At this time in my life, I felt I was ready to ask the Heavenly Father to open my eyes to the sincere desires of my heart. My desire was to have a visual understanding of the liahona. I knew I could not be led from point to point without the spiritual protocol of the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 9:3, that you must "study it out in your mind...."

I certainly don't claim to have all the answers, but I believe I have some understanding of the "mysteries" surrounding the liahona. We may not be allowed to see totally on the other side of the veil, but we may occasionally be permitted to come near it.

Nephi Describes Lehi's Miraculous Brass Ball

And it came to pass that as my father arose in the morning, and went forth to the tent door, to his great astonishment, he beheld upon the ground a round ball, of curious workmanship; and it was of fine brass. And within the ball were two spindles; and the one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness (1 Nephi 5:11-12).

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the *pointers* which were in the ball, that *they* did work according to the faith, and diligence, and heed, which we did give unto *them*. And there was also written upon *them* a new writing, which was plain to be read, which did give us understanding concerning the ways of the Lord; and it was written and *changed from time to time*, according to the faith and diligence which we gave unto it (1 Nephi 5:34-35, emphasis added).

And it came to pass after they had loosed me, behold, I took the *compass*, and it did work whither *I desired it* (1 Nephi 5:209, emphasis added).

Thoughts I Pondered

Today two basic types of compasses are used. The so-called "Boy Scout" type with a pointer sitting atop of a spindle which always points to magnetic north. A person aligns off a degree mark in relation to north aimed at an objective in the distance and follows it. The other compass is a "marine" type. It allows one to move or sail toward an objective without needing a visual reference point in the distance. All that is needed is knowledge of the location of the objective, and to hold the course indicated on the "Compass Rose"

This example of the liahona was crafted by the author after his dream. He explains that in his dream he did not see the outside design, but saw it open, hinged on one side. In the center of each half and protruding from the center, was a rotating spindle (or shaft) with the pointers mounted on the top of the shaft. It's made of brass because it's non magnetic and thus not hinder the working of the compass portion.

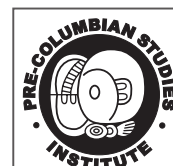
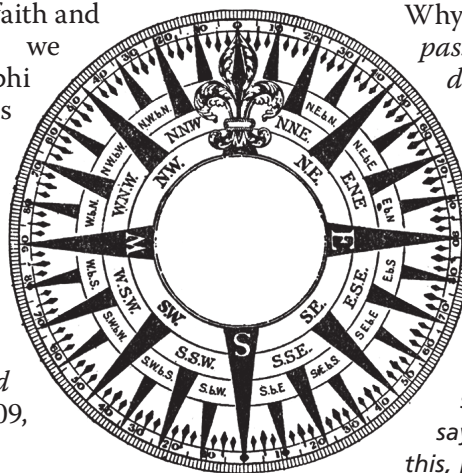


(shown below). Only the marine type compass is practical for use on both land and sea.

In the first paragraph above, Nephi wrote that the spindles *pointed*, whereas in the second he refers to *pointers*. Since the pointers were mounted on top of the spindles and were, in effect, a single unit, I suppose the terms are interchangeable.

Why was the word *compass* used six times and *director* or *directors*

The marine style compass that operates on both land and sea (a type Lehi's party needed) has what is called the compass rose card. This example is only one of its many styles. The author is not saying it looked exactly like this, just that the pointers could have resembled the compass rose.



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five times? I believe it is because the *compass* section established the basic direction (e.g. north), *w h e r e a s* the *pointers* which were in the other section, had a *new writing* upon *them* and thus established the way they should go.

As I pondered these things, my first impression was that the two spindles were definite in number, and for the next few weeks I would mentally place two needles in various positions. Each night while I was asleep, the words would come to me, "Look at the spindles, there are two of them."

