

Brigham Young University and Jerusalem before Semester Abroad, 1931–1968

Kahlile B. Mehr

Kahlile B. Mehr (MehrKB@ldschurch.org) is a manager in the Records and Information Division of the Family and Church History Department in Salt Lake City. In addition, he serves on the executive committee of the Journal of Mormon History.

The relationship between Brigham Young University and Jerusalem is generally noted to have commenced with the first Semester Abroad program there in 1968. Yet precursors to that program go back to 1931 when BYU professors and staff studied Hebrew in Israel and came into contact with prominent Israelis. Though we recognize 1968 as the beginning of a formal relationship between the city and the university, understanding the informal relationships nurtured by a handful of forerunners helps us to appreciate the roots from which emerged both the Semester Abroad program and subsequently the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies.

Forerunners who blazed the trail for the establishment of the center and Semester Abroad included a BYU Travel Study program, which functioned as the institutional arm of BYU in Jerusalem; individual professors who studied Hebrew in language schools, became acquainted with the country, and imbibed its biblical heritage; and an Israeli dance group from the Pasadena California Stake. The experiences of individuals involved in these programs engendered a desire to broaden the involvement of BYU and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the religious heritage of Jerusalem. The purpose of this article is to trace a brief history of these individuals and groups in the Holy Land, noting the contribution each made.

Sidney B. Sperry

Sidney B. Sperry was the first of several who forged a link between BYU and Jerusalem. The father of religious studies at BYU, Sperry was also the first BYU professor to study in Jerusalem. After teaching seminary and institute in Utah and Idaho, Sperry sought to deepen his scholarship. He received a doctorate in Old Testament languages and literature in 1931 from the University of Chicago. Pursuing his studies further, he spent a year doing postdoctoral work in archaeology at the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. Joining the BYU faculty in 1932, he inspired many BYU scholars to focus their teaching on Christian origins in the land of the Savior's mortal ministry.¹

Early Holy Land History

For nearly a millennium, Jerusalem and the Holy Land had been part of the Islamic world. A province of the Ottoman Empire for several centuries prior to World War I, it was transformed into a British protectorate at the conclusion of the war, which was the political condition during Professor Sperry's sojourn in 1931. World War II was in the offing as Hitler established a reign that would strike at the moral foundation of civilization, with the Jewish people bearing the greatest brunt. In the aftermath of that war, dispossessed Jewish masses sought refuge in a land they claimed on the basis of their Hebrew Bible.

Early Church Involvement in the Holy Land

The interest of BYU (founded, funded, and firmly directed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) in Jerusalem and Israel extends back to the formative experiences of the Church. Ninety years before Professor Sperry's educational pursuit in Jerusalem, Apostle Orson Hyde pronounced his blessing on the Mount of Olives, just east of the city. Missionaries sporadically ranged through the area from 1886 to 1928.

The year after Sperry's return, Elder John A. Widtsoe, president of the European Mission, established a mission and blessed the land again, the fourth Apostle to do so since Elder Orson Hyde. The mission headquarters was located in Haifa from 1933 to 1935 and then moved to Beirut, Lebanon. The mission closed in 1939 with the advent of the war, but it reopened from 1947 to 1951. No proselytizing occurred in the Protectorate, though it was considered part of the mission when the Jewish state of Israel emerged as a political entity after an unexpected victory of the Jewish refugees over the Arab armies.

Eldin Ricks

The next person to foster a BYU–Jerusalem connection was Chaplain Eldin Ricks. A seminary teacher who had graduated from BYU in 1941, he was inducted into the U.S. Army in 1943 and served in Africa and Italy. In August 1945, at war’s end, he was included in a group of twenty army chaplains permitted to visit the Holy Land. Hosted by the British Chaplain’s Corps, they toured many sites made famous in biblical history.² The experience, he wrote home, “helps you connect things up in your mind and should be an invaluable aid in future teaching.”³ Thus, Ricks anticipated the course of his career. Still on duty, he kept track of his alma mater, observing in a subsequent letter that BYU would soon be enlarged to accommodate five thousand students.⁴ Ricks began employment at BYU in 1949. In 1952, he was approached by the director of Extension Services, Harold Glen Clark, who was seeking to take advantage of Ricks’s experience.

