

## Brief Notices

*A Peculiar Treasure: Old Testament Messages for Our Day*, by Brent L. Top (Bookcraft, 1997)

If you are looking for a book that will help you understand the history and culture of ancient Israel, buy something else. But if you want to learn how to liken the stories and teachings of the Old Testament to yourself and your family, this is the book. Brent L. Top, associate dean of Religious Education at Brigham Young University, illustrates principles of eternal import by tracing a thread of ancient covenant-keepers—and a few covenant-breakers—from Genesis to the opening of the Christian era. The messages contained in this book are not only timely, but timeless.

Clearly, the author has learned a lesson from Nephi, who likened all scripture—even very ancient scripture—to himself and his people (1 Nephi 19:23-24; 2 Nephi 11:2, 8). Not everyone would read these stories the way Top does, but, then, that's the nature of likening the scriptures to ourselves.

The book begins by explaining the concept of birthright and covenant in ancient Israel, contrasting those who, like Esau, despised such heavenly blessings with others, such as Joseph and the prophets,

who sought to do the Lord's will. Throughout, Top makes continual reference to God's desire that his children become "a peculiar treasure" through love, trust, and obedience, in return for which he blesses them. In all this, the book stresses the importance of placing God at the center of our lives in order to gain a perspective of our own role in the divine plan.

Top also makes Old Testament passages relevant to Latter-day Saints by drawing parallels with teachings of modern prophets and personal experiences. The principles are sound and full of hope. If the complexity and historical remoteness of the Old Testament scare you, try reading it with a dose of this book. Then share its teachings in your family and Church circles.

—John A. Tvedtnes

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*The Iowa Mormon Trail: Legacy of Faith and Courage*, edited by Susan Easton Black and William G. Hartley (Helix, 1997)

Few recent publications contain as much original research as does this volume of papers delivered at a symposium held in Des Moines, Iowa, in May 1996. The purpose of the symposium was to "identify,