While I was at my desk one evening, my eyes fell upon my old paper spindle. Then I realized the spindles that Nephi was describing inside the ball were two vertical shafts, but how? I was given the answer in a dream vision.

From the edge of my mind I saw a three-dimensional round object approaching with words in space

reading, "The Ball." As it stopped in front of my mind's eye, the words changed to, "Watch." At that point I witnessed the ball opening up into two equal halves, hinged at one edge. Then I saw in the center of each half a vertical shaft rotating. Again the words changed to read, "Two spindles and one pointed the way."


My own creative spirit was touched with the knowledge that this was the reason the unit was a ball design. Not only did it, when closed, seal out all desert dust and sand when on land and all water and humidity when at sea, but it also allowed space for two spindle-pointer operating systems. One half operated by God's natural law (a compass). The other half operated by faith, diligence and heed, under God's control, designed to show the way that they should go.

Alma wrote:

These things are not without a shadow; for as our fathers were slothful to give heed to this compass, (now these things were temporal,) they did not prosper; even so it is

with things which are spiritual. For behold, it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course, to the promised land (Alma 17:78-79).

What a remarkable gift (and challenge) was this miraculous director given by the Lord!

Editor's note: The former artist Bob Farley relates his experience depicting the liahona in a painting of Lehi and Sariah. (See *Recent Book of Mormon Developments*, Vol. 2, p. 155-156). Farley's description differs in some ways from David Johnson's. Both believe they were inspired in their conception of the liahona. Are they conflicting? Or can it be that each had an insight that was not the whole story? Johnson says he didn't see the outside design. Send us your thoughts and comments. Write to the Editor, PSI, P.O. Box 477, Independence, MO 64051. 

GLYPH *Clips*

By Sherrie Kline Smith

Olmec-Style Sculpture Discovered at Ojo de Agua

Both the University of Wisconsin-Madison (<http://newswise.com/articles/ancient-mesoamerican-sculpture-uncovered-in-southern-mexico>) and the journal *Mexicon* (December 2010) recently reported on the discovery in 2009 of an Olmec-style monument found near the southern Pacific coast of the Mexican state of Chiapas. Found by plantation workers while digging an irrigation trench at Ojo de Agua, the sculpture was similar to one found in the late 1960s at the same site.

Monument 1, as the first is called and pictured here, was described by Gareth Lowe as "the first clearly Olmec statue in the round ever found south of the Olmec 'heartlands' in the central Gulf Coast region" (*Mexicon* 2010:141). The new sculpture called Monument 3, shares some of the same design elements, like cleft heads, representations of stylized jaguar faces, and simple rectangular designs.

The site of Ojo de Agua "was the largest site in the Mazatán region from 1200 to 1000 BC" and "is the earliest site currently known in Mesoamerica with formal pyramids built around plazas" (*Mexicon* 2010:142). The authors of the article in *Mexicon* state that regional styles of sculpture at neighboring places, like Izapa, Takalik Abaj, and Monte

Alto, began about 400 BC, and further relate that monuments in clear Maya style "were being carved at Takalik Abaj by 400 BC, so this is the cut-off date for Olmec-style sculptures at this piedmont center" (2010:143).

By the end of the Middle Formative [400 BC], Olmec-style monuments were no longer being carved in the Pacific Slope region. Rather, they were replaced by a wide variety of stylistically different sculptures that continued some of the traditional themes, but in new ways... (*Mexicon* 2010:143).

These findings suggest cultural interaction between the Olmec (believed to be the Jaredites) with the Maya (associated with the Nephites/Lamanites/Mulekites) culture up to 400 BC. These dates match quite well the account in The Book of Mormon. Many other studies (see clip below on Ceibal for one) provide evidence of interaction among these two groups, suggesting that some Maya cultural traits might be traced back to an Olmec influence.