Clark had initiated a travel study program in 1951, sending a group of thirty-one by bus to Latter-day Saint historical sites in the Midwest and a group of seventeen by private automobile to Mexico. The program was directed primarily toward adults, not students, but it presaged later student programs. Clark had encouraged Professor Sperry to send a group of adults to Israel. Sperry was the only Latter-day Saint educator with firsthand experience in the region and seemed an ideal candidate to attract prospective travelers. He had a fault, however—he had no penchant to recruit, which at that time was a responsibility of those who directed tours. Recruiting was critical because the BYU Board of Trustees had charged the program to be self-supporting.⁵ Clark turned to Ricks, the other BYU professor with in-country experience and offered to make him the assistant director if he could solicit the needed participants. To aid him in the quest, Clark gave Ricks a list of wealthy Church members.⁶

Ricks needed the approval of BYU President Ernest L. Wilkinson, who questioned the need for two directors and wondered how they might both be spared from the Division of Religion at the same time. Ricks responded by referring to the experience of two BYU professors who had recently returned with a student tour group that had gone to Europe: “They say that they found the multitude of details relative to tickets, baggage, meals, hotel accommodations, not to mention special lectures concerning historic sites, proved a full time job for both of them.” To the second concern, Ricks responded that colleagues had “expressed their willingness to accept a temporary overload of classes”

to make the tour possible.⁷ The person writing letters of appointment to Sperry and Ricks was Lynn M. Hilton, assistant director to Clark. Within a few years, Hilton would carry the baton of Travel Study to the Holy Land.

The tour was limited to twenty-four persons.⁸ That limit was nearly reached. The final tally was a party of twenty-one, including the two directors. They came primarily from Utah but included a few from Idaho and one from California. They spent sixty-one days steaming to Europe, traversing the continent, and flying to Egypt and Israel, returning homeward through England and Scotland. In the Middle East, they were carried by camels to view the pyramids and the Sphinx and transported by train to Luxor to observe the ruins in the sun-baked landscape at Karnak. On the flight to Jerusalem, they passed over the Gulf of Aqaba at the north end of the Red Sea, imagining below them the path trodden by Lehi's family centuries earlier. Landing on the Arab side of the border, they walked in the Garden of Gethsemane, hiked the Mount of Olives, tarried at the Garden Tomb, and visited the Dead Sea. It was rewarding for Dr. Sperry to see the land restored to fruitfulness, manifested by new orchards, vineyards, towns, and agricultural cooperatives.⁹ Entering Israel, they bussed north through the Plain of Esdraelon to Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee, where they boated to historical sites around the sea's coastline. Yet despite its title as the "Holy Land Tour," the group spent only thirteen days in Egypt, Jordan, and Israel, compared to forty days in Europe. In reality, it was a European tour with a Holy Land segment.

After the tour, Ricks pursued his doctoral studies at Dropsie College, Philadelphia. Founded in 1907 by a Jewish lawyer, it was a center for Jewish learning "free of theological, sectarian, or political considerations, and open to all races and creeds."¹⁰ It was a small institution with a student body of 115 students in 1957, 40 percent non-Jewish. The first scholar to view the Dead Sea Scrolls, Eleazar Sukenik, was a Dropsie alumnus. A portion of Ricks's curriculum included three months of Hebrew language study in Jerusalem, from July to September 1956. Though of shorter duration than Sperry's yearlong precedent, it was the second extended study sojourn by a BYU professor in Jerusalem.

Five weeks into his course, the struggling student wrote home to his mother, "I am sorry to say I don't yet speak Hebrew like a native. In fact, I have scarcely scratched the surface."¹¹ He studied five hours a day with a class of twenty-eight Jewish immigrants from eight nations. "No English is spoken," he wrote home. When Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion visited the class, they assailed him with questions

in “bad Hebrew,” which elicited a good-humored laugh from the distinguished visitor. Prior to Ricks’s departure, Jordanian soldiers killed three and wounded eighteen members of an archaeological tour. In a reprisal raid, the Israeli army killed thirty-eight Jordanian soldiers. Commenting on the event, Ricks wrote, “All the ingredients to World War III are already here—or so it seems. Certainly the next fifty years will see great world shattering events taking place in this part of the world.”¹² In early October 1956, his wife and four children welcomed him back to their Philadelphia apartment.

