The book of Ether is like a Book of Mormon for the people of the Book of Mormon. Why did the children of Lehi need such a book? Does each dispensation have its own “Book of Mormon”? What does seeing that the Book of Mormon people had the Jaredite record teach us? Does it make the story of their fall any more poignant?

Ether 1

Verse 34: Why do you think the brother of Jared isn’t mentioned by name? What might account for the omission of the name of such a great prophet?

Verse 43: What promise did Jared’s people receive? To whom has this promise been made?

Ether 2

Verse 8: What does it mean to say that the Lord made this promise “in his wrath”?

Verses 9–12: Notice that Moroni begins these verses with one of his father’s writing “trademarks”: “And now, can we behold . . .” (Usually Mormon says see rather than behold, but the phrase is essentially the same.) Why do you think Moroni interjects his own thoughts into the book of Ether so often?
Verse 15: The writer (whether Mormon or Ether) calls the brother of Jared’s sin of omission—neglecting to pray—an evil. Is he exaggerating for emphasis, or is neglecting to pray an evil thing?

Ether 3

Verse 2ff.: There are two ways to read these verses. We can read Jared as sincere, or we can read him as “buttering up” the Lord. Which do you think is better and why? If Jared is sincere, what does that imply about the doctrinal content of these verses?

Verse 2: What does it mean to say “we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually”? One way of reading this is that we cannot help doing evil; the fall makes us do it. But shouldn’t we be excused from what we can’t help doing? After all, if we are fallen, it isn’t by any act of our own, but a result of what Adam and Eve did. How can we subscribe to what this verse says without concluding that we aren’t responsible for our evil desires and, therefore, for our evil deeds if our natures are continually evil because of something we didn’t do? Or is there another way of understanding what this means?

Verse 8: Apparently not all the prophets have known that God has a body. It appears, in fact, that before this experience the brother of Jared might not even have known that Christ would come to the earth as a person. Why might that information have been withheld from certain times?

Verse 13: The Lord tells him he is redeemed from the fall because he knows that God speaks the truth. Why would
that redeem him? What does it mean to be redeemed from the fall?

Because he is redeemed, he is brought back into the Lord’s presence. Isn’t he already in his presence? He is, after all, speaking with the Lord. (What parallels might one see between the brother of Jared’s experience and our experience in the temple?)

**Verse 15:** The Lord tells Jared that he has never shown himself to a human being. But what about the prophets who preceded the brother of Jared (e.g., Adam, Seth, Enos, Enoch, and Noah)? Hadn’t they seen him? Moses 7:4, for example, expressly says that Enoch spoke with God face to face. How do you reconcile Moses 7:4 with this scripture?

**Verses 19–20:** We often say something like “The brother of Jared couldn’t be kept from seeing the Lord because of his faith.” Here, however, it says that he couldn’t be kept from seeing because of his knowledge. What knowledge put him in this position? What kind of knowledge is that? How did he get that knowledge?

**Verse 24:** Does this verse mean that the Urim and Thummim are made from the stones used by the Jaredites? If so, is there more than one Urim and Thummim, or did the Lord move it from the Jaredites to the Israelites and then back to the Book of Mormon people?

**Ether 4**

**Verse 6:** Have the things that the brother of Jared saw “gone forth”? Does that mean the Gentiles have repented and become clean?
Verse 7: Has this verse been fulfilled yet? If not, when will it be fulfilled? What would its fulfillment entail?

Verse 8: How would one contend against the Lord’s word? Those who “deny these things” will also be accursed. To what does “these things” refer? What the brother of Jared learned? His experience? The book of Ether? The Book of Mormon?

Verse 10: We hear that those who won’t listen to the Lord’s servants won’t listen to him. Here, however, that is reversed. Of course, those who won’t listen to the master won’t listen to the servants; what point is the Lord making here?

Verse 11: To what does “these things of which I have spoken” refer? Is the mark of the truth of those things that they persuade people to do good? If not, what do we make of the remark at the end of the verse? If so, how does that make us rethink what we mean when we speak of the truth? For example, we sometimes justify what we do by saying, “I’m only telling the truth.” When we speak that way we must be using truth to mean “an accurate portrayal of the fact,” rather than “what persuades people to do good.”

What difference would it make for us to think of truth as what persuades people to do good? If we thought of it that way, could we also justify portraying the facts inaccurately, lying?

Verse 12: Jesus says that good comes of none but him. That could mean that what seems to be good, like the work of the Moslem equivalent of the Red Cross, the Red Crescent Society, isn’t actually good, or it could mean it comes from Christ. Which seems more reasonable? How might understanding
the statement made here about good help us be more understanding and tolerant of those who differ from us?

The Savior makes a distinction between believing his words and believing him. What’s the difference?

What does the Book of Mormon mean when it speaks of Jesus as the Father? Why does it emphasize his fatherhood? The irony is that Latter-day Saints seldom discuss the matter for fear that we will be espousing apostate doctrine, though the Book of Mormon teaches the fatherhood of Christ much more clearly than does the New Testament. (We much prefer to speak of him as our “Elder Brother,” though the scriptures never use that phrase.) Might this be one of the things the Book of Mormon was meant to restore?

How is Christ the light of the world? How is he its life? (Does answering that question help us understand how he is the Father?) How is he its truth? (Does the answer to the latter question help us understand how the truth is that which persuades men to do good? How might thinking of Christ as the truth force us to rethink what we mean by the word truth?)

**Verse 13:** What are “the greater things” that those who come to Jesus will be shown?

**Verse 15:** In most places the veil is spoken of as something that is removed. Here it is spoken of as something we must remove. Is this verse talking about the same veil we refer to when we speak of the veil between ourselves and the Father?

**Verse 19:** How do we remain faithful to the Lord’s name? Where in the Book of Mormon did we see a discussion of this? There is a very real sense in which the Book of Mor-
mon’s central theme is taking his name on us and remaining faithful to that name. As you read through it next time, you might watch for the places where that theme is mentioned. You’ll find, I think, that each of the prophets speaks of it, and you’ll find that King Benjamin’s sermon is one of the most important documents in the Book of Mormon.

Ether 5
Verses 3–4: What might have caused Moroni to think of three witnesses as he transcribes the book of Ether?