The account in The Book of Mormon is silent concerning interaction of the two major cultures. Nephi makes no mention of finding other people *Cont. on Page 6*



Sherrie Kline Smith

GLYPH *Quotes*

And no man knoweth of his ways, save it be revealed unto him; wherefore, brethren, despise not the revelations of God.

—Jacob 3:11

By Sherrie Kline Smith

In my work as a librarian in the special collections department of the Kansas City Public Library I review about 20 periodicals for articles of historic interest to add to our Local History Index database. One of those publications is *Missouri Life*. Ron Marr writes a column every month called “Musings on Missouri.” I usually skip this as it is more opinion than information, but his topic in the February 2011 issue, about inspiration and creativity, caused me to read it.

Marr quotes George Washington Carver—the man who invented some 330 different products from peanuts and 118 from sweet potatoes. Carver gives God credit for all his ideas, disputing the standard scientific method. Carver’s obituary, printed January 6, 1943, by *The New York Times*, includes this statement by Carver in his own words.

My discoveries come like a direct revelation from God. The idea and the method of working out a new product come all together. In half an hour after the idea was revealed to me, I produced the yolk of an egg from the Puerto Rican sweet potato.

For a couple of months I’ve pondered this—inspiration and revelation from

God. Sometimes when I write, I too have had times when I feel “inspired,” and the words just flow; other times, I struggle to put words on paper. What causes God to reach down and touch a person’s mind with enlightenment?

This year for morning devotions, I’ve been reading a short daily entry from a little book I picked up in an antique market on the streets of Shanghai called *The Endeavourers’ Daily Devotions* (circa 1933). The entry for April 18th is about Dr. George Matheson, author of the words to the hymn “O Love That Will Not Let Me Go.” The Reverend Matheson explains how the hymn came to be penned within five minutes.


My hymn was composed in the manse in the evening of June 6, 1882. I was alone at the time. Something had happened to me which was known only to myself and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. The hymn was the fruit of that suffering. It was the quickest piece of work I ever did in my life. I had the impression rather of having it dictated to me by some inward voice, than of working it out myself.”

Many other examples could be given, like Handel who composed

The Messiah, one of the most popular works in Western choral music, in only 24 days.

Yes, God does inspire men, women, and children, but for special purposes He goes further and provides visions. Joseph Smith in telling his own story relates several visions he had concerning the churches of his day and about the record “written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent....” Because of these inspirations, visions, and revelations, the Church of Jesus Christ was once more established on the earth and the priceless scripture, *The Book of Mormon*, became available to all.

These experiences come not by the will of man, but of God. Most times, though, they come because a person is pondering and asking God for enlightenment. Joseph had wondered what church to join and asked God; Rev. Matheson was in a period of meditation; and Carver relates,

When I was young, I said to God, “God tell me the mystery of the universe.” God answered, “That knowledge is for me alone.” So I said, “God tell me the mystery of the peanut.” Then God said, “Well, George, that’s more nearly your size.” 

Glyph Clips (Cont. from page 5)

already here in the *Drawing of Monument 3 Promised Land*. This information could possibly have been in the lost 116 pages of manuscript. The only interaction between Jaredites and later people in *The Book of Mormon* is the discovery by the Mulekites of the last Jaredite king, Coriantumr.

These archaeological findings help to flesh out the “spiritual” record found in *The Book of Mormon*.

Engraved Lead Plates

On May 29, 2011, BBC, the British news company, reported on the discovery in Jor-

Drawing of Monument 3 shown at a presentation in Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) during the Olmec symposium, October 2010.



dan, sometime between 2005 and 2007, of lead books or codices (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12888421>). This has caused a great deal of excitement among Latter Day Saints. At first glance these appear to be another good example of metal plates (even had rings!) to support Joseph Smith’s claim that ancient records were kept on metal plates and held together with rings. As with anything new like this, however, questions arise about authenticity, and these lead plates are no exception. Many scholars believe they are fakes, presenting good evidence to that effect. Wikipedia’s entry, “Jordan Lead Codices,” includes links to both pro and con articles (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jordan_Lead_Codices). Thus we advise caution using this find for purposes of supporting Joseph *Cont. on Page 8*

Glyph Dwellers

Dwellers - to live and have a home in a particular place



Hi guys!
 Last time I talked to you, Nephi's dad had just had that awesome vision where God showed Lehi how much He loved us! After that, God continued to show Lehi and Nephi all kinds of interesting things. It was amazing. I learned so much! Then God told Lehi it was time to continue on our journey. So we started getting everything ready and packed up camp.