Ellis T. Rasmussen and Truman G. Madsen

In addition to Ricks, other Latter-day Saint scholars were involved in studying the biblical past, though not in Israel. Ellis T. Rasmussen, who would later become the chair of the Department of Ancient Scripture (1969–1971) and eventually dean of Religious Education (1976–1981), was an acquaintance of Sperry from his time as an undergraduate. Working as a seminary teacher after graduation, he returned to BYU annually to pursue graduate work under Sperry’s guidance. Upon Sperry’s recommendation, Rasmussen pursued the study of Old Testament languages and literature and was employed full-time at BYU in 1951. At the suggestion of Sperry, from 1957 to 1958, he lived in Philadelphia and studied at Dropsie College.¹³ Rasmussen was also a friend of Ricks, their association dating back to when they both started teaching seminary in 1941.¹⁴ Another faculty member with biblical interests was Truman G. Madsen, who began his BYU service in 1957 teaching biblical studies and Latter-day Saint Church history. He obtained a doctorate in the history and philosophy of religion from Harvard University in 1960.¹⁵ Both Rasmussen and Madsen would be involved with BYU Travel Study to Israel before the end of the decade.

Lynn M. Hilton

The cause of Travel Study to Israel was picked up again in 1961 by Harold Glen Clark’s assistant in the Extension Division, Lynn M. Hilton. Having obtained an undergraduate degree from the University of Utah, Hilton entered a doctoral program in educational administration at the University of Chicago’s College of Education. He graduated in 1952. President David O. McKay, passing through Chicago to New York, personally offered Hilton employment at BYU.¹⁶ Hilton served as a BYU administrator for twelve years, from 1953 to 1959 at the main

campus and from 1959 to 1964 as the founding director of the BYU Center in Salt Lake City. In the words of Clark, he was “young, ambitious, full of ideas, and moved the work along rapidly.”¹⁷ He instigated evening school on campus as well as Education Week and helped develop off-campus courses and adult education centers. Most significantly, with regard to Israel, he helped promote the Travel Study program.¹⁸

One of Hilton’s passions was the Jewish people and their increasing presence in the Holy Land. In 1953, he began to study the subject and authored a series of five lectures on “The Jews, a Promised People.”¹⁹ Delivered at various BYU adult education forums, they were published as part of the Know Your Religion series in 1954. In lecture three, he noted that there had been an increase in Latter-day Saint interest in Judah during the last few years.²⁰ No doubt this was a result of the creation of a Jewish state in the Middle East and the gathering of Jews to live there in what appeared to be a literal fulfillment of centuries-old prophecy. In lecture five, he recollected that during a Chicago stake conference, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith commented that the day of Judah was dawning and that the day of the Gentile was closing. Hilton further reflected that the idea struck him with great force.²¹

Hilton corresponded with Elder LeGrand Richards concerning a proselytizing effort among the Jews and was excited by the response. In a letter dated June 2, 1954, Elder Richards wrote: “For your information, this matter [preaching the gospel to Judah] was discussed in a meeting of the Church missionary committee some time ago. It was the feeling at that time that as soon as the literature was prepared properly and intelligently to present our message to the Jews that a mission might be opened up in various stakes of Zion where there are large numbers of Jews residing, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, New York and Washington.”²² In 1955, Elder Richards appointed Lynn to a committee formed to establish this program, an effort that flowered mostly in Southern California but that was canceled by direction of the First Presidency in 1959.²³ Though canceled, this effort spawned a later development: a group of Latter-day Saint youth known as the Yovail Dancers. In 1964, this group, directed by Mildred Handy, would take its enterprise to Israel and indirectly beget a BYU student program.

In August 1959, Hilton embarked on a life-altering journey of circling the globe, spending two months of language study in Israel in the process. He traveled with Donald Blackwelder, a family friend. Frugal in their expenditures, they budgeted a mere \$2,600 for expenses. They visited twenty-six countries, bicycled through England and Europe, were mistakenly arrested as spies in Jerusalem for taking notes during

conversations with military draftees, skin-dived in the Gulf of Aqaba, and were quarantined in India on their way home through Asia. They visited Lynn's parents in New Zealand, steamed across the Pacific to San Francisco, and hitchhiked back to Salt Lake City. In Israel, they lived at Beit Hashita, a kibbutz in the Jezreel Valley, twenty miles southeast of Nazareth, tending groves of pomegranate, olives, and citrus to pay for their board while pursuing their study of the Hebrew language.²⁴

In approving Hilton's sabbatical, President Wilkinson jokingly addressed him as "Lazarus Moses Hiltonsky" (apparently alluding to Lynn's interest in Jewish affairs), stating that "I can't for the life of me understand what you are going to obtain from adult education in Jerusalem. The answer to this will either expose my ignorance or yours."²⁵ Though Hilton went to study adult education, his experience engendered an enduring interest in Israel and the Middle East, which he would visit repeatedly and where he would even reside for five years. Even more significantly, it was here that he first got the idea for a BYU educational project in Jerusalem, an idea that he would espouse for the duration of his tenure at BYU. He thought primarily in terms of adult education and was a key proponent in two Travel Study tours to Israel thereafter.²⁶

The stay in Israel prepared Hilton to propose and host a 1961 Travel Study tour called the Bible Lands Tour. The tour group consisted of seventeen people, an average-sized group when compared with other Travel Study tours that year. The roster consisted of two men and fifteen women, ages twenty-six to eighty-three, from Utah, California, Arizona, Canada, and England. The trip included a European segment from July 4 to August 2, an Arabic segment in Egypt and Jordan from August 3 to 8, an Israel segment from August 9 to 20, and a return through Spain and Portugal from August 21 to 26. They spent a month in the Middle East, a significantly longer stay than the two weeks spent by the Sperry tour eight years earlier. Though the tour was for adults, Hilton penned the following note in his tour binder: "Resident Program in Israel. Send 25 young students to Israel 2 1/2 months, middle June–middle of August."²⁷ Though Hilton never saw the realization of this idea, it foreshadowed the future.

Robert C. Taylor

During the decade prior to the 1961 tour, the Travel Study program had matured. Operated initially out of the Extension Division director's office, a Travel Bureau was authorized in 1953 with R. Max Rogers as a part-time director. The 1953 Sperry-Ricks tour had been the ninth tour after three years of activity. Five to seven tours were

conducted each year from 1954 to 1957. The program expanded dramatically to twelve tours in 1958, attracting 301 participants. Of the twenty-one universities in the nation offering education travel programs in 1958, only one had more than five tours, less than half the number of BYU tours.²⁸ Another significant initiative in 1958 was a student-in-residence study program in Mexico City. Another was set up the following year in Quebec. These were short-term programs.²⁹ Semester Abroad was still in the future, but the precedent for having students domiciled in their place of study was set. By the end of 1959, the program had evolved to merit a full-time director. The appointment went to Robert C. Taylor.³⁰

Taylor had worked in Hollywood for seven years as a staff assistant for the Howard Hughes Production Company and was married to Kathy Cook, a model and the head of the fashion department on *Queen for a Day*, a popular daytime television show. Desiring to return to Utah, Taylor gave notice to Hughes prior to learning by happenstance of the job opening at BYU. He directed the program for the next three and a half decades. A premonition of her husband's later involvement in Israel first came to Kathy while she was visiting Haifa in 1965. She announced to Robert upon her return, "We are going to be involved in something important in Israel." Robert remembered his wife's inspiration when a Jerusalem Semester Abroad program was proposed in 1966. In 1992, he wrote that "there had not been a day in the last 27 years when [his] mind had not dwelt on Jerusalem and the Holy Land."³¹

Second Bible Lands Tour

In 1962, a second Bible Lands Tour was canceled because of insufficient interest.³² So the appeal of the tour could be broadened, it was combined in 1963 with archaeological sites in Mexico and renamed the "Bible & Book of Mormon Lands Tour." The overall travel time was reduced from the fifty-three days of the 1961 tour to thirty-nine days, seventeen of them in Israel.³³ The 1963 tour had thirty-one participants, exceeding the number of the 1953 and 1961 tours. It was the fourth most popular tour that year, following the perennially popular Church History Tour (72), the Student European Tour (54), and the Fine Arts European Tour (34).³⁴ W. Cleon Skousen, emeritus BYU professor, author of *The First 2,000 Years* (1953), and a popular lecturer at the time, initially agreed to direct the tour.³⁵ When his schedule precluded this possibility, Hilton was asked to conduct the new tour. Because of the tour's size, he was permitted to have an assistant director, and he assigned Ellis Rasmussen the job.

The tour began Rasmussen's twenty-four-year period of conducting tours and teaching Semester Abroad. He wrote afterward, "For me personally the tour was one of the most effective, impressive, and valuable experiences of my life. . . . In many significant sites we were able to visualize historic and inspirational events while we read from the Scriptures the narratives and teachings that came from those very places . . . and for the first time were often able to feel that the people and events were indeed real, and their message more vital than we had even before known them to be."³⁶ Similarly, Ricks wrote in 1971 that "[visits to Israel] have by no means decreased my interest in the great events that transpired there in the past but have served to increase my excitement at the unfolding miracle of the present and prophecies of fascinating developments yet future."³⁷ The feelings of Rasmussen and Ricks were probably shared by others touring Israel, and as such they are the key to understanding the popularity of the Travel Study to Israel that continued to grow with the introduction in 1968 of the Semester Abroad program, BYU faculty tours, continuing adult tours, and the eventual establishment of the BYU Jerusalem Center.