The Adventures of Beezrom

by Mindy Mulheron

When we got up to leave the next morning, Lehi found a round ball in front of his tent - only this wasn't the kind of ball you could kick around. It was brass and really pretty. It had two spindles in it and may have looked kind of like a clock. God told Lehi that it would help us know which way to go. Cool, huh?

We traveled for a LONG time. It was really hard, but God continued to help us and we knew we could do it if we listened to Him. We finally reached a sea shore and called the place "Bountiful" because it was full of fruit.


One morning, God told Nephi to go up into the mountains. While Nephi was up there, God talked with him and told him to build a boat. God said that we were all going to take a trip across the sea, to a place called the "Promised Land." Isn't that awesome? God also showed Nephi how to make all the tools he would need to build the boat. So Nephi began to build the boat as soon as he came down. I helped; wow, was that a lot of work! It took a while to build, but it was beautiful when we were finished. The boat was big enough to hold all of us and everything we needed.

Finally, when we had everything packed and everyone was ready, we went off into the sea! I was seasick for several days, but I eventually got over it - just about the time something bad happened to Nephi.

Laman and Lemuel were doing some bad things so Nephi asked them to stop. They got really mad at Nephi - so mad that they tied him up! It was horrible! Then something really scary happened: it started storming really bad. Really bad. The waves were huge, and I was scared the ship was going to sink. There was lightning and thunder everywhere! It stormed for four days, and I was convinced we were all going to die. Finally Laman and Lemuel realized that God was angry with them for treating their brother so badly and they untied him - hoping it would stop the storm. Nephi dropped to his knees and began to pray that the Lord would rescue all of us from the terrible storm.

And you know what? God did rescue us! When you ask Him something, and have faith that He will do it - He will bless you. The storm stopped, and we turned again towards the Promised Land.

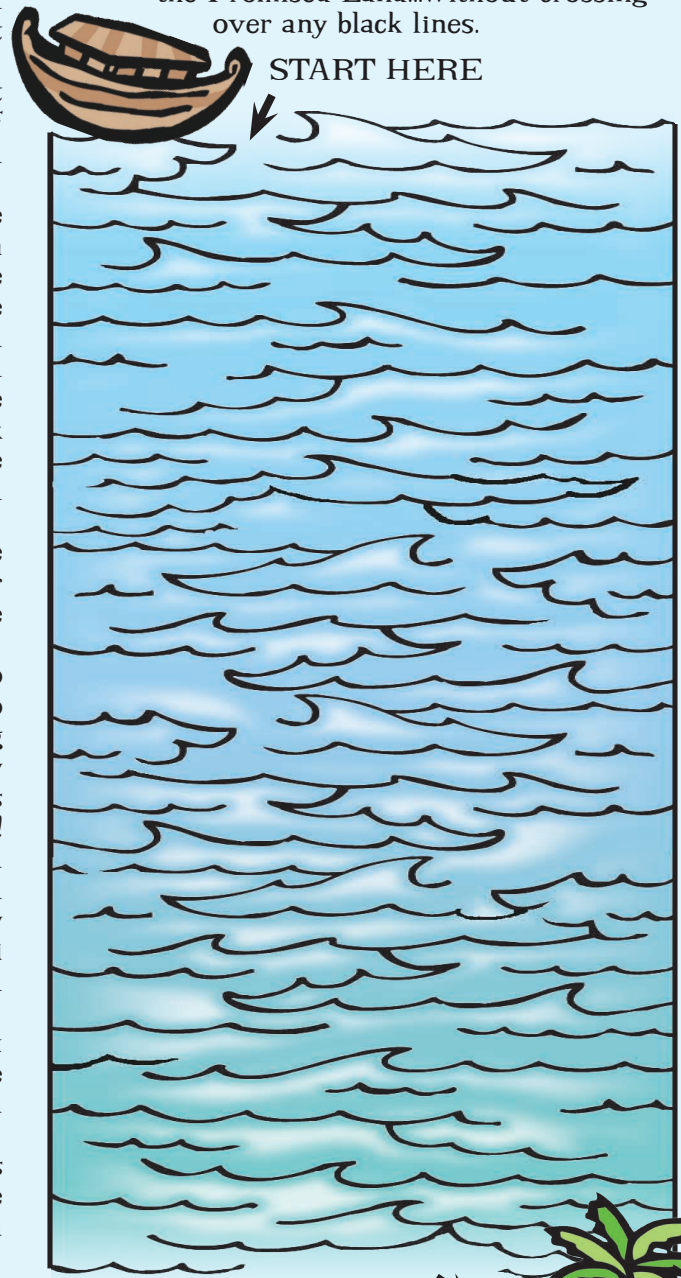
Several days later, we saw land! We had made it! God's promises are sure! He will always help you get where He wants you to be. Always. Just trust in Him - even when things get rough. He'll help you through it!

Well, I guess I better help unload all of this stuff and get started setting up the tents - we have a lot of work to do! See ya next time! 

Our Journey to the Promised Land Maze

by Beezrom

Help me find my way through the ocean to the Promised Land...without crossing over any black lines.



FINISH HERE
 Yea! We've made it to the Promised Land!

REMINDER!
**Registrations for the
November 2011 Israel
Tour are due now!**

*Metal Plates and Stone Boxes:
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Been Vindicated?*

Working Together

*The Liahona: The Miraculous
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Smith's account of the plates, until proven one way or the other.

See Glenn Scott's article on page 1 of this issue for more about metal plates, which have been authenticated by scholars.

Ceibal, Guatemala

"Scientist at Work: Notes from the Field" Blog, *The New York Times*

The *Times* website features a blog with an almost daily entry about current scientific exploration. From February 17 through April 10, Takeshi Inomata, a professor of anthropology at the University of Arizona, posted blog entries during his fifth field season at Ceibal in Guatemala. The goal of the excavation team has been to dig down to trace Ceibal's occupation back to its beginning. Some of the excavations have reached a depth of eight meters (about 26 feet) exposing more than 30 construction episodes.

This short news clip can't begin to relate all that was reported on the blog, but some very interesting results have surfaced.

One of the most exciting discoveries found in 2009 was



Olto Román, a Guatemalan archaeologist, excavating the cache of polished axes that we found in 2009. This ritual deposit marked the beginning of occupation at Ceibal around 1,000 B.C.

a ritual deposit of polished axes of greenstone that marked the beginning of Ceibal at 1,000 BC. More similar caches were found in 2010 along with an Olmec-style figurine. This cache, so similar to the one found at the Olmec site of La Venta, the figurine, and the fact that the site is oriented north/south like other Olmec sites are evidence of an Olmec settlement in what later developed into a Maya site.

Inomata's team has also discovered stucco floors that date to the Preclassic 600–300 BC and a royal palace, "a magnificent building with a throne room and a painted stucco façade flanking two other buildings in the courtyard," from the last years of Ceibal, dated to the Terminal Classic (about AD 830-980).

This blog, with great photos, is highly recommended. The entries, however, are not in strict chronological order; others are interspersed with them. You'll have to search for them. <http://scientistatwork.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/02/17/excavating-the-origins-of-maya-civilization/>