In 1963, Hilton approached Church Commissioner of Education William E. Berrett and proposed sending institute and seminary teachers to Israel for an experience in biblical geography. Like his efforts to sponsor adult tours to Israel and his thoughts to promote student study there as well, this idea later became a reality. He would not be directly involved, as he left BYU in 1964 to establish a successful language study abroad program for high-school students, but he was not forgotten. In March 1991, Taylor reported to a tour group in Mexico on the building of the BYU Jerusalem Center. He said, "The BYU programs [in Israel] continued to flourish over the years from the work started by Lynn Hilton."³⁸

Daniel H. Ludlow

After Hilton's departure, others pursued BYU involvement in Israel, primarily Daniel H. Ludlow. Ludlow's interest in Israel began in 1948 when he edited *Latter-day Prophets Speak: Selections and Sermons from the Writings of the Presidents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.³⁹ He joined the BYU Department of Religious Instruction in 1955 and obtained an EdD degree in 1956 from Columbia University. He developed an intense interest in Israel during his discussions on the subject with his colleagues Sperry, Rasmussen, and Ricks.⁴⁰ In 1959, the Church Missionary Committee assigned Ludlow and his three colleagues to study the Rose Marie Reid lessons that had been an important factor in the Jewish proselytizing program in Southern California the previous

decade. They expanded their study to the plans of Irving Cohen in New York and Artel Ricks in Washington DC. The result was a new set of eight lessons titled “Teach the Gospel to the Jewish People,” which they submitted to Church headquarters for review in March 1960. There is no record of an official response to this submission.

In 1963, Ludlow took sabbatical leave and spent five months studying in Israel. He studied Hebrew for several months, first in Jerusalem and then at Kibbutz Alonim, situated in the Jezreel Valley, the prophesied site of Armageddon. He then joined faculty members from various universities on a three-week trip entitled “Land of the Bible Workshop,” sponsored by New York University and officially sanctioned by the State Department. They met major governmental, education, business, and religious leaders, including recently retired Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion. They also visited major archaeological sites. This experience was the foundation for a continued connection to Israel, as Ludlow soon became the key figure in promoting a Jerusalem Semester Abroad program. A second experience set his course in that direction.

The Yovail Dancers

In January 1964, the Yovail Dancers, an indirect result of the Jewish proselytizing program in Southern California, announced in the *Church News* their pending performance trip to Israel in the coming summer.⁴¹ The troupe of fifty youth dancers from the Pasadena Stake had performed throughout the fall and winter and had received a standing ovation from sixty-five hundred people at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.⁴² The group contacted BYU to set up the tour, and Robert Taylor asked Daniel H. Ludlow to direct it.

Performing during July 1964, the troupe swept the country with singing and dancing routines. Abba Eban, famed Israeli statesman and deputy to the prime minister at that date, awarded the dancers the Israeli peace medal, only the second one given, Pope John XXIII having received the first. Guri Kadman, the mother of Israeli folk dancing, was visibly touched and wept at a performance. The clean-looking young people impressed the nation, and Ludlow began to consider how this influence might be perpetuated.⁴³

Semester Abroad Plans

In January 1966, Ludlow took the proposal for a Jerusalem Semester Abroad program to President Wilkinson.⁴⁴ In the meantime, Taylor

had worked to focus Travel Study on educational study rather than touring. As the “creative leader” in this effort, his endeavor paid off in 1965 with the creation of the first Semester Abroad program. During the winter of 1965, 143 students attended classes given by five BYU faculty members in Salzburg, Austria. They ended the semester with a three-week tour of Europe.⁴⁵ Ludlow’s proposal was presented to the Board of Trustees in February 1966 and was referred to the First Presidency. Church President David O. McKay approved it in June 1966 with one important caveat—that half of the program be in Arab territory and half in Israeli territory.⁴⁶

In October 1966, Taylor made his first trip to Israel. He felt that it would take a miracle to get the program set up in the politically turbulent region, as it had been difficult enough to get going in the peaceful countries of Austria and France (January–June 1966). Ricks and Ludlow gave him letters of introduction to ease the way. Upon his return, Taylor confirmed the possibility of a program housed in Jerusalem, half the time in the Jordanian sector and half in the Israeli sector. It was to be limited to fewer than thirty students. He summarized that it was the most successful and important trip he had ever taken. Privately, both he and his wife, who had been there in 1965, felt they had “succumbed to that strong emotional attachment to the land, . . . and we knew we would return.”⁴⁷

Bible Land Tours, 1966–68

After a hiatus from 1964 to 1965, adult Travel Study tours began again. Rasmussen directed a small Bible Lands Tour in 1966 for eleven participants. Doyle Green, managing editor of the *Improvement Era*, was there to take pictures for that publication.⁴⁸ In 1967, Truman G. Madsen conducted a group of eighteen.⁴⁹ As was normally the case, the group toured in the Arab nations surrounding Israel before going into the country. Any passport stamped with an Israeli visa would prevent crossing an Arab border. They were stopped without explanation in Beirut prior to entering Israel. The Six-Day War erupted on the second day after the denied entrance, resolving the mystery of the border closure. This outcome did not deter Madsen from returning with another group in 1968 and nearly every year thereafter through 2004.⁵⁰ He would later serve as a director of the BYU Jerusalem Center.

Semester Abroad

Although the war may have seemingly dashed hopes for a Semester Abroad program in 1968, President Wilkinson encouraged continued

recruiting by Ludlow, the scheduled director of the program. Wilkinson himself publicized the program in a devotional assembly and, in time, enough students (twenty) had committed to go, permitting the program to carry forward.⁵¹ Returning from Israel in late 1967, Taylor reported his favorable impression that the students would be safe.⁵² This feeling was echoed in a letter from Ludlow to the parents and friends of the students in which he noted that the area appeared more stable than when he was there in 1963 and 1964.⁵³ Taylor was excited and requested that Roy Doxey, acting dean of the College of Religious Instruction, cover the topic of the Jerusalem group in the college newsletter with this statement: “We believe this is, perhaps, the most significant semester abroad program yet developed.”⁵⁴

Jerusalem Center Plans

So the Jerusalem Semester Abroad program came to pass, leading eventually to even greater BYU involvement in Israel. Even before the students departed Utah for the first Semester Abroad, there had been discussion of a future student center in Jerusalem. In a proposal drafted in June 1967 by Ludlow, Clark, Madsen, and Taylor, among others, it was argued that a dormitory in Jerusalem was needed—not only for the Bible Land tours and residence program but also for the Around the World Tour and the faculty Study Tour anticipated in 1968. More significantly, the report foresaw a need for a permanent presence there, given the prophesied role of Jerusalem as one of the latter-day world capitals.⁵⁵ After seeing his students off, Ludlow turned around and conducted the Lands of the Scriptures Workshop in June and July, the first BYU faculty tour of the Middle East. As these and an increasing number of other contacts between BYU and Israel continued in the years to follow, the Semester Abroad program was of prime importance as an impetus for the eventual construction of a BYU Jerusalem Center.⁵⁶

Conclusion

Although Semester Abroad became the roots from which the center emerged, the decades of interest in Israel reflected in the activities of BYU professors and staff in that country were the soil from which Semester Abroad sprouted. From Sidney B. Sperry’s yearlong study in 1931, when Israel was still the British Protectorate of Palestine, a succession of professors—Ricks, Rasmussen, Ludlow, and Madsen—and Travel Study administrators—Hilton and Taylor—sustained an interest in Israel. It was not a formal BYU effort until the founding of the Semester Abroad program, but the pioneers were all connected to the institution.

In subsequent years, the bond between BYU and Jerusalem forged a link between the Jewish and Latter-day Saint faiths, both of which trace their spiritual lineage back to Abraham. The efforts of those mentioned in this article were not the only reasons the program was started. The interest in the land where Jesus lived and taught has always been the key attraction of the Holy Land not only to Latter-day Saints but also to all Christians. Still, these few transient scholars sowed the seeds later harvested as a permanent presence for BYU and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Jerusalem. **RE**

Notes

1. See Jeff McClellan, "A Lingering Influence: Top 10 BYU Professors," *BYU Magazine Online* (Winter 1999), <http://magazine.byu.edu> (accessed February 24, 2004); "Sidney B. Sperry," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4, no. 1 (1995), x–xi, FARMS Web site <http://farms.byu.edu> (accessed February 24, 2004).

2. See Eldin Ricks, "A Chaplain's Diary," *California Intermountain News*, published serially in five issues, 7, no. 22 (August 31, 1945): 4; 7, no. 23 (September 14, 1945): 4; 7, no. 24 (September 28, 1945): 4; 7 no. 25 (October 12, 1945): 2; 8, no. 1 (November 9, 1945): 4; 8, no. 5 (January 4, 1946): 3.

3. Eldin Ricks to Mother and Family, August 2, 1945, photocopy of transcript obtained from Irene Ricks; in author's possession.

4. See Eldin Ricks to Mother, Wanda, Family, and Clyde, September 14, 1945, photocopy of transcript obtained from Irene Ricks; in author's possession.

5. See Richard H. Henstrom and Keith R. Oakes, *The World Is Our Campus: The History of the Division of Continuing Education at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1875–1997* (Provo, UT: The Division, 1997), 235–36.

6. See Irene Ricks Oral History, telephone interview by Kahlile Mehr, February 24, 2005, and interview, February 28, 2005, Provo, Utah; notes in author's possession.

7. Eldin Ricks to Ernest L. Wilkinson, October 30, 1952, photocopy of original obtained from Irene Ricks; in author's possession.

8. See Harold Glen Clark to Dear Friend, January 19, 1953, photocopy of original obtained from Irene Ricks; in author's possession.

9. See "Europe, Pope, Holy Land Impress Returning BYU Tourists," *Brigham Young Universe*, July 2, 1953, 1.

10. "Dropsie College to Mark Golden Jubilee, Draws Scholars from All Parts of World," *Sunday Bulletin* (Philadelphia), May 19, 1957, 3.

11. Eldin Ricks to Mrs. Hyrum Ricks, August 10, 1956, photocopy of original obtained from Irene Ricks; in author's possession.

12. Eldin Ricks to Mrs. Hyrum Ricks, September 29, 1956, photocopy of original obtained from Irene Ricks; in author's possession.

13. See Ellis T. Rasmussen, "Sidney B. Sperry, As I Remember and Appreciate Him," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 4, no. 1 (Spring 1999): xxv–xxvi.

14. See Ellis Rasmussen Oral History, interview by Kahlile Mehr, February 14,

2004, Orem, Utah, and telephone interview, February 24, 2004; notes in author's possession.

15. See Truman G. Madsen Oral History, telephone interview by Kahlile Mehr, March 19, 2004, and telephone interview, April 20, 2005; notes in author's possession.

16. See Lynn M. Hilton, "Autobiography of Lynn Mathers Hilton," 9–10, 12, transcribed and edited by Sheree Hilton Anderson from an oral history dictated during September 1997, photocopy obtained from Lynn Hilton; in author's possession.

17. Harold Glen Clark, "The Golden Years of Continuing Education at Brigham Young University," in Lynn M. Hilton Papers, accn 1945, carton 5, folder 4; Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

18. See Hilton, "Autobiography," 12.

19. Lynn M. Hilton, "Plan of Ways in Which Fulbright Grant Is to Be Used," photocopy of original obtained from Lynn Hilton; in author's possession.

20. See Lynn M. Hilton, *The Jews, a Promised People*, rev. ed. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Extension Division, 1960), 39.

21. See Hilton, *The Jews, a Promised People*, 71.

22. Hilton, *The Jews, a Promised People*, 70.

23. See Arnold H. Green, "A Survey of Latter-day Saint Proselyting Efforts to the Jewish People" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, May 1967), 115.

24. See Merwin G. Fairbanks, "2 Adventurers Complete 203-Day Global Jaunt," *Deseret News Salt Lake Telegram*, March 12, 1960, 1; "Hilton Returns to Y, Sheds Beard," *Daily Universe*, March 15, 1960, 2; Hilton, "Autobiography," 13.

25. Ernest L. Wilkinson to Lazarus Moses Hiltonsky [Lynn M. Hilton], May 30, 1958, photocopy of original obtained from Lynn Hilton; in author's possession.

26. See Lynn M. Hilton Oral History, interview by Kahlile Mehr, January 28, 2002, Salt Lake City; notes in author's possession.

27. "Bible Lands 1961," binder of tour materials in Lynn Hilton's possession; notes in author's possession.

28. See Henstrom and Oakes, *The World Is Our Campus*, 236. Still, the number of student participants was low. Fifty percent of the Stanford graduating class in the 1960s spent two quarters at one of their foreign campuses (see Robert C. Taylor to Ernest Wilkinson, August 30, 1966, Re: Tour Report, in Division of Continuing Education, Harold Clark Files, UA 547c, box 45, folder 12; L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah).

29. See Robert Taylor to Ernest L. Wilkinson, August 30, 1966, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

30. See Henstrom and Oakes, *The World Is Our Campus*, 236; "Master List of Travel-Study Tours," in Harold Clark files, 547c, box 17, folder 11, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU; Robert C. Taylor to Ernest L. Wilkinson, August 30, 1966, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

31. Robert Taylor, "A Modern Miracle in Jerusalem, the Holy City, 1994," 6, 12–23; unpublished manuscript obtained from Taylor's daughter Michelle; notes in author's possession.

32. See Robert Taylor to Ernest L. Wilkinson, May 24, 1963, in Harold Clark files, UA 547c, box 45, folder 10, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

33. "Bible Lands Tours 1963," in Lynn M. Hilton Papers, carton 5, folder 5, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah.

34. See "Travel Study Report: 1963 Programs," in Harold Clark files, UA 547c, box 45, folder 11, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

35. See Robert Taylor to Harold Clark, October 8, 1963, Re: Justification for Sending Lynn M. Hilton on Tour, in Harold Clark files, UA 547c, box 45, folder 11, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

36. Ellis T. Rasmussen, "Review and Evaluation, Book of Mormon-Bible Lands Tour," photocopy of original obtained from Ellis Rasmussen; in author's possession.

37. Eldin Ricks to [prospective tour participants], March 13, 1971, photocopy of original obtained from Irene Ricks; in author's possession.

38. Lynn Hilton, notes from a talk of Robert Taylor, March 5, 1991, Coat-zacoalcos, Mexico, photocopy of original obtained from Lynn Hilton; in author's possession.

39. See Daniel H. Ludlow Oral History, telephone interview by Kahlile Mehr, February 20, 2004; notes in author's possession.

40. See Taylor, "A Modern Miracle in Jerusalem," 25.

41. At the end of the direct proselytizing effort in Southern California, Ken Dyal, San Bernardino Stake mission president, initiated a program called "Understanding Israel," which focused on helping Latter-day Saints become better acquainted with Jewish culture and tradition. In 1961, Mildred Handy converted Dyal's program into a youth Israeli dance program, first in the San Diego Second Ward and later in the Pasadena Stake, where they adopted the name Yovail Dancers (see Arnold Green, "Survey of Latter-day Saint Proselyting Efforts," 109-21).

42. See "Dancers Plan Trip to Israel," *Church News*, January 4, 1964, 6.

43. See Taylor, "A Modern Miracle in Jerusalem," 30; Ludlow Oral History.

44. See Taylor, "A Modern Miracle in Jerusalem," 33.

45. Henstrom and Oakes, *The World Is Our Campus*, 243.

46. See Ernest L. Wilkinson and W. Cleon Skousen, *Brigham Young University: A School of Destiny* (Provo: BYU Press, 1976), 727-28; Henstrom and Oakes, *The World Is Our Campus*, 262.

47. Robert Taylor to R. Wayne Shute, November 29, 1966, Trip Report, in Division of Continuing Education, Wayne Shute files, UA 547i, box 5, folder 13, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU; Taylor, "A Modern Miracle in Jerusalem," 34-36, 46.

48. See Rasmussen Oral History. The pictures and stories were published in March and August 1967 issues of the *Improvement Era*.

49. See "Comparison of BYU Study Tours, 1960-1969," in Harold Clark files, UA 547c, box 45, folder 12, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

50. See Madsen Oral History.

51. See Taylor, "A Modern Miracle in Jerusalem," 47-51.

52. See Robert Taylor to R. Wayne Shute, November 2, 1967, Recent Trip to Europe and Israel, in Wayne Shute files, 547i, box 5, folder 14, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

53. See Daniel Ludlow to Parents and Friends of Students in Jerusalem Semester Program, February 27, 1968, in Division of Continuing Education, Robert Taylor files, UA 547s, box 1, folder 8, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

54. See Robert Taylor to Roy Doxey, February 29, 1968, in Robert Taylor files, UA 547s, box 1, folder 8, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

55. See Roy Doxey, Robert Clark, Truman G. Madsen, Robert C. Taylor, Daniel H. Ludlow, and Robert K. Thomas to Ernest L. Wilkinson, June 29, 1967 (draft), in Robert Taylor files, UA 547s, box 1, folder 8, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

56. See Henstrom and Oakes, *The World Is Our Campus*, 262.